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# Family Vulnerability: Examining The Contributions of Spirituality and Social Support

## Intan Islamia

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung intanislamia@radenintan.ac.id

# Andry Rahman Arif

Universitas Tulang Bawang Lampung andry.rahman@utb.ac.id

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#### Abstract

Family vulnerability encompasses multiple dimensions, including physicaleconomic, social, and psychological factors. This study explored the role of spirituality and social support in mitigating family vulnerability. A sample of 189 families was selected using simple random sampling. Data on family vulnerability and social support were collected using questionnaires designed by Sunarti (2021), while spirituality was measured using the DSES questionnaire by Underwood (2020). Data analysis using SPSS revealed significant negative correlations between both spirituality and family vulnerability, as well as social support and family vulnerability. These findings indicate that increased levels of spirituality and social support can serve as protective factors against family vulnerability. Furthermore, subsequent analysis demonstrated that spirituality exerted a stronger influence than social support in reducing specific dimensions of family vulnerability, such as psychological distress.

#### Abstrak

Kerentanan keluarga mencakup berbagai dimensi, termasuk faktor fisikekonomi, sosial, dan psikologis. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran spiritualitas dan dukungan sosial dalam mengurangi kerentanan keluarga. Sampel sebanyak dipilih menggunakan teknik simple random sampling 189 keluarga (pengambilan sampel acak sederhana). Data mengenai kerentanan keluarga dan dukungan sosial dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner yang disusun oleh Sunarti (2021), sedangkan spiritualitas diukur menggunakan kuesioner DSES oleh Underwood (2020). Analisis data menggunakan SPSS menunjukkan adanya korelasi negatif yang signifikan antara spiritualitas dan kerentanan keluarga, serta antara dukungan sosial dan kerentanan keluarga. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa peningkatan tingkat spiritualitas dan dukungan sosial dapat berperan sebagai faktor pelindung terhadap kerentanan keluarga. Lebih lanjut, analisis lanjutan menunjukkan bahwa spiritualitas memiliki pengaruh yang lebih kuat dibandingkan dukungan sosial dalam mengurangi dimensi kerentanan tertentu, seperti distres psikologis.

*Keywords*: Family vulnerability, family resilience, spirituality, social support, family sciences.

## Introduction

From a social point of view, the family is the most foundational unit of social organization (Tripodoro et al., 2024). The family provide much of the care people need to maintain their life, shape the children's development, provide individuals to learn about the values of life, and significantly influence personality development (Al-Momani, 2024; Grasmeijer et al., 2024; Jensen et al., 2024; Lechieva et al., 2025; Prasad & Rao, 2024; Zemp et al., 2024). Knowing how important the family is in the social system makes it important to maintain family harmony and balance. However, as with any dynamic life, socio-economic changes can affect family development, especially in an era like today (Campione-Barr et al., 2024; Jafarova, 2024; Nguyen, 2024; Pujadas-Mora & Brea-Martínez, 2025). Research has found that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the entire family system, influencing family functioning, relationship qualities, and parenting.

Changes in the family may have a beneficial or bad impact on the family, as we know as family vulnerability. Family vulnerability is described as the increased risk of family dysfunction, maladaptive behaviours, and suboptimal outcomes under stress relative to other families. Family vulnerability can be defined as the inability of a family to overcome or adapt itself to the situations or stressors it faces, which can affect the function and welfare of the family as a whole (Manciaux & Deschamps, 1974). Eshriqui explained that family vulnerability is the process of a family's exposure to risk factors, such as poverty, disease, and social isolation, affecting their ability to maintain health and well-being (Eshriqui et al., 2024).

There are multiple stressors such as socio-economic difficulties, physical and mental health issues, conflicts within the family, traumatic episodes, and sudden social change or restructuring (Dana et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2024). Analyzing the roots of familial vulnerabilities within a society offers insight for developing effective strategies to enhance familial welfare.

Vulnerability is commonly linked to several risk factors including poverty, disorganized neighborhoods, or a history of trauma. However, research has placed considerable emphasis on exploring both internal and external resources that can mitigate a family's level of vulnerability (Zhu et al., 2024) In this regard, psychosocial and spiritual aspects are quite important. Spirituality, which refers to beliefs and practices as well as the pursuit of meaning beyond the material, often acts as an effective internal resource (Balboni et al., 2022). For vulnerable families, spirituality aids in coping by making it possible for them to understand and manage challenges, nurture hope in hopeless situations, and provide purpose and cohesion of family members (De Souza et al., 2024; Islamia, 2023; Prasetyo et al., 2024). Those spiritual beliefs affect the manner in which families confront crises, the extent to which they manage negative emotions, and their motivation to seek solutions (Amin et al., 2024; Islamia & Marliani, 2023; Yeom & Kwon, 2024).

Family becomes an important component in terms of experience and practice of spirituality (Wright, 2005). (Walsh, 2020) also explains that families who share the value of meaningfulness are related to spirituality, tend to feel connection with the family, society, and the world. Family spirituality strengthens family relationships and increases family well-being (Chang et al, 1998; Friedemann et al., 2002; Mahoney et al., 2003; Mahoney & Cano, 2014). In the context of couples, spirituality is also related to marital satisfaction (David & Stafford, 2015). Furthermore, (Coppola et al., 2021) explain that spirituality and religiosity are protective factors that are related not only to mental and psychological health but also to

physical health and the ability to increase coping resources in dealing with problems.

Alongside spirituality, social support emerges as another important external factor impacting family vulnerability (Negi & Sattler, 2024). Social support captures the degree of accessibility, the quality of interpersonal relationships, social resources, and networks within the family including its members, friends, neighbors, the community, or even formal organizations. Families with adequate social resources are better prepared to deal with stressors, receive help when needed, enjoy emotional recognition and belonging that helps reduce the sense of isolation often accompanying vulnerability (Liu & Ci, 2024) Conversely, the absence of gaps in social support tends to exacerbate vulnerability while restricting resources necessary for adaptive coping.

Spirituality and social support tend to be interconnected domains of family life. A lot of families are supported socially within their spiritual communities that offer informal and formal networks of help. In addition, some other people are encouraged through spiritual or religious beliefs to engage in helpful activities, strengthen interpersonal connections within communities, and support each other. Therefore, the goal of this article is to analyze the importance of spirituality and social support in the context of family vulnerability. We will focus on how these two resources may mitigate vulnerability (protective factors), alleviate stress and its impacts, or worsen vulnerability when such resources are scarceoptional/nonexistent. This article aims to understand the constraints of spirituality and social support as part of the strategies intended to reduce vulnerability and enhance family well-being through literature review and conceptual analysis.

# Methods

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. The sampling technique utilized was random sampling. A total of 189 individuals, comprising husbands and wives, who voluntarily agreed to participate were included as respondents. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires completed by the participants. The questionnaires assessed family characteristics, spirituality, and family vulnerability.

The spirituality variable was measured using the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) developed by Underwood (2020).

This scale consists of 16 items designed to evaluate the frequency of transcendent experiences in everyday life. The reliability of this scale in the current study was high ( $\alpha = 0.967$ ). The social support and family vulnerability variables were measured using scales compiled by (Sunarti et al., 2021). The reliability coefficients for these scales were also acceptable, with the Family Vulnerability (FV) Scale demonstrating the reliability of  $\alpha = 0.801$  and the Social Support Scale showing the reliability of  $\alpha = 0.906$ .

The collected data were subsequently analyzed using multiple regression analysis, performed with the aid of SPSS software.

# Result and Discussion Family Characteristic

The study results (Table 1) indicate that the average age of respondents and their partners falls within the early adulthood range, approximately 37 years. The duration of marriage ranged from 0 to 41 years, with an average of 10.9 years. Furthermore, the average number of children per family was between 1 and 2, while the total number of dependents in the family ranged from 0 to 9.

# Table 1.

Distribution of respondents based on min-max, average and std scores

deviation				
Categories	Min-Max	Mean $\pm$ Std De		
Respondent's age (years)	22 - 63	$37.43\pm9.942$		
Spouse's age (years)	25 - 68	$37.54 \pm 10.401$		
Length of marriage (years)	0 - 41	$10.95\pm9.545$		
Number of children	0 - 8	$1.98 \pm 1.448$		
Number of family dependents	0 - 9	$2.81\pm1.755$		

# **Spirituality and Family Vulnerability**

The results of the study (Table 2) show that majority of respondents' family vulnerability is in the low category (72%). Meanwhile, most respondents are in the moderate category (75%) for the spirituality variable.

Table 2.   Categorization of Research Variable Scores			
Variable	Categories	(%)	
Spirituality	High	19	
	Medium	75	
	Low	6	
Family	High	5	
vulnerability	Medium	23	
	Low	72	

# Relationship between Spirituality, Social Support and Family Vulnerability

The results of the correlation test (Table 3) for these three variables indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between the variables of spirituality and family vulnerability.

Table 3.					
Correlation Test Results					
Variable	R	Sig. Explanation		1	
Spirituali	-	0.022	Negative	-	
ty & FV	0.166*	si	significant		
Social	-	0.000	Negative	-	
Support & FV	0.293**	si	gnificant		

Furthermore, regression test results show that (Table 4) the two variables showed around 10,3% influence the family vulnerability.

l abel 4.				
Regression Test Results				
Model	R	R	Adjusted R	Std. Error of the
		Square	Square	Estimate
1	0.321*	0.103	0.093	3.209
Dendistance (Constant) assistance and family and silver the set filter				

a. Predictors: (Constant), social support and family vulnerability

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
		Squares		Square		
1	Regression	219.602	2	109.801	10.665	0.000
	Residual	1914.970	186	10.296		
	Total	2134.571	188			

a. Dependent variable: Family vulnerability

b. Predictors: (Constant), social support and spirituality

The results of this study indicate that most participating families exhibited low family vulnerability (See Table 1 for descriptive statistics). This suggests that most respondents possessed a notable capacity to anticipate and navigate potentially unfavourable events or challenges impacting the family. However, it is important to note that a subset of respondents did report high levels of family vulnerability, indicating a need for continued support to enhance their family resilience. This overall finding aligns with previous research highlighting the impact of global changes on family conditions, particularly within lower-middle social classes (Datta et al., 2020; Sunarti & Kamilah, 2021; Sunarti et al., 2022; Suryahadi et al., 2020)

Regarding the specific relationships examined, the results show a significant negative relationship between spirituality and family vulnerability. This finding suggests a tendency for family vulnerability to be lower as the spirituality of the husband/wife increases. This is consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated the role of family spirituality in strengthening family relationships and promoting family well-being (Chang et al., 1998; Friedemann et al., 2002; Mahoney et al., 2003; Mahoney & Cano, 2014). Further supporting this, Ghaffari et al. (2013) and Amin et al (2024) found interrelationships among spiritual well-being, family protective factors, and overall family strength. Additionally, (S. S. Kim et al., 2016) proposed that family spirituality enhances family health by fostering commitment, improving emotional well-being, encouraging healthier behaviours, and providing healing experiences. (De Souza et al., 2024) found that spirituality and religiosity influence the lives of children, adolescents, and families, acting as a protective factor and source of comfort.

Spirituality has also been recognized as a significant factor in mitigating the negative emotional impacts during challenging periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Arslan & Yıldırım, 2021; S. C. Kim et al., 2021)). (Chirico, 2021) posited that, at a global level, spiritual resources and values serve as crucial coping mechanisms for dealing with the short- and long-term consequences of the pandemic. Consistent with its protective role, spirituality has been found to be positively correlated with life satisfaction and general well-being during a pandemic (Carranza Esteban et al., 2021; Muralidharan et al., 2022) and negatively correlated with indicators of distress such as stress, anxiety, and trauma during such events (Akanni, Olashore, and Oderinde, 2021).

Furthermore, the results of this study support previous findings indicating a significant negative relationship between social support and family vulnerability (Bäckström et al., 2021; Higgins et al., 2023; Mampane, 2020; Nunes et al., 2021). Social support is consistently identified as a key factor associated with family resilience. It plays a vital role in assisting families as they navigate difficulties and positively influences the development and well-being of its members.

## Conclusion

This study assessed the impact of spirituality and social support on the familial aspects of vulnerabilities. The results indicated that family vulnerability decreased significantly with an increase in spirituality. A similar finding was noted with social support; it also showed a significant negative relationship with family vulnerability. More notably, the combination of social support and spirituality was a significant predictor of family vulnerability, accounting for around 10.3% of the variance. This suggests that families high in social support and spirituality are less likely to experience vulnerability. These findings support prior studies and highlight the significance of both social and spiritual aids as protective elements against family vulnerability. Future research could investigate the specific dimensions or types of spirituality (e.g., religious practices, existential beliefs, sense of connection) and social support (e.g., emotional support, instrumental support, sense of belonging) that are most impactful in reducing family vulnerability.

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