

## Examining the Relation of Spiritual Well-being and Marital Spirituality with Marriage Quality

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**Abstract:** This study aims at examining the relationship of spiritual well-being and marital spirituality with marriage quality among female married personnel of governmental administrations of Ahvaz city. 200 participants of this study were selected by multistage sampling method. Data were collected using questionnaires of marriage quality, marital spirituality and well-being. For data analysis, in addition to descriptive methods (mean value and standard deviation), simple correlation coefficient and regression were used to examine the hypotheses. Results showed that: spiritual well-being and its sub-scales (relationship with God, relationship with nature, relationship with oneself, relationship with others) have positive relationship with marriage quality. Results from multi-variance regression analysis showed that spiritual well-being and marital spirituality variables are significant predictors of marriage quality.

**Key words:** spiritual well-being, marital spirituality, marriage quality.

### INTRODUCTION

one of the most important issues in marital mechanism is satisfaction experienced by the spouses in their married life (Taniguchi, Freeman, Taylor, and Malcarne, 2006). Moreover, one of the dimensions affecting marriage quality can be spouses' value and belief systems and similarities and differences between beliefs and values within this marital discipline. Many researchers have emphasized on religiousness and marital satisfaction (Hunler & Gencoz, 2005).

In most of the places throughout the world, even in west's industrial world where organization of religion has been affected during the recent three decades, but still the mass of people benefit from religion in order to enhance interpersonal and marital relationships, and believe that religious beliefs are of special importance to them. Agreement on religious issues is an important factor in stability of marital relationships. The role of religion is definite, since religion has many other elements in itself including life style, belief and value systems, expectations, etc. Religiousness is significantly in relation with marital satisfaction. Spirituality and religiousness act as a soothing event for conflicting couples, such that praying reduces hostile excitements and emotional interactions (Hunler & Gencoz, 2005).

By proposal and evaluation of this structure, Perez (2012) states that trying to give a distinctive name to this concept explains the issue that spirituality among couples is different with personal or individual spirituality. Numerous authors have proposed definition of marital spirituality based on its characteristics and generally have explanations in common. These characteristics are generally and roughly defined to be love for one another, love for the almighty or divine being or obeying His teachings or rules, and sharing love with others and with the society. The 6 factor structure of this concept includes relationship with God, existential dimension, traditional/ritual dimension, intimacy, partnership, and forgiveness in relation with the spouse. Each of these factors are definable and interpretable in 6 levels of very much at the highest level, a lot, average, a little, very little at the lowest level respectively. The dimension of relationship with God reflects the extent of individuals' understanding about relationship with God and the value and importance they consider for this relationship. The concepts of this criteria also reflect the individuals' understanding about existence of God in marital life and paying attention to it. The existential dimension reflects concepts according to which individuals report their belief and pursuance of goal and meaning of their marriage. These concepts reflect individuals' opinion that what is the goal of this

marriage and that it should be according to the plan of God. Traditional/ritual dimension reflects ritual and religious ceremonies in which couples participate as a manifestation and showing of their faith. The concepts of this dimension might include reports of participation in religious places, prayer, reading holy book or so. Intimacy dimension reflects togetherness with the spouse, sexual relationship, faith and understanding personal growth in marital life. Forgiveness dimension reflects concepts related to acceptance and welcoming spouses despite of their mistakes and weaknesses, as well as report of compromise with the spouse. Participation dimension reflects recognition and acceptance of one's role in marital relationship and perception of couple cooperation and interaction in playing their roles (Perez, 2012). In his research, Perez (2012) showed that spirituality is related with satisfaction about marriage. He says that difference in marital spirituality scores among highly satisfied and low satisfaction groups can be explained by emotional relations and the couples attachment to one another. Maybe individuals' marital spirituality may generally affect their assessment about their marriage. This assessment includes the fact that if their needs, expectations, and wants are fulfilled in the marriage or not. Spiritual well-being is another spiritual structure and one of the important aspects of man's health in life which comes with physical, mental, and social dimensions and leads to enhancement of public health and coordinates other aspects of health too. Ellison (1983) believes that spiritual well-being includes a mental, social element and a religious element. Religious well-being which is a religious element, is the sign of relationship with a superior power, that is God. Existential well-being is a mental-social element and is a sign of individuals' feeling about who are they, what do they do and why, and where they belong to. This two dimensions are overlapping although they are distinct. As a result, the sense of spiritual health leads to satisfaction and targetfulness. Gomez and Fisher (2003) believe that spiritual well-being is a mode of health which indicates emotions, behaviors, and positive cognitions of relationship with oneself, others, nature, and a superior being. Also Carvin and Hirnle (2003) state that spiritual well-being provides a harmonin and accordant relationship among individuals, and is determined by properties of stability in life, peace, proportion and harmony, sense of close relationship with oneself, God, society and the surrounding atmosphere. When spiritual well-being is at risk, the individual may experience

mental disorders such as sense of loneliness, depression, and loss of meaning in life, which in itself can make coherence in life, especially eternal life, face difficulties (Carvin and Hirnle 2003).

## METHODS

### Population and sample

The sample of this study included 200 female employees at governmental offices in Ahvaz city that has been selected by convenience sampling.

### Tools

#### 1. Questionnaire of marital spirituality

This tools was created and evaluated by Perez in 2012. The scale is made of 31 questions, in which there are 7 questions on God, 6 questions on traditional/ritual dimensions, 6 questions on intimacy, 4 questions of forgiveness, 4 questions on participation and 3 questions on existential dimension. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.93. Respondents may point abundance of a specific behavior's occurrence. They mark scales with 1, never, 2, very rarely, 3, rarely, 4, often, 5, most of the times, and 6, always. Cronbach's alpha for the 6 factors has high and variable values between 0.79 and 0.87. The test can be conducted in group or individually. Conduction and delivery usually takes about 20 minutes. This questionnaire was translated by Amanollahi and heidarian and was used after being reviewed and approved by consultation experts. Questionnaire of attachment to God was used to examine validity of this questionnaire, where their coherence was calculated as being 0.63 which was significant at the level of  $p < 0.001$ . Cronbach's alpha and bisection coefficient of this questionnaire was calculated as being 0.95 and 0.95 in validation sample. Cronbach's alpha and bisection coefficient of this questionnaire for main sample was calculated to be 0.96 and 0.94.

#### 2. Questionnaire of spiritual well-being

This questionnaire has been created by Dehshiri (2013) based on model proposed by inter-religion national institute (1975) among Tehran University students. Scoring of the questions is from 1 to 5, so that the choice I disagree is scored 1 and I fully agree is scored 5 respectively. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the whole questionnaire was 0.94 and alpha coefficients of sub-scales were 0.93, 0.92, 0.91, and -0.85 respectively. Also the questionnaire retest stability coefficient was 0.86 and its sub-scales 0.81, 0.89, 0.81, and 0.80 respectively. Positive and significant correlation of questionnaire scores with scores of spiritual well-being scale, life satisfaction scale, and sanctuary religiousness test showed convergent validity.

The questionnaire of attachment to God was used to examine validity of this questionnaire, where their correlation was obtained as being 0.79 which was significant at the level of  $p < 0.001$ . Cronbach's alpha and bisection coefficient of this questionnaire in validity sample was calculated as being 0.97 and 0,96. Cronbach's alpha and bisection coefficient of this questionnaire were calculated to be 0.98 and 0.96 in the main sample.

3. Quality of marital inventory questionnaire

This questionnaire was created by Norton in 1983. This questionnaire is a 6-question tool

which measures marital quality by using general phrases (such as we have a good marriage). The subject shows his/her degree of agreement in a Likert's scale range of 1 (fully disagree) to 7 (fully agree). In the 6<sup>th</sup> question which is a general question, the subject states his/her degree of agreement in a range of 1 (fully disagree) to 10 (fully agree). Fincham et al. (2004) reported the stability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha method for both groups of men and women.

**RESULTS**

Table 1. Descriptive findings of criteria and predictive variables

Predictive variables	Statistical indicators		
	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Marital quality	200	28.89	7.33
Spiritual well-being	200	175.23	22.50
Relationship with God	200	56.11	5.61
Relationship with oneself	200	41.69	7.77
Relationship with others	200	44.51	4.59
Relationship with nature	200	42.91	6.71
Marital spirituality	200	153.46	23.94

Table 2 simple correlation coefficients between spiritual well-being, marital spirituality, and marital quality

criteria variable	Predictive variable	Number	Correlation coefficient (R)	sig
Marital quality	Spiritual well-being	200	0.56	0.001
	Relationship with God	200	0.56	0.010
	Relationship with oneself	200	0.48	0.001
	Relationship with others	200	0.64	0.001
	Relationship with nature	200	0.36	0.001
	Marital spirituality	200	0.63	0.001

As can be seen in table 3, the correlation coefficient of spiritual well-being and its dimensions (relationship with God, relationship with oneself, relationship with others, and relationship with

Table 3 Results of regression analysis for predictive variables with marital quality in a stage method for the subjects

Criterion variable	Indicators	Regression coefficients			
		MR	RS	FP	
Marital quality	Predicting variable				
		Marital spirituality	0.63	0.40	130.57 P<0.001
	Spiritual well-being	0.64	0.41	67.19 P<0.001	$\beta = 0.51$ T=5.44 P<0.001
					$\beta = 0.15$ T=1.64 P<0.001

As can be seen in table 3, according to regression results in stage method, variables of marital spirituality and spiritual well-being are significant predictors for marital quality, having multiple relation with marital quality, and their

R and R<sup>2</sup> are 0.64 and 0.41 respectively. That is 41% of marital quality variance is determined by marital spirituality and spiritual well-being variables.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Results showed that spiritual well-being has a positive relation with marital quality. This result is similar to findings of Ellison, Bradshaw, Kuyel, and Marcum (2010), Fabricator, Handal, Rubio and Gilner (2004), Fiorito and Ryan (2007). Using the same introductory content proposed to explain hypothesis 2 on spiritual well-being, and using the definition that spiritual well-being is a state of health that explains positive emotions, behaviors, and cognitions about one's relation with oneself, others, nature and a superior being, it may be concluded that spiritual well-being provides a harmonious and consistent relation in individuals, and is determined by characteristics such as stability in life, peace, proportion and harmony, and sense of close relationship with self, society, and environment. It can therefore lead to meaningfulness of individual life and concordance in interpersonal relations, especially marital relation. Spiritual well-being is meaningful in knowing and having friendly relationship with God and creatures and relaization of virtues within oneself. From among its results are its fulfilment and growth, having principles, and harmony in marital relations, which may lead to fulfilment of marital satisfaction that is positive and pleasant attitude of the couple about different aspects of their relationship, agreement on disputed issues, practicing points of interest and joint activities and reduction of sense of dissatisfaction and

complaining about the relationship, by providing grounds for peace, finding meaning in life, hopefulness, positive thinking and strength in encountering anxieties and provision of a supportive atmosphere. Positive relation of marital spirituality with marital quality is in line with results obtained from studies conducted by Perez (2009), Hasely (2006), Kessler and Robinson (1996), Astasio (1999), Borchinal (1997). By direct effect in form of creating mission in life and sense of duty and commitment towards relatives and spouse, as well as growing a sense of altruism and caring about others' feelings and fairness about family members, spirituality may be effective on satisfaction about married life. Moreover, spirituality directly changes individuals' all aspects of existence and method of life, which can be effective on the quality of relationship and satisfaction about marital relationship. Aspects of couple spirituality, like the said spiritual models in relationship with God, empowers asking God's help to solve the problems by nourishing the belief that God almighty's content has a great importance in marriage, and considering value for relying on God and providing grounds for trust and resort to God and believing in eternal presence of God in marital life, and relying on Him. Such a person practices spiritual activities and besides enriches his/her marital relationship and by practicing individual worshiping or together with his/her spouse, strengthens the relationship with God and benefits from divine

teachings in marital relationship, and improves it.

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