

The Impact of Spiritual and Cultural Beliefs on Family Relationships and Marital Satisfaction in Religious Communities: A Systematic Review



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Abstract:

Introduction: Recognizing and examining factors that contribute to the strength and stability of families is a valuable step toward improving the quality of life and mental well-being of individuals in society. This systematic review aims to investigate the influence of spiritual and cultural beliefs on family relationships and marital satisfaction within religious communities.

Methods: This systematic review was conducted in January 2025, adhering to the PRISMA guidelines. The keywords "healthy family," "marital satisfaction," "spiritual health," "religious communities," "spiritual and cultural beliefs," and "family relationships" were used to search the PubMed, Google Scholar, ISC, Scopus, and Web of Science databases, covering publications from 2010 to 2024. Study quality was assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), and a total of eleven studies were included. Full-text reviews were conducted independently by two authors.

Results: Findings indicate that religious and spiritual beliefs promote coping mechanisms, enhance marital satisfaction, and improve mental health outcomes.

Discussion: Cultural and religious contexts significantly influence the effectiveness of interventions and educational programs designed to improve marital satisfaction. Islamic principles and religious education contribute to better marital adjustment, reduced distress, and enhanced family resilience. Sociodemographic factors and religious commitment are key predictors of marital satisfaction and family well-being.

Conclusion: Spiritual and cultural beliefs significantly enhance marital satisfaction and strengthen family relationships within religious communities, promoting improved mental health and resilience through effective coping mechanisms and religious education.

Keywords: Family, Spiritual beliefs, Cultural beliefs, Marital satisfaction, Spiritual health, Religious communities, Family relationships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The formation of a family is the foundation of all social and human education, and it is one of the most important social institutions that has been considered by religious scholars, moralists, and experts in education, sociology, and psychology due to its importance, role, and various functions. An Islamic society without a healthy and vibrant family institution cannot progress [1, 2]. Marital satisfaction, as a feeling of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by both spouses, is one of the most important factors affecting the healthy functioning of a family. Undoubtedly, all couples seek to enjoy their marital life and feel satisfied [3, 4]. Marital satisfaction is an attitudinal variable, and therefore, it is a personal characteristic for both spouses. According to this definition, marital satisfaction is, in fact, a positive and pleasant attitude that spouses have towards various aspects of their marital relationship [5-7]. Marital satisfaction refers to the subjective evaluation of the quality of a marital relationship, encompassing emotional intimacy, mutual respect, and fulfillment of spousal expectations [8]. It is influenced by psychological factors (attachment styles, conflict resolution), social factors (family support, economic stability), and spiritual-cultural factors (shared religious values, cultural norms) [9]. Research indicates that couples with aligned spiritual beliefs report higher marital satisfaction due to shared meaning systems and coping mechanisms during crises [10, 11]. Conversely, cultural mismatches in marital expectations (*e.g.*, differing views on gender roles) can reduce satisfaction, highlighting the need for culturally adaptive marital therapies [12, 13]. Cultural beliefs are shared value systems, norms, and traditions that shape individuals' perceptions of marriage, gender roles, and family obligations [14, 15]. These beliefs influence marital expectations—such as communication styles, conflict resolution, and emotional expression—based on cultural scripts [16, 17]. For example, collectivist cultures may prioritize familial harmony over individual desires, whereas individualist cultures may emphasize personal fulfillment in marriage [18]. Religious teachings further reinforce cultural and spiritual beliefs by prescribing marital roles (*e.g.*, spousal duties in Islamic, Christian, or Hindu traditions), thereby affecting marital satisfaction [19-21].

Spiritual beliefs encompass an individual's or collective's transcendent value system that seeks meaning, purpose, and connection with the sacred, whether within formal religious traditions or through secular spirituality [22]. Contemporary research identifies three key dimensions influencing marital outcomes: the cognitive dimension (belief in the sanctity of marriage is associated with a higher percentage of marital satisfaction), behavioral dimension (shared practices enhancing neurobiological synchrony), and communal dimension (religious support buffering stress) [10, 23, 24]. These findings demonstrate spiritual beliefs operate through meaning-making frameworks (sanctification effect), emotional regulation via contemplative practices, and

reinforced commitment through sacred bonds [25, 26], while highlighting the importance of authentic (vs. imposed) spirituality and cultural context in marital outcomes. Spiritual beliefs also affect the formation of relationships, marital satisfaction, and the continuity of the family institution [27]. For some, spiritual beliefs are a phenomenon separate from religion, while for others, spiritual beliefs are connected to or part of their religious identity [28]. Believing that a role or relationship has spiritual characteristics makes it acquire transcendent qualities, such as sacredness, heavenliness, and more, and it is seen as a manifestation of the divine [29, 30]. In general, in Islamic societies, the existence of religious beliefs has a significant impact on family stability. Belief in God makes people's view of the universe purposeful. Lack of belief in God leads to a lack of coherence and peace, which can cause weakness and many conflicts in family life. Adherence to religion is an important factor in the stability of marriage and marital satisfaction [31]. According to research on family processes, spiritual and religious beliefs and practices play a crucial role in healthy family functioning. The relationship between spiritual/cultural beliefs and marital outcomes can be understood through several theoretical lenses. From a family systems perspective [32], shared spiritual beliefs create emotional interdependence that enhances family cohesion. Social learning theory [33] suggests religious communities provide models for adaptive marital behaviors. Attachment theory [34] frames spirituality as a secure base that reduces marital anxiety. The biopsychosocial-spiritual model [35] integrates these perspectives, proposing that spiritual health—defined as the degree to which individuals find meaning, purpose, and connection through transcendent beliefs—operates at multiple levels to influence marital satisfaction. These theoretical foundations help explain why spiritual congruence between partners predicts better communication [36] and why cultural belief systems shape marital expectations [37]. Identifying and examining the factors that contribute to the stability and strength of this social institution can be a useful step towards improving the quality of life and mental health of individuals in society [38].

1.1. Defining the Research Objectives and Key Questions

This systematic review was conducted to determine the impact of spiritual and cultural beliefs on family relationships and marital satisfaction in religious communities. This study aims to identify the spiritual and cultural beliefs that affect family relationships and marital satisfaction in religious communities by reviewing the existing literature. While this review examines multiple religious traditions, it emphasizes Islamic communities for three reasons: (1) the majority of included studies focused on Muslim populations, reflecting current research trends, (2) Islamic family structures present unique features regarding spiritual dimensions of marriage, and (3) this focus addresses a gap in systematic reviews of non-Western contexts. However, we synthesize findings across

religions to identify universal *versus* culture-specific mechanisms, consistent with the cultural comparative approach in family studies.

This study uses the following three key questions to examine the main topic of the research:

- 1. Is there a relationship between spouses' religious and spiritual beliefs and their marital satisfaction?
- 2. Do the cultural and religious contexts in a society affect marital satisfaction?
- 3. Do Islamic principles and religious education in societies affect marital compatibility?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Search Strategy

This systematic review was conducted in January 2025, based on the PRISMA statement, using the keywords “healthy family, marital satisfaction, spiritual health, religious communities, spiritual and cultural beliefs, family relationships” in the databases PubMed, Google Scholar,

ISC, Scopus, and Web of Science from 2010 to 2024. The inclusion criteria were articles written in English or Persian, availability of the complete text, and relevance to the study objectives. The search strategy was performed according to the PRISMA statement. The search yielded 540 article titles. Due to the overlap of some databases and simultaneous indexing of an article in multiple databases, many duplicate titles were removed using EndNote software, leaving 305 articles. Then, the abstracts were screened. After applying the inclusion criteria, 205 abstracts were excluded. The full text of the remaining 100 articles was reviewed. In the detailed screening phase, we excluded 89 full-text articles for specific reasons: 32 lacked empirical data, 27 focused on non-marital relationships, 18 used incompatible outcome measures, and 12 had methodological flaws. This rigorous selection resulted in 11 high-quality studies meeting all PICOS criteria: population (religious communities), intervention/ exposure (spiritual/cultural beliefs), comparison (varying belief systems), outcomes (marital satisfaction/ family relationships) Fig. (1).

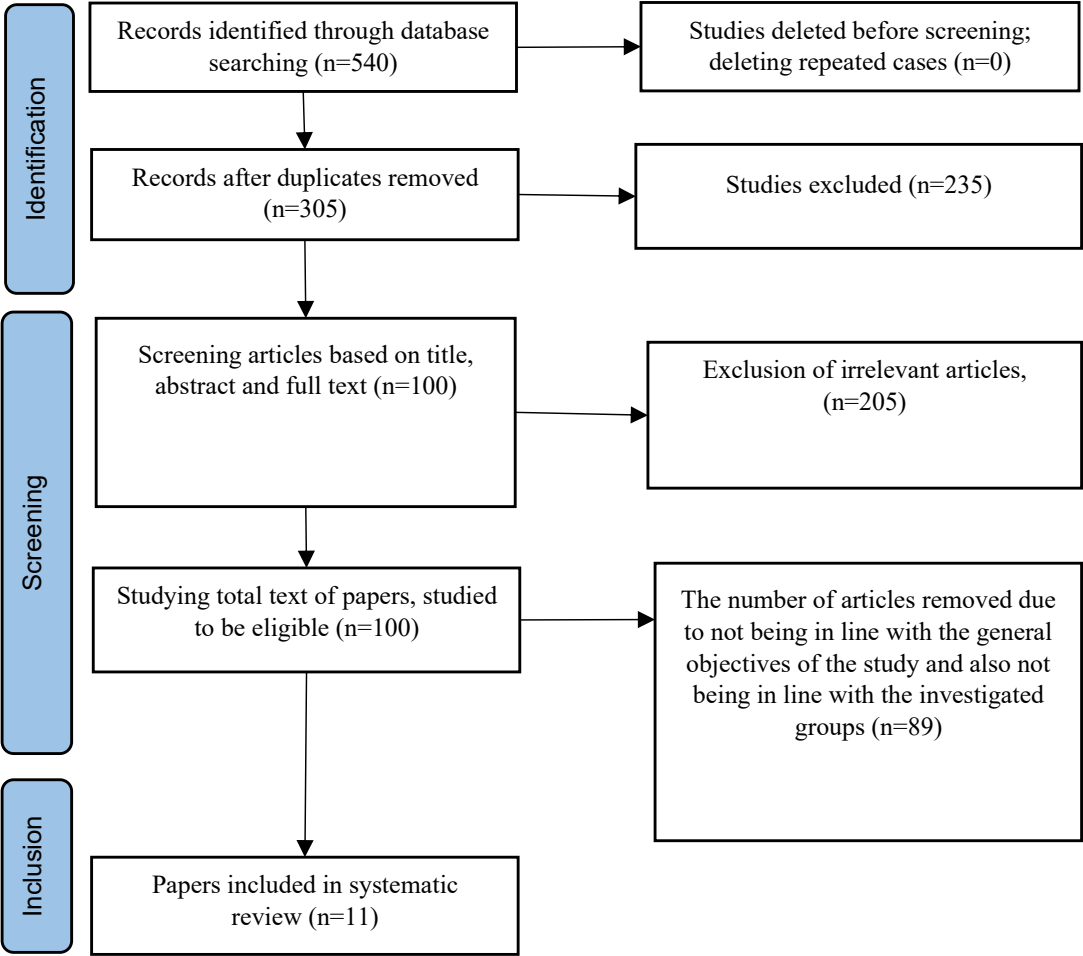


Fig. (1). Search and screening process of the selected articles based on PRISMA guidelines.

2.2. Quality/Risk of Bias Assessment

All included studies underwent rigorous quality assessment using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) version 2018 [39], which allows for simultaneous appraisal of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. Two independent reviewers evaluated each study across five domains: (1) appropriateness of research questions, (2) study design adequacy, (3) participant recruitment strategy, (4) data collection methods, and (5) data analysis rigor. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion with a third reviewer. Studies scoring $\geq 3/5$ on relevant domains were retained. This process revealed moderate overall quality (mean score = 3.6, SD = 0.8), with the strongest performance in research question formulation and the weakest in reporting of participant characteristics.

2.3. Publication Bias and Search Limitations

We acknowledge several search limitations: (1) exclusion of grey literature (dissertations, conference proceedings) to maintain quality standards, (2) language restrictions to English/Persian publications, and (3) potential publication bias favoring positive results. These limitations were mitigated by comprehensive database searching and hand-checking reference lists of included studies.

3. RESULTS

After screening and removing duplicate and irrelevant articles, a total of 11 studies were included in the review. The details of the articles analyzed in this systematic review are presented in Table 1. The findings revealed that spirituality and religious beliefs play a complex and multidimensional role in the quality of marital relationships. Research findings indicate that spiritual well-being, religious congruence, and religious commitment are significantly associated with marital

satisfaction. This relationship is mediated through various mechanisms, such as improving communication patterns, fostering intimacy, promoting mutual commitment, and managing conflicts. Specifically, couples with higher levels of religious alignment tend to experience greater satisfaction, intimacy, and commitment in their relationships. Spirituality has a positive impact not only on the quality of marital relationships but also on individuals' mental health. Therapeutic interventions based on human dignity and spiritual education have been shown to reduce depression, improve marital adjustment, and enhance resilience. These findings highlight the importance of multidimensional approaches in counseling and treating couples, extending beyond purely psychological strategies.

The findings demonstrated a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and marital satisfaction. Spiritual well-being, defined as a state of balance and harmony within oneself and with others, has a notable impact on marital satisfaction. Among the key influencing factors, the belief in the sanctity of marriage and the quality of communication between spouses were identified as the most significant. The belief in the sacred and divine nature of marriage directly and indirectly predicts marital happiness, whereas irrational relational beliefs negatively affect it. These findings underscore the vital role of spiritual and religious dimensions in enhancing marital satisfaction, indicating that strengthening these aspects can improve the quality of marital relationships. The results also highlighted the meaningful role of religion and faith in enhancing marital satisfaction and increasing spiritual well-being. Religion and religious congruence between spouses positively influence marital satisfaction. Religious beliefs and practices enable individuals, on an intrapersonal level, to manage anger physiologically,

Table 1. Characteristics of the articles included in the present study.

Row	Author(s)	Year of Study	Key Findings	Reference
1	Moghadam <i>et al.</i>	2015	There is a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and marital satisfaction among married nurses.	[40]
2	Marsh <i>et al.</i>	2000	The role of religion and religious congruence among couples positively influences marital satisfaction.	[41]
3	Thanagoue <i>et al.</i>	2011	There is a significant relationship between religious adherence and communication patterns among couples.	[42]
4	Seydi	2015	Belief in the sanctity of marriage and communication quality are the most influential factors in marital happiness.	[43]
5	Salehi <i>et al.</i>	2017	Marital satisfaction does not differ between men and women, but men have higher spiritual well-being. With increased spiritual well-being, marital satisfaction also increases.	[44]
6	Jamalirad <i>et al.</i>	2023 (1402)	Islamic dignity-based therapy is effective in reducing depression and enhancing marital adjustment in women affected by infidelity.	[45]
7	Fitchett <i>et al.</i>	2015	Patients receiving dignity therapy report high satisfaction and benefits for themselves and their families.	[46]
8	Zaheri <i>et al.</i>	2016	Spiritual, religious, sexual, interpersonal, relational, and mental health factors positively influence marital satisfaction.	[47]
9	Cassepp-Borges	2021	Participants with the same religion experience higher satisfaction, intimacy, and commitment in their relationships.	[48]
10	Ten Kate <i>et al.</i>	2017	Muslims report lower life satisfaction compared to non-religious individuals, while Catholics experience significant life satisfaction benefits compared to non-religious individuals.	[49]
11	Najafi <i>et al.</i>	2019	Religious upbringing increases marital satisfaction, and teaching spirituality to mothers or caregivers of sick children leads to significant improvements in distress, depressive symptoms, and spiritual resilience components.	[50]

cognitively, and emotionally while taking responsibility for their actions during conflicts. On an interpersonal level, religious practices create conditions where couples turn to God during moments of anger, providing mutual support. Islamic dignity-based therapy has proven effective in alleviating depression and improving marital adjustment in women affected by infidelity. These findings suggest that religious and spiritual therapeutic interventions can improve spiritual well-being and marital satisfaction. Additionally, patients who receive dignity-based therapy report higher levels of satisfaction, benefiting both themselves and their families. Therefore, religious and spiritual interventions can contribute to enhancing the quality of life and marital satisfaction among couples. The findings also indicated the significant influence of culture and society on marital satisfaction and spiritual well-being. Similarity in religious beliefs and values can strengthen marital relationships. Religious upbringing and spiritual education for mothers or caregivers of sick children have resulted in significant improvements in stress levels, depressive symptoms, and spiritual resilience components. These findings suggest that religious upbringing and spiritual education can improve mental health and marital satisfaction. However, the impact of spirituality on marital satisfaction varies across different cultures and religions. Some studies have revealed significant differences between various religious groups. For instance, despite lower satisfaction levels reported among Muslims in certain societies, Catholics have reported greater benefits in life satisfaction. This diversity suggests that cultural, social, and individual factors interact with spirituality, playing a crucial role in shaping marital satisfaction. Therefore, one-dimensional and generalized approaches to studying the role of spirituality in marital relationships should be approached with caution.

4. DISCUSSION

This systematic review was conducted to determine the impact of spiritual and cultural beliefs on family relationships and marital satisfaction in religious communities. This study aims to identify the spiritual and cultural beliefs that affect family relationships and marital satisfaction in religious communities by reviewing the existing literature.

4.1. Relationship between Spouses' Religious/Spiritual Beliefs and Marital Satisfaction

This systematic review found a significant positive relationship between couples' religious/spiritual beliefs and their marital satisfaction. This finding can be explained by several factors, including religious congruence between spouses (shared beliefs), which leads to greater satisfaction, intimacy, and commitment [48]. Furthermore, belief in the sanctity of marriage and quality of communication between partners were identified as key factors [43]. Religious practices (prayer, rituals) also help couples better manage anger and take more responsibility during conflicts [41]. Spiritual well-being refers to a state of balance and harmony within oneself and with others, as well as the ability to strike a balance between inner needs

and the demands of the outside world [51]. Notably, spiritual well-being is the newest dimension of health, alongside other dimensions, such as physical, mental, and social health. Researchers have increasingly focused on spiritual well-being as a framework through which individuals can comprehend the meaning, purpose, and transcendent values of life. Spirituality is a broad concept associated with wisdom, compassion, the experience of a joyful life, and moral sensitivity [51, 52]. Some even argue that without spiritual well-being, other dimensions of health cannot function optimally, and achieving a high level of quality of life becomes impossible. Thus, the importance of spirituality and spiritual growth in humans has drawn increasing attention from psychologists and sociologists over the past few decades [53]. Spiritual and religious beliefs influence how individuals interpret and perceive events, facilitating the process of adaptation and acceptance of life's challenges [54]. Individuals with strong religious and spiritual beliefs, high levels of spiritual well-being, or those actively involved in religious communities tend to report higher life satisfaction [55]. In the study conducted by Marsh *et al.* (2000), the role of religion and religious congruence among couples was examined, and the results demonstrated that religion plays a significant role in marital satisfaction [41]. On an interpersonal level, religious practices create a space where individuals turn to God during moments of anger, providing mutual support for couples to avoid conflicts with each other. Connection with God plays an interactive and compensatory role in marital relationships. Research also shows that Islamic self-awareness can increase marital harmony and resolve conflicts [56].

Additionally, various studies have reported the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions combined with religious practices in reducing marital conflicts and treating disorders, such as depression, anxiety, increasing happiness, and enhancing marital satisfaction [57]. Jamalirad *et al.* (2023) examined the effectiveness of dignity-based therapy derived from Islamic principles on depression and marital adjustment in women affected by infidelity. The study was conducted on 12 women who had experienced marital infidelity and sought psychological services at counseling and psychological service centers. The data from this study revealed that the Islamic spiritually informed dignity-based therapy was effective in reducing depression and improving marital adjustment in women affected by their spouse's betrayal [58]. A review of both domestic and international research indicates that spiritual well-being is significantly related to attitudes toward premarital relationships and marital burnout among married women. Moghadam *et al.* (2015) found a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and marital satisfaction among married nurses [40]. The findings of the study by Thanaghee *et al.* (2011) revealed a significant relationship between religious adherence and couples' communication patterns. Moreover, there was a significant difference in the communication patterns of religiously committed couples compared to those who were not religiously committed [42].

4.2. Impact of Cultural and Religious Contexts on Marital Satisfaction

The review revealed that cultural and religious contexts significantly affect marital satisfaction. For instance, in societies like Pakistan, religious commitment positively correlates with marital satisfaction [20]. However, in some contexts (*e.g.*, Netherlands), Muslims reported lower satisfaction compared to Catholics, likely due to weaker social position rather than religious beliefs [49]. Spiritual education for mothers of ill children was shown to reduce stress and depression while improving marital satisfaction [50], demonstrating how cultural-religious factors moderate these relationships. The sociology of religion focuses on the social and marital life of individuals. One of the first focused studies on the influence of spirituality and religiosity on marital satisfaction among Muslim couples in Pakistan explored how religious commitment and practice strengthen relationships between couples. The findings indicated that religious commitment and practices are essential for a happy marital life. The study provided insights into the social dynamics of marital satisfaction within Pakistani culture. However, the results cannot be generalized beyond this cultural context [31]. Religious beliefs and spiritual upbringing in women can significantly impact various aspects of individual and family health, including mental health and quality of life. A study conducted in 2019 aimed to examine the impact of religion and teaching spiritual beliefs on marital satisfaction and the health of mothers with sick children. The findings revealed that religious upbringing was a contributing factor to increased marital satisfaction among those who had received this type of education compared to those who had not. Teaching spirituality to mothers or caregivers of sick children significantly improved levels of distress, depressive symptoms, and the functioning of certain components of spiritual resilience, such as patience, contentment, and social reliance. Overall, teaching religious beliefs positively influenced marital satisfaction. Spiritual upbringing can significantly improve the mental health of mothers with sick children [50].

In a review study on factors affecting marital satisfaction among Iranian men and women, it was found that spiritual and religious, sexual, interpersonal, relational, and mental health factors positively influenced marital satisfaction and family relationships in the vast majority of studies reviewed. Additionally, many articles emphasized the impact of socio-demographic factors, such as occupation, duration of marriage, age, number of children, economic status, and income. As a result, when selecting a spouse, various criteria, including religious, moral, psychological, communication skills, and sexual factors, should be considered. In case of any issues, measures such as education, counseling, and therapy should be taken [47]. A study aimed at examining the variables influencing relationship stability investigated whether satisfaction with the relationship, intimacy, passion, decision/commitment, love styles, and shared religion are associated with the continuation of the

relationship. The sample consisted of 129 participants in romantic relationships from 13 states in Brazil. Participants individually completed the Relationship Assessment Scale, Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale, and the Love Attitudes Scale. After six months, participants reported whether they were still in the same relationship. The study confirmed the influence of love and religious compatibility on the fate of relationships. Participants who continued their relationships reported higher levels of satisfaction, intimacy, and commitment compared to those who ended their relationships. Those who shared the same religion experienced higher satisfaction, intimacy, and commitment in their relationships. These data emphasize the importance of religion, love, and relationship satisfaction in promoting relationship success [48].

4.3. Effect of Islamic Principles and Religious Education on Marital Compatibility

The review revealed that Islamic principles and religious education were found to positively impact marital compatibility. Islamic dignity-based therapy effectively reduced depression and improved marital adjustment among women affected by infidelity [58]. Religious upbringing and spiritual education enhanced marital satisfaction and mental health [50]. In Islamic societies like Iran, incorporating religious teachings into family counseling appears essential as religion forms a core part of cultural identity [59, 60]. Religious beliefs help couples view marriage as sacred and employ more adaptive coping mechanisms [41, 43]. The positive relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction is well-established. However, this relationship likely varies across cultural contexts and religious orientations. To explore the reasons behind this, it is essential to assess the impact of religion on life satisfaction. Religiosity plays a role in individuals' life satisfaction. Data analysis from a study on Muslims in the Netherlands initially showed that Muslims reported lower life satisfaction compared to non-religious individuals. This appeared to be due to their weaker social position rather than their religious beliefs. Additionally, the study found that Catholics experienced significant life satisfaction benefits compared to non-religious individuals, with belonging to a religious community playing a key role. Alongside the structural benefits of belonging—centered on social bonds—a cultural aspect appears to highlight the importance of religious affiliation, suggesting that it gives life greater meaning [61]. Seydi (2015) conducted a study aimed at identifying predictors of marital happiness, focusing on spiritual and relational beliefs, communication quality, and demographic variables (age, education level, gender) among 913 married individuals in the city of Marivan. The results of data analysis revealed that belief in the sanctity of marriage, destructive conflict, and unwillingness to change one's spouse directly and indirectly, and sexual perfectionism and mind-reading indirectly (mediated by communication quality and age), predicted marital happiness. Belief in the sacred and divine nature of marriage was identified as one of the most influential factors in marital happiness, whereas irrational relational beliefs had profoundly nega-

tive effects. The results suggested that family counselors could help couples experience happier marriages by affirming and strengthening the spiritual aspect of marriage and challenging irrational beliefs about marital relationships [43]. In marital relationships, various factors contribute to spouses' satisfaction with one another. Among these, spirituality plays a foundational role in family and societal health. Salehi *et al.* (2017) conducted a cross-sectional study on 375 married students at the Islamic Azad University of Sari to examine the relationship between spiritual well-being and marital satisfaction and compare these variables between men and women. The findings revealed that marital satisfaction did not differ between men and women, but spiritual well-being was higher in male students. Additionally, an increase in spiritual well-being was associated with an increase in marital satisfaction [44].

Jamalirad *et al.* (2023) examined the effectiveness of dignity-based therapy derived from Islamic principles on depression and marital adjustment in women affected by infidelity. The study sample consisted of 12 women who had experienced marital infidelity and sought psychological services at counseling and psychological centers. The participants were randomly assigned to two groups (6 in the experimental group and 6 in the control group). The results indicated that the Islamic spiritually informed dignity-based therapy was effective in reducing depression and improving marital adjustment in women affected by their spouses' betrayal [58]. Fitchett *et al.* (2015) found that patients who received dignity therapy reported high levels of satisfaction and benefits for themselves and their families, including an increased sense of meaning and purpose [46]. Research indicates that individuals with high levels of religiosity exhibit greater commitment to their marital lives. A strong relationship has also been observed between religiosity and quality of life, with both variables being associated with survival strategies and the preservation of marital relationships [62]. Religion (*e.g.*, prayer, rituals, and participation in ceremonies) enhances couples' perceptions of the sacredness of marriage. It also attributes the durability and survival of marriage to divine blessings, giving kinship and the positive outcomes of marriage a sacred dimension [63]. Choosing any approach to educating couples without considering their cultural and social context is ineffective. In all countries, religion and its teachings constitute an important part of culture. In Iran, in addition to various national perspectives and ethnic traditions, Islamic culture and its ethical, social, and familial recommendations have been deeply rooted in Iranian families for centuries. Therefore, incorporating Islamic teachings into specialized interventions and educational programs aimed at enriching and improving marital relationships seems essential and necessary [59, 60].

CONCLUSION

Research findings indicate that spiritual well-being, religious congruence, and religious commitment are significantly associated with marital satisfaction. This

relationship is facilitated through mechanisms such as improved communication patterns, increased intimacy, mutual commitment, and conflict management. Couples with higher levels of religious congruence tend to experience greater satisfaction, intimacy, and commitment in their relationships. Furthermore, spiritually based therapeutic interventions have proven effective in reducing conflicts, improving marital adjustment, and enhancing resilience. While spiritually-based interventions show efficacy in enhancing marital adjustment, their effectiveness is context-dependent. Researchers and clinicians must balance optimism about spiritual interventions with rigorous attention to cultural variability and methodological limitations in this emerging field. Notable limitations include methodological heterogeneity, cultural specificity (particularly Islamic contexts), and cross-sectional designs that preclude causal inference. The observed variability across religious communities suggests socioeconomic factors may moderate spirituality's impact. Clinically, spiritual interventions require careful cultural adaptation to ensure transferability across diverse populations. Future research should prioritize: 1) cross-cultural longitudinal designs, 2) standardized measurement approaches, and 3) examination of secular spirituality.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the main limitations of this study is its focus on articles published only in English and Persian, which may have excluded valuable research in other languages and religious cultures. Additionally, despite a comprehensive search across reputable databases, some relevant articles may have been missed due to access restrictions or a lack of indexing in the reviewed databases. Variations in the methodology and sample populations of the included studies also posed challenges for systematic comparisons. On the other hand, this study primarily focuses on specific religious communities (particularly Islamic societies), limiting the generalizability of the results to other religions or cultures. Moreover, due to the cross-sectional nature of most included studies, causal inferences between spiritual variables and marital satisfaction cannot be established. Publication bias and the exclusion of gray literature or unpublished studies may also prevent a comprehensive understanding of the impact of spiritual beliefs on family relationships. Finally, the lack of standardized operational definitions for key variables (*e.g.*, "spiritual well-being" or "marital satisfaction") across different studies made it difficult to compare and synthesize findings effectively.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors confirm their contribution to the paper as follows: R.R.: Study Conception and Design; S.H.S.: Conceptualization; H.S.G.: Data Collection; A.K.: Analysis and Interpretation of results; S.D., K.H.: Draft Manuscript; All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

ABBREVIATION

MMAT = Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Not applicable.

STANDARDS OF REPORTING

PRISMA guidelines were followed.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [K.H] upon reasonable request.

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None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

PRISMA Checklist is available on the publisher's website along with the published article.

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