

## Investigating the Effect of Psychological Flexibility and Religious Orientation on Marital Satisfaction Based on the Mediating Role of Self-Compassion

Javad Seyyedjafari<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Borjali\*<sup>2</sup>, Abolghasem Isamorad\*<sup>3</sup>, Faramarz Sohrabi<sup>2</sup>, Abdollah Motamedi<sup>2</sup>

1. Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran
2. Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran
3. Associate Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

\* **Corresponding author:** Ahmad Borjali. Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

\* **Corresponding author:** Abolghasem Isamorad. Associate Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

Received 2024 March 15; Accepted 2024 December 14.

### Abstract

**Background:** Marital satisfaction is an essential aspect of the relationship between a husband and wife, which has a significant impact on life satisfaction and is considered one of the foundational elements of life.

**Objectives:** The current research aims to investigate the impact of psychological flexibility and religious orientation on marital satisfaction with the mediating role of self-compassion.

**Methods:** This research was a descriptive-correlational study that utilized a cross-sectional research method, employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The statistical population of this study included all married couples in Tehran from July to October 2023 who visited Farhangsara centers in Tehran for marriage and family counseling. The sample consisted of 169 men and women selected through multi-stage sampling. The research instruments included the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS), Religiosity Measurement Scale based on Islam (RMSI), Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (PFQ), and Self-Compassion Scale (SCS). Data was analyzed using SPSS version 27 and Smart PLS 4 software through Structural Equation Modeling. A significance level of 0.05 was considered.

**Results:** According to the findings of the present study, religiosity had a significant and positive effect on marital satisfaction through the mediator variable of self-compassion ( $\beta=0.097$ ,  $p=0.010$ ). Psychological flexibility had a significant and positive impact on marital satisfaction through the mediator variable of self-compassion ( $\beta=0.312$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), resulting in an increase in marital satisfaction among individuals.

**Conclusion:** The findings of the present research underscore the significance of psychological flexibility, religiosity, and self-compassion in enhancing marital satisfaction and highlight the intricate interplay among these variables.

**Keywords:** Psychological flexibility, Religious orientation, Marital satisfaction, Self-compassion

### 1. Background

Creating and maintaining a meaningful and positive relationship with a romantic partner is one of the main components of the human experience. The quality of marital life and the bond of a married couple can be described as

marital satisfaction, a construct that encompasses thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to a person's relationship with their life partner (1). Marital satisfaction is a transient evaluation that can impact the overall functioning and well-being of the

family. It is influenced by factors such as expressing love and affection, mutual respect, sexual relations, attitudes, common communication style, and problem-solving abilities. Marital satisfaction is said to occur when both the husband and wife feel happy and satisfied with their decision to marry and be together (2). Research indicates that marital satisfaction can be influenced by factors such as the type of employment, age, length of marriage, number of children in the family, and perceived stress level (3). The results of a study also showed that marital satisfaction and self-compassion are important predictors of the psychological well-being of married individuals (4).

One of the factors that can influence interactions and coping with stressful and challenging situations in married life is psychological flexibility (5). Psychological flexibility is related to the capacity to fully engage in the present moment, accept and acknowledge challenging thoughts and feelings, and make choices based on personal values. It is associated with improved quality of life, values and physical health, psychopathological conditions, and functional outcomes (6). Psychological flexibility plays a crucial role in the health and growth of individuals. It is a multifaceted construct that includes openness to experience, behavioral awareness, and value-based action (7). In a study, it was stated that psychological flexibility is a significant predictor of marital burnout (5). Findings of a study also showed the impact of psychological flexibility on marital self-regulation, self-compassion, and marital adjustment (8). Another study also indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-compassion and cognitive flexibility with marital quality (9).

During a conflict between couples, religion can serve as a mediator of differences through spiritual concepts and shared religious values. Religion provides guidelines for life and a system of beliefs and values that can influence

marital life (10). Religious orientation has been defined as providing a framework for the structure of relationships and interactions in the context of the relationship between humans and God. It encompasses adherence to religious actions and thoughts that have both internal and external dimensions. Internal religious orientation is pervasive and organized around principles, while external religious orientation is an external matter used to satisfy personal needs such as status and security (11). It was stated in a study that strengthening internal religious orientation improves marital relationships and satisfaction (12). Another study also demonstrated that religious orientation can significantly predict marital satisfaction (13). Varae et al. (2020) also indicated that attitudes towards religion can have a positive impact on well-being by increasing self-compassion (14).

Self-compassion, which involves the ability to connect with feelings of pain and suffering with a sense of kindness, is another personal trait that can impact a marital relationship and influence the quality of life (15). Self-compassion involves supporting oneself when dealing with personal mistakes, shortcomings, and life challenges. This practice has various benefits for well-being and mental health outcomes, such as reducing stress, anxiety, and depression; enhancing emotional flexibility; improving interpersonal relationships; increasing motivation for self-improvement; and ultimately increasing overall life satisfaction (16). Self-compassion helps individuals maintain a balanced perspective on their personal failures and suffering, rather than exaggerating or suppressing them. This enables them to avoid negative emotions and enhance positive feelings, which is beneficial for psychological well-being (17). It has been suggested in a study that self-compassion can predict marital satisfaction (18). A study by Amanuelahi et al. (2022) also showed that self-compassion plays an important role in the relationship between marital conflicts and interactions with quality

of marital life (15).

## 2. Objectives

Higher marital satisfaction among couples is associated with fewer negative events, better communication, higher mutual support, fewer symptoms of psychological distress, and overall better health. Marital satisfaction is also one of the strongest predictors of whether couples will stay in their relationship or not (1). Therefore, examining the factors that influence marital satisfaction among couples is of great importance. However, a study directly

exploring the impact of psychological flexibility and religious orientation on marital satisfaction, with self-compassion as a mediator variable, was not found. Thus, despite the significance of this issue, there is a research gap in this area, and the present study is one of the first studies conducted in this field. It seeks to answer the question of what impact psychological flexibility and religious orientation can have on marital satisfaction, with the mediating role of self-compassion. The conceptual model of the study is depicted in [Figure 1](#).

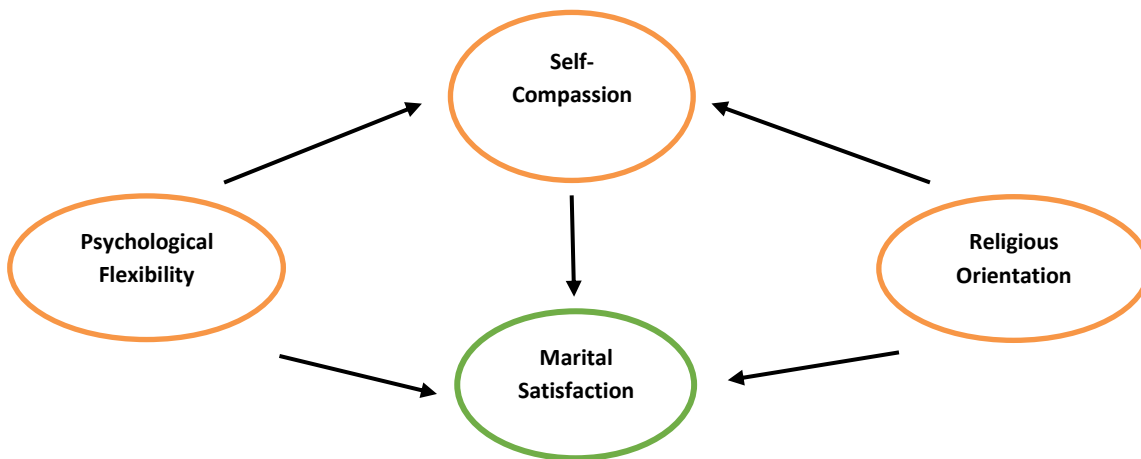


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the research

## 3. Methods

This study is a descriptive-correlational research and used a cross-sectional research method, employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Considering the objective of the research method, it was classified as applied research. The target population included all married couples in Tehran from July to October 2023 who sought marriage and family counseling at Farhangsara (cultural) centers in Tehran. The sample consisted of 169 men and women selected through multi-stage sampling. The adequacy of the sample size was calculated using the Cohen formula to determine the sample size in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) methods. This calculation took into

account the number of observed and latent variables in the model, the anticipated effect size, as well as the desired probability and levels of statistical power (19). With an anticipated effect size of 0.3, a desired statistical power level of 0.8, four latent variables, 167 observed variables, and a probability level of 0.01, the researcher determined that a sample size of 200 individuals was needed. In the next stage, the research population was determined based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria included individuals aged between 20 and 40 years, with at least one year of marital life, a minimum of a high school diploma, seeking counseling at the specified centers, providing informed consent, being responsive to questions (failure to respond to

more than 8 items in the questionnaires resulted in exclusion). Exclusion criteria included any physical or mental disorders hindering response, incomplete questionnaires, chronic physical or neurological diseases, use of psychiatric drugs, presence of substance abuse disorder in one of the partners, participation in recent individual or couple's therapy, extramarital relationships, and couples' unwillingness to participate in the research.

The implementation method began with obtaining the necessary approvals from the researcher's university for conducting the study. Subsequently, researchers visited five Fahangsara centers in Tehran (the names of the centers were kept confidential). The centers were selected by compiling a list of Fahangsara centers in Tehran from the internet and categorizing them into 22 groups according to Tehran city districts. Next, five areas were randomly selected. The randomization was conducted by the researcher using a random selection table. One Fahangsara center was randomly selected from each area. In the next step, the researcher visited the selected centers and coordinated with the management for research purposes. The researcher then approached the randomly selected couples at these centers and requested their cooperation. Subsequently, explanations about the research objectives and methods were provided to individuals interested in collaboration. This information included research objectives, research permits, and ethical considerations. Participants were assured that none of the research forms contained personal information, and they had the option to withdraw from the research process if they desired. Questionnaires were physically distributed and collected face-to-face from 50 individuals in each randomly selected area. Furthermore, 31 respondents were excluded from the study because they did not respond to more than 8 questionnaire items, provided incorrect responses, or withdrew from the research. This resulted in 169 participants whose data were analyzed in the study. Four variables, including marital

satisfaction, religiosity, psychological flexibility, and self-compassion, were assessed in each sample member.

## Measures

**ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS):** This questionnaire is a self-report designed by Fowers and Olson in 1993 to assess potential problematic areas or identify positive aspects for enhancing marital relationships (20). The original version of the test consists of 115 questions, covering dimensions of personality aspects, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationships, children and parenting, family and friends, relationships, equative roles, and religious orientation. Due to the scale's length, multiple forms have been extracted. Olson first introduced a 15-item form and then a 47-item form. The Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire consists of 47 items and is scored on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from "never" to "always"). The total scale scores range from 47 to 235, with higher scores indicating greater marital satisfaction. The developers of the questionnaire reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.71 to 0.86. They also highlighted the test's capability to differentiate between couples based on marital satisfaction, demonstrating the divergent validity of this instrument. In Iran, the reliability of the questionnaire has been reported in a study using Cronbach's alpha as 0.95 (21). In this research, the reliability of the questionnaire was found to be 0.811 using Cronbach's alpha.

**Religiosity Measurement Scale based on Islam (RMSI):** This scale was developed in 2003 by Azarbaijani using Islamic sources, including the Quran and authentic Hadiths, at the Research Institute of Hawzah and University (22). The Religiosity Measurement Scale is an instrument for measuring religious orientation based on Islamic literature and local resources in Iran. The religiosity scale includes ten dimensions, such as the relationship between humans and God, the

relationship between humans and the Hereafter, religious authorities, personal ethics, social relations, livelihood, family, physical dimensions, and the relationship between humans and nature. This scale has two subscales: beliefs and rituals, and ethics. It consists of 70 multiple-choice questions. The score in this scale ranges from 70 to 280. By summing the scores, the total score for an individual's Islamic religious orientation is obtained. Higher scores indicate stronger religious tendencies in the respondent. The reliability of the scale has been reported based on a study by calculating Cronbach's alpha to be 0.94 for the beliefs and rituals subscale, 0.79 for the ethics subscale, and 0.93 for the total scale (23). In this study, the questionnaire's reliability was determined to be 0.727 using Cronbach's alpha.

**Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (PFQ):** This questionnaire was developed by Ben-Itzhak et al. (2014) to assess psychological flexibility in individuals (24). The Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire consists of 24 items and 5 subscales. The subscales include positive perception of change, characterization of the self as flexible, characterization of the self as open and innovative, perception of reality as dynamic and changing, and a perception of reality as multifaceted. Scoring was based on a 6-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "never" and 6 indicating "very much." The total score of this questionnaire ranges from 24 to 124. A higher score on this questionnaire indicates greater psychological flexibility in the respondent. The reliability of the questionnaire, assessed using Cronbach's alpha method, was reported as 0.91 by the developer. The reliability of the scale was reported to be in the range of 0.77 to 0.89, as indicated by a study that calculated Cronbach's alpha (25). In this study, the reliability coefficient for this questionnaire was found to be 0.722 using Cronbach's alpha.

**Self-Compassion Scale (SCS):** The Self-

Compassion Scale was designed by Raes et al. (2011) to measure self-compassion, including self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification (26). The long-form of this questionnaire consists of 26 items and 6 components, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from almost never=1 to almost always=5. The minimum possible score is 26, and the maximum score is 130. Test-retest reliability of this questionnaire was estimated by the developer. A retest conducted two weeks after the initial administration showed a reliability coefficient of 0.93. Concurrent validity, assessed by administering the Beck Depression Inventory, shows strong concurrent validity for this questionnaire. The scale's reliability was calculated to be 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha (27). In this study, the questionnaire's reliability was found to be 0.804 using Cronbach's alpha.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27 and Smart PLS 4 software with the structural equation modeling method. The statistical findings were considered significant at the 0.05 level. The researcher used SPSS for descriptive statistical analysis in this study. Structural equation modeling was employed to analyze path coefficients and mediator variables. Bootstrapping was used to assess the significance of the model. The Sobel test was used to assess the significance of mediator variables.

#### 4. Results

Initially, the researcher focused on examining the descriptive statistics of the research variables. Participants were divided into three age groups: 20 to 25 years old (69.8%), 25 to 30 years old (24.9%), and 31 to 40 years old (5.3%). Similarly, in terms of the frequency of sexual encounters per week, participants were categorized into three groups: 1 to 2 times a week (41.4%), 3 to 4 times a week (50.3%), and more than 4 times a week (8.3%). Participants were also divided into four education groups: high school diploma, associate degree, bachelor's degree,



and master's degree. Furthermore, individuals were classified into three groups based on the duration of marriage: 1 to 2 years (63.9%), 3 to 4 years (29.0%), and more than 4 years (7.1%). Additionally, participants were divided into

two groups based on gender: male (63.3%) and female (36.7%) (Table 1).

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the research variables.

Table 1. Description of the demographic variables

Variables	Groups	Frequency	Percent	Sample size	Median
Age	20-25	118	69.8	169	1
	25-30	42	24.9		
	31-40	9	5.3		
Sexual encounters per week	1 to 2	70	41.4	169	2
	3 to 4	85	50.3		
	+4	14	8.3		
Duration of marriage	1-2	108	63.9	169	1
	3-4	49	29.0		
	+4	12	7.1		
Gender	Male	107	63.3	169	1
	Female	62	36.7		
Education	High School Diploma	34	20.1	169	3
	Associate Degree	39	23.1		
	Bachelor's degree	67	39.6		
	Master's degree	29	17.2		

Table 2. Description of the main research variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro-Wilk	
								W	p
Marital Satisfaction	169	169.124	15.590	149	199	0.429	-1.266	0.885	p < 0.001
Religiosity	169	162.047	14.928	130	189	-0.543	-0.710	0.936	p < 0.001
Psychological Flexibility	169	79.314	9.222	60	98	-0.155	-0.863	0.969	p < 0.001
Self-Compassion	169	77.568	7.347	66	93	0.274	-0.761	0.955	p < 0.001

The assumptions of the test were examined. The Shapiro-Wilk test was utilized to assess the normality of the distribution of research variables. Since this test yielded significant results for the research variables (p < 0.001), it can be concluded that the research variables were not normally distributed. As the researcher used a random sampling method,

this assumption was met. The sample size for conducting the structural equation model using the partial least squares method is sufficient, with a total of 169 participants. Table 3 displays the correlation between research variables using the Pearson correlation coefficient

Table 3. Pearson's correlation coefficients

Variable		1	2	3	4
Marital Satisfaction	Pearson's r	—			
Psychological Flexibility	Pearson's r	0.578	***	—	
Religiosity	Pearson's r	0.480	***	0.540	***
Self-Compassion	Pearson's r	0.737	***	0.620	***

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

According to Table 3, marital satisfaction has a significant and positive relationship with psychological flexibility (r = 0.578, p < 0.001), religiosity (r = 0.480, p < 0.001), and self-compassion (r = 0.737, p < 0.001). Similarly,

psychological flexibility has a significant and positive relationship with religiosity (r = 0.540, p < 0.001) and self-compassion (r = 0.620, p < 0.001). After running the model, the researcher examined the path coefficients

between the research variables and the significance levels between the variables in

Table 4. In this study, the researcher set the bootstrap value at 5000.

Table 4. Standard research coefficients in general

Path between variables	Path	STDEV	P-value	T-value	Result
Psychological Flexibility -> Marital Satisfaction	0.138	0.062	0.027	2.210	confirmation
Psychological Flexibility -> Self compassion	0.531	0.057	0.000	9.324	confirmation
Religiosity -> Marital Satisfaction	0.140	0.043	0.001	3.231	confirmation
Religiosity -> Self-Compassion	0.165	0.064	0.010	2.593	confirmation
Self-Compassion -> Marital Satisfaction	0.588	0.063	0.000	9.365	confirmation

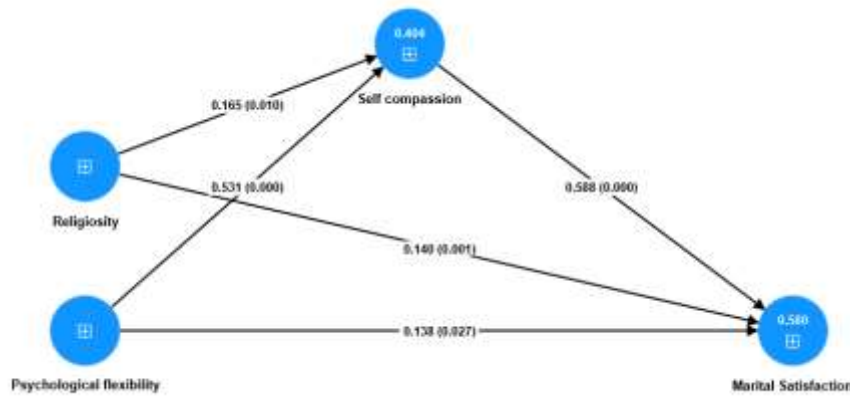


Figure 2: Path coefficients between variables and significance levels

Based on the results presented in Table 4 and Figure 2, psychological flexibility had a significant and positive impact on marital satisfaction ( $\beta= 0.138, p=0.027$ ) and self-compassion ( $\beta= 0.531, p=0.000$ ), contributing to their increase. Similarly, religiosity had a significant and positive impact on marital satisfaction ( $\beta= 0.140, p= 0.001$ ) and self-

compassion ( $\beta= 0.165, p= 0.010$ ), leading to their increase. The variable self-compassion had a significant and positive impact on marital satisfaction ( $\beta= 0.588, p=0.000$ ), resulting in its increase. The researcher then proceeded to examine the indirect impact of the research variables using bootstrapping.

Table 5. Indirect effects between research variables

Path between variables	Path coefficient	SD	P-value	T-value	Result
Religiosity -> Self-Compassion -> Marital Satisfaction	0.097	0.038	0.010	2.575	confirmation
Psychological Flexibility -> Self-Compassion -> Marital Satisfaction	0.312	0.046	0.000	6.751	confirmation

According to Table 5, religiosity had a significant and positive impact on marital satisfaction through the mediator variable of self-compassion ( $\beta=0.097, p=0.010$ ), resulting in an increase in marital satisfaction among individuals. Similarly, psychological flexibility had a significant and positive impact on marital satisfaction through the mediator variable of self-compassion ( $\beta=0.312, p=0.000$ ), resulting in an increase in marital satisfaction in individuals.

The researcher also used the Sobel test to assess the significance of the mediator variables in the study. This test was calculated based on the following formula:

$$Z \text{ value} = \frac{|a \times b|}{\sqrt{(b^2 \times S_a^2) + (a^2 \times S_b^2) + (S_a^2 \times S_b^2)}}$$

a: The value of the path coefficient between the independent variable and the mediator

b: Path coefficient value between mediator and dependent variable

Sa: The standard error of the path between the independent variable and the mediator

Sb: Standard error of the path between the mediator and dependent variable

In the Sobel test, if the value of Z exceeds 1.96, it can be confirmed that the mediating effect of a variable is significant at a 95% confidence level. The value of Z for self-compassion as a mediator between religiosity

**Table 6. coefficients of determination of the model**

Variables	R-square	R-square adjusted
Marital Satisfaction	0.580	0.572
Self-Compassion	0.404	0.397

As shown in Table 7, the reliability and validity of the model have been confirmed. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the variables is higher than 0.7.

The composite reliability of these variables is also higher than 0.7. Similarly, the validity of the model was examined using the Average Variance Extracted index. Since the value of the research variables is higher than 0.5, it can be concluded that the model's validity is confirmed. The researcher then assessed the

and marital satisfaction was 2.245849. The value of Z for self-compassion as a mediator between psychological flexibility and marital satisfaction was 6.59345. Therefore, the mediator variables were significant. The researcher also examined the determination coefficients of the endogenous variables in the study (Table 6).

The reliability and validity of the research model are shown Table 7.

**Table 7. Reliability and validity of the model**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Marital Satisfaction	0.811	0.869	0.571
Religiosity	0.727	0.808	0.544
Psychological Flexibility	0.722	0.827	0.545
Self-Compassion	0.804	0.856	0.592

model fit. All fit indices of the model were confirmed. SRMR, or Standardized Root Mean Square Residual, is the difference between observed correlations and the structural model correlation matrix. The value of SRMR for the model was 0.135.

**Table 8. Predictive communication Q<sup>2</sup>**

Variable	SSO	SSE	Q <sup>2</sup> (=1-SSE/SSO)
Marital Satisfaction	169.000	73.128	0.567
Psychological Flexibility	169.000	169.000	-
Religiosity	169.000	169.000	-
Self-Compassion	169.000	101.620	0.399

Q<sup>2</sup> or Goodness of Fit values above zero indicate that the observed values are well reconstructed, and the model has predictive ability. According to Table 8, the model's fit was confirmed.

## 5. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of psychological flexibility and religious orientation on marital satisfaction based on the

mediating role of self-compassion. According to the results of the current study, both psychological flexibility and religiosity increased marital satisfaction and self-compassion. Additionally, self-compassion increased marital satisfaction and was significant as a mediator variable in the research.

The findings of the present study regarding the positive influence of psychological flexibility and religiosity on marital satisfaction



and self-compassion are consistent with previous research (8, 9, 12, 14). Results of a study have shown the influence of psychological flexibility on self-compassion and marital adjustment (8). Another study indicated a positive and significant relationship between self-compassion and cognitive flexibility with marital quality (9). It has also been suggested that improving internal religious orientation can enhance marital relationships and satisfaction (12). A study by Varae et al. (2020) also suggested that attitude towards religion can have a positive impact on well-being through increased self-compassion (14).

In explaining this finding, it can be stated that psychological flexibility is a factor that can impact interactions and coping with stressful and challenging situations in marital life. Humans require psychological flexibility for survival and to meet their needs in order to adapt to environmental changes. Couples with higher psychological flexibility can embrace new challenges and situations from various perspectives, employing new strategies to deal with unpredictable circumstances. This ability can enhance their marital satisfaction by effectively resolving conflicts (5). Cognitive flexibility refers to the ability to modify cognitive functions in response to changing environmental stimuli. It involves skills such as changing perspectives on desires or adapting to new environmental conditions. This means that individuals are conscious of their choices, can adjust to new situations, and feel competent in these novel circumstances. Having these traits increases self-compassion and enables couples to feel emotional support for themselves and others when facing problems. It also helps improve their behavior through adaptive coping strategies, activity, and acceptance (28). In addition to psychological flexibility, religion also provides guidelines for life that can impact marital relationships. Spiritual concepts and shared religious values can act as mediators in conflicts between couples. Religious beliefs

can lead to flexible behaviors in family conflicts, and communication with God can fulfill some needs that couples cannot provide for each other. This can strengthen emotions such as kindness, happiness, tranquility, and self-esteem in couples, ultimately increasing marital satisfaction and fostering a loving relationship between partners (10). Similarly, in the religious and spiritual context, a person who regards God as kind and merciful is also kinder and more merciful to themselves. Consequently, they tend to be more compassionate towards themselves when facing marital problems. Compassion is a common principle in all major religions around the world, emphasizing compassionate attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, being religious, and consequently having a positive relationship with God and understanding Him as existing compassionately, leads to couples valuing themselves, dealing with their weaknesses and deficiencies with gentleness, and extending this kindness and compassion towards themselves as well (29).

Another finding from the current study showed that self-compassion increases marital satisfaction and is also significant as a mediator variable, which is consistent with previous research (15, 18, 30). Research has shown that self-compassion and cognitive flexibility play an important role in life satisfaction (30). Fahimdanesh et al. (2020) also indicated that self-compassion can predict marital satisfaction (18). A study also suggested that self-compassion plays a crucial role in the relationship between marital conflicts and interactions with the quality of marital life (15).

To elaborate on this finding, it should be noted that self-compassion is associated with a wide range of benefits in interpersonal relationships and enhances emotional well-being. While marital issues may impact couples and lead to marital dissatisfaction, learning self-acceptance and self-compassion helps individuals develop the necessary psychological flexibility for personal growth.

Self-compassion helps soften hearts, facilitates communication with partners, makes positive expressions of feelings easier in conflict situations, strengthens individual relationships, enables individuals to enjoy married life overall, and ultimately increases marital satisfaction (31). Additionally, individuals with self-compassion, as opposed to those who harshly criticize themselves, exhibit higher levels of emotional intelligence, coping skills, flexibility, joy, optimism, life satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation. They evaluate their life experiences more carefully and reduce their depressive or anxious responses to real or imagined negative events. This helps improve relationships and increase levels of satisfaction (15).

The current study has various limitations that need to be considered. For instance, utilizing self-report and questionnaire methods has its own specific limitations, especially in variables like religiosity. Due to the cultural and societal norms, individuals may sometimes have the tendency to portray themselves as more religious or better than they actually are. It is suggested that extensive research on religious orientation be conducted for normalization purposes. In addition to using questionnaires, other measurement instruments such as observing the real lives of individuals and interviewing and questioning their social circle should be used to achieve more accurate results. The large number of questionnaire items also extended the duration of its completion, potentially impacting the accuracy of participants' responses. However, attempts were made to mitigate this limitation by allocating enough time for completing the questionnaires. Another limitation of the research was the inability to control intervening variables, such as the culture of the place of residence and socioeconomic status during the selection of participants. To enhance the generalizability of results in future research, it is recommended that studies be conducted in various geographical regions and among diverse

religious groups and cultures within the country. This should include participants from Christian, Zoroastrian, and other religious groups.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of the current research emphasize the significance of psychological flexibility, religiosity, and self-compassion in enhancing marital satisfaction and underscore the intricate interaction among these variables. It is suggested that enhancing psychological flexibility and religiosity can help improve self-compassion and marital satisfaction. Based on the results, it is recommended to provide continuous educational classes for couples with a focus on integrating religious methods into their interactions. It is also suggested that seminars and sessions be held with the participation of Islamic scholars, counselors, and psychologists to incorporate religious concepts in the family counseling process. Ultimately, it is proposed that by enhancing supportive spiritual experiences and fostering compassion within families, as well as increasing policymakers' attention to this issue, appropriate measures should be taken to enhance the marital satisfaction of couples in terms of psychological, economic, and social support.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors are thankful to all individuals who helped with carrying out the research.

**Availability of data and materials:** The dataset used in the research can be requested from the corresponding author either during the submission process or after the publication of the study.

**Conflicts of interest:** The authors mentioned that they do not have any conflicting interests.

**Consent for publication:** The Publisher is sent the signed Consent to Publish in order to receive permission from the Authors to publish the Work.

**Ethics approval and consent to participate:**

This article underwent a review at Allameh Tabataba'i University and was found to be in compliance with ethical standards under the code IR.ATU.REC.1403.070. The study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

**Financial disclosure:** This study was not financially supported by any external sources.

**Author contributions:** J. S.: Contributed to the conception of the work, revising the draft, approving the final version of the manuscript, and agreeing on all aspects of the work; A. B.: Contributed to the data analysis and interpretation, critical revision, and approval of the final version of the manuscript; A. I.: Contributed to acquiring data, drafting the manuscript, and approving the final version; F. S. and A. M.: Contributed to the conception and design of the study, critical revision, and approval of the manuscript's final version; J. S.: Contributed to the conception and design of the study, data interpretation, drafting of the manuscript and critical revision, and approval of final version.

**References**

- Dobrowolska M, Groyecka-Bernard A, Sorokowski P, Randall AK, Hilpert P, Ahmadi K, Alghraibeh AM, Aryeetey R, Bertoni A, Bettache K, Błażejewska M. *Global perspective on marital satisfaction. Sustainability.* 2020 Oct 23;12(21):8817. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12218817>
- Azhdari A, Zarei E, Mohammadi K. An Assessment of the Correlations between Marital Adjustment and Marital Satisfaction based on Light Triad Traits and Quality of Life in Women. *WHB.* 2024 Jan 1;11(1):64-74. <https://doi.org/10.30476/whb.2024.101717.1270>
- Hong TB, Chang MT, Zakaria ZF, Kabir MS, Shirin L, Islam T, Vytialingam N, Doustjalali SR, Sabet NS, Tan SY, Maung TM. Marital Satisfaction among the Working Population in Malaysia During the Covid-19 Pandemic. *In Obstetrics and Gynaecology Forum 2023 Aug 1 (Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 28-36). In House Publications.* <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ogf/article/view/262109>
- Birni G, Eryilmaz A. Enhancing Well-being of the Married: Investigating Marital Satisfaction, Self-Compassion and Happiness Increasing Strategies. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi.* 2022;12(67). [10.17066/tpdrd.12061408](https://doi.org/10.17066/tpdrd.12061408)
- Sabetroo M, Zahrakar K, Asadpour E. Predicting marriage burnout based on mindfulness, psychological flexibility and coping styles. *J. Fam. Relat.* 2023 Jul 1;3(10):44-53. [10.22098/jfrs.2023.12497.1111](https://doi.org/10.22098/jfrs.2023.12497.1111)
- Fang S, Ding D, Huang M, Zheng Q. Chinese version of the Simplified Psychological Flexibility Scale-6 (C-Psy-Flex): study of its psychometric properties from the perspective of classical test theory and network analysis. *JCBS.* 2024 Apr 26:100769. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2024.100769>
- Sloshower J, Zeifman RJ, Guss J, Krause R, Safi-Aghdam H, Pathania S, Pittman B, D'Souza DC. Psychological flexibility as a mechanism of change in psilocybin-assisted therapy for major depression: results from an exploratory placebo-controlled trial. *Sci Rep.* 2024 Apr 17;14(1):8833. doi: [10.1038/s41598-024-58318-x](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-58318-x). (PubMed: 38632313).
- Dokaneifard F, Andabil AF. Presenting a Predictive Model of Marital Adjustment Based on Psychological Flexibility and Frustration Discomfort with the Mediation of Marital Self-Regulation and Self-Compassion. *Psychology of Woman Journal.* 2023 Oct 1;4(4):109-16. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.pwj.4.4.13>
- Jafari A. Prediction of marital quality based on positive and negative emotions with mediating self-compassion and cognitive flexibility in nurses of patients with COVID-19. *J. Nurs. Manag.* 2022 Mar 10;10(4):61-74. [https://ijnv.ir/browse.php?a\\_id=915&sid=1&slc\\_lang=en](https://ijnv.ir/browse.php?a_id=915&sid=1&slc_lang=en)
- Bozhabadi F, Beidokhti A, Shaghaghi F, Parimi A, Kamali Z, Gholami M. The Relationship between religious orientation and promotion of sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction in women of reproductive age. *J Educ Health Promot.* 2020 Mar 31;9:53. doi: [10.4103/jehp.jehp\\_129\\_19](https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_129_19). (PubMed: 32489988).
- Araghian Mojarad F, Amir Khanlou Z, Jafari H. A review of religious orientation in nurses and nursing students. *JORH.* 2022 Mar 10;9(2):71-80. <https://jrh.mazums.ac.ir/article-1-951-en.html>
- Torabi NT, Vakili P, Andebil AF. The relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction based on the mediation role of religious orientation. *Appl. Psychol.* 2020;14(1):118-99. [10.52547/apsy.14.1.99](https://doi.org/10.52547/apsy.14.1.99)
- Darbani SA, Eslami F, Tabatabaeifar SM. The role of religious orientation, self-control, and forgiveness in predicting marital satisfaction. *JARAC.* 2020 Jul 25;2(2):18-29. <https://journals.kmanpub.com/index.php/jarac/article/view/27>

14. Varaee P, Momeni K, Moradi A. Mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between attitude toward religion and psychological well-being in the elderly. *SJRM*. 2020 Mar 20;**9**(1):49-62. [10.22037/jrm.2019.111284.1886](https://doi.org/10.22037/jrm.2019.111284.1886)
15. Amanelahi A, Murchegani FA, Rajabi G. The Moderating Role of Self-Compassion and Forgiveness in the Relationship of Marital Conflicts and Interactions With Quality of Marital Life. *JAC*. 2023;**36**(003):1771. [10.22055/jac.2023.36003.1771](https://doi.org/10.22055/jac.2023.36003.1771)
16. Cai RY. Backdraft in Self-Compassion: An Overlooked Yet Vital Research Focus. *Mindfulness*. 2024 Mar 2:1-5. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-024-02324-7>
17. Tran MAQ, Vo-Thanh T, Soliman M, Ha AT, Van Pham M. Could mindfulness diminish mental health disorders? The serial mediating role of self-compassion and psychological well-being. *Curr Psychol*. 2022 Aug 3:1-14. doi: [10.1007/s12144-022-03421-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03421-3) .(PubMed: 35967505).
18. Fahimdanesh F, Noferesti A, Tavakol K. Self-compassion and forgiveness: major predictors of marital satisfaction in young couples. *AM J FAM THER Journal*. 2020 May 26;**48**(3):221-34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926187.2019.1708832>
19. Cohen J. Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences. *Routledge*; 2013 May 13. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203771587>
20. Fowers BJ, Olson DH. ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *JFP*. 1993 Sep;**7**(2):176. <https://psycnet.apa.org/journals/fam/7/2/176/>
21. Bakhshayesh AR, MORTAZAVI M. The relationship between sexual satisfaction, general health and marital satisfaction in couples. <https://www.sid.ir/paper/151886/en>
22. Azarbaijani M. Religiosity measurement scale based on Islam.
23. Seddighi A, Masoumi A, Shahsiah M. An evaluation of the relationship between religious orientation and marital satisfaction among couples of Qom city. *JSUMS*. 2016 Jan 21;**22**(6):965-71. [https://jsums.medsab.ac.ir/article\\_776.html?lang=fa](https://jsums.medsab.ac.ir/article_776.html?lang=fa)
24. Ben-Itzhak S, Bluvstein I, Maor M. The psychological flexibility questionnaire (PFQ): Development, reliability and validity.
25. Safarzaei M, Ameri F, Mehrinejad SA, Peivastegar M, Khodabakhsh Pirkalani R. Psychometric properties of the Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire among students. *Journal of Research in Psychological*. 2020. <http://rph.khu.ac.ir/article-1-3787-fa.html>
26. Raes F, Pommier E, Neff KD, Van Gucht D. Construction and factorial validation of a short form of the Self-Compassion Scale. *Clin Psychol Psychother*. 2011 May-Jun;**18**(3):250-5. doi: [10.1002/cpp.702](https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.702) .(PubMed: 21584907).
27. Ghorbani N, Watson PJ, Chen Z, Norballa F. Self-compassion in Iranian Muslims: Relationships with integrative self-knowledge, mental health, and religious orientation. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. 2012 Mar 22;**22**(2):106-18. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10508619.2011.638601>
28. Saghebi Saeedi K, Abolghasemi A, Akbary B. The Effectiveness of Positive Thinking and Self-compassion Training on Cognitive Flexibility and Cognitive Failure in Girls With Primary Dysmenorrhea. *CJNS*. 2020; **6** (1): 45-56. [10.32598/CJNS.6.20.221.1](https://doi.org/10.32598/CJNS.6.20.221.1)
29. Momeni K, Moradi A. Structural equation modeling: A study on the effect of religious orientation on the psychological wellbeing concerning the mediating role of death anxiety and self-compassion in the male elderly living in kermanshah city in 2017. *Iranian Journal of Ageing*. 2019 Jul 10;**14**(2):162-77. [10.32598/sija.13.10.360](https://doi.org/10.32598/sija.13.10.360)
30. Tabesh F, Basak Nezhad S, Khodakarami Fard M. The Relationship between Self-Compassion and Cognitive Flexibility with Life Satisfaction in Married Women of Ahvaz City. *Clinical Psychology Achievements*. 2022 Aug 23;**8**(2):103-12. [10.22055/jacp.2023.42621.1265](https://doi.org/10.22055/jacp.2023.42621.1265)
31. Çolakkadioğlu o, eken i. Examining the relationship between psychological resilience, self-compassion and marital satisfaction. *Ijetsar*. 2023 nov 1;**8**(24). <https://dx.doi.org/10.35826/ijetsar.688>