

## **The Effects of Spiritual Well-Being, Family Protective Factors, and Family Strength on the Marital Satisfaction Based on the Strength-Based Approach**

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Understanding what makes couples strong has given helping professionals specific characteristics they can focus on and develop within families. The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of spiritual well-being, family protective factors, and family strength on marital satisfaction in a propositional structural model. The research population consisted of all the married people of the Isfahan city (Iran), in the year of 2012 with preschool children and in the first decade of marriage with at least 9 grades of education level. Subjects were selected randomly through a multistage sampling from 7 parts of the city (N= 304). The instruments used in this study were the Spiritual Well-being Scale, Inventory of Family Protective Factors, Family Strength Scale, and Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Descriptive statistics and a structural equation modeling analytic approach were used. The analytic model explained 89% of the distribution of marital satisfaction. FS had a strong direct effect on DAS (= 0.89). SWB had indirect standard effects on FS (=0.37) through FPF, and on DAS (= 0.76) through FPF and FS. Also, FPF had indirect standard effect on

DAS (= 0.52) through FS ( $p < .000$ ). Consisted to the strength-based approach, the results of this study confirmed the interrelationships among spiritual well-being, family protective factors, and family strength and their simultaneous positive effects on marital satisfaction, and suggest that family counselors employ an integrated spiritual-religious, resilient, and strength-based perspective to inform their work with couples.

**Keywords:** spiritual well-being, family protective factors, family strength, marital satisfaction

Much of the research about families has focused on understanding the pathology or dysfunction of families to understand what is wrong with them (Otto, 1962; Schumm, 1985; Stinnett & Sauer, 1977). Researchers have sought to understand how the problems within the family affect the individuals within the family, as well as the rest of the society (Otto, 1962; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985). The need for empirical research that contributes to isolating the components of marital success and family success is increasing.

Differing from the research trying to identify elements of family dysfunction, a small amount of research has been conducted over the past three decades with the intent of identifying what makes families “strong” or healthy (Arditti, 1999; Brigman & Stinnett, 1983; Greeff & LeRoux, 1987). These strength-based researchers wanted to understand what makes a family strong, they wanted to know what characteristics strong families have in common. Stinnett (1979) along with his colleagues identified six characteristics that seemed to be present in strong families, both in the United States and abroad. It also should be noted that all of the researchers found a high degree of marital satisfaction in strong families (Otto, 1962; Stinnett, Sanders, Defrain, & Parkhurst, 1982; Stinnett, 1979). The following six characteristics that strong families have in common are:

1. Expression of appreciation for each other
2. Willingness to spend time together and participate in activities together
3. Good communication patterns
4. Commitment to a religious lifestyle

5. Commitment to each other

6. The ability to deal with problems and crises in a positive way.

The model of family strengths that Stinnett (1979) developed has become the model often used by family therapists, social workers, psychiatrists, and family life educators (Wheeler, 2008). Understanding what makes families strong has given helping professionals specific characteristics they can focus on and develop within families. Schumm (1985) hypothesized a multivariate model of family strengths within the family. Schumm, Hatch, Hevelone, and Schumm (1989) developed a new 20-item survey designed to assess the family strength characteristics that had been embraced in a number of helping fields. The survey assessed the family strengths of time spent together, positive interaction/appreciation, open and empathetic communication/conflict resolution, commitment to relationship stability, commitment to relationship growth, and personal worth of self and others (Schumm, Bollman, Jurich, & Hatch, 2001).

As discussed by Stinnett (1979) and Schumm (1985), spiritual/religious aspects of lifestyle are important elements of family strength. Research suggests the positive impact of religious and spiritual variables are often correlated with positive outcomes in individuals and families (Varner, 2009). Otto (1962) found that a strong family created an atmosphere which provided for the spiritual needs of its members by a shared set of beliefs and spiritual or religious values. Hünler and Gençöz (2005) refined these findings when they discovered that marital satisfaction was only predicted by religiousness in cases of parallel beliefs. These families also provided a safe environment for sharing doubts and concerns about religious beliefs (Otto, 1962). Stinnett and Defrain (1985) noted that strong families have a spiritual lifestyle and these families said they had an awareness of God or a higher power that gave them a sense of purpose and gave their family support and strength and reported that this awareness helped them to be more forgiving, more patient with each other, and to be more positive and supportive. Same results achieved by Carothers, Borkowski, Lefever, Burke, and Whitman (2005). Spirituality has been studied for several

decades, and the definition has been debated among researchers. A recent comprehensive measure of one's spirituality is spiritual well-being. An operational definition of spiritual well-being was first proposed by Moberg and Brusck (1978). According to them, spiritual well-being consists of two dimensions which seem to be a comprehensive conceptualization of spirituality. The first dimension is associated with one's relationship with a higher power within a particular system of religious beliefs, and the second dimension is one's sense of meaning and purpose in life. Within this definition, meaning and purpose in life is not dependent on a specific religious framework. In order to measure spiritual well-being, Paloutzian and Ellison (1982) developed the Spiritual Well-Being scale. The scale consists of two scales, the Religious Well-Being scale and the Existential Well-Being scale.

On the other hand, based on previous research (Beavers & Hampson, 1990; Stinnett, et al., 1982; Stinnett, 1979; Otto, 1962), strong families are also having the ability of coping, adjustment, and change and the ability to deal with problems and crises in a positive way. These features are similar to the term called 'Family Resiliency. McCubbin and colleagues (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1991;. McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, & Thompson, 1995; McCuhhin & Patterson, 1981) initially developed and researched what has become known as The Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation, which has directed the attention of helping professionals toward critical elements of family functioning from a resilience perspective. The Family Adaptation Model (Drummond, Kysela, McDonald, & Query, 2002; McDonald, Kysela, Drummond, Martin, & Wiles, 1997) directly emanates from this work; however, unlike the McCubbin and colleagues model, there is only one simple iterative process of family adaptation rather than two processes that represent protective processes and vulnerability processes separately (Gardner, Huber, Steiner, Vazquez, & Savage, 2008). Given the potential complexity of family assessment and intervention, this singular, ongoing process eliminates the tendency to dichotomize family strengths and deficits and

promotes a systemic orientation that highlights reciprocity as well as parsimony and practical utility (Drummond et al., 2002). The Family Adaptation Model asserts that the mediating dynamic between protective and vulnerability family processes is represented within its five dimensions: demands, appraisals, supports, coping, and adaptation (Gardner et al., 2008). Demands represent stressors families encounter, their vulnerability family processes. Appraisals, social supports, and coping strategies represent the protective family processes that interact with demands or stressors to predict family adaptation (Drummond et al., 2000; McDonald et al., 1997). The Inventory of Family Protective Factors (IFPF) was developed as a brief measure to assess the degree of demands or stressors and protective family factors (i.e., family resilience) perceived to be present in an individual's family milieu, thus predicting the adaptation process (Gardner et al., 2008). The descriptor "protective" in this context implies family members who experience higher levels of protective factors (and lower levels of stressors) in their family milieu and are less affected and thus more able to move toward adaptation when interacting with demands or stressors they encounter (i.e., protected), thereby predicting greater likelihood of "good adaptation" (Masten & Reed, 2005). Supports for the factors that are included in the IFPF are present in separate bodies of literature that represent each of them. A brief overview of each follows.

The presence of fewer stressors in a family's current milieu (as compared to recent and/or distant past circumstances) is in a sense "protective". Families experiencing fewer stressors rather than more stressors or demand factors will have members less likely to develop psychological problems (Al-Ansari & Matar, 1993; Holahan & Moos, 1991; Tiet et al., 1998) and more likely to exist at an optimal level of functioning and adaptation (Luthar, 1991; Otto et al., 1997). Adaptive appraisal is an asset for families in increasing the likelihood of adaptively addressing problems in life, due to the fact that such appraisals serve as markers of optimal well-being; the overall balance of people's positive and

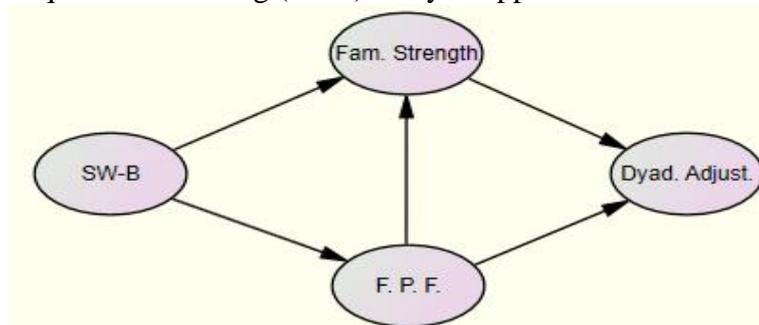
negative appraisals has been shown to predict their judgments of subjective well-being (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1991; Frederickson, 2001). Researchers (Armerikaner, Monks, Wolfe, & Thomas, 1994; Holahan & Moos, 1991; Werner, 1993) have addressed the role of social support and how it relates directly to psychological health. Availability of social support has been linked to emotional well-being and the ability to compensate for negative life conditions (Chase-Lansdale, Wakschalag, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). Compensating experiences have been referred to as rewarding experiences that provide a sense of meaning and control over one's life (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2001). Compensating experiences represent a manner of problem solving that is a cognitive enterprise with a behavioral component: "actions that help" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Clarifying issues and redefining a situation is a critical component of family coping (McCubbin, Sussman, & Patterson, 1983). Masten (2001) posited the influence of family mastery resources as compensatory. Conger and Conger (2002) likewise asserted a family's sense of mastery to be a compensating psychological resource, a way to reduce emotional distress.

As noted earlier, all of the researchers found a high degree of marital satisfaction in strong families (Stinnett, et al., 1982; Stinnett, 1979; Otto, 1962). More specifically and as discussed by some researchers (Casas, Stinnet, Defarain, Williams, & Lee, 1984; Schumm et al., 1989; Wheeler, 2008), marital satisfaction is a most important dependent variable of family strength characteristics that is in high percentage of strong families the marital dyad also had a high degree of marital satisfaction. Wheeler (2008) noted that to adequately survey family strengths, the level of marital satisfaction in the marital dyad must also be assessed.

Thus far no researcher has taken on to hypothesize a unified multivariate theoretical model of the structural relationships among spiritual well-being, family protective factors, family strengths, and marital satisfaction and to test such a model. If a multivariate model of the interaction of these variables were developed, it could be helpful in a

number of ways. Family life educators working with families will have a way of knowing which variables among spirituality, protective factors, and family strengths are the most important for a couple to develop first to achieving higher marital satisfaction. New research needs to be conducted to determine the interrelationships among the spiritual/religious variables, protective factors, various elements of family strengths, and marital satisfaction. In order to prevent the lifelong detrimental effects of divorce and the breakdown of the family system, educators, therapists, and families must become more knowledgeable about the role that the spiritual/religious, protective factors, and family strengths play in preserving marital satisfaction.

According to the literature, diagram 1 designed for conceptualizing the relationships among spiritual well-being (SWB), family protective factors (FPF), family strength (FS), and marital satisfaction (DAS) through the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analytic approach.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Relationships among Spiritual Well-Being, Family Protective Factors, Family Strength, and Marital Satisfaction**

## Method

### Translation

The SWBS, IFPF, and FSS were translated into Persian in parallel by two independent, native Iranian psychology professional translators, fluent in both English and Persian. Subsequently, the two translators compared the translated versions and the original English version of the

questionnaire. Pre-testing was completed with 30 subjects to evaluate the comprehension and readability of the questionnaires. Subjects were asked whether they encountered any difficulty in understanding each of the items. Subjects indicated they had no problems with the measures and understood the items. The content validity of the translated versions was confirmed by five psychology faculty members.

### **Research Design**

The aim of this descriptive-correlation study was to investigate the effects of spiritual well-being, family protective factors, and family strength, on the marital satisfaction in a propositional structural model.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS.16 and Amos.18 softwares. For the description of data, mean and standard deviation were used. Psychometric properties of instruments [alpha and test-retest reliability coefficients, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)] were computed. Eventually, the fit indices of the conceptual model were investigated through estimating the chi-square statistic, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Values close to 1 for GFI, AGFI, and CFI are considered to be indicative of a reasonably well-fitting model and RMSEA values of less than .08 are considered acceptable (Bentler, 1990).

### **Sample**

The research population consisted of all the young married people of the Isfahan city in the year of 2012 with preschool children and in the first decade of marriage with at least 9 grades of education. Samples of 350 participants were selected randomly through multi-stage sampling from the 7 zones of the whole 14 geographic zones of the city. According to the permission from the Isfahan well-being organization and because of more convenient availability of married subjects with preschool child/children in

a kindergarten, one kindergarten from each zone was selected. Subsequently, one class (age level) of each kindergarten was randomly selected and the instruments were filled by one parent of each child. After the primary investigations, 44 subjects (12%) were removed from the study sample because of their incomplete answer sheets. The research sample consisted of three hundred and four (110 men and 194 women) married people of the Isfahan city (Iran) in the year of 2012, with preschool children [range: 1-3, mean: 0.98 (SD: 0.67)] and in the first decade of marriage [range: 1-10 years, mean length: 6 (SD: 3.46)] at the age range of 25-35 years [mean age: 29.1 (SD: 4.44)] with at least 9 grades of education (range: high school-MD/PhD; 21% high school, 19% diploma, 44% BA/BS, 8% MA/MS, 8% PhD/MD). The rules of privacy of the subjects' answers were confirmed in the questionnaire instruction.

### **Instruments**

*The spiritual well-being scale (SWB).* Paloutzian and Ellison (1982) developed the 20-item Spiritual Well-Being scale to serve as a global psychological measure of one's perception of spiritual well-being. The scale consists of two scales, the Religious Well-Being (RWB) scale (10 items), and the Existential Well-Being (EWB) scale (10 items). It has been reported that the reliability coefficients for both the EWB and RWB subscales are high including test-retest reliability coefficients ranging from .82 to .99, with the exception of one sample in which a coefficient of .73 was observed for the EWB scale (Schoenrade, 1994). The test-retest intervals ranged from 1 to 10 weeks which is sufficient for this type of construct (Schoenrade, 1994). Coefficient alphas from seven studies indicate that the internal consistency ranged from .72 to .82 for the RWB and .82 to .94 for the EWB which is satisfactory (Schoenrade, 1994). Concurrent validity studies have been conducted to confirm that the SWBS is a direct general measure of spiritual well-being (Schoenrade, 1994). Correlations with related measures such as Crumbaugh's (as cited in Schoenrade, 1994) Purpose in life Test (for the EWB,  $r = .68$ ) and

Allport and Ross's (as cited in Schoenrade, 1994) measure of Intrinsic Religion (for the RWB,  $r = .79$ ) are reflections of its concurrent validity. The items on the SWBS also render great face validity which is determined by examination of the content of the items (Schoenrade, 1994). The concurrent validity of the translated version of SWBS was obtained by correlating the score of this questionnaire with the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (Underwood, 2006) which resulted in a satisfactory positive correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.63$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Dehshiri, Sohrabi, Jafari, and Najafi (2008) reported reasonable psychometric properties (test-retest coefficient: 0.85, internal consistency: 0.90, and acceptable results from EFA and CFA) for the SWBS among bachelor Iranian university students (age range: 18-30). In this study, the reliability coefficients of SWBS (alpha: 0.87 for SWBS; EWB: 0.84, RWB: 0.84, test-retest after 5 weeks: 0.81), and the fit indices from CFA on the SWBS factors ( $\chi^2 = 141.1$ , df: 53, GFI: 0.93, AGFI: 0.90, CFI= 0.93, RMSEA= 0.07) were satisfactory.

*The Schumm et al. family strengths scales.* This 20-item survey assessed the family strengths of time spent together, positive interaction/appreciation, open and empathetic communication/conflict resolution, commitment to relationship stability, commitment to relationship growth, and personal worth of self and others (Schumm et al., 1989, 2001). Previous study reported that the Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates were very good ( $>0.80$ ) for most scales and ( $>0.70$ ) for all scales (Schumm et al., 2001). In this study and for the first time in Iran, the reliability coefficients of the Farsi translation of FSS (alpha: 0.91 for FSS; worth: 0.70, commitment to the relationship growth: 0.83, commitment to the relationship stability: 0.60, communication/conflict resolution: 0.87, positive interaction/appreciation: 0.82, time together: 0.68, and test-retest after 5 weeks: 0.81), and the fit indices from CFA on the six factors of FSS ( $\chi^2 = 336.8$ , df: 151, GFI: 0.90, AGFI: 0.89, CFI= 0.93, RMSEA= 0.06) were satisfactory.

*The inventory of family protective factors (IFPF).* The 16-item IFPF was developed as a brief measure to assess the degree of demands or stressors and protective family factors (i.e., family resilience) perceived to be present in an individual's family milieu, which have satisfactory psychometric properties [cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient ranged from 0.77 to 0.81 for all sub-scales] (Gardner et al., 2008). In this study and for the first time in Iran, the reliability coefficients of the Farsi translation of IFPF (alpha: 0.91 for IFPF; fewer stressors: 0.60; adaptive appraisal: 0.82; social support: 0.88; Coping: 0.89), and the fit indices from CFA on the IFPF factors ( $\chi^2= 228.3$ , df: 94, GFI: 0.91, AGFI: 0.89, CFI= 0.95, RMSEA= 0.06) were satisfactory.

*The revised dyadic adjustment scale (R-DAS).* Busby, Crane, Larson, & Christensen (1995) were developed 14-item R-DAS from the original 32-item Spanier's DAS (Hollist and Miller, 2005). R-DAS developed to serve as a measure of general satisfaction in a close relationship and consists of three scales; Consensus, Satisfaction, and Cohesion (Hollist and Mliller, 2005). The psychometric properties of R-DAS (good fit indices in CFA and cronbach's alpha from 0.80 to 0.90) were confirmed by previous research (Hollist and Mliller, 2005). Isanejhad's (2008) CFA results on the Farsi translation of R-DAS showed satisfactory fit indices ( $\chi^2= 28.59$ , df: 74, GFI: 0.98, AGFI= 0.99, CFI: 0.99, RMSEA= 0.0001). In this study, the reliability coefficients of R-DAS were satisfactory (alpha: 0.90 for R-DAS; consensus: 0.83, satisfaction: 0.88, cohesion: 0.76, and test-retest after 5 weeks: 0.86).

## **Results**

Tables 1 and 2 show the description statistics, and the matrix of the relationships among the model variables, respectively.

**Table 1**  
**Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables**

Variables	Mean	SD
EWB	43.03	8.70
RWB	48.54	8.13
SWB	91.60	15.27
Worth	12.60	1.98
Commit. to stability	10.10	2.53
Commit. to growth	8.76	1.31
Communication/C-R	23.50	4.25
PI/Appreciation	7.80	1.76
Time together	15.27	3.16
FS	78.82	11.83
Consensus	29.30	4.52
Satisfaction	19.02	3.53
Cohesion	11.70	3.12
DAS	59.77	7.45
Fewer stressors	14.70	3.15
Adaptive appraisal	15.50	3.37
Social support	16.10	3.83
Compensating experiences	15.47	3.63
FPF	61.74	11.48

**Table 2**

**The Correlation Matrix of the Model Variables**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
EWB	1																			
RWB	.65**	1																		
SWB	.91**	.90**	1																	
Worth	.63**	.47**	.61**	1																
Stab.	.43**	.30**	.41**	.32**	1															
Grow.	.49**	.44**	.51**	.56**	.30**	1														
Commu./CR	.61**	.44**	.58**	.66**	.48**	.53**	1													
PL/Appr.	.55**	.40**	.53**	.65**	.41**	.45**	.64**	1												
Time togeth	.59**	.36**	.53**	.62**	.33**	.44**	.64**	.67**	1											
FS	.71**	.50**	.67**	.80**	.62**	.64**	.90**	.80**	.81	1										
Consensus	.61**	.41**	.57**	.64**	.43**	.47**	.73**	.67**	.69**	.79**	1									
Satisfaction	.55**	.36**	.51**	.53**	.51**	.44**	.66**	.66**	.59**	.74**	.69**	1								
Cohesion	.49**	.29**	.43**	.53**	.27**	.37**	.53**	.49**	.57**	.60**	.54**	.50**	1							
DAS	.65**	.42**	.60**	.67**	.48**	.50**	.76**	.72**	.73**	.84**	.91**	.86**	.77**	1						
Few. Stres.	.40**	.31**	.39**	.37**	.22**	.31**	.41**	.42**	.35**	.45**	.41**	.39**	.32**	.44**	1					
Ada. Appr.	.54**	.41**	.52**	.59**	.38**	.45**	.63**	.58**	.56**	.69**	.66**	.61**	.51**	.70**	.57**	1				
Soci. Sup.	.34**	.24**	.32**	.44**	.22**	.38**	.42**	.43**	.39**	.49**	.40**	.43**	.30**	.45**	.49**	.50**	1			
Comp. Exp.	.52**	.45**	.54**	.57**	.31**	.48**	.64**	.59**	.59**	.69**	.65**	.58**	.51**	.68**	.53**	.76**	.53**	1		
F.P.F	.55**	.42**	.54**	.60**	.34**	.49**	.64**	.62**	.58**	.71**	.65**	.61**	.50**	.69**	.77**	.86**	.78**	.86**	1	

\*\* p<0.001

As shown in Table 2, there were significant internal correlations among all variables of the model. The correlation coefficient between FS and DAS ( $r= 0.84$ ) was higher than the correlation coefficients between FPF and DAS ( $r= 0.60$ ) and between SWB and DAS ( $r= 0.60$ ). Communication/conflict-resolution had a higher correlation coefficient with DAS ( $r= 0.76$ ), than time spent together ( $r= 0.73$ ), positive interaction/appreciation ( $r= 0.72$ ), adaptive appraisal ( $r= 0.70$ ), compensating experiences ( $r= 0.68$ ), worth ( $r= 0.67$ ), EWB ( $r= 0.65$ ), commitment to relationship growth ( $r= 0.50$ ), commitment to relationship stability ( $r= 0.48$ ), social support ( $r= 0.45$ ), fewer stressors ( $r= 0.44$ ), and RWB ( $r= 0.42$ ).

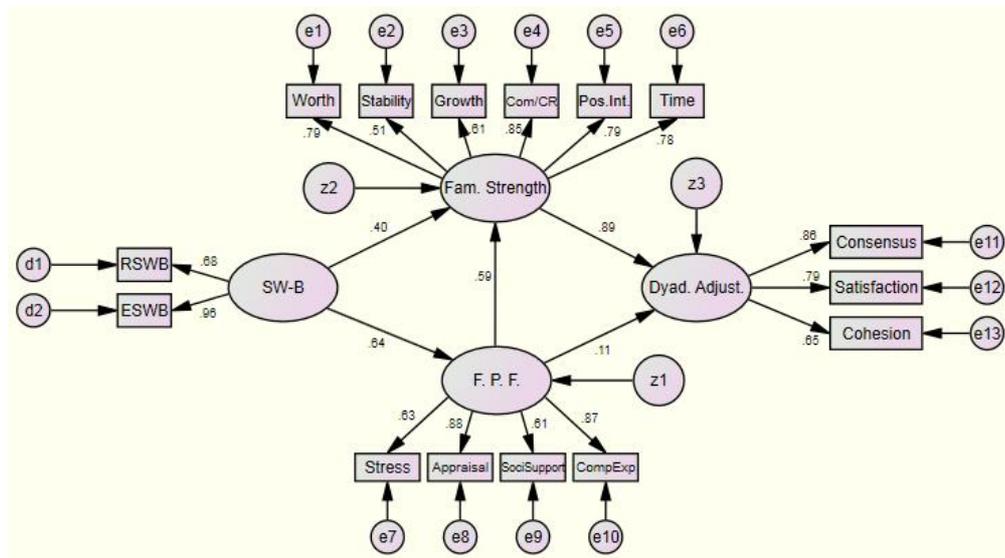
Table 3 shows the fit indices of the conceptual model of the structural relationships among spiritual well-being, family protective factors, family strength, and marital satisfaction.

**Table 3**  
**Goodness of Fit Summaries for the Conceptual Model**

$\chi^2$	df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
163.3	85	.93	.90	.97	.05

As shown in Table 3, the SEM analyses on the conceptual model of the structural relationships among spiritual well-being, family protective factors, family strength, and marital satisfaction were resulted in satisfactory indices (RMSEA= 0.05, GFI> 0.90, AGFI= 0.90, CFI> 0.90). That is, the results showed the well fitness of the conceptualized model for the structural relationships among spiritual well-being, family protective factors, family strength, and marital satisfaction. Diagram 2 (analytic model), shows the standardized direct effect coefficients for the

relationships among model variables ( $p < 0.000$ ). The sample size in this study was sufficient (Hoelter's Index  $> 200$ ) (Bentler, 1990).



**Figure 2. Standardized Direct Effect Coefficients for the Relationships among Spiritual Well-Being, Family Protective Factors, and Marital Satisfaction**

As shown in Diagram 2, all the direct effect coefficients were positive and satisfactory except the effect of FPF on DAS. The results showed that the direct effect of FPF on the DAS ( $= 0.11$ , parameter estimate= 0.18) was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.18$ ). FS had a strong direct effect on DAS ( $= 0.89$ , parameter estimate= 2.19). The direct effect of SWB on FPF ( $= 0.64$ , parameter estimate= 0.18) was higher than its direct effect on FS ( $= 0.40$ , parameter estimate= 0.08). The direct effect of FPF on FS ( $= 0.59$ , parameter estimate= 0.40) was higher compared with SWB ( $= 0.40$ , parameter estimate= 0.08). Results showed that SWB and FPF affect DAS indirectly. Table 4 shows the indirect and the total effect coefficients of the model.

**Table 4**  
**The Indirect and Total Effect Coefficients of the Model**

Variable	Indirect effect		Total effect		R <sup>2</sup>
	Parameter estimate	Standardized effects	Parameter estimate	Standardized effects	
On the FPF					.41
SWB			.18	.64	
On the FS					.80
SWB	.07	.37	.15	.78	
FPF					
On the DAS					.89
SWB	.35	.76	.35	.76	
FPF	.87	.52	1.05	.63	
FS			2.19	.88	
On the Time spent.					.61
SWB	.23	.61	.23	.61	
FPF	.62	.46	.62	.46	
FS			1.56	.78	
On the PI/Appr.					.63
SWB	.13	.61	.13	.61	
FPF	.35	.47	.35	.47	
FS			.88	.79	
On the Commu/CR					.72
SWB	.34	.66	.34	.66	
FPF	.91	.50	.91	.50	
FS			2.29	.85	
On the Growth					.37
SWB	.07	.47	.07	.47	
FPF	.20	.36	.20	.36	
FS			.51	.61	
On the Stability					.26
SWB	.12	.40	.12	.40	

FPF	.33	.30	.33	.30	
FS			.82	.51	
On the Worth					.62
SWB	.15	.61	.15	.61	
FPF	.40	.46	.40	.46	
FS			1.01	.79	
On the Consensus					.74
SWB	.35	.65	.35	.65	
FPF	1.05	.54	1.05	.54	
FS			2.19	.76	
On the Satisfaction					.62
SWB	.25	.60	.25	.60	
FPF	.76	.50	.76	.50	
FS			1.56	.70	
On the Cohesion					.42
SWB	.18	.49	.18	.49	
FPF	.55	.41	.55	.41	
FS			1.14	.58	
On the stress					.40
SWB	.15	.40	.15	.40	
FPF			.85	.63	
On the Ad. Appr.					.77
SWB	.23	.56	.23	.56	
FPF			1.27	.88	
On the Soc. Sup.					.37
SWB	.18	.39	.18	.39	
FPF			1.01	.61	
On the coping					.76
SWB	.24	.56	.24	.56	
FPF			1.36	.87	

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p<0.000

As shown in Table 4, the conceptual model explained 89% of the distribution of DAS through SWB, FPF, and FS. The total standard effects of FS (= 0.88), SWB (=0.76), and FPF (=0.63) on DAS were positive and strong. SWB predicted 41% of the distribution of FPF and had direct total standard effects on FPF (=0.65) and FS (=0.78), and had indirect standard effects on FS through FPF (=0.37) and on DAS through FPF and FS (= 0.76). SWB and FPF explained 80% of the distribution of FS. Also, FPF had indirect standard effect on DAS through FS (= 0.52). The total effects of the SWB, FPF, and FS on consensus (= 0.65, 0.54, and 0.76, respectively) were higher than the same effects on satisfaction (= 0.60, 0.50, and 0.70, respectively) and cohesion (= 0.49, 0.41, and 0.58, respectively). Also, the total effects of SWB on the adaptive appraisal and compensating experiences (= 0.56 for both of them) were higher than the same effects on the fewer stressors (= 0.40), and social support (= 0.39).

### **Discussion**

The aim of this correlational study was to investigate the goodness of indices of a model for conceptualizing the structural relationships among spiritual well-being, family protective factors, family strength and marital satisfaction. As shown in Diagram 2 and Table 4, the results showed positive and strong direct effects of spiritual well-being on family protective factors and family strength, and a positive and reasonable indirect effect of it on marital satisfaction. As discussed earlier, previous research (Carothers et al., 2005; Hünler and Gençöz, 2005; Otto, 1962; Stinnett, 1979; Schumm, 1985; Varner 2009; Wheeler, 2008) suggested that spiritual/religious aspects of lifestyle are important elements of family strength and the positive impact of religious and spiritual variables are often correlated with positive outcomes in individuals and families. As discussed, a strong family creates an atmosphere which provides for the spiritual needs of its members by a shared set of beliefs and spiritual or religious values. These families also provide a safe environment for sharing doubts and concerns about religious beliefs and they also have an

awareness of God or a higher power that give them a sense of purpose and give their family support and strength. This awareness helps them to be more forgiving, more patients with each other, and to be more positive and supportive. Wheeler (2008) reported a positive effect of religious/spiritual aspects of one's life on family strength through enhancing person's feeling of worth. Research has also supported the significant positive relationship between spirituality/religiosity and marital satisfaction (Alston, 2007; Broomfield, 1995; Harmon, 2005; Mask, 2004). Ford (2010) reported a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and marital satisfaction.

The results of this study also showed a positive direct effect of family protective factors on family strengths. Research reports and literature reviews over the past decade have provided family counselors with an enhanced understanding of, as well as protocol for, employing a family resilience perspective to inform their work with individuals and their families (Connolly, 2005; Gardner et al., 2008; Huber, Navarro, Womble, & Mumme, 2010; Patterson, 2002; Simon, Murphy, & Smith, 2005; Walsh, 2002). Resilience within a family context highlights families' positive adjustment in the context of challenging life conditions (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Family resilience emanates from a systemic view positing the presence of vulnerability processes and protective processes reciprocally interacting to affect the functioning of a family and all its members in a circular manner (McCubbin & McCuhbin, 1991). As discussed, based on previous research (Beavers & Hampson, 1990; Stinnett, et al., 1982; Stinnett, 1979; Otto, 1962), strong families are also having ability to cope, adjustment, and change and the ability to deal with problems and crises in a positive way. Previous research (Al-Ansari & Matar, 1993; Arnerikaner et al., 1994; Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995; Diener et al., 1991; Frederickson, 2001; Holahan & Moos, 1991; Luthar, 1991; Masten, 2001; Marin & Huber, 2011; Otto et al., 1997; Papalia et al., 2001; Tiet et al., 1998; Werner, 1993), indicate that family protective factors (fewer stressors, adaptive appraisal, social support, and

compensating experiences) are positively related to family and family members' strength.

As discussed, experiencing fewer stressors will result in having family members less likely to develop psychological problems (Al-Ansari & Matar, 1993; Holahan & Moos, 1991; Tiet et al., 1998) and more likely to exist at an optimal level of functioning and adaptation (Luthar, 1991; Otto et al., 1997).

Adaptive appraisal includes family members' beliefs that their family possesses a sense of self-efficacy, positive expectations, acceptance of life situations, and maintenance of trust and calm (Drummond et al., 2002). This factor involves how a family and its members view and approach crisis situations, which subsequently influences their potential solution efforts (F. Walsh, 1998, 2006). Previous research confirmed that, adaptive appraisal helps families to increase the likelihood of adaptively addressing problems in life, because such appraisals serve as markers of optimal well-being (Diener et al., 1991; Frederickson, 2001).

Social support is defined as a family's experience of having at least one supportive, caring, interested and/or trusting relationship (Gardner et al., 2008). According to the previous research, availability of social support through providing emotional well-being and the ability to compensate for negative life conditions (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995), positively affects family strength.

Compensating experiences are defined as a family's experiences of mastery within the context of adversity (Gardner et al., 2008). This mastery includes feelings of positive control over uplifting experiences, while having experienced the same situations as hassles (Luthar & Zigler, 1992). According to Lazarus & Folkman, 1984 and Papalia et al., 2001, compensating experiences can be considered as a manner of problem solving which through providing a sense of meaning and control over one's life, positively effects family strength. As noted earlier, Masten (2001) and Conger and Conger (2002) asserted a family's sense of mastery

to be a compensating psychological resource, a way to reduce emotional distress.

In this study, results also showed a significant positive and strong indirect effect of spiritual well-being on marital satisfaction through family protective factors and family strength which can be explained through reviewing and integrating the results of some related previous studies. Folkman (2008) states that research supports the distinction of meaning-based coping from other forms of coping and suggested that religious and spiritual coping is an important aspect of meaning-based coping. In Calicchia and Graham's (2006) study, spiritual well-being was positively correlated with health and had a negative relationship with the stress variables that is participants who reported higher levels of spiritual well-being, reported less stress from one's spouse/partner and extended family. They also reported that according to their results, spiritual well-being was positively correlated with receiving social support from extended family, friends, and positive events. Given the findings, Calicchia and Graham (2006) concluded that spiritual well-being is an effective buffer of stress and an effective provider of social support. Weber and Cummings (2003) reported a positive effect of spirituality and social support on the family resilience. Previous research confirmed that spiritual well-being has been positively associated with positive outcome, higher quality of coping, and more adaptive appraisal in the midst of various difficult life circumstances through providing a clear sense of meaning and direction in life (Calicchia & Graham, 2006; Davis et al., 2003; Kanya, 2000, Varner, 2009; Weber & Cummings, 2003). So, it can be concluded that spiritual well-being indirectly affects marital satisfaction through improving family resilience and strength.

Another result of this study was the strong and positive direct effect of family strength on marital satisfaction. As discussed, researchers (Casas et al., 1984; Schumm et al., 1989; Wheeler, 2008) noted that marital satisfaction is the most important dependent variable of family strength characteristics that is in a high percentage of strong families. Marital dyad

also had a high degree of marital satisfaction. The results indicate that a couple's level of marital satisfaction is increased when they value each other, make a commitment to each other, communicate well, enjoy being with each other, and spent time together (Wheeler, 2008). In conclusion and consistent with the strength-based approach, the results of this study confirmed the interrelationships among spiritual well-being, family protective factors, and family strength and their simultaneous positive effects on marital satisfaction, and suggest that family counselors employ an integrated spiritual-religious, resilient, and strength-based perspective to inform their work with individuals and their families. Of course, more research is needed with different measures (e. g. different measures based on different conceptualizing of spirituality and religiosity) and in different population (e.g., different socio-economic levels, cultures and sub-cultures, and investigating the conceptual model based on gender difference) to provide a comprehensive theoretical explanation for the interrelationships among spiritual/religious variables, family resilience, family strength, and marital satisfaction.

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