


Explaining the Structural Model of Marital Satisfaction Based on Spirituality with the Mediating Role of Happiness in Married Women

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to explain the structural model of marital satisfaction based on spirituality with the mediating role of happiness in married women.

Methods: The research method was descriptive-correlational of the structural equation modeling (SEM) type. The statistical population included all married women employed in schools in Tehran. The total number was 41,656 in the 2022–2023 academic year. The sample size was calculated based on the PLS method proposed by Barclay et al. (1995), which required a minimum of 70 participants. However, due to the potential risk of participant attrition, a larger sample of approximately 120 individuals was examined. The sampling method used in this study was convenience sampling. The measurement instruments included the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (1989), the Parsian and Dunning Spirituality Questionnaire (2009), and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (1989). The assumptions were analyzed using SPSS 26 and SMART-PLS statistical software.

Findings: The results of this study indicated that the structural model of marital satisfaction based on spirituality, with happiness as a mediator, demonstrated a good and acceptable fit, with a significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it is predicted that the structural model of marital satisfaction based on spirituality with the mediating role of happiness applies to married women. Consequently, spirituality, mediated by happiness, enhances marital satisfaction.

Conclusion: Thus, by increasing the level of spirituality among couples, with happiness as a mediator, a higher level of marital satisfaction can be anticipated.

Keywords: Marital satisfaction, Married women, Happiness, Spirituality

1. Introduction

The family is one of the fundamental pillars of society (Gharadaghi & Masoumi Ala, 2022). Moreover, marriage serves as the foundation for family formation. The family can be considered an emotional unit and a network of intertwined relationships that arise from the marital bond between spouses. An individual's satisfaction with family life is regarded as their overall satisfaction with the family (Karami et al., 2021).

The role and significance of the family institution have been a key focus in various scientific fields, including religious studies, ethics, education, sociology, and psychology (Amir Arjmandi et al., 2014). Numerous studies and investigations have examined different dimensions of marital relationships, including the concept and criteria of marital satisfaction, which have been extensively analyzed by psychologists and family counselors (Ebrahimi, 2018). Marital satisfaction remains a central concern in research conducted to date (Defanti, 2025). Examining factors that contribute to increased marital satisfaction is of great significance, as marital satisfaction is a vital and complex aspect of spousal relationships (Karami et al., 2021). It reflects the mutual affection and empathy between spouses, as well as their positive outlook on marriage (Taghani et al., 2019).

One of the recent topics of interest among researchers in the field of family therapy is the role of religion and spirituality in therapeutic processes (Ahmadi et al., 2016). Family background, spirituality, value systems, and self-esteem can play a significant role in marital satisfaction over time (Baker, 2019; Fonseca et al., 2018; Karimi et al., 2019). The loss of meaning and spiritual values in life may contribute to psychological distress (Ebrahimi et al., 2020). Findings from previous studies indicate that couples experiencing marital dissatisfaction are more likely to improve their marital satisfaction if they focus on spiritual growth (Bawa, 2018; Shearin, 2016).

Historically, spirituality and religion were often used interchangeably. However, over time, particularly spirituality has acquired distinct implications. Traditionally, spirituality refers to the reformation of religious processes centered around the image of God and the pursuit of human salvation, as described in sacred texts (Eslami et al., 2023). Spirituality is perceived as a non-material and transcendental concept, encompassing any element that influences the human soul (Abedi & Doosti, 2023). It encompasses a sense of connection between individuals and the world, meaning

in life, purpose, integration, growth, truth, and mindfulness. As a dynamic and intrinsic aspect of human nature, spirituality guides individuals in seeking meaning and purpose while fostering relationships with themselves, their families, others, and society (MacLeod et al., 2019).

In Iranian society, 98% of the population is Muslim, and religious beliefs play a crucial role in their lives, particularly in times of crisis. Spirituality is also interpreted as a sense of connection with a higher power (Salmani et al., 2016). Furthermore, spirituality and religion are recognized as empowering factors that provide individuals with coping mechanisms and strategies for problem-solving. This connection to spirituality and religion fosters a sense of meaning in the face of challenges and hardships while offering individuals a perceived indirect control over life events (Akbari et al., 2021). Additionally, spirituality transcends religious orientations by encompassing the comprehension of cultural and religious beliefs and an intrinsic connection with an ultimate divine power, guiding individuals toward higher spiritual consciousness (Bahrai et al., 2020).

According to recent research, spiritual and religious factors help individuals cope with marital crises and predict marital satisfaction (Thomas, 2023). Moreover, the spiritual dimensions of life play a crucial mediating role in the relationship between marital conflicts and marital satisfaction (Qasemi Moghadam et al., 2020). In other words, spirituality serves as a predictor of marital satisfaction (Balmer et al., 2012; McIntosh, 2022; Qasemi Moghadam et al., 2020). One of the fundamental factors in marital satisfaction is happiness (Karami et al., 2021; Sepherian Azar et al., 2016; Soleimani et al., 2015). Couples who enjoy their marital life and experience happiness tend to have stronger bonds and positive relationships with each other and their children. Such families collaborate and support each other in various aspects of life (Bahrai et al., 2020).

Marital happiness reflects an individual's overall level of joy within different dimensions of their marital relationship. It involves a person's judgment of their well-being and satisfaction in their marriage and has significant effects on the happiness of both men and women in their marital life (Karbalai Saleh & Dasht Borgi, 2020; Okur et al., 2025). Marriage is a shared life experience in which two individuals decide to build their lives together, motivated by the pursuit of mutual satisfaction and happiness. Achieving this goal requires that both partners' expectations in marriage are met, allowing them to benefit from the experience. In essence,

attaining happiness and fulfilling expectations are crucial to marital satisfaction (Çelik et al., 2022).

Furthermore, spiritual experiences may play a key role in positive psychological outcomes, such as happiness (Singh et al., 2019). Research findings indicate the positive role of Islamic spirituality in determining happiness (Amiruddin et al., 2021). Additionally, findings show that individuals who positively evaluate their spouse's behavior tend to experience higher levels of happiness in their marital life (Emami Kalesar & Rasouli, 2017).

Considering the aforementioned points, it appears that there is a potential relationship between the discussed variables, such that spirituality is related to marital satisfaction. Furthermore, spirituality is linked to happiness, and happiness, in turn, may serve as a mediating variable in the relationship between spirituality and marital satisfaction. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the following research question: "Can the structural model of marital satisfaction based on spirituality with the mediating role of happiness be explained?"

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study employed a descriptive-correlational research design using structural equation modeling (SEM), as it aimed to predict the relationship between marital satisfaction, spirituality, and happiness. The study population included all married women employed in schools in Tehran, covering elementary schools (both girls' and boys' schools) and high schools for girls during the 2022–2023 academic year. The total population size was 41,656 individuals.

In structural equation modeling using PLS software, sample size determination follows the method introduced by Barclay et al. (1995), which is not highly sensitive to sample size variations (Dauri & Rezazadeh, 2014). Based on this approach, the minimum required sample size for the present study was 70 participants. However, to mitigate potential participant dropout issues, a larger sample of approximately 120 individuals was considered.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Marital Satisfaction

The Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (1989) consists of 47 items, rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Some items are positively scored, including items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 17, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 33, 34, 36, 43, and 44, while others are reverse-scored. The computed score follows a T-score scale, with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 (Damiri et al., 2014). The total score ranges from 47 to 235, and individuals scoring below 150 may experience marital dissatisfaction (Agha Mohammad Hasani et al., 2012). In the short-form 47-item version, scores between 47 and 84 indicate severe dissatisfaction, scores between 85 and 122 indicate moderate dissatisfaction, scores between 123 and 160 indicate average satisfaction, scores between 161 and 198 indicate high satisfaction, and scores between 199 and 235 indicate very high satisfaction (Suleimanian, 1994, as cited in Seraj et al., 2014). The Cronbach's alpha reliability of this questionnaire was reported as 0.86, with test-retest reliability scores ranging between 0.77 and 0.92, with an average of 0.86 over a four-week interval (Sanai Zakir, 2017). Additionally, Alizadeh Fard et al. (2016) reported that the correlation coefficients between the subscales and the total questionnaire score ranged between 0.64 and 0.85. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Persian version was 0.74 (Arab Alidosti et al., 2015).

2.2.2. Spirituality

The Parsian & Dunning Spirituality Questionnaire (2009) is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 29 items, rated on a four-point Likert scale (1–4). The questionnaire provides both a total score and subscale scores covering self-awareness (10 items), the importance of spiritual beliefs in life (4 items), spiritual activities (6 items), and spiritual needs (9 items). Parsian & Dunning (2009) reported an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.94, with subscale alphas ranging from 0.80 to 0.91, indicating high internal consistency. Additionally, factor analysis confirmed its construct validity. Through confirmatory factor analysis, Aminaei et al. (2014) identified four factors—self-awareness, importance of spiritual beliefs, spiritual activities, and spiritual needs—and reported their respective reliability as follows: self-awareness (0.84), importance of spiritual beliefs (0.90), spiritual activities (0.77), spiritual needs (0.82), and the overall scale (0.90) (Aminaei et al., 2014). In the study by Yousefi Afarashteh & Rezaei (2021), the Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.78 (Yousefi Afarashteh & Rezaei, 2021).

2.2.3. Happiness

The Oxford Happiness Inventory (1989) (OHI) consists of 29 multiple-choice items, scored as follows: Option A (0 points), Option B (1 point), Option C (2 points), and Option D (3 points). The maximum possible score is 87, indicating the highest level of happiness, while the minimum score is 0, representing severe dissatisfaction, distress, and depression. The optimal happiness range is between 40 and 42. It is recommended that this questionnaire be administered multiple times over different periods to compare results, especially after implementing interventions to enhance happiness. Given its 29-item format, the test is relatively quick to complete. The questionnaire assesses several components, including self-concept (items 1, 6, 10, 13, 14, 19, 23, and 24), life satisfaction (items 3, 9, and 12), psychological preparedness (items 18, 20, 21, and 25), exuberance (items 11 and 15), aesthetic appreciation (items 2, 4, 7, 16, and 27), self-efficacy (items 8, 17, 22, and 26), and optimism (items 28 and 29). Mohammadipour (2012) assessed the questionnaire's validity as acceptable and reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.87 (Ying & Parsakia, 2024).

2.3. Data Analysis

Data for this study were collected using both library research and fieldwork. The study was conducted through self-administered questionnaires measuring marital satisfaction, spirituality, and happiness. The questionnaires were prepared in both electronic and physical formats. After

sample selection based on the defined methodology, the questionnaires were distributed to the selected participants.

3. Findings and Results

Table 1 presents the minimum, maximum, skewness, kurtosis, mean, and standard deviation of marital satisfaction. As shown, the mean and standard deviation of marital satisfaction were 139.2 ± 35.0 .

Table 1 also displays the minimum, maximum, skewness, kurtosis, mean, and standard deviation of spirituality and its subscales, including self-awareness, the importance of spiritual beliefs in life, spiritual activities, and spiritual needs. The results indicate that the mean and standard deviation of spirituality were 86.5 ± 19.5 , self-awareness was 29.0 ± 7.06 , the importance of spiritual beliefs in life was 12.32 ± 3.3 , spiritual activities were 17.8 ± 4.4 , and spiritual needs were 27.3 ± 6.5 .

Similarly, Table 1 presents the minimum, maximum, skewness, kurtosis, mean, and standard deviation of happiness and its subscales, including self-concept, life satisfaction, psychological preparedness, exuberance, aesthetic appreciation, self-efficacy, and optimism. The results show that the mean and standard deviation of happiness were 48.9 ± 27.5 , self-concept was 13.3 ± 8.09 , life satisfaction was 5.18 ± 2.9 , psychological preparedness was 7.1 ± 4.1 , exuberance was 3.15 ± 2.1 , aesthetic appreciation was 8.41 ± 5.03 , self-efficacy was 6.59 ± 4.03 , and optimism was 3.45 ± 2.06 .

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Marital Satisfaction, Spirituality, and Happiness

Variables	Kurtosis	Skewness	Standard Deviation	Mean	Maximum	Minimum
Marital Satisfaction	-0.317	-0.146	35.0	139.2	211	52
Spirituality	-0.368	-0.954	19.5	86.6	114	34
Self-awareness	-0.310	-0.501	7.06	29.0	40	10
Importance of Spiritual Beliefs	-0.140	-0.737	3.3	12.32	16	4
Spiritual Activities	0.207	-0.888	4.4	17.8	24	6
Spiritual Needs	0.240	-0.852	6.5	27.3	36	9
Happiness	-0.462	0.724	27.5	48.9	107	6
Self-concept	-0.550	0.666	8.09	13.37	30	0
Life Satisfaction	-0.115	0.572	2.9	5.18	12	0
Psychological Preparedness	-0.446	0.398	4.1	7.1	16	0
Exuberance	-0.080	0.786	2.1	3.15	8	0
Aesthetic Appreciation	-0.484	0.471	5.03	8.41	20	0
Self-efficacy	-0.177	0.700	4.03	6.59	16	0
Optimism	0.552	0.915	2.06	3.45	10	0

The results of the measurement model test using SMART-PLS software, presented in Table 3, indicate that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), used as an indicator of convergent validity, was 0.51 for marital satisfaction, 0.84 for happiness, and 0.82 for spirituality. Since all values exceed the threshold criterion of 0.45, the measurement model demonstrates acceptable convergent validity.

The results of the measurement model test using SMART-PLS software, as shown in Table 3, indicated that

the Cronbach's alpha values were 0.89 for marital satisfaction, 0.90 for happiness, and 0.92 for spirituality. Additionally, the composite reliability values were 0.90 for marital satisfaction, 0.91 for happiness, and 0.92 for spirituality. All values exceeded the 0.70 threshold, confirming that the internal consistency (reliability) of the items for each construct is satisfactory.

Table 2

Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Variable	Marital Satisfaction	Happiness	Spirituality
Marital Satisfaction	0.719	-	-
Happiness	0.734	0.919	-
Spirituality	0.474	0.388	0.906

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Marital Satisfaction	0.89	0.90	0.517
Happiness	0.90	0.91	0.845
Spirituality	0.92	0.92	0.821

Since the sample size is large, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests tend to produce Type I errors in large samples, the central limit theorem was applied. Based on the skewness and kurtosis values in Table 1, where all values fall within the range of -2 to +2, the distribution of the variables (marital satisfaction, spirituality, and happiness)

can be assumed to be normal. However, it is important to note that Smart-PLS software has three significant advantages: first, it is robust to violations of the normality assumption; second, it can perform structural equation modeling (SEM) with small sample sizes; and third, it allows construct measurement with even a single item.

Table 4

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values

Variable	Happiness	Marital Satisfaction
Spirituality	1.15	1.25

The results of the multicollinearity analysis, presented in Table 4, indicate that the variance inflation factor (VIF) values for all predictor variables are below the threshold of 10. Therefore, there is no multicollinearity among the predictor variables of spirituality.

The structural model of marital satisfaction, based on spirituality components (self-awareness, importance of spiritual beliefs, spiritual experiences, and spiritual needs), with the mediation of happiness components (self-concept, life satisfaction, psychological preparedness, exuberance,

aesthetic appreciation, self-efficacy, and optimism), was successfully predicted in married women.

The path analysis results using PLS software, as presented in Table 5, demonstrate that happiness plays a significant mediating role in the effect of spirituality on marital satisfaction among married women ($P = 0.001$, $T = 3.24$, $b = 0.15$). Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, spirituality, by increasing happiness, leads to a significant improvement in marital satisfaction among married women.

Table 5

Coefficients and Values for the Indirect Path in the Structural Model

Pathway	b	SE	T	P
Spirituality → Happiness → Marital Satisfaction	0.15	0.045	3.42	0.001

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to explain the structural model of marital satisfaction based on spirituality, with the mediating role of happiness in married women. Given that the structural model of marital satisfaction based on spirituality components (self-awareness, the importance of spiritual beliefs, spiritual experiences, and spiritual needs), with the mediation of happiness components (self-concept, life satisfaction, psychological preparedness, exuberance, aesthetic appreciation, self-efficacy, and optimism), was found to be significant, it can be concluded that spirituality and happiness play a beneficial role in marital relationships.

Referring to previous research, it can be expected that spirituality, happiness, and marital satisfaction are interrelated. Consistent with the prior findings (Murphy et al., 2015; Sediqi et al., 2013), this study confirms that spiritual or religious individuals tend to be more hopeful, utilize effective family coping strategies, and experience greater marital satisfaction. As discussed, spiritual orientation, sensitivity, and self-sacrifice significantly predict happiness in marriage and life satisfaction, a finding that aligns with prior research (Sayin et al., 2019). Studies (Khalili Baseri et al., 2023; Narimani et al., 2015; Seifi & Taqavi, 2019) also supports the present research, emphasizing that enhancing spiritual well-being can strengthen the mechanisms contributing to marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are in agreement with prior studies (Khosravi & Farrokhzad, 2020; Mahipalan & Sheena, 2019; Nikjo et al., 2018) regarding the role of spirituality in predicting happiness, reinforcing previous research that linked happiness to spirituality.

Regarding the prediction of marital satisfaction based on religious and spiritual orientation, this study is consistent with the prior findings (Aman et al., 2021; Aman et al., 2019; Bezhabadi et al., 2020; Hakimi Dezfuli & Ibrahimpour, 2023; Hwang et al., 2019; McIntosh, 2022; Thomas, 2023). Previous research has already established that an increase in religious and spiritual commitment serves as a strong predictor of marital satisfaction. Moreover, the relationship

between religiosity, spirituality, and marital satisfaction has been confirmed by prior studies (Abidi & Majeed, 2019; Anaeche, 2020; Sefidi et al., 2015; Targhee Jah et al., 2016; Wade et al., 2018). However, these studies did not explore the mediating role of happiness in predicting marital satisfaction based on spirituality, which was a central focus of the present study.

The results of this research are also consistent with the prior findings (Amir Arjmandi et al., 2014; Balmer et al., 2012; Javadi et al., 2015; Tajvidi et al., 2017). Given that happiness plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between spirituality and marital satisfaction in married women, the results of this study align with prior research (Hojjatkhah et al., 2021). Accordingly, spirituality and happiness can be considered essential variables in marital life, contributing positively through their effective influence on relationship dynamics.

These findings can be interpreted in light of Emmons' theory, which attempted to define spirituality within Gardner's framework of intelligence. Emmons argued that spirituality could be considered a form of intelligence because it predicts individual performance and adaptation (e.g., better health) and presents capabilities that enable individuals to solve problems and achieve their goals (Gharibi et al., 2019). Therefore, by employing problem-solving abilities, couples can attain higher marital satisfaction, supporting the theoretical foundations underlying this research.

Ultimately, greater emphasis should be placed on the role of crucial factors such as spirituality and happiness. These variables, as influential and practical factors, can have substantial effects on marital satisfaction—a critical issue that impacts the broader societal structure. Marital satisfaction shapes the quality of spousal relationships, which in turn affects family dynamics and ultimately the overall stability of society. A society is composed of family units, and its sustainability depends on the presence of healthy families. A well-balanced family, both internally and externally, is less likely to experience marital conflicts, extramarital issues, divorce, or emotional separation. Hence, marital satisfaction is of paramount importance, and the

proposed structural model serves as a practical framework for fostering stability and well-being in a family-centered society.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

This study was conducted exclusively in schools in Tehran, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the research focused solely on women to ensure better control over results, which presents another limitation regarding generalizability. Moreover, socioeconomic status may have acted as an intervening variable affecting the study results.

To improve the generalizability of findings, future research should be conducted in other cities and include participants of both genders. Based on the results, it is recommended that educational programs be designed for couples to enhance their happiness, and strategies for increasing happiness should be explored and applied in a practical manner. Additionally, given the impact of spirituality on marital relationships, structured spiritual programs should be developed to improve marital satisfaction. These programs should be implemented in institutions that work with couples, particularly newlyweds, to help them cultivate effective factors from the outset of their marriage, thereby enhancing their marital satisfaction.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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