

The Role of Forgiveness and Spiritualism in Predicting Couples' Happiness

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Article Info

Received: Aug 15, 2019
 Received in revised form:
 Sep 21, 2019
 Accepted: Oct 19, 2019
 Available Online: Sep 23, 2021

Keywords:

Couples
 Forgiveness
 Happiness
 Spirituality



 <https://doi.org/10.22037/jrrh.v7i1.26742>

Abstract

Background and Objective: Happiness is one of the concepts of positivist psychology that is important today in married life as well as mental health. Forming and maintaining a family and preventing it from collapsing requires family members to have certain skills and abilities. Accordingly, the present study was conducted with the aim of explaining the role of forgiveness and spirituality in couples' happiness.

Methods: This is a descriptive-correlational study. The sample population of the study included all the couples living in Kermanshah during 2019, out of whom 300 were selected by available sampling method. The instruments used in the present study included the Oxford Happiness Scale (Hills & Argyle), the Family Sensitivity Measurement Scale (Pollard et al.), and the Spirituality Scale (Shahidi and Farajnia). Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, and step-by-step regression. In this study, all ethical considerations have been observed and no conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Results: The results showed that there is a significant relationship between forgiveness ($r=0.519$; $P<0.05$) and spirituality ($r=0.688$; $P<0.05$) and couple happiness. On the other hand, among the dimensions of forgiveness, the sub-scales of feelings of recovery and light-heartedness, recognition/acknowledgment and realistic understanding could more strongly predict the couple's happiness. Also, among the subscales of spirituality spiritual ability and spiritual attitude had a stronger predictive power for the happiness of couples, respectively ($P<0.05$).

Conclusion: According to the results, it can be stated that forgiveness and spirituality can play an effective role in promoting the happiness of couples, and there is a need to pay more attention to these structures in counseling centers.

Please cite this article as: Hojatkah SM, Taroghtayeb M, Rahmani-Nik S, Karimi-Taleghani MN, Sattari H, Ehsanpour F. The Role of Forgiveness and Spiritualism in Predicting Couples' Happiness. Journal of Pizhūhish dar dīn va salāmat. 2021;7(3):111-123. <https://doi.org/10.22037/jrrh.v7i3.26742>

Summary

Background and Objective

The feeling of happiness is one of the psychological needs of human beings that affect marital life (1, 2). Research shows that there is a relationship between marital adjustment and couples' happiness (3). Some theorists point to the

role of spirituality in happiness (2). Spirituality is the constant search for the meaning and purpose of life, understanding the value of life and the system of personal beliefs (4). There has been much discussion about spirituality in several verses of the Holy Quran, as well as hadiths and narrations (5). Therefore, it can be stated that there is a relationship between spirituality and human life in different dimensions such as psychological well-being (6); and spirituality increases the happiness of couples by increasing their level of adjustment (7).

Numerous studies have been conducted in other countries on the factors contributing to a couple's happiness (9, 8). Al-Othman showed in a study that there is a significant relationship between the demographic variables and spiritualism of couples and their marital happiness (8). Selim also showed that there is a relationship between spiritualism and couples' happiness (9). Another variable that affects happiness and married life is interpersonal forgiveness (10). Therefore, the present study aimed to explain the role of forgiveness and spiritualism in couples' happiness.

Methods

Compliance with ethical guidelines: To observe the principles of ethical research and to protect the rights of the participants, the necessary clarifications on the objectives of the study and its implementation procedure were provided to all the couples. They were left free to participate in or quit the study. They were also assured that their personal information would be kept confidential and that the data published would be confidential, without the inclusion of a private identifier, and would be analyzed as a group with personal information being confidential.

The present study was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population included all married people living in Kermanshah during 2019. Using available sampling method, 250 couples were selected from the couples referring to counseling centers (3 centers) under the supervision of the Welfare Organization and responded to the research instruments. In order to estimate the sample size, the formula proposed by Tabakhnick and Fidell was used.

The Oxford Happiness Scale, the Family Forgiveness Scale, and the Spirituality Scale were used for data collection. Descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics including step-by-step regression were used for data analysis.

Results

Demographic data showed that the participants' mean age was 49. Also, the results showed that 61% (154 people) of the couples had primary education, 31% (76 people) had a diploma and 8% (20 people) had university degrees (associate-bachelor's degree). 79% (198 people) of the participants had more than 3 children and 21% (52 people) had 1 to 2 children. Eighty-five percent (211 people) were in poor economic conditions and only 15 percent (39 people) were in near-average economic status.

Step-by-step regression analysis was used to test the research hypothesis. Prior to regression analysis, its assumptions were verified. The results of the correlation matrix showed that there was a relationship between forgiveness and spirituality and happiness of couples in all the subscales ($P < 0/01$). Because there is a significant correlation between all the subscales of the present study in terms of correlation, regression analysis was used in the next step to predict the share of each of the subscales.

In the first step, the regression equation of the variable of spiritual ability was included the equation, which could predict 16% of the variance of the couple's happiness. But in the second step, the components of spiritual ability and spiritual attitude were included in the equation together, so that they were able to predict 19% of the total variance in the couple's happiness.

Overall, the findings showed that the components of feeling well and light-hearted, recognizing/acknowledging and realistic understanding ($P < 0.0001$) could significantly predict couples' happiness in a way that 39% of the total variance in couples' happiness could be explained by the scores related to these three variables.

Conclusion

The first finding of the present study, in line with the results of previous studies on this issue (11, 12), was that the subscales of forgiveness predict the happiness of couples. In explanation for this finding, it can be stated that generous people have a positive attitude towards others and try to look at everything positively in life, which can lead to happiness and vitality in them. In forgiveness, an attempt is made to overcome the feelings and thoughts that are upsetting so that one's happiness is facilitated. In this way, people who are more forgiving will feel more cheerful and happy in life.

Another finding of the present study, in line with the results of the previous studies (13, 14),

was that there is a significant relationship between spiritualism and couple's happiness. In explaining this finding, it can be stated that people with high spirituality have a higher quality of life because they have a specific goal in life and do not feel alone in the face of life's problems. Happiness as a part of satisfaction with life is also affected by one's spirituality (15).

In future studies, researchers are recommended to use an interview alongside a questionnaire, and a larger population using simple random sampling method to increase generalizability of the results.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the participants in the study and all those who helped them in conducting the study.

Funding

The authors declared no sponsorship for this study and all the costs have been paid by the authors.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution

Research management, writing the method section and abstract: first author; Writing the introduction and statement of the problem sections and data collection: second and third authors; Statistical analysis: fourth and fifth authors; and writing the discussion and conclusion sections: sixth author.

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