

Islamic Quality of Life and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation as Predictors of Marital Intimacy

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Abstract

Marital intimacy is one of the fundamental pillars of family stability in Muslim societies, particularly in large families that face multiple economic, emotional, and parenting challenges. The present study aimed to examine the role of difficulties in emotion regulation and Islamic quality of life in predicting marital intimacy among large Muslim families with more than four children. This applied study employed a descriptive–correlational design. The statistical population consisted of parents with more than four children who resided in Abyek County in 2025. A total of 120 participants were recruited using convenience sampling. Data were collected using the Marital Intimacy Questionnaire (Bagarozzi, 2001), the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Grazt & Roemer, 2004), and the Islamic Quality of Life Questionnaire (Nezhadmohamad Nameghi et al., 2019). Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficients and multiple regression analysis. The results indicated that difficulties in emotion regulation had a significant negative relationship with marital intimacy, whereas Islamic quality of life showed a significant positive relationship with marital intimacy. The regression model revealed that these two variables jointly explained 36% of the variance in marital intimacy. The findings suggest that marital intimacy in large Muslim families emerges from the interaction between emotion regulation skills and spiritual–cultural resources grounded in an Islamic lifestyle. These results highlight the distinctiveness of the Islamic model of well-being compared to secular models and may contribute to the development of family-oriented policies and programs aimed at strengthening marital intimacy in Muslim societies.

Keywords: Difficulties in emotion regulation; Family policy; Islamic quality of life; Large Muslim families; Marital intimacy

INTRODUCTION

Marital intimacy is one of the most fundamental dimensions of human relationships and a core component of family stability. This construct reflects emotional, psychological, cognitive, physical, and spiritual closeness between spouses, and its quality plays a decisive role in marital satisfaction and the continuity of shared life (Kamali et al., 2020; Reyhani et al., 2022). Empirical evidence indicates that the presence of marital intimacy is associated with greater

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Received: May 2, 2026

Revised: April 4, 2026

Accepted: April 22, 2026

marital satisfaction, higher psychological well-being, and stronger family adjustment, whereas its decline may lead to emotional disengagement, chronic conflict, and ultimately divorce (Khabazi et al., 2022).

In Muslim societies such as Iran, large Muslim families with more than four children represent a manifestation of traditional and Islamic values and play a pivotal role in social structure. In Iran, recent demographic changes—including pronatalist policies aimed at addressing declining fertility rates (from approximately 6.2 births per woman in the 1980s to about 1.9–2.1 in recent years)—have contributed to the emergence and visibility of such families (Ladier-Fouladi, 2021; Azmoude et al., 2019). This trend is accompanied by economic, emotional, and parenting pressures that may negatively affect marital intimacy; however, it may also foster greater family cohesion through role sharing and increased solidarity (Mahmoudpour et al., 2020; Kowal et al., 2021).

Similar dynamics are observed in other Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan, where large Muslim families are shaped by religious and cultural factors. In Pakistan, for example, a relatively high fertility rate (approximately 3.5 births per woman) is often associated with son preference and Islamic inheritance laws, which influence reproductive behavior and may affect marital relationships (Kader, 2021). In Indonesia, fertility declined from 5.7 in the 1960s to 2.4 by 2015; nevertheless, Islamic values continue to shape family structures, and government policies aimed at reducing family size have been accompanied by education initiatives and rising age at marriage (Snopkowski & Nelson, 2021). In Malaysia, Islamic-based family policies emphasize family strengthening and childbearing, while simultaneously confronting modern trends such as marriage migration and cultural change (Mohamad, 2021).

International studies suggest that in Muslim societies, Islamic teachings and religiously grounded lifestyles can play a meaningful supportive role in sustaining marital intimacy and satisfaction by reinforcing values such as forgiveness, empathy, and responsibility (Borjali et al., 2018; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2018). In contrast, demographic evidence indicates that fertility decline in many societies is driven less by religious factors than by processes of secularization, increased female education and employment, and changing cultural attitudes toward family life (Azmoude et al., 2019; Simsek & Phalet, 2024).

The present research framework, with its emphasis on Islamic dimensions, differs substantially from secular models. Secular approaches often prioritize material and individualistic aspects of quality of life, whereas Islamic quality of life—grounded in *tawhīd*, *sa'ādah* (felicity), and the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*)—integrates spiritual, familial, and social dimensions and provides a

value-based foundation for family policies in Muslim societies (Aycan, 2024; Kader, 2021). For instance, in Muslim countries such as Indonesia and other Southeast Asian societies, applying this model may facilitate the design of effective support programs for large families, where childbearing and generational continuity are aligned with Islamic values (Mohamad, 2021; Kader, 2021). However, research indicates that achieving these goals requires a deliberate balance between religious values and modern economic, social, and psychological challenges to prevent population policies from undermining family quality of life (Ladier-Fouladi, 2021).

Among the factors influencing marital intimacy in such families, difficulties in emotion regulation occupy a prominent position. Difficulties in emotion regulation refer to an individual's inability to control and manage emotional responses in stressful situations. Maladaptive strategies such as rumination, catastrophizing, and self-blame contribute to marital dissatisfaction and emotional distancing between spouses, whereas reduced emotion regulation difficulties are associated with greater resilience and fewer marital conflicts (McRae & Gross, 2020; Pourmohseni Kolouri & Afshar, 2025). Accordingly, difficulties in emotion regulation can determine how couples cope with daily stressors and the degree of emotional closeness they maintain.

In addition to psychological factors, Islamic quality of life constitutes an important cultural and spiritual component within Iranian society. Islamic teachings—emphasizing affection, forgiveness, responsibility, spiritual tranquility, and devotion to God—offer a value-based framework for improving marital relationships. By strengthening religious beliefs and healthy communication skills, this lifestyle may function as a protective factor against psychological and social stressors and promote marital cohesion (Borjali et al., 2018; Safara et al., 2019; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2018; Joshanloo, 2017; Mansouri, 2021; Janbaz et al., 2023). In large Muslim families with more than four children, where parents face multiple economic, emotional, and parenting responsibilities, adherence to Islamic values may serve as a supportive and moderating factor in maintaining marital intimacy.

Despite the importance of this issue, a review of the literature indicates that few studies have simultaneously examined the effects of difficulties in emotion regulation and Islamic quality of life on marital intimacy in large Muslim families with more than four children. Most previous studies have focused on families with fewer children or have examined these variables separately (Khabazi et al., 2022; Shareh & Eshaghi Thani, 2021). To the best of the authors' knowledge, no study has concurrently investigated the roles of Islamic quality of life and emotion regulation difficulties in predicting marital intimacy among families with more than four

children. Consequently, a research gap remains in understanding the psychological and cultural mechanisms influencing marital intimacy in large Muslim families.

Moreover, official statistics in Iran indicate an upward trend in divorce rates in recent decades, raising concerns about the stability of marital relationships (Damari et al., 2022). At the same time, empirical findings suggest that while marital satisfaction and family quality of life have declined in some segments of society, other groups—depending on economic conditions, cultural contexts, and psychological resources—have experienced stability or improvement in family well-being (EbadiRad et al., 2023; Diener et al., 2018). This dual pattern suggests that cultural, cognitive, and emotional factors may exert differential effects on marital stability. Therefore, examining the simultaneous role of difficulties in emotion regulation and Islamic quality of life in predicting marital intimacy—particularly among large Muslim families with more than four children—is of considerable importance. Such findings may have implications for Islamic studies and family policies in Muslim societies, including population strategies, pronatalist initiatives, and the strengthening of family foundations through Islamic-based educational programs aimed at enhancing marital intimacy and satisfaction (Ladier-Fouladi, 2021; Mohamad, 2021).

In sum, the present study seeks to address the existing gap in the literature by examining whether marital intimacy in large Muslim families with more than four children can be predicted based on difficulties in emotion regulation and Islamic quality of life. Investigating this issue may not only expand theoretical understanding of psychological mechanisms underlying marital relationships but also provide practical guidance for policymakers, family counselors, and mental health professionals seeking to improve family quality of life.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and employs a descriptive–correlational design with respect to its nature and method of implementation. The study aimed to examine the relationships between psychological variables—namely difficulties in emotion regulation and Islamic quality of life—and marital intimacy among large Muslim families with more than four children.

Population and Sample

The statistical population consisted of all married couples with more than four children residing in Abyek County during the 2024–2025 academic year. Based on Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) guideline for multivariate regression analysis and

considering the number of predictor and criterion variables, a sample size of 120 participants was determined. Participants were selected using convenience sampling.

Data Collection Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Data were collected using both library-based and field methods. In the first stage, relevant theoretical literature and previous studies were reviewed through books, journal articles, and theses to establish the theoretical framework of the study. In the field phase, the research instruments—consisting of standardized questionnaires—were administered to participants, and the collected data were subsequently entered into statistical software for analysis.

Ethical considerations were fully observed, including obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring the confidentiality of personal information, and adhering to the ethical principles approved by the university ethics committee, such as voluntary participation and the absence of coercion.

Research Instruments

Marital Intimacy Questionnaire (Bagarozzi, 2001)

This scale consists of 41 items measuring eight dimensions of intimacy: emotional, psychological, intellectual, sexual, physical, spiritual, aesthetic, and social-recreational intimacy. Items are rated on a ten-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating a greater need for intimacy in the corresponding dimension. In Iran, Khamse and Hosseinian (2008) reported acceptable reliability coefficients for all subscales. In the present study, the overall reliability of the instrument was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89.

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004)

This questionnaire includes 36 items assessing six components of emotion regulation difficulties: nonacceptance of emotional responses, difficulties in goal-directed behavior, impulse control difficulties, lack of emotional awareness, limited access to emotion regulation strategies, and lack of emotional clarity. Total scores range from 36 to 180, with higher scores indicating greater difficulties in emotion regulation. The reliability of the Persian version was reported by Kermani Mamazandi, and Tale' Pasand (2018) with a Cronbach's alpha between 0.58 to 0.80. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.85.

Islamic Quality of Life Questionnaire (Nezhadmohamad Nameghi et al., 2019)

This scale comprises 58 items across four dimensions: relationship with God, others, self, and nature. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale, with higher

scores reflecting a higher level of Islamic quality of life. Previous studies have reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.88 for the subscales, indicating satisfactory reliability. In the current study, the overall reliability of the questionnaire was 0.92. (Nezhadmohamad Nameghi et al., 2019)

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software (version 23). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were used to summarize the data. Inferential analyses included multiple regression analysis, the coefficient of determination (R^2), and significance testing of regression coefficients to examine the study hypotheses. Prior to conducting the analyses, statistical assumptions—including the normality of data distribution—were assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

The research sample consisted of 120 married individuals with more than four children residing in Abyek County. Among the participants, 67 were men (56.8%) and 53 were women (43.2%). Regarding age distribution, the highest frequency was observed in the 31–40 age group (49.2%), while the lowest frequency belonged to the 51–60 age group (11.9%). The mean duration of marriage was 15 years, and the average number of children per family was 5.3. In terms of educational attainment, 35% of participants held a high school diploma, 40% had a bachelor's degree, and 25% had higher academic qualifications. Approximately 60% of men were employed, whereas about 80% of women were homemakers.

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and score ranges of the main study variables, including difficulties in emotion regulation, Islamic quality of life, and marital intimacy.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the main study variables					
Variable	Minimu	Maximu	Mea	SD	
	m	m	n		
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	52	172	105.94	18.9	
Islamic Quality of Life	104	258	185.43	26.8	
Marital Intimacy	215	273	240.20	11.86	

Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationships among the study variables, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. The results indicated a significant negative correlation between difficulties in emotion regulation and marital intimacy ($r = -0.46$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that higher levels of emotion regulation difficulties are associated with lower levels of marital intimacy. In contrast, Islamic quality of life showed a significant positive correlation with marital intimacy ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$). The correlation between the two predictor variables was not statistically significant ($r = 0.04$, $p = 0.346$), indicating their relative independence within the predictive model (Table 2).

Table 2. Pearson correlation matrix among the study variables

Variable	Marital Intimacy	Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	Islamic Quality of Life
Marital Intimacy	1		
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	-0.463***	1	
Islamic Quality of Life	0.377***	0.037	1
** $p < 0.001$			

From an interpretive perspective, these findings are consistent with theoretical and empirical evidence suggesting that deficits in emotion regulation undermine emotional closeness between spouses, whereas value-based and spiritually grounded lifestyles enhance relational intimacy. In large Muslim families, where couples face cumulative emotional and practical demands, the ability to regulate emotions and draw upon Islamic sources of meaning appears particularly crucial for sustaining marital intimacy.

Assumption Testing

Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within the acceptable range (± 2). In addition, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$ for all variables). The Durbin–Watson statistic was 2.016, demonstrating the independence of residuals. Visual inspection of the standardized residual scatterplot also confirmed

homoscedasticity. Accordingly, the assumptions for conducting parametric analyses, including multiple regression, were met.

Regression Analysis

To predict marital intimacy based on difficulties in emotion regulation and Islamic quality of life, a multiple regression analysis using the Enter method was conducted. The summary of the regression model is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the multiple regression model predicting marital intimacy

Index	Value
R	0.609
R ²	0.370
Adjusted R ²	0.360
Standard Error of Estimate	9.49
F	34.40
Significance	< 0.001

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 117) = 34.40$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that the predictor variables collectively explained 36% of the variance in marital intimacy. This finding suggests that both psychological and value-based factors play a substantial role in shaping marital intimacy among large Muslim families.

The standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients of the predictor variables are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression coefficients for predictors of marital intimacy

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	-0.299	0.046	-0.478	-6.51	< 0.001	1.00
Islamic Quality of Life	0.175	0.032	0.395	5.38	< 0.001	1.00

As shown in Table 4, difficulties in emotion regulation significantly and negatively predicted marital intimacy, whereas Islamic quality of life emerged as a significant positive predictor. The low VIF values indicate the absence of multicollinearity, confirming the robustness of the regression model.

From a broader perspective, these results align with previous studies emphasizing the detrimental impact of maladaptive emotion regulation on marital relationships and the protective role of religious and spiritual resources in fostering intimacy. Importantly, the findings also support the distinction between Islamic and secular models of well-being by demonstrating that Islamic quality of life contributes uniquely to marital intimacy beyond purely psychological variables. This underscores the relevance of culturally and religiously grounded frameworks for understanding family dynamics in Muslim societies.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the role of emotion regulation difficulties and Islamic quality of life in predicting marital intimacy among large Muslim families with more than four children. The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that these two variables jointly explained 36% of the variance in marital intimacy, highlighting the simultaneous importance of psychological and cultural-religious factors in understanding the quality of marital relationships within this group of families.

The first major finding demonstrated a significant negative relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and marital intimacy. This result is consistent with a substantial body of previous research showing that ineffective management of negative emotions and the use of maladaptive strategies—such as rumination, catastrophizing, and self-blame—are associated with increased marital conflict and reduced emotional closeness between spouses (McRae & Gross, 2020; Pourmohseni Kalouri & Afsar, 2025; Khabazi et al., 2022). In families with more than four children, cumulative economic, parenting, and time-related pressures may intensify emotional arousal, and in the absence of adequate emotion regulation skills, these pressures can gradually erode marital intimacy. From this perspective, emotion regulation can be considered a core mechanism for maintaining emotional bonds between spouses under stressful family conditions.

Beyond psychological factors, the findings also revealed that Islamic quality of life is positively and significantly associated with marital intimacy and independently predicts this construct. This finding aligns with both national and international studies emphasizing the supportive role of religious beliefs and faith-based lifestyles in enhancing marital relationships (Borjali et al., 2018; Safara et al., 2019; Khojasteh Mehr et al., 2018; Janbaz et al., 2023). Islamic teachings, with their emphasis on affection, forgiveness, patience, responsibility, and cooperation, provide a normative framework for managing marital conflicts and strengthening

emotional bonds. In large Muslim families, these values may play an even more pronounced protective role in sustaining marital intimacy.

The present findings can be further interpreted within the conceptual framework of Islamic well-being. According to Kader (2021), human well-being in Islam is a multidimensional construct grounded in a monotheistic worldview that integrates spiritual, psychological, familial, and social dimensions. Within this framework, the preservation and enhancement of family and progeny are considered fundamental objectives of Islamic law, and healthy marital relationships are a prerequisite for achieving these goals. Islamic quality of life, by fostering meaning, purpose, and ethical commitment in everyday life, can provide the psychological foundation necessary for strengthening marital intimacy, even in contexts characterized by structural and economic challenges.

An important implication of the findings is the clear distinction they draw between Islamic and secular models of quality of life. While secular approaches often prioritize individual satisfaction, subjective well-being, and material indicators (Diener et al., 2018; Simsek & Phalet, 2024), the Islamic model conceptualizes family and interpersonal bonds not merely as outcomes of well-being, but as integral components of its very essence. From a theoretical standpoint, the results suggest that explaining marital intimacy in Muslim societies without considering religious and cultural dimensions would yield an incomplete representation of social reality.

Overall, the findings indicate that marital intimacy in large Muslim families is shaped by a complex interaction between intrapersonal skills, such as emotion regulation, and spiritual-cultural resources, such as Islamic quality of life. Neglecting either of these dimensions may weaken family-supportive policies and interventions aimed at strengthening marital relationships.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrated that emotion regulation difficulties and Islamic quality of life, as psychological and cultural-religious constructs, play a meaningful role in predicting marital intimacy among large Muslim families with more than four children. Reduced capacity for emotion regulation is associated with diminished marital intimacy, whereas higher levels of Islamic quality of life function as a supportive and strengthening factor in marital relationships.

These findings carry important theoretical and practical implications for Islamic and social studies. From a theoretical perspective, the results support Islamic models of well-being rooted in a monotheistic worldview and the objectives

of Islamic law, highlighting those concepts such as family, meaning, and ethics are inseparable components of quality of life in Muslim societies. From a practical standpoint, the findings can inform the design of educational, counseling, and family-oriented policies that simultaneously focus on enhancing emotion regulation skills and promoting an Islamic lifestyle.

In a context where population and family policies in Iran and other Muslim societies emphasize fertility encouragement and family strengthening, attention to the quality of marital relationships and to spouses' psychological and spiritual resources is indispensable. Future research is therefore recommended to employ longitudinal and intervention-based designs to further examine causal mechanisms and the role of mediating and moderating variables, thereby contributing to the development of more comprehensive family policies in Islamic societies.

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