

Exploring the Impact of Spousal Compatibility (Kafa'ah) on Marital Harmony: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the limited research on spousal compatibility (kafa'ah), despite its significant impact on marital harmony and family stability. While kafa'ah is a foundational concept in Islamic marital jurisprudence, contemporary scholarship has not fully integrated classical perspectives with modern empirical findings. Therefore, this study aims to systematically explore the dimensions of kafa'ah and analyze how these dimensions influence marital harmony through a comprehensive literature review. The research adopts a qualitative design, synthesizing findings from peer-reviewed journal articles, classical Islamic texts, and contemporary family studies selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through document analysis and examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to compatibility and marital outcomes. The findings reveal three major dimensions of kafa'ah: religious-spiritual, emotional-communicative, and socioeconomic-cultural compatibility. Religious compatibility consistently emerges as the most influential factor shaping marital stability, while emotional and communication alignment strengthens conflict management and relational intimacy. Socioeconomic and cultural compatibility further supports cooperation in daily marital functioning. These results align with both classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary relationship psychology, demonstrating coherence between traditional jurisprudence and modern scientific understanding. The study concludes that kafa'ah plays a critical multidimensional role in enhancing marital satisfaction, reducing conflict, and strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds. The implications include theoretical contributions to the integration of Islamic family law and family psychology, as well as practical recommendations for marriage counselors, religious leaders, and policymakers to emphasize multidimensional compatibility in premarital guidance. Future research is encouraged to examine kafa'ah using empirical or longitudinal approaches to deepen understanding within diverse cultural contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of a harmonious family—often articulated in Islamic discourse as a *sakinah* family—has long been regarded as an ideal framework for Muslim household life. Linguistically,

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family is defined as a unit consisting of parents and their children (Pusat Penyusunan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, 1999). Terminologically, Widjaja (1987) describes a family as a legitimate bond between a man and a woman through marriage, which serves as the foundational institution for nurturing offspring under the shared responsibility of both spouses. Harmony in the family is characterized by mutual awareness, emotional balance, and the fulfillment of rights and obligations, expressed through mutual care, respect, affection, and cooperation (Ilyas, 2007). This vision aligns with the definition of a *sakinah* family as a legally established union capable of fulfilling material and spiritual needs while embodying love, compassion, and moral excellence (Departemen Agama RI, 2000).

At the level of broader societal expectations, a harmonious family is associated with tranquility, discipline, mutual forgiveness, cooperation, and religious observance. It also includes fulfilling educational responsibilities and maintaining positive social interactions with the surrounding community. These characteristics suggest that the stability of marriage is influenced by multiple factors, including religiosity, communication, emotional maturity, and socioeconomic balance. However, one of the recurring issues in the search for a suitable marital partner is the principle of *kafa'ah* (spousal compatibility), understood as proportionality or equivalence in social status, religiosity, morality, and economic capacity. Classical scholars argue that equitable status between spouses contributes to marital stability and prevents household disharmony (Sabiq, 1993).

Despite its widespread relevance, *kafa'ah* has historically been debated due to the absence of explicit textual injunctions in the Qur'an and Hadith. Concerns also emerge regarding the potential misuse of *kafa'ah* as a justification for social stratification or discriminatory practices. In reality, Islamic teachings emphasize that human worth is determined by piety rather than lineage or social status, as affirmed in Qur'anic teachings such as QS al-Hujurat:13. Modern fiqh scholarship therefore stresses that compatibility should be assessed primarily in terms of personal conduct and religious disposition rather than hereditary or economic markers (Sabiq, 1993). In the context of marital dynamics, incompatibility in core values and expectations has been identified as a contributing factor to conflict and instability (Al-Hayali, 2005).

Recent scholarly discussions highlight *kafa'ah* as a normative framework meant to uphold marital goals, particularly family stability and long-term harmony. From this perspective, *kafa'ah* is conceptualized as an evaluative tool that helps couples enter marriage with balanced expectations and readiness (Septiani, 2025). Contemporary analyses also demonstrate a shift from traditional emphases—such as lineage and social rank—toward compatibility in religious values, emotional maturity, and ethical commitment, which are now considered essential predictors of marital harmony (Nasution, 2025). This shift is reinforced by studies showing that religious homogamy fosters higher marital satisfaction, greater emotional support, and more effective conflict management (Raesi, 2025).

Furthermore, empirical research increasingly supports the idea that marital harmony is strongly influenced by compatibility across multiple domains. Personality studies reveal that low neuroticism combined with high conscientiousness among spouses correlates with greater relationship stability and satisfaction (Sayehmiri et al., 2020). Similarly, communication compatibility has been identified as a significant predictor of a couple's ability to prevent misunderstandings and maintain emotional cohesion (Presenting the compatibility model..., 2024). Additional evidence indicates that shared religious practices enhance forgiveness and emotional support, further strengthening marital bonds (Osei-Tutu et al., 2021).

Additional literature also highlights the importance of dyadic coping, which refers to the couple's capability to manage stress collaboratively. This skill acts as a mediating factor between compatibility and marital harmony, demonstrating that compatible couples tend to develop stronger cooperative coping mechanisms (Idulfilastri, 2024). Parallel findings suggest that cultural and family-background similarity facilitates adaptation to marital roles and reduces early-stage tensions that may disrupt harmony (Hendrati, 2015). When *kafa'ah* is interpreted contextually—focusing on values and mutual commitment rather than sociocultural hierarchies—it has the

potential to strengthen familial bonds rather than reinforce social divisions (Putra, 2025). Research has also shown that sexual compatibility plays a vital role in marital satisfaction, with discrepancies in this domain contributing significantly to conflict and reduced harmony (Nekoolaltak et al., 2020).

Building on these insights, it becomes evident that marital harmony is a multidimensional construct shaped by religious, psychological, social, and cultural elements. This complexity demonstrates why kafa'ah remains a relevant topic in both classical and contemporary Muslim societies. As modern couples navigate shifting socioeconomic structures and rising marital challenges, the notion of compatibility becomes increasingly important in determining the quality and resilience of marital relationships. Moreover, societal transformations—such as higher levels of women's education, changes in gender roles, and increased exposure to global marriage models—have contributed to the redefinition of what compatibility means in present-day contexts, especially in Muslim-majority societies where religious values remain central.

At the same time, several studies underline that mismatches in expectations—whether in financial management, religious intensity, or interpersonal communication—frequently serve as triggers for marital dissatisfaction. The growing body of literature emphasizes the need for couples to engage in premarital assessment that incorporates emotional readiness, value alignment, and shared future goals. This reinforces the argument that kafa'ah should be approached holistically rather than narrowly. Additionally, theoretical contributions from family psychology suggest that relationship satisfaction is optimized when partners share similarities in worldview and problem-solving strategies, confirming the interconnectedness of psychological and spiritual dimensions in fostering harmony.

These theoretical and empirical developments reveal a clear gap: while numerous studies address marital satisfaction, fewer investigate how the classical Islamic concept of kafa'ah can be integrated with contemporary frameworks of marital compatibility. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on general marital predictors, yet lacks a systematic analysis of how kafa'ah interacts with modern constructs such as dyadic coping, communication alignment, and personality compatibility. This gap underscores the importance of positioning kafa'ah within a contemporary, evidence-based discourse on marital harmony.

Drawing from classical fiqh, contemporary Islamic scholarship, and empirical research in psychology and family studies, this literature-based study presents a comprehensive synthesis of how kafa'ah contributes to marital harmony in modern contexts. The review incorporates normative religious perspectives and interdisciplinary findings to offer a holistic understanding of compatibility within Islamic marriage. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to analyze the multidimensional impact of spousal compatibility (kafa'ah) on marital harmony by organizing and evaluating the existing body of literature.

METHOD

1. Research Type

This study employs a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review design aimed at identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing empirical and conceptual evidence concerning the relationship between kafa'ah (spousal compatibility) and marital harmony. This approach enables the integration of findings from diverse scholarly works, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how compatibility influences marital dynamics (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). The method is particularly suitable for addressing variations in theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches across existing studies.

2. Research Design

The research design adheres to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol, which provides a structured and transparent process for

conducting systematic reviews. The design includes formulating research questions, conducting a structured search across selected databases, screening studies using predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, extracting relevant data using standardized forms, assessing methodological quality, and synthesizing findings through narrative thematic analysis. The PRISMA framework ensures rigor, replicability, and transparency throughout the review process (Moher et al., 2009; Liberati et al., 2009).

3. Participants and Sampling Technique (Data Sources)

The “participants” in this review consist of scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, literature reviews, book chapters, and research reports deemed relevant to the topic. Studies published between 2015 and 2025 were targeted to ensure the inclusion of contemporary perspectives, while foundational conceptual sources within the 1980–2010 period were considered when necessary.

Data were retrieved from established academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, ProQuest, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories. The search strategy utilized Boolean keyword combinations including “kafa’ah,” “kufu,” “spousal compatibility,” “marital homogamy,” “compatibility,” “marital harmony,” “marital satisfaction,” “marital stability,” and “family sakinah,” as well as related terms such as “religious homogamy,” “dyadic coping,” and “communication compatibility.” Sampling of studies followed purposive and snowball techniques to ensure both relevance and comprehensiveness. The screening procedure consisted of two stages: title/abstract screening and full-text evaluation to confirm eligibility.

4. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria comprised empirical and conceptual studies that examined various dimensions of spousal compatibility—such as kafa’ah, religious homogamy, personality congruence, communication patterns, and sexual compatibility—and their connection to indicators of marital harmony, including marital satisfaction, stability, conflict levels, and emotional support. Eligible studies were those published in English or Indonesian between 2015–2025, with seminal works from earlier periods included where theoretically necessary.

The exclusion criteria eliminated non-scholarly sources such as popular opinion pieces lacking academic grounding, studies that did not explicitly address the compatibility–harmony relationship, duplicate publications, and works outside the specified timeframe unless they held significant theoretical relevance.

5. Instruments and Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using a standardized data extraction form designed to capture essential study characteristics, including the title, authors, publication year, country of study, research objectives, methodological design, sample description, principal variables (dimensions of compatibility), indicators of marital harmony, major findings, limitations, and methodological quality notes. Two independent reviewers carried out the initial search and extraction to minimize bias, with disagreements resolved through discussion or by involving a third reviewer. The PRISMA flow diagram was used to document the selection process from identification to inclusion.

Reference management software such as EndNote or Zotero was employed to organize literature, while qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo) was used where necessary to facilitate coding and theme development.

6. Quality Appraisal

Methodological quality was assessed using appropriate appraisal tools depending on the type of study. Qualitative and cohort studies were evaluated using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklists, while quantitative studies such as surveys or quasi-experimental designs were reviewed using relevant quantitative appraisal tools. These assessments were compiled into a quality appraisal table and served as a basis for weighting each study's contribution to the synthesis (Higgins & Green, 2011; CASP, 2018).

7. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using narrative thematic synthesis, integrating both qualitative and quantitative findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis proceeded through several stages: repeated reading of extracted data, inductive and deductive coding based on predefined concepts related to kafa'ah (e.g., religiosity, personality fit, communication congruence, sexual compatibility, dyadic coping, and financial compatibility), organizing codes into themes and subthemes, and constructing a synthesized narrative linking empirical evidence with theoretical frameworks from Islamic jurisprudence and family psychology. A sensitivity analysis was conducted to determine whether findings changed when limiting the synthesis to high-quality studies, thereby strengthening the robustness of conclusions.

8. Trustworthiness Strategies

To ensure trustworthiness, the study implemented several strategies. Source triangulation was used by integrating evidence from qualitative, quantitative, and conceptual studies. Double coding was carried out by two independent coders to enhance reliability, with inter-rater agreement calculated and reported. Additionally, the researchers maintained reflexive documentation throughout the review process to acknowledge and manage potential biases, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the data rather than subjective assumptions.

RESULTS

1. Dimensions of Spousal Compatibility (Kafa'ah) Identified in the Literature

a. Religious and Spiritual Compatibility

The literature consistently identifies religion as the primary axis of kafa'ah, positioning it as the most influential determinant of marital balance and stability. Classical Islamic scholarship defines kafa'ah as proportionality and suitability between spouses, especially concerning faith, religious practice, and moral character (Depag RI, 2010; Abidin & Aminuddin as cited in Ghazali, 2010). Scholars assert that although socioeconomic indicators may hold cultural value, Islam emphasizes piety (taqwa) and ethical conduct as the true measures of compatibility.

Historical legal perspectives reinforce this view. The hadith encouraging Muslims to “marry those who are compatible (sekufu)” (Al-Hayali, 2005) suggests that shared religious commitment enhances harmony by shaping aligned expectations, shared goals, and a unified moral framework. Modern scholarship echoes this principle: cross-cultural analyses demonstrate that value congruence—particularly in religiosity—strongly predicts long-term marital stability and satisfaction (Ismail, 2020; Moghadam et al., 2021).

Recent empirical studies further reveal that religious homogamy fosters emotional closeness, trust, and cooperative marital behaviors by providing shared meaning systems and reducing ambiguity in role expectations (IIJSE Review, 2024; Mahoney & Boyatzis, 2020). These findings align with family psychology research showing that shared spiritual practices increase dyadic resilience and relational bonding. Consequently, the religious–spiritual dimension remains the most consistent predictor of marital compatibility across classical and contemporary frameworks.

b. Personality, Communication, and Emotional Compatibility

Contemporary marital research consistently highlights personality congruence—particularly emotional regulation, temperament, empathy, and openness—as critical determinants of marital functioning. When spouses demonstrate emotional compatibility, they are better able to manage stress, regulate conflict, and maintain intimacy. This echoes classical Islamic discussions that elevate ethical character (*akhlak*) and good temperament as essential attributes for marital stability (Ghozali, 2003).

Modern relationship psychology shows that communication alignment plays a central role in reducing misunderstandings, facilitating constructive conflict management, and strengthening emotional intimacy (Furler et al., 2022). Similar moral and ethical foundations between spouses have been found to reduce recurrent conflict and increase long-term trust (Reza, 2021). Moreover, alignment in expectations—related to financial planning, career development, parenting, and future aspirations—emerges as a strong predictor of marital satisfaction, while discrepancies in these areas often produce chronic strain (Munini et al., 2024; Overall & McNulty, 2017).

These psychological and communication-based dimensions complement the classical Islamic view that compatibility in disposition, ethics, and moral behavior contributes significantly to marital harmony. They highlight that emotional and interpersonal compatibility operate not merely as relational skills but as essential components that transform *kafa'ah* into sustained relational stability.

c. Socioeconomic, Educational, and Cultural Compatibility

While classical jurists traditionally regarded socioeconomic factors—such as lineage, wealth, profession, and social standing—as secondary indicators of compatibility (Ghozali, 2003; Samin & Aroeng, 2010), contemporary scholarship highlights their practical influence on marital dynamics. Though not determinants of marriage validity, socioeconomic and educational alignment can facilitate smoother negotiation of roles, minimize financial tension, and strengthen mutual understanding in day-to-day life.

Recent family studies show that couples with similar educational attainment and socioeconomic backgrounds generally experience better communication, shared life planning, and reduced financial conflict (Azhdari et al., 2024; Adeyemo & Balogun, 2022). Economic compatibility also contributes to psychological well-being within marriage, influencing stress levels, emotional stability, and relational support structures.

Cultural upbringing further shapes shared norms, rituals, expectations, and communication styles. When spouses originate from similar cultural or familial environments, they are more likely to share implicit understanding of marital roles, responsibilities, and conflict-resolution strategies (Karney & Bradbury, 2021). This facilitates smoother adaptation and cooperation, reinforcing the classical Islamic insight that while socioeconomic and cultural factors do not determine the legitimacy of a marriage, they nonetheless influence how couples navigate daily marital realities.

Dimensions of Spousal Compatibility (Kafa'ah) Identified in the Literature

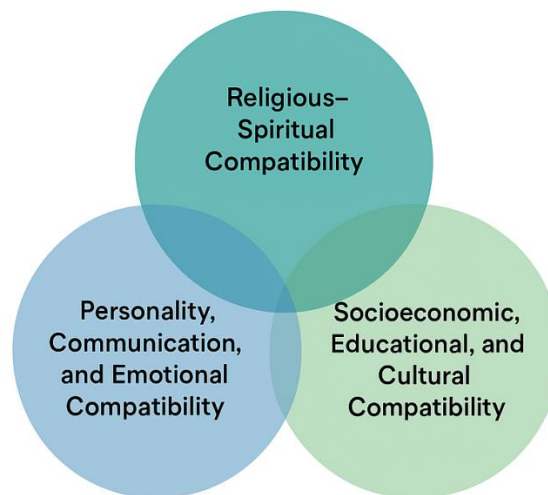


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Spousal Compatibility (Kafa'ah).

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model of spousal compatibility (kafa'ah) by integrating three major dimensions consistently identified across classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary marital research. The first dimension, Religious–Spiritual Compatibility, emphasizes shared faith, religious commitment, and moral character as the core foundation of marital stability. The second dimension, Personality, Communication, and Emotional Compatibility, highlights alignment in temperament, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills that support healthy marital interaction. The third dimension, Socioeconomic, Educational, and Cultural Compatibility, represents practical and contextual factors—including social background, education, and financial stability—that influence how couples negotiate daily life.

The overlapping areas in the Venn diagram indicate that these dimensions are interconnected rather than isolated; harmony emerges when multiple forms of compatibility reinforce one another. This model demonstrates that kafa'ah operates as a multidimensional construct shaped by both internal (religious, emotional, psychological) and external (social, cultural, economic) factors that collectively contribute to marital balance and long-term relational resilience.

2. Effects of Spousal Compatibility on Marital Harmony

a. Enhancing Marital Satisfaction and Long-Term Stability

Across both classical and contemporary perspectives, kafa'ah is presented as a factor that contributes to marital happiness and protects couples from instability (Abidin & Aminuddin as cited in Ghozali, 2010). Islamic teachings describe marriage as a pathway to *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*, emphasizing peace, affection, and compassion (QS Ar-Rum: 21).

Empirical evidence supports this normative ideal. For instance, couples with shared religiosity and strong religious commitment report higher marital satisfaction (Moetamedin et al., 2016; Istiqomah & Mukhlis, 2015). In a recent survey among lecturers at religious campuses, greater religious maturity was significantly associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction. Similarly, research on Indonesian migrant-worker couples found positive correlation ($r = .364$, $p < 0.01$) between religious commitment and marital satisfaction (Ghufron & Suminta, 2018).

Thus, compatibility in religious values, ethical conduct, communication style, and life goals provides a foundation for trust, collaboration, and mutual emotional support, which fosters long-term marital stability and satisfaction.

b. Reducing Marital Conflict and Psychological Stress

Spousal compatibility functions as a buffer against marital conflict by reducing the likelihood of value clashes, unmet expectations, and emotional triggers. For example, couples whose religiosity and religious practice are congruent tend to experience greater relational harmony and lower psychological stress.

Moreover, beyond religiosity, compatibility in expectations concerning domestic responsibilities, financial management, and mutual support also reduces marital tension, as aligned value systems facilitate cooperative decision-making and reduce sources of friction. This reflects classical Islamic emphasis: while socioeconomic status or lineage should not be the sole basis for kafa'ah, compatibility in moral character and life orientation is important to avoid hardship in married life (Samin & Aroeng, 2010; Ghozali, 2003).

When compatibility exists in multiple dimensions (religious, moral, communicative, socioeconomic), couples are better equipped to manage stress, share burdens, and reach mutual agreements — thereby minimizing conflict and psychological strain.

c. Strengthening Emotional, Social, and Spiritual Bonding

Literature underscores that compatible spouses tend to offer consistent emotional support, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving. Shared spiritual commitments enhance resilience and deepen relational meaning. In a study of families across several cities in East Java, spirituality was found as a moderating variable strengthening the relationship between love and family harmony — indicating that spiritual compatibility amplifies emotional bonding and overall family cohesion (Aziz & Mangestuti, 2021).

Additionally, longitudinal research suggests that similarity in personality, values, and life goals supports stable marital satisfaction over time (Yárnoz-Yaben et al., 2020). Couples with aligned religious beliefs and life orientations tend to report stronger relational commitment, mutual understanding, and social support — elements essential for building a sakinah household grounded in love (mawaddah) and compassion (rahmah).

Therefore, kafa'ah understood broadly — as compatibility in religiosity, personality, values, and life goals — supports not just practical cooperation but deeper emotional, social, and spiritual bonding that undergirds marital harmony.

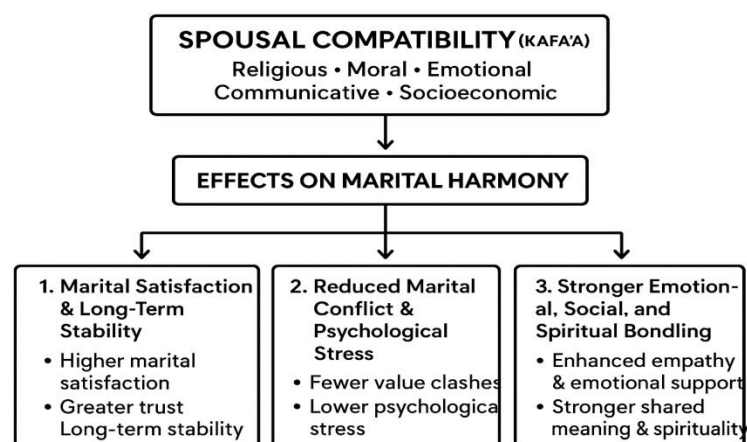


Figure 2. Effects of Spousal Compatibility (Kafa'ah) on Marital Harmony

Figure 2 illustrates how spousal compatibility (kafa'ah)—encompassing religious–spiritual, moral, emotional, communicative, and socioeconomic alignment—directly contributes to three major outcomes that shape marital harmony. First, compatibility enhances marital satisfaction and long-term stability, as shared values and aligned life goals foster trust, emotional intimacy, and durable commitment. Second, compatibility helps reduce marital conflict and psychological stress by minimizing value clashes, unmet expectations, and communication breakdowns. Third, compatibility strengthens emotional, social, and spiritual bonding, enabling couples to provide mutual empathy, resilience, and shared meaning in their marriage. Collectively, the diagram shows that kafa'ah operates as a multidimensional construct whose integrated effects promote harmony, stability, and relational well-being within marriage.

3. Mediating and Moderating Factors in the Kafa'ah–Harmony Relationship

a. Communication Quality and Conflict Management Skills

Even when spouses exhibit strong compatibility in religious beliefs, moral values, and life orientations, communication quality remains a central mediator in transforming compatibility into relational harmony. The literature shows that poor communication can diminish the positive effects of compatibility, whereas effective communication amplifies marital satisfaction, mutual trust, and emotional stability. Research consistently demonstrates that constructive communication styles and conflict-management skills predict lower marital distress and stronger long-term stability (Furler et al., 2022; Overall & McNulty, 2017).

Reza (2021) similarly observes that moral alignment alone cannot guarantee harmony unless supported by adequate emotional communication and problem-solving competence. This aligns with Islamic principles emphasizing musyawarah (consultation), empathy, and gentleness (rifq) as core mechanisms for maintaining balance within marriage (Sarjanaku.com, 2013). Therefore, communication operates as a mediating mechanism through which kafa'ah is translated into practical marital functioning, emotional intimacy, and conflict reduction.

b. Shared Expectations, Values, and Life Orientations

Shared expectations in financial management, household responsibilities, parenting, and future planning serve as another crucial mediating factor in the relationship between kafa'ah and marital harmony. When spouses share similar life schemas and expectations, the stabilizing effect of compatibility becomes stronger. Congruent expectations promote smoother decision-making and minimize value-based conflicts, as shown by recent findings linking value alignment with marital satisfaction and cooperative behavior (Munini et al., 2024; Azhdari et al., 2024).

From an Islamic jurisprudential perspective, classical jurists emphasize the importance of alignment in ethics, religious obligations, and social conduct as indicators of marital balance (Samin & Aroeng, 2010). These expectations form a practical extension of kafa'ah, guiding spouses on how to manage responsibilities and cultivate shared meaning in marriage. Inconsistent expectations, regardless of compatibility in other areas, can destabilize harmony, underscoring the mediating role of aligned values.

c. Cultural, Familial, and Environmental Influences

The broader cultural and familial environment moderates the effect of kafa'ah on marital harmony. Studies demonstrate that strong cultural norms, family involvement, or communal pressures can either strengthen or undermine the positive effects of spousal compatibility (Ismail, 2020; Adeyemo & Balogun, 2022). External pressures sometimes override individual preferences in spouse selection or marital decision-making, influencing long-term outcomes and conflict patterns.

Classical Islamic jurisprudence acknowledges that elements such as lineage, occupation, and social reputation have historically shaped societal perceptions of compatibility, even if these factors are not required for the validity of marriage (Ghozali, 2003; Samin & Aroeng, 2010). These socio-cultural moderators reveal that marital harmony is not solely determined by internal compatibility but also by the interplay between the couple and their surrounding environment—highlighting that harmonious marriages require alignment not only within the dyad but also within the broader ecological context.

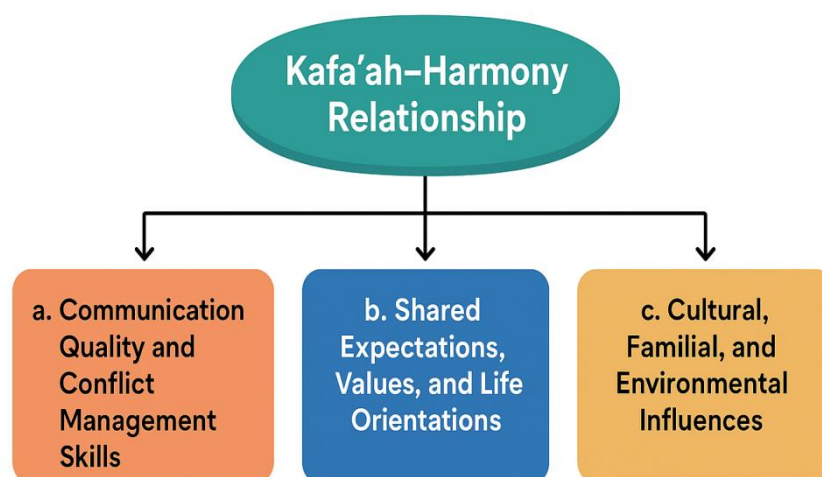


Figure 3. Mediating and Moderating Factors in the Kafa'ah-Harmony Relationship

The infographic illustrates the core dimensions and effects of kafa'ah (spousal compatibility) on marital harmony. It highlights three primary domains of compatibility—religious, intellectual, and economic—which jointly strengthen the foundation of marital relationships. These domains contribute to key outcomes such as effective communication, mutual respect, emotional stability, and shared decision-making. Ultimately, the figure emphasizes that kafa'ah functions as an integrated framework that enhances marital satisfaction, conflict reduction, and long-term relational harmony.

DISCUSSION

1. Results Analysis

a. Dimensions of Spousal Compatibility (Kafa'ah)

The findings of this literature review demonstrate that spousal compatibility (kafa'ah) is a multidimensional construct encompassing religious-spiritual, emotional-communicative, and socioeconomic-cultural domains. These dimensions jointly reflect the classical Islamic understanding of proportionality between spouses while integrating contemporary psychological frameworks. Religious and spiritual compatibility emerged as the strongest dimension, consistently highlighted in classical jurisprudence and supported by modern empirical studies as the primary determinant of marital stability. Personality alignment, emotional regulation, communication style, and shared ethical values were also identified as crucial factors shaping marital functioning, underscoring that compatibility is not limited to doctrinal congruence but extends into interpersonal and psychological spheres. Socioeconomic and cultural compatibility further contextualize marital interaction by influencing daily decision-making, financial negotiation, and social adaptation.

b. Effects of Kafa'ah on Marital Harmony

The analysis indicates that kafa'ah contributes to marital harmony through three major pathways: enhancing marital satisfaction, reducing conflict and psychological stress, and

strengthening emotional and spiritual bonding. These outcomes reflect both the normative ideals of Islamic marriage—sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah—and empirical findings showing that shared values and congruent expectations provide stronger relational foundations. Compatibility in religious commitment, communication style, and life goals significantly supports the development of trust, intimacy, and resilience. Alignments in domestic expectations, financial management, and mutual support reduce sources of friction, while shared spirituality deepens relational meaning and cohesion.

c. Mediating and Moderating Influences

The review also highlights that the relationship between kafa'ah and marital harmony is not linear but shaped by important mediating and moderating factors. Communication quality and conflict-management skills serve as critical mediators that transform compatibility into functional marital outcomes. Even highly compatible couples may experience strain if communication is ineffective. Shared expectations in financial responsibilities, parenting, and long-term planning further mediate how compatibility translates into harmony. Meanwhile, cultural norms, family pressures, and environmental contexts function as moderating factors that can either strengthen or weaken the impact of kafa'ah. These findings demonstrate that marital harmony results from a dynamic interaction between internal compatibility and external sociocultural influences.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

Overall, the findings of this review are consistent with established scholarship in both Islamic family law and contemporary family psychology. Classical scholars emphasize piety, moral character, and ethical conduct as primary indicators of compatibility, aligning with empirical evidence showing that religious homogamy and shared values predict long-term marital satisfaction. Studies by Moghadam et al. (2021), Mahoney & Boyatzis (2020), and IJSE Review (2024) corroborate the centrality of spiritual alignment in fostering marital trust, emotional security, and cooperative behavior between spouses. These findings closely mirror the traditional Islamic view that spiritual congruence forms the deepest foundation of marital harmony.

The role of emotional and communication compatibility similarly reinforces a large body of psychological research demonstrating that emotional regulation, empathy, and constructive communication are crucial predictors of marital stability. Findings from Furler et al. (2022) and Overall & McNulty (2017) show that communication styles directly shape couples' conflict patterns, problem-solving abilities, and overall relationship quality. This parallels classical Islamic discourse on akhlak (good character), which places significant emphasis on emotional discipline, patience, and gentle communication as essential qualities for sustaining harmony in marriage.

Moreover, findings on socioeconomic and cultural alignment reflect broader family studies arguing that shared educational backgrounds, comparable financial expectations, and similar cultural orientations minimize conflict and enhance relational functioning (Azhdari et al., 2024; Adeyemo & Balogun, 2022). Classical Islamic jurisprudence acknowledges these factors—not as requirements for the validity of marriage, but as practical considerations that can affect long-term stability. This alignment between classical and contemporary perspectives demonstrates that socioeconomic and cultural compatibility continues to play an important contextual role in shaping marital dynamics.

However, some contemporary studies introduce nuance to traditional views by highlighting contexts in which strong emotional and communicative compatibility can mitigate disparities in socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds. Research on intercultural and interclass marriages reveals that couples who possess high levels of emotional intelligence, mutual respect, and shared moral

values often maintain stable and satisfying marriages despite external differences. These findings suggest that while socioeconomic and cultural similarity may contribute to smoother marital adjustment, its absence does not necessarily undermine marital harmony when emotional and spiritual bonds are strong. Such evidence enriches classical frameworks by showing that certain compatibility dimensions may compensate for others, emphasizing the flexible and adaptive nature of marital functioning in modern contexts.

Collectively, the comparison demonstrates substantial alignment between classical Islamic principles and contemporary empirical models of marital compatibility while also illuminating areas where modern relational dynamics introduce additional complexity. This reinforces the relevance of kafa'ah as a multidimensional concept that remains both theologically grounded and empirically supported across evolving social contexts.

3. Implications of Findings

a. Theoretical Implications

This review contributes to the literature by offering an integrated, multidimensional conceptualization of kafa'ah. It broadens the understanding of compatibility beyond its classical legal boundaries, showing how psychological, communicative, and sociocultural factors operate alongside religious determinants. The model developed from the findings supports a holistic theoretical framework that bridges Islamic normative teachings and contemporary relational theory.

b. Practical Implications

Practically, the findings provide guidance for premarital counseling, marital education, and family-strengthening programs in Muslim communities. Counselors and educators may use the multidimensional model of kafa'ah to help couples assess compatibility across religious, emotional, and socioeconomic domains. Strengthening communication skills and clarifying shared expectations may serve as effective interventions for couples with high compatibility but unresolved relational challenges. Policy makers and religious leaders may also apply these insights in developing guidelines that emphasize both spiritual and practical aspects of marital readiness.

4. Research Limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, this study relies on secondary literature, which limits the ability to provide new empirical evidence. The findings are constrained by the methodological diversity of the reviewed studies, which range from qualitative analyses to correlational surveys, making it difficult to draw causal conclusions. Second, cultural variations across contexts mean that the applicability of certain dimensions of kafa'ah may differ between societies, particularly in non-Muslim or highly diverse settings. Third, some classical perspectives on compatibility—such as lineage or social status—may not fully align with contemporary empirical research, indicating the need for updated culturally responsive frameworks. Future research would benefit from integrating qualitative interviews, large-scale quantitative studies, and cross-cultural comparisons to validate and expand upon the conceptual model proposed in this review.

CONCLUSION

This literature review explored how spousal compatibility (kafa'ah) influences marital harmony by synthesizing perspectives from classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary empirical research. The findings demonstrate that kafa'ah is a multidimensional construct encompassing religious–spiritual, emotional–communicative, and socioeconomic–cultural

dimensions. Across sources, religious and spiritual compatibility consistently emerges as the strongest predictor of marital stability, fostering shared values, moral alignment, and a unified sense of purpose. Emotional and communication compatibility further enhances relational functioning by promoting constructive interaction, empathy, and mutual understanding. Meanwhile, socioeconomic and cultural alignment contributes to smoother daily cooperation and reduced conflict. Collectively, these dimensions shape marital satisfaction, reduce psychological stress, and strengthen emotional and spiritual bonding, revealing that marital harmony is achieved through the interplay of internal and external compatibility factors. The analysis also shows that the relationship between kafa'ah and marital harmony is not linear but moderated and mediated by key variables, including communication quality, shared expectations, and broader cultural and familial contexts. Strong communication and conflict-management skills amplify the positive effects of compatibility, while congruent life expectations help translate shared values into everyday cooperation. Conversely, external pressures such as family involvement and cultural norms can strengthen or weaken the influence of kafa'ah on marital outcomes. These findings highlight the dynamic nature of marital compatibility and underscore its relevance in diverse social contexts.

Despite its comprehensive scope, this review is limited by its reliance on secondary data and variations in methodological rigor across the included studies. The absence of empirical data specific to certain cultural settings may also restrict generalizability. Additionally, differences in how kafa'ah is conceptualized across disciplines suggest the need for more unified frameworks in future research. Future studies should consider employing mixed-method or longitudinal designs to examine how compatibility evolves over time and how couples negotiate differences within rapidly changing social environments. Research focusing on intercultural, interclass, or transnational marriages may also provide deeper insight into how certain dimensions of compatibility compensate for others. Developing standardized instruments to measure kafa'ah empirically would further strengthen theoretical integration between Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary family psychology. Overall, this study reinforces that kafa'ah remains a relevant and robust framework for understanding marital harmony. Its multidimensional nature offers valuable guidance for scholars, practitioners, and couples seeking to cultivate stable, resilient, and spiritually grounded marital relationships.

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