

Research Paper

Psychological and Spiritual Well-Being in Marriage: A Multidimensional Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Within the framework of marriage, this paper examines the complex interplay between spiritual and psychological well-being (SWB and PWB). **Methods:** Our methodology included a narrative integrative assessment of recent cross-cultural studies, qualitative data, and intervention-based research to explore how marriage quality and personal well-being are linked. **Findings:** According to the literature, spiritual and psychological well-being are deeply interconnected, not just parallel paths. Spirituality often acts as an "anchor," reducing stress and promoting self-compassion, both of which strengthen marital relationships. Although religious homogeneity, or shared faith, is typically associated with greater closeness, interfaith couples also thrive through mutual respect and flexible communication. In particular, families experiencing significant stress, such as those with special needs, benefit greatly from spiritual attachment. However, the review also highlights the idea of "spiritual bypass", the use of faith to avoid psychological processing as an important moderator that can hinder true closeness and help-seeking. **Conclusion:** Strength in marriage is best understood from a biopsychosocial-spiritual perspective. Clinicians are encouraged to adopt integrative practices that acknowledge inner discomfort without using spiritual resources to mask it.

Keywords: Marital Satisfaction, Spiritual Well-Being, Psychological Resilience, Self-Compassion, Spiritual Bypass, Integrative Therapy

Marriage is more than just a legal contract or social arrangement; for many, it serves as an essential site for psychological development and understanding of the meaning of existence. While traditional marriage research has focused on communication techniques and conflict resolution, modern family psychology is increasingly focusing on couples' psychological climate. Specifically, how do individuals' psychological health and spiritual orientation impact the quality of their relationship?

Psychological well-being (PWB) is not simply about the absence of illness; it also includes independence, the ability to manage emotions, and the ability to maintain meaningful relationships. In contrast to religious beliefs, spiritual well-being (SWB) encompasses a sense of connection to God, a positive perspective on the world, and existential peace. This

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study goes beyond viewing them as separate factors. Instead, we believe that PWB and SWB serve as mutually reinforcing pillars of marital stability. By combining existing empirical data, we examine how these inner resources protect couples from stress, the difficult dynamics of interfaith relationships, and the "double-edged sword" of spirituality as a psychological shield.

Spirit and Mind Harmony in Relationships

There is strong evidence that couples who cultivate a healthy inner life on a psychological and spiritual level report better quality relationships. Spirituality often provides a cognitive "map" for coping with life's storms. According to Singh and Bahadur (2021), participation in spiritual activities such as prayer, meditation, or community worship is strongly associated with life satisfaction and reduced distress.

However, the benefits and drawbacks are not equal. Gender dynamics also play a role, with working women often relying more on spiritual resources for well-being than their male counterparts. Additionally, religious monogamy, which involves sharing the same religious traditions, remains a strong indicator of stability. According to Raesi et al. (2025), when couples share a "sacred language," they feel more committed and closer because they share similar core beliefs and conflict resolution techniques.

However, this connection goes both ways, especially later in life. As couples age, their relationship satisfaction and spiritual well-being reinforce each other, creating a virtuous cycle of resilience and acceptance (Tang et al., 2024).

How It Works: "Hidden" Mechanisms

Why does a spiritual perspective help marriage? The literature suggests several mediation mechanisms that transform abstract beliefs into tangible relationship benefits.

Anxiety Buffer and Self-Compassion

Spiritual well-being appears to act as an anxiety regulator. When people develop faith in a holistic system of meaning, they become less reactive to everyday challenges. Most importantly, this sense of comfort fosters self-compassion. Bahadori et al. (2025) found that people who practice self-compassion and mindfulness are more likely to extend similar compassion to their spouses. When a person is less self-critical, they are less likely to criticize their spouses.

Psychological Security

A sense of psychological security mediates the relationship between spirituality and marriage in older adults (Tang et al., 2024). A stable spiritual attachment is formed.

Attachment to God as a Resource

In high-stress situations, such as families raising children with special needs, the role of "attachment to God" is essential. Keshavarz-Afshar et al. (2016) found that a secure attachment to positive energy, such as a secure attachment to parents, provides comfort in difficult situations. This vertical attachment (from humans to God) often stabilizes horizontal attachment (from spouses) when resources are limited.

Context Matters: Spirituality and High-Stress Families

The myth that "interfaith marriages are doomed to fail" is increasingly challenged by data. Arundill et al. (2017) found that differences in religious beliefs do not always impact

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satisfaction. Rather, process is more important than content. Interfaith couples who value mutual respect and open discussion about their differences report greater satisfaction. Conflicts are often associated with raising large families or children, but they can be alleviated with adaptive communication skills. Similarly, in the case of parenting stress, spiritual resources act as a protective buffer. Raising a child with special needs presents significant challenges.

Parents who incorporate spiritual meaning-making and purpose into their lives report lower rates of burnout and greater marital closeness.

The Shadow Side: Understanding Spiritual Bypass

Importantly, this review shows that focusing on spirituality is not necessarily the only way to avoid unresolved emotional or psychological wounds. Ahmed (2021) emphasizes the existence of spiritual bypass, which refers to the adoption of spiritual ideas or practices to avoid unresolved emotional or psychological wounds. When spirituality is used to suppress uncomfortable emotions (e.g., "I don't need to be angry, I just need to pray more"), it is associated with increased depression and anxiety. In marriage, this can have dangerous consequences. A partner practicing spiritual bypassing may ignore their spouse's genuine emotional difficulties or avoid professional care due to stigma, viewing therapy as a sign of a "lack of faith." In some circumstances, spirituality has a negative impact on mental health.

Clinical Implications: Toward an Integrative Practice

These results remind mental healthcare professionals that the spiritual aspect cannot be ignored in therapy. Interventions that focus solely on behavior change may overlook the deeper, existential foundations that underpin a couple's behavior. Recent research on marital psycho-spiritual interventions (MP-SI) shows potential. Mohanai and Shekhiani (2026) found that therapies that incorporate positive psychology and religious spirituality significantly enhance dyadic adjustment. Therapists can help couples strengthen their spiritual perspectives and also provide psychological regulation skills.

CONCLUSION

The interplay between psychological and spiritual well-being offers a valuable approach to understanding marital success. Spirituality provides the "why"—purpose and support, while psychological health provides the "how"—emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. When these two elements are properly integrated, they create a strong marital relationship that can withstand significant stress. However, both practitioners and couples should be wary of spiritual bypassing, ensuring that trust serves as a bridge to intimacy rather than a barrier to emotional transparency. Ultimately, the most successful marriages seem to be those in which both people foster each other's spiritual and psychological growth.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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