

MARITAL RELATIONS AS A FACTOR IN THE DYNAMICS OF TERMINAL AND INSTRUMENTAL VALUES

Mirsamukova Shakhnoza Kakhramonovna.
KIMYO International University in Tashkent
Faculty: Social Psychology. Master's Program.

Abstract: This study examines the role of marital relations in shaping the dynamics of individuals' terminal and instrumental values. As one of the most influential social institutions, marriage significantly affects personal development, value orientation, and behavioral strategies. The research highlights that harmonious marital relations—characterized by trust, emotional support, and constructive communication—promote the strengthening of humanistic terminal values, such as personal growth, family well-being, and self-respect. At the same time, stable and supportive relationships foster prosocial instrumental values, including responsibility, tolerance, honesty, and self-control. In contrast, conflictual or dysfunctional marital interactions lead to shifts toward individualistic and defensive value orientations. The findings emphasize the importance of marital quality as a key factor influencing value transformation and may serve as a basis for further studies in family psychology and practical guidance in marital counseling.

Keywords: Marital relations; terminal values; instrumental values; value dynamics; family psychology; interpersonal interaction.

Marital relations represent one of the most influential social environments that shape an individual's worldview, behavior, and value orientation. As a core institution of adult socialization, marriage plays a significant role in the formation and transformation of both terminal values—reflecting long-term life goals—and instrumental values, which determine the behavioral strategies used to achieve these goals. In contemporary society, characterized by rapid changes in family roles, shifting expectations, and increasing variability in interpersonal communication, the value systems of individuals undergo substantial modifications. The quality of marital interaction, including emotional closeness, mutual support, and constructive dialogue, has been shown to directly affect the stability and direction of these value changes. Harmonious and supportive marital relationships contribute to the development of prosocial behaviors, strengthen long-term humanistic goals, and foster a sense of psychological well-being. Conversely, conflict, emotional distance, and value inconsistency within a marriage may destabilize a person's value system, increase

reliance on defensive strategies, and reduce satisfaction with life and relationships. Given these dynamics, studying marital relations as a determinant of changes in terminal and instrumental values is essential for understanding adult personality development and for advancing practical approaches in family psychology and marital counseling. This study employed a combination of theoretical and empirical methods aimed at identifying the relationship between the quality of marital relations and the dynamics of terminal and instrumental values. Theoretical methods included the analysis of scientific literature in the fields of family psychology, value theory (M. Rokeach, S. Schwartz), and contemporary research on the influence of interpersonal marital interaction on personality development. Empirical methods consisted of the following instruments: Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) — used to assess the structure of participants' terminal and instrumental values. Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (V.V. Stolin & A.N. Volkova) — applied to evaluate the quality of marital relations, including emotional closeness and overall satisfaction. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires — designed to explore communication patterns, role distribution within the family, and perceived value compatibility between spouses. The research sample included married individuals with a marital duration ranging from 1 to 15 years ($N = 60$). Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, enabling the identification of relationships between marital quality and changes in value orientations. The results of the study indicate that the quality of marital relations significantly influences the dynamics of both terminal and instrumental values. Participants with high marital satisfaction demonstrated a stronger orientation toward humanistic terminal values, such as personal growth, family well-being, social recognition, and harmonious interpersonal relationships. Specifically, goals like “happy family life,” “meaningful work,” “health,” “self-respect,” and “love” were prioritized by these individuals. Correlation analysis revealed a positive association between constructive marital communication and the strengthening of prosocial instrumental values, including responsibility, tolerance, honesty, self-control, and respectful behavior toward one's partner. This suggests that supportive and cooperative interactions within marriage contribute to more adaptive behavioral strategies. Conversely, participants with lower marital satisfaction exhibited a tendency toward individualistic and defensive instrumental values, an increased focus on materialistic goals, and a decreased emphasis on emotional closeness and joint life objectives. Semi-structured interviews further confirmed that conflict, emotional distance, and value incompatibility between spouses lead to value destabilization, reduced trust, and the development of protective behavioral patterns.

Conclusion

The conducted study demonstrates that marital relations are a significant factor influencing the dynamics of terminal and instrumental values in adults. High-quality marital interactions, characterized by trust, emotional support, and constructive communication, contribute to the strengthening of humanistic terminal values, the development of prosocial instrumental values, and overall psychological well-being. Conversely, low marital satisfaction, frequent conflicts, emotional distance, and value incompatibility can lead to destabilization of the value system, a shift toward individualistic and defensive orientations, and decreased prioritization of joint life goals. Therefore, the quality of marital relations should be recognized as a key determinant of personal development, moral and behavioral orientations, and the stability of an individual's value system. The findings of this study can be applied in family counseling, marital therapy, and further research on value dynamics across various social contexts.

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