

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Interreligious Marriage and Psychological Well-Being: A Qualitative Exploration Through the Lens of Seligman's PERMA Model

Jineesh Cyriac<sup>1</sup>  | P. M. Mathew<sup>2</sup>  | Santhosh Kareepadath Rajan<sup>3</sup>  | Sudha Thomas<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Work, Navajyothi College, Cherupuzha, Kannur, India | <sup>2</sup>Department of Social Work, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, India | <sup>3</sup>Department of Psychology, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, India

**Correspondence:** Jineesh Cyriac ([jineesh.cyriac@njc.ac.in](mailto:jineesh.cyriac@njc.ac.in))

**Received:** 12 November 2025 | **Revised:** 8 May 2026 | **Accepted:** 26 May 2026

**Keywords:** interpretative phenomenological analysis | interreligious marriage | PERMA model | psychological well-being | strategies and recommendations

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to explore how individuals in interreligious marriages in India experience and interpret their psychological well-being.

**Background:** Interreligious unions in India represent a complex intersection of faith traditions, culture, and social expectations. Such marriages often face unique individual and relational challenges, including socio-familial rejection, dissolution, and religious dissonance, which may influence their mental health and well-being. Understanding these experiences is essential for advancing culturally sensitive psychological and policy support for interreligious couples.

**Method:** Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 interreligious married individuals across India, recruited through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed thematically following IPA procedures. Seligman's PERMA model provided the theoretical lens for interpreting participants' experiences of well-being.

**Results:** Results revealed a coexistence of flourishing and distress among participants. Relationships and meaning were often strained by family rejection, pressure to convert, and religious disagreements. However, positive emotions and engagement were strengthened through empathy, shared rituals, and mutual respect. Resilience and persistence in the face of social opposition contributed to participants' sense of accomplishment.

**Conclusion:** Interreligious marriages in India foster both psychological challenges and growth, reflecting dynamic adaptations within pluralistic contexts. The findings underscore the need for culturally informed counseling practices and legislative measures that promote pluralism, inclusion, and mental health among interfaith couples.

## 1 | Introduction

Interreligious marriage, defined as a union between individuals of differing faith traditions, is a growing social phenomenon in modern India, in an era of increased globalization, migration, higher education, digital socialization, and intergroup interaction (Cyriac et al. 2024; Farooq and Shah 2023; Hayat and Basharat 2019; Sewenet et al. 2017). Latest census and Pew

Research data indicate that interreligious unions comprise approximately 2%–3% of all marriages nationwide, predominately in metropolitan regions where social interaction across faith boundaries is more common (Cyriac et al. 2024; Kramer 2011; Sahgal et al. 2021; Sandhya and Somashekarappa 2019). Even though under the Special Marriage Act 1954, the Indian Constitution protects the right to marry anyone from any religion and its practice. Such unions often face familial

disapproval, social and religious stigma, and institutional barriers, as documented in prior research (Farooq and Shah 2023; Nawaz et al. 2021).

Interreligious marriage in India must be understood within a sociocultural context characterized by strong religious identities, collectivist family systems, and religious-based regulation of marriage choices (Cyriac et al. 2026). Marriage in India is widely understood not merely as a private contractual arrangement but as a deeply social institution embedded within religious doctrine, community regulation, and alliance between families and religious communities (Allendorf and Pandian 2016; Gupta et al. 2021; Kōu et al. 2017). Religious traditions differ in their orientations toward interreligious marriage, and levels of acceptance are often shaped by doctrinal interpretations and the degree of religiosity (Leeman 2009). Islamic jurisprudence traditionally permits Muslim men to marry Christian or Jewish women but generally prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men unless conversion occurs (Aini 2008; Cyriac et al. 2024; Kurttekin 2020). Christian Canon Law historically discouraged marriages between Christians and non-Christians, although certain dispensations are permitted (The Holy See 1983). Hindu texts do not explicitly address interreligious marriage, but historically reinforced endogamy through caste-based marriage norms (Bidner and Eswaran 2015; Leeman 2009). Despite these doctrinal positions, contemporary attitudes are increasingly shaped by generational change and sociopolitical contexts (Cyriac et al. 2024).

Although the Constitution of India guarantees the freedom to choose one's spouse irrespective of religion, interreligious marriages may be governed by a complex system of legal pluralism and personal religious laws. While the Special Marriage Act was intended to provide a secular legal framework for interfaith unions, its procedural requirements, such as mandatory public notice and waiting periods, often expose couples to social surveillance, harassment, and familial backlash (Paranjpe 2023).

Beyond legal constraints, family structures in India are predominantly collectivist, where marriage decisions are closely monitored and negotiated by extended family members (Gupta et al. 2021). Interreligious marriages are frequently viewed as transgressions of communal boundaries, perceived to produce religious discontinuity and familial dishonor (Allendorf and Pandian 2016; Gupta et al. 2021; Kalmijn 1998). As a result, couples face intense emotional pressure, coercion to convert, disinheritance, social ostracism, moral scrutiny, and, in extreme cases, threats to their personal safety (The Indian Express 2022, 2023). These intersecting legal, familial, and cultural pressures create a uniquely stressful environment that shapes the lived psychological experience of such individuals (Allendorf and Pandian 2016; Barber 1967).

### 1.1 | Constructive and Detrimental Dynamics of Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is widely conceptualized as a multifaceted construct extending beyond the presence of positive affect to include purpose, relational fulfillment, and personal growth (Mousavi 2020; Seligman 2011; World Health Organisation

(WHO) 2001). In interreligious marriages, well-being emerges from a dynamic interplay among relational, religious, and structural conditions (Cyriac and Mathew 2026). Such unions can foster psychological enhancement, personal development, and intercultural assimilation, empathy, and adaptive coping when embedded within supportive social environments (Patras 2021; Waite and Gallagher 2000). Empirical findings suggest that mutual respect, relational intimacy, and tolerance for religious difference enhance marital satisfaction, strengthen religious identity, and promote psychological adjustment (Chebotareva and Volk 2020; Colaner et al. 2023; Proulx et al. 2007; Shoaf et al. 2022; Soliz and Colaner 2015). In contexts where family acceptance and community endorsement are secured, couples often report greater resilience, emotional stability, and social integration (Chebotareva and Volk 2020; Qadir et al. 2013; Radjab et al. 2020). Such conditions position interreligious unions as sites of pluralistic engagement that can contribute to broader social cohesion and psychological flourishing (Marks and Dollahite 2017; McGraw et al. 2012).

Conversely, when interreligious marriages are situated within environments characterized by family disapproval, social stigma, institutional constraints, financial insecurity, disagreements over child-rearing or religious practice, dissatisfaction, and dissolution, psychological distress frequently intensifies (Mousavi 2020; Walker et al. 2013). Research consistently documents elevated stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, relational strain, and identity conflict among interreligious couples facing persistent opposition (Farooq and Shah 2023; Hamdanah 2018; Kurttekin 2020; McAloney 2013; Proulx et al. 2007; Qadir et al. 2013; Soliz and Colaner 2015; Vignoles et al. 2011). Family rejection and community exclusion undermine emotional security and belonging (Diener and Seligman 2004; Hill and Pargament 2003; Kalmijn 1998; Seligman 2011), while conversion pressures and doctrinal conflicts often disrupt sacred identity and internalized guilt (Hughes and Dickson 2005; Patras 2021). These stressors are associated with Seligman's concepts of "deficits in flourishing," in which chronic stress and social stigma diminish positive emotions and relational satisfaction. In extreme cases, couples may resort to secrecy or withdraw from their family and social networks, thereby intensifying emotional loneliness (Beach et al. 1990; Farooq and Shah 2023). Institutional and legal barriers, including procedural constraints under the Special Marriage Act-1954, may further reinforce marginalization and diminish individual sense of accomplishment and agency, by exposing couples to bureaucratic hurdles and social scrutiny (Cyriac et al. 2024).

### 1.2 | Contextual Factors Influencing Psychological Well-Being in Interreligious Marriages

Religious compatibility and adaptive negotiation, such as shared belief systems, ritual participation, and moral alignment, are crucial for maintaining psychological well-being in interfaith marriages (Cyriac and Mathew 2026). On the other hand, differences in religious intensity and doctrinal discord often produce disagreements, conflicts, and marital dissatisfaction (Hwang et al. 2019; Lehrer and Chiswick 1993). Studies have highlighted that faith alignment predicts satisfaction among highly religious couples, whereas in more secular contexts, interpersonal

communication and personal compatibility are stronger predictors of well-being (Curtis and Ellison 2002; Hwang et al. 2021; Kalmijn 1998; Myers 2006).

Parenting and religious socialization present additional psychological stress. Interreligious parents often struggle to reconcile divergent religious identities while raising children, resulting in anxiety and guilt (Ata 2005; Hamdanah 2018). Research conducted among Turkish Muslim–Christian couples in the UK shows that many such couples prioritize moral education over religious doctrine, creating hybrid cultural-religious identities for their children (Kurttekin 2020). However, developmental psychologists suggest that inconsistent religious modeling can generate confusion and weaken family coherence (Amato and Booth 2001; Syahid 2016). Conversely, when families accept pluralism and grant children autonomy in faith decisions, they experience stronger emotional bonds despite social resistance (Farooq and Shah 2023; Radjab et al. 2020).

Comparative scholarship from socioreligious contexts of Indonesia, Israel, and Pakistan further illustrates that structural, legal, and communal environments profoundly shape the psychological consequences of interreligious marriages (Patras 2021; Shahr 2017; Suyaman and Alfiany 2022). Across these contexts, institutional resistance, religious gatekeeping, segmented legal systems, conversion pressures, and familial oppositions transform intimate relationships into publicly regulated religious matters. Such structural constraints generate chronic stress, identity strain, relational instability, internalized guilt, and social isolation among interreligious couples (Davidson and Widman 2002; Farooq and Shah 2023; Shahr 2017; Suyaman and Alfiany 2022). These intersecting pressures undermine relational security and existential coherence, thereby destabilizing core dimensions of psychological well-being (Seligman 2011).

While these cross-national findings reveal consistent patterns of stigma-related stress and identity negotiation, the Indian context presents a distinct configuration shaped by legal pluralism, collectivist family systems, and procedural constraints under the Special Marriage Act (Cyriac et al. 2024). Therefore, although international research underscores the vulnerability of interreligious couples under conditions of social hostility, the psychological experiences of Indian interreligious marriages must be understood within the country's specific socio-legal and cultural structures. Psychological well-being in interreligious unions, therefore, cannot be understood as an individual attribute from the wider socioreligious structures that rule them. Although the literature explains the diverse psychological and cultural dimensions of interreligious marriage, a deeper exploration of how participants narratively construct and interpret their experiences is required to understand how these dynamics are disclosed in everyday relational and individual contexts.

### 1.3 | Theoretical Framework

Several theoretical frameworks conceptualize psychological well-being, including Ryff's (1989) multidimensional

model and Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (SDT) (Vallerand 2000). While these frameworks offer robust accounts of autonomy, competence, and intrapsychic functioning, they primarily emphasize individual-level processes. Interreligious marriage, particularly within collectivist and religiously embedded contexts such as India, involves layered emotional, relational, spiritual, and structural dimensions that extend beyond individual motivation alone. Accordingly, the present study adopts Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of flourishing as its primary interpretative framework.

PERMA conceptualizes well-being across five interrelated domains: Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Its conceptual breadth allows for the integration of hedonic and eudaimonic components of flourishing, capturing emotional experience, experimental immersion, relational embeddedness, existential coherence, and goal-directed mastery within a single framework (Seligman 2011). This multidimensionality is particularly suitable for examining interreligious marriages, where emotional reciprocity, family acceptance, religious negotiation, and social recognition intersect simultaneously (Diener and Seligman 2004). Moreover, PERMA explicitly foregrounds relational connection and meaning-making, domains that are especially salient in collectivist and religious contexts, where well-being is negotiated within family systems and community structures rather than experienced solely as an individual state (Hamdanah 2018; Hwang et al. 2019; Kun et al. 2016).

Methodologically, PERMA was employed as an interpretative scaffold rather than a deductive coding structure. Consistent with interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), themes were first generated inductively from the participants' narratives. The PERMA framework was introduced in the final interpretative phase to illuminate how lived experiences reflected enhancement or deficit across emotional, relational, and existential domains. This dynamic understanding of well-being aligns with prior research highlighting the coexistence of growth and vulnerability in religiously mixed unions (Mahoney 2010; Shoaf et al. 2022).

However, while Seligman's PERMA effectively identifies domains of flourishing and deficit, it does not fully explain the cultural and interactional processes through which interreligious marriages are negotiated and sustained over time. To address this limitation, the present study is complemented by Swidler's cultural theory of marriage, as articulated in *Talk of Love* (Swidler 1986, 2003). Swidler conceptualizes culture as a "tool kit" of symbols, narratives, habits, and strategies that individuals selectively mobilize under conditions of strain. From this perspective, marriage is not merely an expression of romantic ideology but an ongoing process of cultural labor through which couples adapt to shifting constraints and motivations.

Applied to interreligious marriages in India, this process-oriented lens enables an understanding of how individuals actively navigate familial rejection, religious difference, and social stigma by mobilizing available cultural repertoires, such as moral narratives of commitment, negotiated religious boundaries, premarital agreements, and selective ritual participation.

When used alongside the PERMA, this Swidler's framework complements the analysis by explaining how well-being is not simply experienced as a psychological outcome but is actively produced, negotiated, and stabilized through everyday relational practices.

Earlier empirical research on marriage often highlighted its protective psychological and health benefits, framing marriage as a broadly advantageous social institution (Waite and Gallagher 2000). However, such generalizations may obscure the uneven distribution and structural conditioning of marital benefits, particularly in contexts of religious heterogeneity and social stigma. Interreligious marriages challenge universalist assumptions by revealing how well-being is negotiated within contested religious and sociocultural terrains.

Although interreligious unions have been studied across diverse global settings (Aini 2008; Radjab et al. 2020), much of this literature emerges from contexts where individual partner choice is socially normalized and institutional protections are relatively stable. The transferability of these findings to Indian contexts remains uncertain, given its collectivist family structures, maintenance of religious identity, gendered expectations, religious pluralism, and sociocultural frameworks. Existing research has focused mainly on relational adjustment and coping patterns (Hwang et al. 2019; McAloney 2013; Shahar 2017), offering limited insights into how individuals subjectively interpret identity negotiation, emotional strain, sacred meaning, and resilience within socially contested interreligious unions. In particular, qualitative explorations of psychological distress and well-being among interreligious couples in India remain scarce (Patras 2021; Suyaman and Alfiany 2022). This research gap necessitates a phenomenological inquiry that examines how individuals in interreligious marriages narratively construct and interpret their psychological well-being within the Indian sociocultural context.

## 1.4 | Research Question

How do individuals in interreligious marriages experience and interpret their psychological well-being through the lens of Seligman's PERMA model of flourishing, within the Indian sociocultural context?

## 2 | Methods and Materials

This study utilized a qualitative cross-sectional design grounded in the IPA to explore the lived experiences of interreligious married individuals. Using IPA, this study aims to explore participants' subjective accounts and their interpretations of those experiences.

### 2.1 | Participants and Sampling Rationale

The sample comprises 20 interreligious married individuals residing in India. Each participant represented a distinct marital dyad; no interviewees were married to one another. Thus, the study reflects perspectives from 20 separate interreligious

marriages. All participants were in their first marriage; none reported prior marital dissolution or remarriage. Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit participants with variations of key attributes, such as age ( $M = 34.6$ ,  $SD = 2.98$ ), gender (women: 70% men: 30%), religion (Christians: 60%, Hindus: 30%, and Muslims: 10%), and marital duration (1–5 years: 65% and 6–10 years: 35%), allowing exploration of early-to-mid marital experiences within interreligious unions. All participants were cohabiting with their spouses at the time of the interview and reported having children. The majority of them resided in nuclear-family households, while others lived with extended family.

Recruitment channels included community contacts, referrals, and outreach through local NGOs and community organizations. Although purposive sampling enabled an in-depth exploration of lived experience, the final sample included a greater proportion of women and participants from Christian backgrounds. This distribution reflects the accessibility of recruitment and patterns of voluntary participation rather than deliberate exclusion of other groups. This study did not aim for demographic proportionality; instead, it sought experiential richness within interreligious marriages.

IPA traditionally uses relatively small purposive samples to enable in-depth idiographic analysis (Smith and Osborn 2015). Given the study's aim to explore various faith pairings and identify both idiosyncratic and shared psychological meanings, 20 participants were interviewed. This provided both detailed idiographic analysis and meaningful cross-case comparisons. Data collection ceased after the 20th interview as thematic saturation had been achieved. No new analytic codes or substantive themes were identified after the 18th interview, and two subsequent interviews (19–20) served as confirmatory interviews to validate emergent themes (Table 1).

Consistent with the purposive sampling approach typical of IPA, participants were selected for experiential relevance and contextual homogeneity. Based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, individuals were eligible for participation if they: (a) were legally married; (b) self-identified as being in an interreligious marriage (i.e., spouses belonging to different religious affiliations), (c) had been married between 1 and 10 years, allowing exploration of early and mid-stage marital adjustment; (d) were residing in India at the time of the study; (e) provided informed consent for participating and audio recording, and (f) individuals who self-reported experiencing a severe acute psychiatric crisis at the time of data collection were excluded to ensure participant well-being and to maintain focus on lived relational experiences rather than acute clinical distress and preserve analytic focus on nonclinical psychological well-being within interreligious marital contexts.

No formal measure of religiosity or religious practice was used as an inclusion criterion. The participants were not required to be regular practicing members of a faith community. This purposive strategy ensured that the sample was well aligned with the study's phenomenological aim of examining how individuals in interreligious marriages interpreted and constructed psychological well-being within their sociocultural environments.

**TABLE 1** | Demographic details of the individual participants in interreligious marriages ( $N=20$ ).

Participants	Age	Religion	Spouse's religion	Gender	Marital duration	Education
PA	37	Christian	Hindu	Female	5	Intermediate or diploma
PB	32	Christian	Hindu	Female	4	Graduate
PD	36	Hindu	Christian	Male	4	High school
PH	34	Christian	Hindu	Female	7	Intermediate or diploma
PK	36	Christian	Hindu	Female	5	Graduate
PI	28	Hindu	Christian	Female	3	Professional degree
PN	36	Christian	Hindu	Female	6	Intermediate or diploma
PO	34	Christian	Hindu	Female	5	Graduate
PT	35	Christian	Muslim	Female	6	Graduate
PC	30	Hindu	Christian	Female	4	Professional degree
PE	31	Muslim	Christian	Female	3	Graduate
PF	37	Christian	Hindu	Male	2	Professional degree
PG	35	Hindu	Christian	Female	2	Graduate
PJ	32	Christian	Hindu	Male	3	Professional degree
PL	32	Christian	Hindu	Female	4	Intermediate or diploma
PM	37	Christian	Hindu	Female	8	Professional degree
PP	35	Christian	Hindu	Male	4	Intermediate or diploma
PQ	38	Hindu	Christian	Male	8	Professional degree
PR	37	Muslim	Hindu	Female	7	Graduate
PS	40	Hindu	Muslim	Male	7	High school

Note: Participant identifiers (e.g., PA, PB, PC) are pseudonymous codes assigned to individual interviewees to ensure confidentiality. Each code represents a distinct participant; no spouses of participants were included in the sample. Marital duration is reported in years at the time of the interview.  $N=20$  refers to the total number of individual participants.

## 2.2 | Tools for Data Collection

An in-depth interview guide was developed based on themes derived from the comprehensive literature review and qualitative research questions, ensuring that the interviews were closely aligned with the study's qualitative enquiries to explore first-person narratives of positive and negative experiences related to their individual and relational well-being within their interreligious marriages. Although the interviews remained open-ended and exploratory in accordance with IPA, the PERMA model served as a sensitizing conceptual framework during the development of the interview guide. Questions were designed to elicit narratives related to emotional experiences (positive and negative), relational dynamics, engagement in shared practices, meaning-making processes, and perceptions of personal growth and accomplishment.

However, PERMA terminology was not explicitly introduced to participants, allowing themes to emerge organically from their lived experiences. The PERMA model functioned as an interpretative lens applied during analytic synthesis, rather than as a deductive template shaping participants' narratives. For example, the questions included: "How has your marital relationship contributed to your emotional life and current psychological well-being, either positively or negatively? What challenges have you

encountered in your interreligious marriage due to differing religious beliefs and practices? If so, what specific challenges have you come across, and how have they impacted your marital life and well-being? Has interfaith marriage or religious differences benefited you? How?" Five experts in the field further validated the in-depth interview guide.

## 2.3 | Procedure and Data Collection

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and written informed consent from all participants. The researcher clearly outlined the study's primary objectives to participants and provided assurances regarding confidentiality and anonymity before each interview. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw or choose not to answer any question without consequence.

## 2.4 | Risk Management and Participant Safety

Given the sensitive nature of discussing marital conflict, religious exclusion, and potential abuse, specific safeguards were

implemented to ensure participant well-being. Prior to the interview, participants were informed that confidentiality would be maintained; however, if disclosures indicated an immediate risk of serious harm to themselves or others, appropriate support and referral procedures would be discussed collaboratively. Although individuals experiencing severe acute psychiatric crises were excluded from participation, some participants disclosed past or ongoing psychological distress, including suicidal ideation and experiences of abuse related to interreligious marriage. In such instances, the interviewer conducted a brief safety check by gently clarifying whether the distress reflected current and imminent risk. This involved assessing whether thoughts of self-harm were historical or present, and determining whether any imminent intent or plan existed. When no immediate danger was identified, participants were supported within the interview context and, where appropriate, provided with information about accessible local mental health and support services. The researcher also engaged in supervisory consultation and reflexive debriefing throughout the data collection process to ensure ethical handling of emotionally sensitive disclosures.

Interviews were conducted in locations convenient to the participants, including their homes, public parks, or the researcher's office, depending on participants' preferences and availability, to promote comfort and openness. Each interview lasted approximately 45–90 min and was audio-recorded with their prior consent to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data. The recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and identifiable information was replaced with specific codes to maintain confidentiality. Each transcript was checked by coresearchers against audio recordings for accuracy, and further, these transcripts were returned to concerned participants for member checking of data accuracy. Upon confirmation, these transcripts were used for analysis.

## 2.5 | Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using IPA following the iterative and interpretative procedures outlined by Smith and Osborn (2015), which requires the researcher's reflexive engagement in a dialogue with a participant's narrative and meanings. The idiographic orientation of IPA guided a detailed, case-by-case engagement with each participant's narrative to understand how individuals in interreligious marriages made sense of their psychological and relational experiences. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived meanings participants assign to their experiences within complex sociocultural contexts such as India's pluralistic marriage landscape.

The analysis proceeded through a series of interconnected stages. In the *initial stage*, each interview transcript was read multiple times to achieve immersion with the data. Audio recordings were revisited to capture tone, emotion, and emphasis. Reflexive notes were made to document early impressions and emotional responses. In the *second stage* (initial noting), returning to the transcript to transform the initial notes into emerging themes, the researcher made detailed exploratory comments on each transcript. The primary objective was to formulate concise phrases that were sufficiently specific to remain grounded in the text while also providing conceptual understanding. The

*third stage* involved analyzing emerging themes and clustering them to capture the essential psychological meanings and experiential patterns within each transcript. At the *final stage*, a table of themes was produced. The table shows the structure of global themes, organizing themes, and basic themes. The next stage involves moving to the following case and repeating the process for each participant independently, while maintaining IPA's commitment to ideography.

Data analysis followed IPA principles, progressing through iterative stages of close reading, initial noting, and inductive theme development. During the early and intermediate phase of analysis, coding and theme construction were conducted without reference to the PERMA framework to preserve phenomenological openness and minimize theoretical imposition. The PERMA model was introduced only after the development of global and organizing themes. At this stage, the framework was used as an interpretative lens to explore how emergent themes aligned with the PERMA domains. To address potential analytical bias, transcripts were revisited during this integration phase to ensure that alignment with PERMA domains did not override participant-generated meanings. This reflexive review confirmed that the framework facilitated theoretical synthesis without altering or constraining the inductively derived themes. No additional PERMA-related themes were identified that had been omitted in earlier analytic stages. This stage ensured that interpretation remained theoretically coherent while grounded in participants' phenomenological accounts.

While IPA seeks to explore how individuals make sense of significant life experiences, the present study does not treat interview accounts as direct or objective representations of lived reality. Instead, the data consist of first-person narrative accounts of their experiences, constructed within the interview contexts. These narratives are shaped by memory, cultural discourse, relational positioning, and the interview's interactional dynamics.

Throughout the analysis process, the researcher engaged in reflexive journaling to monitor personal biases, emotional reactions, and interpretative assumptions. Peer debriefing sessions were conducted to enhance interpretive credibility and ensure that themes remained faithful to participants' meanings. Trustworthiness was established in accordance with the criteria proposed by Y. Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was ensured through member checking and peer debriefing; an audit trail of analytic decisions maintained dependability; confirmability was achieved through reflexive documentation; and transferability was provided by rich, detailed descriptions of participants' sociocultural contexts.

## 3 | Results

The thematic mapping presented in Table 2 illustrates how lived experiences of interreligious individuals align with Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of psychological well-being, thereby addressing the study's central research question. This shows both flourishing and deficit dimensions across emotional, relational, and existential areas. Rather than merely identifying positive and negative marital experiences, the analysis focuses on how participants narratively positioned their emotional states, relational dynamics, sense

**TABLE 2** | Participants' experiences of positive and negative psychological dynamics in interreligious marriage.

Global theme	Organizing themes	Basic themes (theoretical support—PERMA)
The psychological complexities of interreligious marriage	Positive dynamics of psychological well-being	1.1 Socio-familial approval, acceptance, and supports (P, R) 1.2 Coping and resilience (M) 1.4 Spousal emotional and mental supports (P, R) 1.5 Financial comfort and stability (A) 1.6 Partner-centered relationships and marital satisfaction (E, R) 1.7 Mutual premarital agreements on faith practices (M) 1.8 Mutual support and shared ritual participation (E, M)
	Psychological distress in interreligious marriage	2.1 Family rejection and estrangement (PERMA Deficits: P, R) 2.2 Social isolation and lack of support (PERMA Deficits: P, M) 2.3 Religious exclusion and conversion demands (PERMA Deficits: M, R) 2.4 Internalized guilt and depression (PERMA Deficits: M) 2.5 Mental health struggles (PERMA deficits: P, E) 2.6 Despair and suicidal ideation (PERMA deficits: P, M) 2.7 Loss of self-worth and self-esteem (PERMA deficits: A) 2.8 Broken expectations and emotional disillusionment (PERMA deficits: P, M, A) 2.9 Marital and intimate relationship challenges: abuse and exploitation (PERMA deficits: P, E, R) 2.10 Financial strains and denial of inheritance (PERMA deficits: P, A)
Strategies for the prospects and retrospective insights	Recommendations and cautionary reflections	3.1 Secure family acceptance and support (R) 3.2 Conflict management and communication (E) 3.3 Regretful retrospections (PERMA deficits) 3.4 Forewarning of enduring challenges (A) 3.5 Forewarning for girls (A)

Note: P = positive emotion; E = engagement; R = relationships; M = meaning; and A = accomplishment.

of meaning, and perceived accomplishment within broader religious and structural conditions.

Through IPA, two global themes were developed: (1) The psychological complexities of interreligious marriage and (2) strategies for the prospects and retrospective insights. These comprised three organizing themes—(1) Positive dynamics of psychological well-being, (2) psychological distress in interreligious marriage, and (3) recommendations and cautionary reflections—and 28 basic themes (Table 1). Across narratives, psychological well-being

emerged not as a fixed state but as a dynamic negotiation across relational, religious, and sociocultural conditions.

### 3.1 | Positive Dynamics of Psychological Well-Being

Participants described multiple processes through which interreligious marriage contributed to flourishing. These accounts illuminate how positive emotion, engagement, relationship,

meaning, and accomplishment were strengthened when acceptance, empathy, and mutual respect were present.

### **3.1.1 | Socio-Familial Approval, Acceptance, and Supports**

Some participants interpreted social endorsement not merely as approval, but as affirmation of legitimacy and belonging, strengthening both the relationships and positive emotion domains of PERMA. As PE, a 31-year-old graduate Muslim woman married to a Christian partner for 3 years, noted, “The social connections and support I receive from my family, friends and society have helped me feel mentally free and at peace. Psychologically, I am in a good state...” Some other participants described family participation in marriage ceremonies as symbolizing validation and reducing the sense of transgression. As PE stated, “Even though it was an interreligious marriage, it just happened like a normal wedding, with everyone’s presence and support, creating a joyful atmosphere.” These narratives illustrate how relational inclusion reinforces emotional stability and diminishes stigma.

### **3.1.2 | Coping and Resilience**

Several participants interpreted resilience as both spiritual and psychological endurance. When external support was limited, reliance on faith functioned as a meaning-making strategy, sustaining hope and emotional regulation. As PC (F, 30, Hindu married to a Christian for 4 years, completed professional degree) noted, “I prayed to God and trusted that He would not abandon me. I did not take these issues to heart. I believed that one day, they would understand me and accept me.” Here, coping was framed as spiritual surrender combined with long-term optimism, reinforcing the Meaning domain of PERMA while buffering negative emotion.

### **3.1.3 | Spousal Emotional and Mental Supports**

Spousal support emerged as the most consistent protective factor in several accounts. Some participants described their partners as primary sources of emotional containment and identity reinforcement, thereby strengthening the Relationships and Positive emotion domains. PT, a 35-year-old graduate woman in a Christian–Muslim marriage of 6 years, stated, “She made me the person I am today... This emotional support has greatly contributed to my psychological well-being.” Emotional reciprocity created a relational feedback loop evident in the PE’s account: “When he is happy with me, I feel valued and appreciated, and that makes me happy too.” Well-being was thus constructed as interdependent rather than individual.

### **3.1.4 | Financial Comfort and Stability**

In several accounts, financial comfort and stability were described as conditions for psychological ease and relational harmony. Some participants linked economic stability with reduced stress, greater autonomy, and perceived mastery, aligning with the Accomplishment domain. One participant noted, “Since we do not have any financial issues, we are mentally at peace” (PE,

F, 31, Muslim). Conversely, early financial insecurity intensified vulnerability, indicating how structural conditions intersect with psychological well-being.

### **3.1.5 | Partner-Centered Relationships and Marital Satisfaction**

In some accounts, participants described marital satisfaction as grounded in prioritization, consultation, shared decision-making, mutual understanding, partner support, and emotional intimacy. Being “put first” reinforced emotional safety and relational security. As PG, a graduate Hindu woman aged 35 and married to a Christian partner for 2 years, shared, “I feel that my husband prioritizes me more than anything else... He consults and discusses things with me... he always puts me first in his life.” Similarly, PF, a 37-year-old man in a 2-year-old Christian–Hindu marriage, with a professional degree, noted, “Whenever I face pressure at the workplace, our relationship helps me cope with that stress... my biggest source of relief.” Such narratives illustrate how relational equality simultaneously strengthens Engagement and Relationships.

### **3.1.6 | Mutual Premarital Agreements on Faith Practices**

Premarital negotiation on religious boundaries functioned as a preventive conflict mechanism. Some participants emphasized that explicit agreements reduced conversion pressure and sustained spiritual autonomy. As PC, a Hindu female aged 30, said, “We had already discussed all these matters before marriage... There is no talk between us about religion or religious practice.” Similarly, PS, a 40-year-old Hindu male in a 7-year marital partnership with a Muslim, having a higher school education, also affirmed, “We have never had an argument or disagreement about religion or religious practice... because we had an agreement on it.” These anticipatory negotiations stabilized Meaning and protected relational harmony.

### **3.1.7 | Mutual Religious Support and Shared Ritual Participation**

For some individuals, religious tolerance, mutual support, and understanding of religious issues were important for achieving good psychological outcomes. Some participants described active participation in others’ religious practices as symbolic solidarity rather than theological compromise. As PF, a 37-year-old Christian male, said, “When I attend church, she accompanies me... when she visits the temple, I go with her as support to my wife.” Religious coexistence strengthened the Meaning and Engagement domain of PERMA, enabling couples to reinterpret religious differences as a relational enrichment.

## **3.2 | Psychological Distress in Interreligious Marriage**

Alongside flourishing, participants described profound distress. These narratives demonstrate how deficits across

PERMA domains emerged when family rejection, societal stigma, religious exclusion, and structural pressures intensified.

### 3.2.1 | Family Rejection and Estrangement

In several accounts, participants described being disowned, criticized, or even threatened by their families due to perceived violations of religious or cultural norms. For some participants, family rejection was not merely relational conflict but moral condemnation grounded in perceived religious transgression. As PN, a 36-year-old Christian female married to a Hindu, with Intermediate education, explained: “Not being able to contact my family and their continued refusal to accept me has caused me a lot of stress.” Similarly, PM, a 37-year-old Christian female with a professional degree, married to a Hindu with 8 years of partnership, informed: “I do not even have the freedom to talk to my mother... My brothers are completely against me.” Rejection disrupted the *Positive Emotion* and *Relationships* domains of PERMA.

### 3.2.2 | Social Isolation and Lack of Support

For some participants, social isolation extended beyond reduced social contact to active withdrawal by religious communities, producing a rupture in collective identity. Social isolation was experienced not merely as physical separation, but as relational exclusion from family networks, religious communities, and broader social circles. PB, a 32-year-old Christian female graduate in a 4-year marriage to a Hindu, noted, “I feel completely alone and separated. This severely affects my mental peace... religious community started avoiding me as I married someone from a different religion.” Isolation weakened relational support systems central to flourishing and contributed to reduced Positive Emotion and diminished Meaning. Within PERMA, this theme illustrates how relational exclusion in interreligious contexts destabilizes psychological stability by simultaneously eroding belonging and existential coherence.

### 3.2.3 | Religious Exclusion and Conversion Demands

Several participants experienced exclusion from religious rituals and pressure to convert, which disrupted sacred identity and emotional balance. They described that religious exclusion, denial of the sacraments, and the prohibition of familial and religious rituals were deeply distressing for them. PN, a 36-year-old Christian, informed: “I cannot receive the sacraments... I used to get peace from Holy Communion and confession... this situation makes me very unhappy.” Some participants described that religious exclusion leads to conversion demands from both religious communities and families. PO, a 34-year-old woman in a Christian–Hindu marriage of 5 years, with a graduate degree, noted: “The pressure from my in-laws for conversion is mentally exhausting me.” At the same time, PD, a Hindu male aged 36 and married to a Christian partner for 4 years, added, “My religious community has pressured me to convert her (my wife) to Hinduism, while the Christian community (wife’s) wanted me

to convert to Christianity.” Similarly, PI, a 28-year-old woman in a Hindu–Christian marriage of 3 years, with a professional degree, reported: “Pressure from husband’s family to convert to Christianity is a stress for me.”

Religious exclusion and conversion demand primarily disrupted Meaning, as sacred identity and spiritual continuity were threatened. Conversion pressures also strained the *Relationships* domain, transforming religion from a potential source of shared meaning into a site of coercion.

### 3.2.4 | Internalized Guilt and Depression

Some participants experienced a frequent sense of loss of sacred identity and internalized guilt stemming from the forced perception of interreligious marriage as a sin and a transgression of religious doctrine. This guilt was often internalized, particularly when misfortunes (such as disability or death) were interpreted as divine punishment for “sin” of marrying outside their faith. As PC, a 30-year-old Hindu, noted:

My child is differently abled... Some people said that this happened because of our interreligious marriage... When some deaths occurred in my family, people used to blame me, saying that it happened because I had sinned

(interreligious marriage).

Statement of PO (F, 34, Hindu) further supports the PC’s view: “My father-in-law passed away, and I keep thinking that it may be a punishment for choosing interfaith marriage.” Such narratives demonstrate how spiritual guilt and karmic blame are culturally weaponized, reinforcing emotional distress and psychological self-recrimination.

### 3.2.5 | Mental Health Struggles

Across several accounts, participants described psychological distress manifesting in anxiety, insomnia, emotional exhaustion, and depressive symptoms, often following sustained family rejection, religious exclusion, or relational strain. As PA, a 37-year-old Christian female with a diploma, married to a Hindu for 5 years, expressed: “Life is full of stress and tension... I cannot even sleep properly... I feel like I am carrying a heavy weight in my mind.” Distress was often attributed to sustained social opposition and relational strain, as evident from the words of PH, a 34-year-old graduate Christian woman married to a Hindu partner for 7 years: “There is no support from society... people alienate us and blame us for this interfaith marriage. Many are opposed to it, which affects my well-being.” These accounts reflect erosion within Positive Emotion and, in prolonged cases, diminished capacity for Engagement in daily life.

### 3.2.6 | Despair and Suicidal Ideation

Some participants reported that distress intensified into the experiences of existential despair, suicidal ideation, and

a profound loss of life purpose. As PD, a 36-year-old Hindu male, noted, “I do not even understand how to go on with my life... Sometimes, I feel like just ending my life.” PK, a 36-year-old female in a Christian–Hindu marriage of 5 years, with a graduate degree, similarly stated, “I am not at all happy in my life... I even think of ending my life.” These narratives reflect severe breakdowns across multiple PERMA domains simultaneously. The loss of life purpose indicates disruption within the Meaning domain. Suicidal ideation reflects a profound erosion of Positive Emotion, where hopelessness replaces joy or emotional security.

### 3.2.7 | Loss of Self-Worth and Self-Esteem

Some participants described that the internalized stigma translated into diminished self-esteem and a loss of self-worth. As PT (F, 35, Christian, 6 years of union) noted: “...I do not sleep well. I often think of suicide. I feel like I am stuck in a cage. My self-esteem is destroyed. I feel worthless.” The metaphor of being “stuck in a cage” reflects internal entrapment and loss of agency. Such accounts indicate erosion within the Accomplishment domain, where individuals no longer perceived themselves as competent or empowered actors in their lives. Participants described feeling morally blamed, spiritually compromised, and socially diminished, as a loss of Meaning in life.

### 3.2.8 | Broken Expectations and Emotional Disillusionment

Several participants reported a shift from premarital optimism to postmarital disappointment. Premarital assurances that “religion would not matter” were later reinterpreted as unstable commitments, disrupting both relational trust and existential coherence. As PA, a 37-year-old Christian female, noted: “Before our marriage, he promised me that religion was not important to him and he would always support me. However, over time, all these promises have been broken. I was thrilled... but the excitement and happiness have gone over time.” Some participants experienced regret over their decision to marry outside their faith. As PO, a 34-year-old Christian woman, stated, “Sometimes, I feel that I made a big mistake by choosing a partner from another religion... I often used to think that if I had not married someone from another religion, maybe none of these challenges would have occurred in life.” For some, disillusionment centered on religious tolerance. For others, unmet expectations reflected general relational incompatibility. In both cases, erosion occurred across Positive emotion, Meaning, and perceived Accomplishment domains.

### 3.2.9 | Marital and Intimate Relationship Challenges: Abuse and Exploitation

In some accounts, relational breakdown occurred within the marital dyad itself, including emotional detachment and abuse. Some participants reported that marital discord, emotional detachment, lack of intimacy, and experiences of abuse and exploitation increased their psychological vulnerability. While PB

stated, “I feel that we are no longer emotionally or physically connected. I do not feel any attachment or concern for him,” PD reported profound emotional suffering and fear: “I feel like I am living someone else’s life... one filled with abuse, fear, and emotional breakdown.” Some other participants revealed a deeply distressing experience of physical and sexual abuse, including exploitation by extended family members. As PT disclosed, “I have experienced severe physical and sexual abuse... not only abused by my husband... was given to his friends... even his father used me.” Similarly, PA reported, “Physical abuse has affected me deeply. He used to beat me and use abusive language.” These narratives illustrate how breakdown within the Relationship domain cascaded into diminished Positive Emotion, weakened Engagement, and loss of perceived agency.

### 3.2.10 | Financial Strains and Denial of Inheritance

Several participants repeatedly reported financial vulnerability, mainly stemming from the absence of family inheritance and social sanctions. In several accounts, denial of inheritance or economic support functioned as a social sanction against interreligious marriage. One participant expressed:

We are facing financial stress. After marriage, we have many financial difficulties. It was an agitated situation for me, and I kept worrying about how we would manage our lives. I did not get anything from my family. They were not ready to give me anything as I married someone from another religion. Similarly, there is no financial support from the husband’s family, either

(PC, F, 30, Hindu, 4 years of union).

Financial instability disrupted Accomplishment, reduced autonomy, and intensified stress within Positive emotion. It also symbolized relational rejection within extended family systems.

## 3.3 | Recommendations and Cautionary Reflections

Participants’ recommendations functioned as reflective meaning-making processes through which individuals attempted to restore coherence across disrupted PERMA domains. The main recommendations emphasized the importance of family acceptance, empathy, respect for each other’s religious practices, open communication, and strong conflict management. Cautionary reflections emphasized regret, emotional fatigue, abuse, familial alienation, and identity suppression, especially among women. Rather than detached advice, these reflections reveal how participants reinterpreted their experiences of flourishing and distress to construct guidance for future interreligious couples.

### 3.3.1 | Secure Family Acceptance and Support

Some participants emphasized parental endorsement as foundational to relational stability, thereby helping reconstruct the

PERMA components. They viewed family endorsement not merely as social approval but as an emotional and cultural foundation for marital success. PE, a 31-year-old Muslim woman, recommended:

I strongly recommend seeking parents' acceptance and support... their role in our lives is significant... So, to the maximum extent possible, communicate with them, gain their support, and, if possible, let them be the ones to conduct the marriage. Their involvement will make the journey much smoother and more fulfilling.

### 3.3.2 | Conflict Management and Communication

Several participants emphasized the significance of conflict management and communication as crucial mechanisms for navigating cultural and religious differences. Open communication and adherence to premarital agreements were framed as essential for sustaining relationships and Engagement. PS advised, "Never think of religious conversion... Accept each other as you are... Refrain from fighting over religion." Similarly, PQ, a 38-year-old man in a Hindu-Christian marriage of 8 years with a professional degree, suggested:

Interfaith marriage may bring stress or tension from family and society, but if both partners are prepared to face that without blaming each other, then it can be successful. It is essential to adhere to the mutual agreements and understandings you had before marriage. Do not attempt to change those things afterwards.

### 3.3.3 | Regretful Retrospections

The narratives of some participants revealed regretful observations on their experiences of psychological distress, regret, emotional exhaustion, cultural conflicts, and relational breakdowns that led to disillusionment in interreligious unions. As PK, a 36-year-old Christian woman, noted, "I will never support interfaith marriages anymore. It is very hard to cope with. One has to suffer the consequences of these differences until death." Similarly, PT (F, 35, Christian) also shared a painful narrative of betrayal, abuse, and isolation:

I never support interfaith marriage. It is very difficult to survive. I am personally against interreligious marriage, especially after what I have been through. Before marriage, I believed that love could overcome all religious differences. I thought mutual respect and understanding would be enough. But unfortunately, that wasn't the reality in my case. I married from [name of religion] faith, thinking our bond was strong enough to handle the differences. However, after marriage, everything changed... I

was emotionally and mentally harassed. Even my husband, who once claimed religion wouldn't matter, slowly changed. He started pressuring me to change my identity and beliefs... He and his friends, even his father, sexually abused me... I have three children... the first one is my husband's.... I am not sure about the other two. The worst part is the isolation. I was cut off from my own family, and I didn't belong in his either. I was judged, ridiculed, and eventually made to feel like an outsider... The emotional toll it took on me is something I wouldn't wish on anyone. So, when someone asks me about interfaith marriage, I don't just answer with logic... I speak from pain... I advise everyone to think deeply, not just emotionally, before entering into an interfaith marriage. Because when it goes wrong, it doesn't just affect the couple... it affects families, identities, and mental health.

### 3.3.4 | Forewarning of Enduring Challenges

Several participants acknowledged that interreligious marriages can succeed only when couples are thoroughly prepared to face the complex, ongoing challenges they involve and support and understand each other, which supports the Meaning-making domain of PERMA and process-oriented action. PH, a 34-year-old Christian female, recommended:

I will not outright recommend or support interfaith marriage, but I will not completely discourage it either. I would advise them to think carefully before making a decision... In my case, my husband has been understanding, supportive, and stood by me during difficult times. Even when his family created problems, he defended me. Not everyone may have such a supportive partner... Interfaith marriages come with many challenges, and if a couple cannot overcome them, it can be challenging.

### 3.3.5 | Forewarning for Girls

Some participants provided specific cautionary guidance for women, explaining the gendered nature of interreligious marriage experiences, a point further supported by the Accomplishment domain. PR, a 37-year-old woman in a Muslim-Hindu marriage of 7 years, with a graduate degree, advised:

I would tell them that girls need to be wise and prepared. They are the ones who leave everything behind and go with someone. So, they must be strong and bold enough to face the challenges that may come from society, family, and the religious community.

Across themes, the PERMA framework illuminates how interreligious marriage functions as a dynamic site of flourishing

and vulnerability. For some participants, positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment were strengthened when they experienced acceptance, support, mutual respect, and spiritual autonomy. Conversely, for others, family rejection, social denial, religious exclusion, conversion pressure, and structural sanction disrupted multiple PERMA domains simultaneously. These findings demonstrate that psychological well-being in interreligious marriage is not static but negotiated continuously across relational, religious, and socio-cultural contexts.

#### 4 | Discussion

This study explored the multilayered dimensions of psychological well-being among individuals in interreligious marriages in the Indian sociocultural context, using IPA informed by Seligman's PERMA framework. The findings demonstrated that interreligious unions function simultaneously as sites of flourishing and vulnerability. Psychological well-being was strengthened when empathy, spousal support, religious tolerance, and familial acceptance were present, echoing prior linking relational validation and social endorsement to enhanced marital and mental health outcomes (Proulx et al. 2007; Shoaf et al. 2022). Conversely, experiences of social stigma, family rejection, religious exclusion, and coercive pressures were associated with emotional distress, identity strain, and diminished well-being, consistent with studies highlighting the psychological costs of marginalization in interreligious unions (Beach et al. 1990; Cyriac and Mathew 2026; Proulx et al. 2007; Shoaf et al. 2022).

The findings, synthesized through Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework, demonstrate that interreligious marriage operates as a dynamic configuration of both flourishing and vulnerability rather than a uniformly protective institution. Well-being fluctuated across positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment depending on sociocultural validation and religious negotiation. Emotional stability was strengthened through relational reciprocity and symbolic family inclusion but eroded under stigma and rejection (Mahoney 2010; Shoaf et al. 2022). Engagement was sustained through shared ritual participation and collaborative decision-making, yet weakened in the face of coercion or relational withdrawal (Chebotareva and Volk 2020; Kurniawan et al. 2017).

The Relationships domain proved particularly sensitive to family endorsement and dyadic support, while the meaning functioned simultaneously as a resilience resource and a vulnerability site when sacred identity was either respected or morally condemned (Hamdanah 2018; Kurttekin 2020). Accomplishment was reinforced through financial autonomy, mastery in conflict resolution, and adaptive coping, but undermined by economic exclusion and gendered structural constraints (Shoaf et al. 2022). These patterns indicate that psychological well-being in interreligious unions emerges through ongoing negotiation between relational intimacy, spiritual identity, and socio-structural conditions. Results showed how the identified themes intersect with PERMA domains, illustrating the multidimensional configuration of flourishing and deficit across interreligious marital contexts.

Early scholarship in the late 1900s and early 2000s frequently emphasized the general health and social benefits of marriage, often concluding that married individuals experience better psychological, economic, and physical outcomes compared to unmarried individuals (Soulsby and Bennett 2015; Waite and Gallagher 2000; Waite and Lehrer 2003). While such research established important associations between marriage and well-being, it tended to treat marriage as a relatively homogeneous institution, overlooking how structural inequalities, religious heterogeneity, and family systems shape marital experiences.

However, early scholarship on marital benefits has also consistently demonstrated that the advantages of marriages are not uniformly distributed across gender. Foundational work by Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton (2001) showed that while marriage is generally associated with improved health outcomes, men tend to derive greater physiological and psychological benefits than women, particularly due to the differences in emotional labor, caregiving burden, and exposure to relational stress (Simon 2002; Tatangelo et al. 2017). Similarly, Williams (2003) reported that marriage is more strongly protective against psychological distress for men than for women, with women's well-being more contingent upon marital quality and relational equity. Fowers (1991) further emphasized that women's marital satisfaction is closely tied to relational dynamics such as communication, emotional reciprocity, and role expectations, rather than marital status alone.

These gendered patterns are particularly relevant to the present study, given the predominance of female participants and the salience of themes such as emotional burden, relational vulnerability, and cautionary reflections directed toward women. The findings suggest that interreligious marriage may amplify pre-existing gendered inequalities, where women disproportionately bear consequences of familial rejection, religious adaptation, and identity negotiation.

In Indian context, marital experiences are further shaped by collectivist family systems, patriarchal norms, and religiously embedded social structures, which may intensify gender asymmetries in marital outcomes. Earlier research in India has highlighted that marriage is not solely a dyadic relationship but a family-regulated institution, where women often experience greater constraints related to autonomy, mobility, and identity (Allendorf and Pandian 2016; Gupta et al. 2021).

The present findings complicate this earlier pro-marriage narrative by demonstrating that interreligious marriage does not uniformly confer psychological advantage. Instead, well-being emerges as contingent upon relational dynamics, familial acceptance, religious negotiation, gender positioning, and legal context (Sewenet et al. 2017). The coexistence of flourishing and distress observed in this study suggests that marriage is not inherently protective; instead, its psychological consequences are mediated by sociocultural structures and relational processes. By foregrounding both resilience and vulnerability in interreligious unions, this study contributes to a more differentiated, context-sensitive understanding of marital well-being.

The predominance of early-stage marriages in the sample may partially explain the salience of acute conflict, identity negotiation, and emotional volatility in participants' narratives, as early marital years typically involve greater adjustment and relational restructuring.

#### 4.1 | Positive Dynamics of Psychological Well-Being

The findings indicated that the interplay of relational intimacy, social endorsement, spiritual negotiation, and structural stability shaped psychological flourishing in interreligious marriages. Participants' narratives emphasized spousal emotional support, premarital agreements regarding faith practices, mutual respect, shared ritual participation, and family acceptance as protective resources. These patterns aligned with research linking relational closeness, dyadic adjustment, and community belonging to marital satisfaction and psychological well-being (Chebotareva and Volk 2020; Hwang et al. 2019; Margelisch et al. 2017; Proulx et al. 2007; Qadir et al. 2013; Shoaf et al. 2022; Walker et al. 2013).

Social and familial support functioned as stabilizing anchors, reducing depressive symptoms and buffering stress (Abbas et al. 2019; Hughes and Dickson 2005; Margelisch et al. 2017), contributing to the Positive emotion and Relationships components of PERMA. However, consistent with recent findings, internal marital processes, such as empathy, effective communication, and mutual understanding, often exerted a stronger influence than external validation, suggesting that dyadic intimacy may compensate for limited social approval (Abu-Raiya et al. 2016; Brousseau and Mallinger 1981; Hamdanah 2018; McAloney 2013; Puri and LakshmiPriya 2024).

Financial stability and relational spirituality further reinforced well-being. Reduced financial stress enhanced emotional equilibrium and relational stability, supporting prior evidence that financial security strengthened marital satisfaction and reduced psychological distress (Archuleta 2013; Chebotareva and Volk 2020; K. D. Lincoln and Chae 2010; Vinokur et al. 1996; Walker et al. 2013). This stable financial environment allows for greater engagement and meaning through the development of relational intimacy. Likewise, mutual engagement in each other's religious traditions fostered tolerance and shared moral purpose, echoing research on integrative spirituality in interreligious unions (Mahoney 2010; Marks and Dollahite 2017). Interpreted through PERMA, these processes collectively enhanced emotional stability, relational security, existential coherence, and perceived accomplishment within India's collectivist setting.

The positive dynamics identified in this study can be further illuminated through Swidler's (1986, 2003) cultural theory of marriage, which conceptualizes marital stability as the outcome of ongoing cultural action rather than sustained romantic sentiment. Participants' narratives revealed how interreligious couples actively mobilize cultural tools and repertoires, such as premarital agreements regarding faith practices, routinised religious tolerance, selective ritual participation, and moral reframing of commitment, to manage conflict and stabilize relationships under persistent social and familial strain (Hughes

and Dickson 2005; Puri and LakshmiPriya 2024). In line with Swidler's (2003) argument in "Talk of Love," individuals in interreligious marriages sustained their relationship not through continuous romantic fulfillment but through pragmatic strategies, habituated practice, and moral narratives that emphasized endurance, responsibility, and shared purpose. In this sense, psychological well-being is not merely a passive outcome across PERMA domains but a product of deliberate, procedural work through which couples actively sustained meaning, intimacy, and resilience despite fluctuating emotions, social rejection, and religious pressures.

#### 4.2 | Psychological Distress in Interreligious Marriages

Despite the narratives of flourishing, interreligious married individuals also described psychological distress in interreligious unions, rooted in family rejection, social stigma, coercive religiosity, and financial stress. These experiences manifested as social exclusion, loss of sacred identity, internalized guilt, anxiety, marital discord, sleep disturbance, and suicidal ideation in severe instances. These experiences align with earlier findings from similar socioreligious contexts (McAloney 2013; Shahar 2017; Suyaman and Alfiany 2022). Conversion demands and religious exclusion were often internalized as guilt, providing Shahar's (2017) insights into vulnerabilities in mixed marriages. Narratives on religious moralizing to interfaith unions, where misfortune is attributed as the "sin" of such a union, lead to internalized guilt and spiritual alienation. Notably, attribution contributed to the feelings as the "loss of sacred self," resonating with Mahoney's (2010) concept of spiritual trauma.

These experiences corroborate Hamdanah's (2018) and Patras's (2021) findings that interreligious parenting and gendered religious hierarchy intensify chronic stress among these couples. Women's narratives reported gendered vulnerabilities, including conversion pressures, loss of autonomy, and legal precarity, consistent with prior research (Farooq and Shah 2023; Patras 2021; Shahar 2017). Legal pluralism and conversion demands further intensified distress by threatening marital acceptability and sacred identity (Suyaman and Alfiany 2022).

Financial distress significantly predicted psychological distress due to increased marital conflicts and diminished security. These findings of the study are in agreement with the studies indicating financial insecurity heightens depressive symptoms, marital dissatisfaction, and anxiety (Archuleta 2013; K. D. Lincoln and Chae 2010; Vinokur et al. 1996). Within the PERMA framework, such conditions diminish positive emotion, weaken engagement, and disrupt relationships, consequently dismantling meaning and accomplishment. The lack of financial stability and social acceptance forced couples to internalize guilt and alienation, which further resulted in psychological distress (Archuleta 2013).

From a positive psychology perspective, these results elucidate how structural inequalities (social stigma, gender hierarchies, and legal constraints) systematically destabilize the conditions necessary for flourishing (Mahoney 2010; Seligman 2011). Thus, the interaction of individual and relational stressors

indicates that flourishing cannot exist in isolation from individual and institutional support (Farooq and Shah 2023; Seligman 2011).

### 4.3 | Recommendations and Cautionary Reflections

Qualitative narratives from interreligious married individuals provided practical guidance and cautionary insights for future couples in such unions, which align with the engagement, meaning, and accomplishment domain of PERMA. Participants' accounts recommended obtaining family acceptance and approval, establishing mutual marital agreements on religious practices and child upbringing, and developing financial preparedness. These strategies resonate with strength-based frameworks, indicating proactive relational coping and effective communication as a medium for conflict prevention (Chebotareva and Volk 2020; Kurttekin 2020; Radjab et al. 2020; Shoaf et al. 2022).

Simultaneously, cautionary narratives of women participants, including regret, emotional fatigue, and disillusionment, warned against romanticizing interreligious marriage without accounting for gender and legal vulnerabilities (Farooq and Shah 2023; Patras 2021; Suyaman and Alfiany 2022). These insights parallel those of Myers (2006), who argues that the protective value of intergroup contact is contingent upon broader social acceptance and institutional support. These findings reaffirm that marital satisfaction, social well-being, and financial security must coexist with structural support to maintain well-being in interfaith marriages.

### 4.4 | Integrative Interpretation and Theoretical Implication

The present study demonstrated that the PERMA functions most effectively in interreligious contexts as an interpretive scaffold rather than a deterministic framework. Experiences of individuals in interreligious marriages revealed that positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment were deeply interdependent and structurally conditioned rather than isolated psychological traits. Flourishing emerged when relational validation, spiritual autonomy, and economic stability converged, whereas stigma, conversion pressure, gendered hierarchy, and legal precarity simultaneously destabilized multiple domains. In this sense, external social and legal supports sustained well-being, while familial rejection and institutional constraints contributed to cascading deficits across domains (Hwang et al. 2021; Patras 2021).

It is important to note that PERMA was employed in this study as an interpretative framework rather than a comprehensive explanatory theory of marital development or structural inequality. While the model effectively highlights the dimensions of flourishing and deficit across emotional, relational, and existential domains, it does not independently account for the complex socio-legal and gendered structures shaping interreligious marriages. Therefore, the present analysis situates PERMA within broader relational and structural conditions, recognizing that

well-being unfolds through ongoing interaction between individual meaning-making and institutional contexts.

However, while the PERMA effectively maps the experiential dimension of flourishing and vulnerability, it does not independently account for the cultural and interactional processes through which interreligious marriages are actively negotiated over time. Swidler's (1986, 2003) cultural theory of marriage provides this processual depth by conceptualizing culture as a "tool kit" of symbols, narratives, and strategies that individuals mobilize under strain. From this perspective, participants' accounts of premarital agreements, negotiated religious boundaries, selective ritual participation, and moral reframing of commitment reflect deliberate cultural action aimed at sustaining marital continuity despite familial resistance and social stigma.

### 4.5 | Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, the study sample was unequally distributed, with a predominance of Christian and female participants. This imbalance may have shaped the thematic emphasis on gendered vulnerability, familial conflict, and particular forms of religious negotiation. Male perspectives, nonbinary experiences, and other religious combinations may involve distinct relational and structural dynamics not fully captured in the present dataset. Future research should employ more gender-balanced, cross-regional, and religiously diverse sampling strategies to enhance comparative and intersectional understanding.

Second, most participants were in relatively early stages of marriage (1–5 years), with fewer in mid-duration unions (6–10 years) and none in long-term marriages. Early marital years often involve heightened emotional intensity, adjustment processes, identity negotiation, and family integration processes, which may amplify both distress and resilience. Consequently, the findings reflect transitional and developmental stages rather than long-term relational trajectories. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting early-to-mid marital experiences rather than the whole life-course trajectory of interreligious unions. Longitudinal research following couples across later life-course stages would provide deeper insight into how psychological well-being evolves in interreligious unions.

Third, the study adopted an individual-level phenomenological approach rather than a dyadic design. Interviewing only one partner from each marriage enabled in-depth exploration of subjective meaning-making, but did not allow examination of the interactive "tandem negotiation" process within couples. Future research could incorporate dyadic or tandem interviewing approaches (Bartkowski 2001; Steensland et al. 2000) to understand how partners co-construct religious meaning, negotiate differences, and manage relational challenges.

Fourth, the study did not include a formal measure of religiosity or frequency of religious practice. Variations in religious commitment likely influence experiences of sacred identity, conversion pressures, and meaning-making. Further research could integrate structured assessments of religiosity to examine

further how degrees of religious involvement interact with psychological well-being in interreligious unions.

Despite these limitations, the primary strengths of this study lie in its empirical richness and theoretically informed interpretative use of the PERMA framework. The use of IPA enabled a nuanced exploration of the lived psychological experiences of interreligious couples, illuminating how these individuals construct meaning and negotiate identity in complex socioreligious contexts. This approach ensured authenticity, emotional depth, and contextual sensitivity, often lacking in large-scale quantitative studies. Anchoring the analysis in Seligman's PERMA model provided conceptual coherence while allowing culturally embedded interpretations of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. These strengths extend positive psychology scholarship into the underexplored domain of interreligious marriage within the Indian context.

#### 4.6 | Implications of the Study

This study offers essential theoretical, clinical, and policy implications for understanding psychological well-being in interreligious marriages within India's religiously plural context. The findings demonstrated that flourishing in such unions is shaped not only by individual resilience but by relational validation, spiritual negotiation, and structural conditions. Within the PERMA framework, the relationships and meaning domains appear particularly central in collectivist settings, as family acceptance and religious coherence significantly influence emotional stability, engagement, and perceived accomplishment.

Clinically, these findings support the use of culturally responsive, PERMA-informed approaches when working with interreligious couples. Practitioners should attend to strengths as well as stressors across relational, spiritual, and emotional domains. Interventions may incorporate facilitated dialogue around faith negotiation, shared spiritual agreements, conflict resolution, and family boundary management. Family-based counseling can further reduce stigma by enhancing mutual understanding (Chebotareva and Volk 2020; Shoaf et al. 2022). Given the gendered vulnerabilities identified in this study, particularly among women navigating patriarchal and religiously rigid environments, clinicians should also adopt gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches (Patras 2021; Shahar 2017). Such approaches shift practice from symptom management toward promoting relational resilience and mutual respect.

At the policy level, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening institutional support for interreligious couples. Legal uncertainty, religiously segmented personal laws, and bureaucratic complications may exacerbate psychological distress (Farooq and Shah 2023; Margelisch et al. 2017; Patras 2021; Suyaman and Alfiany 2022). Policies that ensure equitable access to civil marriage procedures, protect rights related to registration, custody, and inheritance, and reduce administrative obstacles could mitigate structural stressors that undermine well-being. Supporting interreligious unions through inclusive legal frameworks contributes not only to marital stability but also to broader social cohesion in plural societies.

## 5 | Conclusion

This qualitative investigation examines the dynamic interplay between psychological well-being and socio-relational conditions within interreligious marriage in contemporary India. For some couples, intentional negotiation, family acceptance, and material stability contribute to patterns of flourishing reflected in positive emotion, relational security, shared meaning, and perceived accomplishment. Conversely, family rejection, legal ambiguity, gendered coercion, and social stigma create conditions that intensify psychological distress, including identity strain, emotional exhaustion, and relational breakdown. By mapping these narrative accounts of people's experiences onto Seligman's PERMA model and situating findings within existing cross-national literature, the study advocates for multilevel interventions that combine dyadic therapy, family outreach, legal reforms, and community education. Future research should expand demographic diversity, employ longitudinal and dyadic designs, and incorporate couple-based interviewing methods to examine how interreligious partners jointly negotiate identity, spirituality, and relational resilience over time, and to evaluate targeted interventions to reduce harm and amplify the resilience pathways documented.

---

#### Funding

The authors have nothing to report.

#### Ethics Statement

We certify that the study complied with the ethical standards outlined in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its subsequent amendments, or with comparable ethical standards. Informed consent has been approved by participants.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

#### Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

#### References

- Abbas, J., M. Aqeel, J. Abbas, et al. 2019. "The Moderating Role of Social Support for Marital Adjustment, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress: Evidence From Pakistani Working and Nonworking Women." *Journal of Affective Disorders* 244: 231–238. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.07.071>.
- Abu-Raiya, H., K. I. Pargament, and N. Krause. 2016. "Religion as Problem, Religion as Solution: Religious Buffers of the Links Between Religious/Spiritual Struggles and Well-Being/Mental Health." *Quality of Life Research* 25, no. 5: 1265–1274. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-015-1163-8>.
- Aini, N. 2008. "Inter-Religious Marriage From Socio-Historical Islamic Perspectives." *Brigham Young University Law Review* 3: 669. <https://digitallcommons.law.byu.edu/lawreview/vol2008/iss3/1>.
- Allendorf, K., and R. K. Pandian. 2016. "The Decline of Arranged Marriage? Marital Change and Continuity in India." *Population and Development Review* 42, no. 3: 435–464.

- Amato, P. R., and A. Booth. 2001. "The Legacy of Parents' Marital Discord: Consequences for Children's Marital Quality." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. 4: 627–638. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.81.4.627>.
- Archuleta, K. L. 2013. "Couples, Money, and Expectations: Negotiating Financial Management Roles to Increase Relationship Satisfaction." *Marriage & Family Review* 49, no. 5: 391–411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2013.766296>.
- Ata, A. 2005. *Mixed Marriages: Catholic/Non-Catholic Marriages in Australia*. David Lovell Publishing. <https://acuresearchbank.acu.edu.au/item/88186/mixed-marriages-catholic-non-catholic-marriages-in-australia>.
- Barber, K. E. 1967. *An Analysis of Intra-Faith and Interfaith Marriage in Indiana*. University Microfilms. Purdue University. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=Barber%2C+K.+E.+%281967%29.+An+Analysis+of+intra-faith+and+interfaith+marriage+in+Indiana.+In+University+Microfilms.+Purdue+University.&btnG=](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Barber%2C+K.+E.+%281967%29.+An+Analysis+of+intra-faith+and+interfaith+marriage+in+Indiana.+In+University+Microfilms.+Purdue+University.&btnG=).
- Bartkowski, J. P. 2001. *Remaking the Godly Marriage: Gender Negotiation in Evangelical Families*. Rutgers University Press. [https://books.google.co.in/books?id=d7C3FsVjWiYC&pg=PR3&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=1#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.in/books?id=d7C3FsVjWiYC&pg=PR3&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=1#v=onepage&q&f=false).
- Beach, S., E. Sandeen, and K. D. O'Leary. 1990. *Depression in Marriage*. Guilford Press. <https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=RbssgU7RKSskC&oi=fnd&pg=PR2&dq=Beach,+S.,+Sandeen,+E.,+&+O%27Leary,+K.+D.+1990.+Depression+in+Marriage.+New+York.+Guilford+Press.&ots=LYp8xO5gt6&sig=eSlZxxE6fB3jtehOU0K2qtxgwUw%23v=onepage&q&f=false>.
- Bidner, C., and M. Eswaran. 2015. "A Gender-Based Theory of the Origin of the Caste System of India." *Journal of Development Economics* 114: 142–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JDEVCO.2014.12.006>.
- Brousseau, K. R., and M. A. Mallinger. 1981. "Internal-External Locus of Control, Perceived Occupational Stress, and Cardiovascular Health." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 2, no. 1: 65–71. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030020106>.
- Chebotareva, E. Y., and M. I. Volk. 2020. "Life and Family Values Similarity in Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Faith Couples." *Behavioral Science* 10, no. 1: 38. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs10010038>.
- Colaner, C. W., A. L. Atkin, A. Elkhaliq, M. Minniear, and J. Soliz. 2023. "Communication in Interfaith and Multiethnic-Racial Families: Navigating Identity and Difference in Family Relationships." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 40, no. 6: 1673–1705. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075221137317>.
- Curtis, K. T., and C. G. Ellison. 2002. "Religious Heterogamy and Marital Conflict: Findings From the National Survey of Families and Households." *Journal of Family Issues* 23, no. 4: 551–576. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X02023004005>.
- Cyriac, J., P. Mathew, and S. K. Rajan. 2024. "Interaction of Generational Differences With Gender and Residential Nature in Attitudes Toward Interfaith Marriages." *Marriage & Family Review* 60: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2024.2402472>.
- Cyriac, J., P. Mathew, and S. Thomas. 2026. "Attitude Toward Inter-Religious Marriage: Interplay of Generational Shifts With Religious Affiliations and Educational Attainments." *Journal of Family Social Work* 1–18: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2026.2645193>.
- Cyriac, J., and P. M. Mathew. 2026. "Individual and Relational Outcomes of Inter-Religious Marriage: A Scoping Review." *Journal of Religion and Health* 65, no. 1: 247–289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-025-02505-1>.
- Davidson, J. D., and T. Widman. 2002. "The Effect of Group Size on Interfaith Marriage Among Catholics." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 3: 397–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5906.00126>.
- Diener, E., and M. E. P. Seligman. 2004. "Beyond Money: Toward an Economy of Well-Being." *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 5, no. 1: 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2004.00501001.x>.
- Farooq, A., and M. S. Shah. 2023. "Interfaith Marriages: In the Light of Islamic and Sociological Perspectives." *Al-Qantara* 9, no. 1: 219–240. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=Farooq%2C+A.%2C+&+Shah%2C+M.+S.+%282023%29.+Interfaith+Marriages%3A+In+the+light+of+Islamic+and+sociological+perspectives.+Al-Qantara%2C+9%281%29%2C+219%E2%80%93240.&btnG=](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Farooq%2C+A.%2C+&+Shah%2C+M.+S.+%282023%29.+Interfaith+Marriages%3A+In+the+light+of+Islamic+and+sociological+perspectives.+Al-Qantara%2C+9%281%29%2C+219%E2%80%93240.&btnG=).
- Fowers, B. J. 1991. "His and Her Marriage: A Multivariate Study of Gender and Marital Satisfaction." *Sex Roles* 24, no. 3: 209–221. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00288892>.
- Gupta, S., C. K. Scoll, and A. Maertens. 2021. "Intra-Household Efficiency in Extended Family Households: Evidence From Rural India." *Journal of Development Studies* 57, no. 7: 1172–1197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2020.1850696>.
- Hamdanah, H. 2018. "Psychological Impacts on Interfaith Families in Palangkaraya in Educating Their Children." *Open Psychology Journal* 11, no. 1: 279–291. <https://doi.org/10.2174/1874350101811010279>.
- Hayat, I., and T. Basharat. 2019. "A Critical Study on the Principles of Interfaith Marriages: A Perspective of Classical Discourse of Islam." *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research (PJIR)* 20, no. 1: 1–12. [https://search.proquest.com/docview/2396481864?accountid=8630%0Ahttps://birmingham-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/openurl/44BIR/44BIR\\_Services?genre=article&issn=20700326&title=A+critical+study+on+the+principles+of+interfaith+marriages%3A+a+perspective+of](https://search.proquest.com/docview/2396481864?accountid=8630%0Ahttps://birmingham-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/openurl/44BIR/44BIR_Services?genre=article&issn=20700326&title=A+critical+study+on+the+principles+of+interfaith+marriages%3A+a+perspective+of).
- Hill, P. C., and K. I. Pargament. 2003. "Advances in the Conceptualization and Measurement of Religion and Spirituality: Implications for Physical and Mental Health Research." *American Psychologist* 58, no. 1: 64–74. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1941-1022.S.1.3>.
- Hughes, P. C., and F. C. Dickson. 2005. "Communication, Marital Satisfaction, and Religious Orientation in Interfaith Marriages." *Journal of Family Communication* 5, no. 1: 25–41. <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327698jfc0501>.
- Hwang, W., A. D. Cakirsoy-Aslan, M. T. Brown, and M. Silverstein. 2021. "Husband–Wife Religious Denomination Homogamy and Marital Satisfaction Over Time: The Moderating Role of Religious Intensity." *Family Relations* 70, no. 5: 1498–1513. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12521>.
- Hwang, W., J. Yoon, M. Silverstein, and M. T. Brown. 2019. "Husband–Wife Religious Discordance, Marital Satisfaction, and Risk of Marital Dissolution in Two Generations." *Journal of Family Issues* 40, no. 9: 1201–1223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X19835871>.
- Kalmijn, M. 1998. "Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 395–421. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.395>.
- Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., and T. L. Newton. 2001. "Marriage and Health: His and Hers." *Psychological Bulletin* 127, no. 4: 472–503. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.4.472>.
- Kōu, A., C. H. Mulder, and A. Bailey. 2017. "‘For the Sake of the Family and Future’: The Linked Lives of Highly Skilled Indian Migrants." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 16: 2788–2805. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1314608>.
- Kramer, S. 2011. *Religious Demography of Indian States and Territories*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/21/religious-demography-of-indian-states-and-territories/>.

- Kun, Á., P. Balogh, and K. G. Krasz. 2016. "Development of the Work-Related Well-Being Questionnaire Based on Seligman's PERMA Model." *Periodica Polytechnica, Social and Management Sciences* 25, no. 1: 56. <https://doi.org/10.3311/PPso.9326>.
- Kurniawan, A. J., E. Wulandari, E. Manurung, and N. E. Manurung. 2017. "Acculturation in Mixed Marriage Family (A Case Study in the Inter-Cultural Communication in Javanese and Tionghoa in Medan)." *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research* 6, no. 7: 21–25. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=Kurniawan%2C+A.+J.%2C+Wulandari%2C+E.%2C+Manurung%2C+E.%2C+&+Manurung%2C+N.+E.+%282017%29.+Acculturation+in+mixed+marriage+family+%28a+case+study+in+the+inter-cultural+communication+in+Javanese+and+Tionghoa+in+Medan%29.+International+Journal+of+Scientific+&+Technology+Research%2C+6%287%29%2C+21%E2%80%939325.&btnG=](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Kurniawan%2C+A.+J.%2C+Wulandari%2C+E.%2C+Manurung%2C+E.%2C+&+Manurung%2C+N.+E.+%282017%29.+Acculturation+in+mixed+marriage+family+%28a+case+study+in+the+inter-cultural+communication+in+Javanese+and+Tionghoa+in+Medan%29.+International+Journal+of+Scientific+&+Technology+Research%2C+6%287%29%2C+21%E2%80%939325.&btnG=).
- Kurttekin, F. 2020. "Religious Education of Children in Interfaith Marriages." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 41, no. 3: 272–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2019.1624938>.
- Leeman, A. B. 2009. "Interfaith Marriage in Islam: An Examination of the Legal Theory Behind the Traditional and Reformist Positions." *Indiana Law Journal* 84, no. 2: 743–771. <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ilj/vol84/iss2/9>.
- Lehrer, E. L., and C. U. Chiswick. 1993. "Religion as a Determinant of Marital Stability." *Demography* 30, no. 3: 385–404. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2061647>.
- Lincoln, K. D., and D. H. Chae. 2010. "Stress, Marital Satisfaction, and Psychological Distress Among African Americans." *Journal of Family Issues* 31, no. 8: 1081–1105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X10365826>.
- Lincoln, Y., and E. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2oA9aWlNeooC&oi=fnd&pg=PA7&dq=Lincoln+%26+Guba,+1985&ots=0vjwPeR8wo&sig=EhNBtYjhlWXqGuYb3uNvGJdrZ4>.
- Mahoney, A. 2010. "Religion in Families 1999 to 2009: A Relational Spirituality Framework." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 72, no. 4: 805–827. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00732.x>.
- Margelisch, K., K. A. Schneewind, J. Violette, and P. Perrig-Chiello. 2017. "Marital Stability, Satisfaction and Well-Being in Old Age: Variability and Continuity in Long-Term Continuously Married Older Persons." *Aging & Mental Health* 21, no. 4: 389–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2015.1102197>.
- Marks, L. D., and D. C. Dollahite. 2017. *Religion and Families: An Introduction*. 1st ed. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. <https://www.routledge.com/Religion-and-Families-An-Introduction/Marks-Dollahite/p/book/9781848725461>.
- McAloney, K. 2013. "Inter-Faith Relationships in Great Britain: Prevalence and Implications for Psychological Well-Being." *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 16, no. 7: 686–694. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2012.714359>.
- McGraw, B. T., R. D. Putnam, and D. E. Campbell. 2012. "Review of American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us." *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 4: E44. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381612000771>.
- Mousavi, S. F. 2020. "Psychological Well-Being, Marital Satisfaction, and Parental Burnout in Iranian Parents: The Effect of Home Quarantine During COVID-19 Outbreaks." *Frontiers in Psychology* 11: 553880. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.553880>.
- Myers, S. M. 2006. "Religious Homogamy and Marital Quality: Historical and Generational Patterns, 1980–1997." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68, no. 2: 292–304. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2006.00253.x>.
- Nawaz, M. A., L. Saeed, and I. Mushtaque. 2021. "Mediating Role of Spousal Support on Internalized Stigma and Marital Satisfaction Among Depressive Patients." *Review of Education, Administration & Law* 4, no. 4: 561–572. <http://real.spcrd.org/index.php/real/article/view/207>.
- Paranjpe, K. 2023. "Special Marriage Act 1954: A New Paradigm in Marriage." (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 4655754). Social Science Research Network. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4655754>.
- Patras, A. I. 2021. "Intersectional Challenges Faced by Christian Women in Interfaith Marriages." *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 58, no. 4: 75–83.
- Proulx, C. M., H. M. Helms, and C. Buehler. 2007. "Marital Quality and Personal Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69, no. 3: 576–593. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00393.x>.
- Puri, P., and E. Lakshmipriya. 2024. "Interfaith Unions: Understanding the Dynamics, Acceptance, and Resilience of Interfaith Couples." *International Journal of Science and Healthcare Research* 9, no. 2: 100–113. <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijshr.20240215>.
- Qadir, F., A. Khalid, S. Haqqani, Zill-e-Huma, and G. Medhin. 2013. "The Association of Marital Relationship and Perceived Social Support With Mental Health of Women in Pakistan." *BMC Public Health* 13, no. 1: 1150. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-1150>.
- Radjab, M., A. Genda, A. Haris, and S. Abdullah. 2020. "Religious Tolerance Practices: A Case Study of Family With Different Religions in Toraja Ethnicity, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia." *International Journal of Management* 11, no. 5: 1145–1154. <https://doi.org/10.34218/IJM.11.5.2020.104>.
- Ryff, C. D. 1989. "Happiness Is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 6: 1069–1081. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069>.
- Sahgal, B. Y. N., J. Evans, A. M. Salazar, K. J. Starr, and M. Corichi. 2021. *Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation*, 84–93. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religious-segregation/>.
- Sandhya, S. J., and C. A. Somashekarappa. 2019. "Perception of Inter-Caste Marriage Among College Students in Karnataka." *International Journal of Management Studies and Social Science Research* 2001: 1–4. [www.ijmsssr.org](http://www.ijmsssr.org).
- Seligman, M. E. P. 2011. *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. Simon and Schuster. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=Seligman%2C+M.+E.+P.+%282011%29.+Flourish%3A+A+visionary+new+understanding+of+happiness+and+well-being.+Simon+and+Schuster.&btnG=](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Seligman%2C+M.+E.+P.+%282011%29.+Flourish%3A+A+visionary+new+understanding+of+happiness+and+well-being.+Simon+and+Schuster.&btnG=).
- Sewenet, A. M., F. Merawi Tessagaye, and G. Tadele. 2017. "Interreligious Marriage: Social and Religious Perspectives." *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 3, no. 6: 355–362. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C5&q=Interreligious+marriage%3A+Social+and+religious+perspectives.&btnG=](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Interreligious+marriage%3A+Social+and+religious+perspectives.&btnG=).
- Shahar, I. 2017. "When "Mixed" Marriages Fall Apart: A Socio-Legal Perspective." *Journal of Israeli History* 36, no. 2: 313–329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13531042.2018.1541650>.
- Shoaf, H. K., J. J. Hendricks, L. D. Marks, D. C. Dollahite, H. H. Kelley, and S. Gomez Ward. 2022. "Strengths and Strategies in Interfaith Marriages." *Marriage & Family Review* 58, no. 8: 675–701. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2022.2093311>.
- Simon, R. M. 2002. "Revisiting the Relationships Among Gender, Marital Status, and Mental Health." *American Journal of Sociology* 107, no. 4: 1065–1096. <https://doi.org/10.1086/339225>.
- Smith, J. A., and M. Osborn. 2015. "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a Useful Methodology for Research on the Lived Experience of Pain." *British Journal of Pain* 9, no. 1: 41–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2049463714541642>.
- Soliz, J., and C. W. Colaner. 2015. "Familial Solidarity and Religious Identity." In *The Sage Handbook of Family Communication*, edited by L. H. Turner and R. West, 401–417. Sage. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=43pZDWAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA401&dq=>

- Soliz, J., +26+ Colaner, C. +W. (2015). +Familial+solidarity+and+religious+identity:+Communication+and+interfaith+families.+The+Sage+handbook+of+family+communication,+401-417.&ots=M2JB0ddecq&sig=JXFICuBik9QEn6tLwraNaAR9SoI.
- Soulsby, L. K., and K. M. Bennett. 2015. "Marriage and Psychological Wellbeing: The Role of Social Support." *Psychology* 6, no. 11: 1349–1359. <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2015.611132>.
- Steensland, B., L. D. Robinson, W. B. Wilcox, J. Z. Park, M. D. Regnerus, and R. D. Woodberry. 2000. "The Measure of American Religion: Toward Improving the State of the Art." *Social Forces* 79, no. 1: 291–318. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/79.1.291>.
- Suyaman, P., and T. F. Alfiany. 2022. "Polemics of Interfaith Marriage Reviewed From the Perspectives of Marriage Law and the Compilations of Islamic Law." In *3rd International Conference on Law Reform (3rd INCLAR), KnE Social Sciences*, 537–549. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i15.12129>.
- Swidler, A. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2: 273–286. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095521>.
- Swidler, A. 2003. "Talk of Love: How Culture Matters." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 28, no. 1: cjc.2003v28n1a1353. <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2003v28n1a1353>.
- Syahid, A. 2016. "Being More Psychologically Healthy: The Concept of Mental Health According to Zakiah Daradjat and Its Application in Islamic Educational Institutions." *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Education* 21, no. 1: 13–30. <https://doi.org/10.19109/td.v21i1.743>.
- Tatangelo, G., M. McCabe, S. Campbell, and C. Szoeko. 2017. "Gender, Marital Status and Longevity." *Maturitas* 100: 64–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2017.03.002>.
- The Holy See. 1983. "Code of Canon Law (Cann. 1086)." [https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib4-cann9\\_98-1165\\_en.html#CHAPTER](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann9_98-1165_en.html#CHAPTER).
- The Indian Express. 2022. "Marriage Registered Days After It Was Forcibly Stopped; We Want to Live Together, Will Follow Our Own Practices: Karnataka Interfaith Couple." *Bangalore News*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/karnataka-interfaith-couple-attacked-by-right-wing-activists-get-married-8158623/>.
- The Indian Express. 2023. "Minor Girl, Forced to Consume Pesticide by Her Father for Being in Love With Boy of Another Faith, Dies." *Thiruvananthapuram News—The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/thiruvananthapuram/minor-girl-murder-father-pesticide-9017769/>.
- Vallerand, R. J. 2000. "Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory: A View From the Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation." *Psychological Inquiry* 11, no. 4: 312–318. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1449629>.
- Vignoles, V. L., S. J. Schwartz, and K. Luyckx. 2011. "Introduction: Toward an Integrative View of Identity." In: Schwartz, S., Luyckx, K., Vignoles, V. (eds) *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* 1–27. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_1).
- Vinokur, A. D., R. H. Price, and R. D. Caplan. 1996. "Hard Times and Hurtful Partners: How Financial Strain Affects Depression and Relationship Satisfaction of Unemployed Persons and Their Spouses." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71, no. 1: 166–179. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.1.166>.
- Waite, L. J., and M. Gallagher. 2000. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. Broadway Books. [https://books.google.co.in/books/about/The\\_Case\\_for\\_Marriage.html?id=ASfw0zU65tUC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.co.in/books/about/The_Case_for_Marriage.html?id=ASfw0zU65tUC&redir_esc=y).
- Waite, L. J., and E. L. Lehrer. 2003. "The Benefits From Marriage and Religion in the United States: A Comparative Analysis." *Population and Development Review* 29, no. 2: 255–276. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2003.00255.x>.
- Walker, R., L. Isherwood, C. Burton, K. Kitwe-Magambo, and M. Luszcz. 2013. "Marital Satisfaction Among Older Couples: The Role of Satisfaction With Social Networks and Psychological Well-Being." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 76, no. 2: 123–139. <https://doi.org/10.2190/AG.76.2.b>.
- Williams, K. 2003. "Has the Future of Marriage Arrived? A Contemporary Examination of Gender, Marriage, and Psychological Well-Being." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 44, no. 4: 470–487. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4018193/>.
- World Health Organisation (WHO). 2001. *The World Health Report 2001: Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope*. World Health Organisation (WHO). [https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=GQEdA-VFSIgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=World+Health+Organization+%5BWHO%5D+\(2001\).+The+World+Health+Report+2001:+Mental+Health:+New+Understanding,+New+Hope.+Geneva:+World+Health+Organization&ots=d3VAUJbgvz&sig=9qxNE4bC-1idCFcTpWwF17mtzYY](https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=GQEdA-VFSIgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=World+Health+Organization+%5BWHO%5D+(2001).+The+World+Health+Report+2001:+Mental+Health:+New+Understanding,+New+Hope.+Geneva:+World+Health+Organization&ots=d3VAUJbgvz&sig=9qxNE4bC-1idCFcTpWwF17mtzYY).