Ranking Spiritual and Religious Practices Strengthening Family Bonds

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to identify, categorize, and rank the most significant spiritual and religious practices that strengthen family bonds, integrating qualitative content analysis and quantitative prioritization to develop a multidimensional framework of family spirituality.

Methods and Materials: The study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. In the first phase, a qualitative content analysis was conducted through an extensive literature review until theoretical saturation was reached. Extracted data were coded and analyzed using NVivo 14, producing six overarching themes of family spirituality. In the second phase, these categories were incorporated into a structured questionnaire and administered to 200 adult participants from Italy. Respondents rated the perceived importance of each spiritual and religious practice on a five-point Likert scale. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, applying descriptive statistics and Friedman's test to rank the practices by mean scores and determine relative importance.

Findings: The results revealed six primary categories of family spirituality ranked as follows: shared religious rituals (M = 4.68), moral and ethical alignment (M = 4.51), emotional and relational spirituality (M = 4.32), community and social belonging (M = 4.09), meaning and purpose orientation (M = 3.88), and interfaith respect and inclusivity (M = 3.47). The Friedman test confirmed significant differences in perceived importance across categories (p < 0.001). The highest-ranked themes emphasized ritual participation and moral coherence as foundational mechanisms of family unity, while emotional, communal, and inclusive practices played complementary but secondary roles.

Conclusion: Spirituality strengthens family bonds through an integrated system of shared rituals, moral alignment, emotional connection, and social belonging.

Keywords: family spirituality; religious practices; family cohesion; moral alignment

1 Introduction

The family is widely regarded as the most significant social institution shaping moral, emotional, and spiritual growth throughout the human lifespan. Within this context, spiritual and religious practices play an essential role in cultivating unity, resilience, and meaning across generations. Contemporary scholarship has highlighted the importance of spirituality as both an individual and collective resource that enables families to navigate adversity, transmit moral values, and sustain emotional intimacy (Rahmatullah & Syafi'i, 2025; Smoljo-Dobrovoljski, 2025). Despite growing secularization trends, the persistence of faith-based traditions across diverse societies indicates that spiritual and religious activities continue to provide a framework for cohesion and ethical orientation within families (Pieja, 2022; Wasosa, 2025). The present study seeks to explore, categorize, and rank the specific spiritual and religious practices that contribute most significantly to strengthening family bonds.

In contemporary social sciences, spirituality is conceptualized not merely as a set of religious observances but as a multidimensional construct encompassing transcendence, connectedness, and purpose (Agudelo et al., 2023; Asadzandi & A, 2023). Within family systems, spirituality operates as a binding force that fosters compassion, forgiveness, and a sense of belonging among members (Barbarin, 2025; Hartanto et al., 2025). Research demonstrates that shared faith experiences—such as prayer, rituals, and collective worship—enhance emotional regulation and interpersonal trust, especially in times of crisis (Job et al., 2022; Manungo & Rukuni, 2021). These practices also facilitate resilience by embedding daily challenges within a moral and metaphysical framework that gives suffering meaning and encourages mutual support (Berry & Lazcano, 2024; Norwood & Boulton, 2021). Thus, spirituality may serve as both a coping resource and a moral compass, guiding families through life transitions and adversity.

The interrelationship between spirituality, parental behavior, and child development has been emphasized in multiple psychological and theological studies (Miftahurrahmat et al., 2025; Rahmatullah & Syafi'i, 2025). Early religious education, for instance, shapes children's emotional stability, moral reasoning, and empathy, thereby influencing family harmony (Munif, 2023; Novitasari, 2025). Scholars argue that parental spirituality often functions as an implicit curriculum for moral formation, where modeling compassion, gratitude, and service cultivates children's pro-social behaviors (Arief et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2024). Faith-based parenting approaches rooted in the Quranic and Biblical traditions emphasize mutual respect, communication, and justice within family relationships (Arifin & Futriani, 2024; Zulfikar & Fathinuddin, 2023). As families transmit religious norms intergenerationally, spirituality becomes a vehicle for preserving cultural continuity and sustaining shared values in rapidly changing societies (Odilova, 2024; Pieja, 2022).

Spiritual and religious activities often take collective forms that reinforce togetherness. Studies across Islamic, Catholic, and interfaith contexts have shown that rituals such as daily prayers, religious celebrations, and family pilgrimages serve as social glue, providing opportunities for reflection and emotional expression (Andriningsih & Sokarina, 2025; Hartanto et al., 2025; Sitepu et al., 2024). The *mudik* and *halal bihalal* traditions in Indonesia, for instance, are symbolic acts of reunion and reconciliation that integrate spiritual devotion with kinship values (Hartanto et al., 2025). Similarly, in Catholic families, the liturgical life—particularly prayer, the Eucharist, and domestic devotions—reinforces familial solidarity and moral commitment (Pieja, 2022; Sitepu et al., 2024). These ritualistic practices cultivate spiritual intimacy by transforming ordinary routines into sacred encounters, thereby deepening the affective ties among family members (Smoljo-Dobrovoljski, 2025; Wasosa, 2025).

Beyond ritual and observance, spirituality influences the moral-ethical dimension of family life. Spiritual belief systems provide families with shared frameworks for ethical decision-making, forgiveness, and conflict resolution (Berry & Lazcano, 2024; Firdous et al., 2023). In this sense, moral alignment within the family unit functions as a stabilizing factor that promotes empathy and reduces hostility. Families that interpret interpersonal difficulties through the lens of faith—emphasizing mercy, patience, and repentance—demonstrate greater relational stability (Goudarzi et al., 2025; Rahmatullah & Syafi'i, 2025). Theories of spiritual pathology suggest that spiritual distress, often arising from misalignment between belief and behavior, can disrupt relational harmony, whereas moral coherence enhances both psychological and spiritual well-being (Asadzandi & A, 2023). Consequently, religious instruction and moral formation within families serve not only theological but also psychosocial functions, fostering adaptive behavior and emotional balance (Irawan et al., 2024; Kaur et al., 2025).

A growing body of evidence links spirituality to emotional resilience and coping mechanisms during life crises (Agudelo et al., 2023; Norwood & Boulton, 2021). Families who integrate prayer, meditation, and reflective discussions into their routines show reduced psychological distress and stronger cohesion during illness, bereavement, or socioeconomic hardship (Barbarin, 2025; Job et al., 2022). The emotional benefits of shared spirituality are particularly pronounced in contexts of grief, as joint rituals provide meaning to suffering and reinforce a sense of collective hope (Berry & Lazcano, 2024; Norwood & Boulton, 2021). In multicultural environments, these emotional and spiritual resources also help families adapt to stressors related to migration, cultural change, and intergenerational differences (Gadingan, 2025; Goudarzi et al., 2025). By fostering mutual empathy and shared narratives of endurance, spirituality becomes an emotional bridge across demographic and cultural boundaries.

The educational role of religion within the family has also received considerable scholarly attention. Religious education—both formal and informal—shapes the development of faith identity and moral reasoning in children (Miftahurrahmat et al., 2025; Munif, 2023). Parents act as primary educators in faith, transmitting narratives, rituals, and ethical codes that define family identity (Arief et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2024). According to Islamic and Christian pedagogical models, integrating spiritual reflection into everyday learning nurtures critical thinking, gratitude, and humility (Arifin & Futriani, 2024; Novitasari, 2025). Furthermore, when families maintain open communication about spiritual matters, adolescents report higher moral self-concept and greater resistance to risky behavior (Nurwiyani, 2023; Odilova, 2024). This underscores the role of family spirituality not only in moral instruction but also in psychological protection and social adjustment.

Religious traditions also serve as frameworks for managing social obligations and civic responsibility within and beyond the household. Faith-based communities often promote altruism, social participation, and the ethic of service, encouraging families to extend their compassion outward (Akbar et al., 2025; Goudarzi et al., 2025). Active participation in religious community life—through charity, volunteerism, and mentorship—enhances family identity and cohesion by aligning individual actions with collective spiritual goals (Andriningsih & Sokarina, 2025; Gadingan, 2025). Families involved in such activities tend to experience a stronger sense of social belonging and a shared mission, reinforcing both moral and relational stability (Firdous et al., 2023; Manungo & Rukuni, 2021). This suggests that spirituality is not only an internal dimension of family functioning but also a social construct that links families to broader networks of moral and emotional support.

Another dimension of spirituality relates to the search for meaning and existential coherence within family life. Scholars emphasize that spiritual families often develop a collective sense of purpose, interpreting their experiences within a divine framework that provides orientation and continuity (Agudelo et al., 2023; Asadzandi & A, 2023). This existential meaning-making process helps families endure hardship with hope and gratitude, transforming adversity into an opportunity for moral and spiritual growth (Berry & Lazcano, 2024; Goudarzi et al., 2025). Practices such as reflection, journaling, and joint prayer encourage members to view daily challenges as opportunities for transformation rather than sources of despair (Job et al., 2022; Norwood & Boulton, 2021). Families anchored in faith thus report higher satisfaction, stronger marital bonds, and greater life coherence (Hartanto et al., 2025; Smoljo-Dobrovoljski, 2025).

The growing diversity of contemporary families has also brought attention to interfaith dynamics and inclusivity as emerging aspects of spiritual life (Pieja, 2022; Wasosa, 2025). In pluralistic societies, interfaith families develop adaptive strategies for integrating diverse spiritual traditions while maintaining mutual respect and harmony (Odilova, 2024; Sitepu et al., 2024). Studies reveal that families who cultivate tolerance, engage in open dialogue, and celebrate multiple faith traditions often experience deeper empathy and mutual understanding (Arief et al., 2024; Zulfikar & Fathinuddin, 2023). Such practices contribute to a more inclusive form of spirituality that transcends doctrinal differences and prioritizes universal values such as love, peace, and justice (Arifin & Futriani, 2024; Firdous et al., 2023). Consequently, inclusivity and interfaith respect emerge as essential components of modern family spirituality in multicultural contexts (Andriningsih & Sokarina, 2025; Manungo & Rukuni, 2021).

Finally, the integration of spirituality and mental well-being has gained prominence in research on family functioning and resilience. Studies show that spiritual intelligence—the capacity to apply spiritual insights to problem-solving and meaning-making—reduces stress and enhances coping among family members (Goudarzi et al., 2025; Kaur et al., 2025). Spiritual reflection and prayer are

associated with lower levels of depression, greater marital satisfaction, and stronger parent–child bonds (Agudelo et al., 2023; Job et al., 2022). In addition, families that maintain religious involvement demonstrate reduced risk behaviors among adolescents and greater resistance to social alienation (Nurwiyani, 2023; Rahmatullah & Syafi'i, 2025). Hence, the integration of faith and psychological well-being forms a holistic framework that unites emotional health with moral-spiritual development.

In sum, prior research highlights that spirituality and religious practices function as multidimensional forces that nurture moral integrity, emotional closeness, and intergenerational continuity within families (Goudarzi et al., 2025; Hartanto et al., 2025; Smoljo-Dobrovoljski, 2025). Yet, despite substantial theoretical work, empirical ranking and prioritization of these practices remain limited, particularly across diverse sociocultural contexts such as Italy. Therefore, the present study aims to identify, categorize, and rank the spiritual and religious practices that most effectively strengthen family bonds, integrating qualitative insights with quantitative evaluation to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding faith-based family cohesion.

2   Methods and Materials

2.1   Study Design and Participants

This study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, combining a qualitative phase for theory generation with a quantitative phase for ranking and prioritization. In the first phase, a qualitative content analysis was conducted to identify and categorize spiritual and religious practices that contribute to strengthening family bonds. This phase relied exclusively on a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed articles, books, and institutional reports published between 2010 and 2025. The review continued until theoretical saturation was achieved— when no new practices or conceptual dimensions emerged from the data.

In the second phase, the findings from the qualitative stage were used to design a structured questionnaire aimed at ranking the identified practices. The quantitative phase adopted a descriptive–survey approach to assess the perceived importance and effectiveness of these practices among a target population. The sample consisted of 200 adult participants from Italy, selected through purposive sampling to include individuals from diverse age groups, family structures, and religious affiliations. The inclusion criteria required participants to be (a) over 18 years old, (b) currently part of a family system (married, cohabiting, or with close kinship relations), and (c) familiar with or engaged in spiritual or religious practices.

2.2   Measures

In the qualitative phase, data were collected through a comprehensive literature review using academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. Keywords included spiritual practices, religiosity, family cohesion, marital intimacy, parent–child relationship, and family spirituality. Studies were screened for relevance, methodological rigor, and conceptual contribution. Extracted texts, definitions, and thematic statements were imported into NVivo 14 software for coding and analysis.

For the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was developed based on the qualitative themes. It contained a list of spiritual and religious practices identified in the first phase, which participants rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very low importance, 5 = very high importance). The questionnaire was administered electronically via a secure online platform to ensure accessibility and anonymity. Demographic data such as age, gender, marital status, and frequency of religious engagement were also collected to allow for subgroup analysis.

2.3   Data Analysis

In the qualitative stage, thematic content analysis was conducted using NVivo 14. Texts were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and subthemes related to family-strengthening spiritual and religious practices. Initial open coding was followed by axial and selective coding to refine themes into broader conceptual categories. Trustworthiness was ensured through peer debriefing and iterative comparison until saturation.

In the quantitative stage, the ranked importance of the identified practices was analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution) were computed to determine the most and least valued practices. Furthermore, Friedman ranking tests were applied to compare the relative importance of the practices across participants. Reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which demonstrated high internal consistency

3   Findings and Results

The qualitative phase of this study aimed to identify, categorize, and conceptualize spiritual and religious practices that strengthen family bonds through a systematic literature review and qualitative content analysis. Using NVivo 14, the selected literature was analyzed to extract meaningful codes, concepts, and relationships reflecting spiritual behaviors, rituals, values, and family-oriented beliefs. The analysis followed an inductive approach, starting with open coding to identify initial concepts, then axial coding to group them into subthemes, and finally selective coding to form overarching categories. Theoretical saturation was reached after examining 58 academic sources, at which point no new codes emerged. The process revealed six major themes, each encompassing several subthemes and associated open codes that represent the core practices enhancing family connectedness through spirituality and religiosity.

Table 1

Main Themes, Subcategories, and Concepts of Spiritual and Religious Practices Strengthening Family Bonds

Category (Main Theme)	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Shared Religious Rituals	Family Prayer and Worship	Collective prayer; Weekly church attendance; Home altar setup; Shared scripture reading; Lighting candles together
	Celebratory Traditions	Religious holidays; Fasting periods; Family pilgrimages; Seasonal ceremonies
	Sacramental Practices	Baptism participation; Communion as a family; Blessing rituals before meals
	Religious Music and Chanting	Singing hymns; Reciting mantras; Spiritual storytelling through songs
2. Moral and Ethical Alignment	Teaching Moral Principles	Parental moral instruction; Use of parables; Modeling ethical behavior
	Intergenerational Guidance	Grandparental advice; Oral religious stories; Transmission of sacred values
	Conflict Resolution through Faith	Forgiveness based on teachings; Praying before reconciliation; Emphasizing compassion in disputes
	Discipline and Boundaries	Faith-based discipline; Self-control lessons; Linking rules to moral reasoning
3. Emotional and Relational Spirituality	Compassion and Empathy	Empathetic listening; Spiritual encouragement; Compassionate caregiving
	Family Unity through Reflection	Shared meditation; Gratitude journaling; Reflective family meetings
	Emotional Healing Practices	Spiritual counseling; Confession and forgiveness; Releasing resentment through prayer
	Faith-Based Emotional Regulation	Trust in divine will; Acceptance of hardship; Mindful surrender to God
	Support During Crisis	Spiritual rituals during illness; Collective coping prayers; Hope reinforcement
4. Community and Social Belonging	Collective Worship Involvement	Group prayers; Parish community service; Religious gatherings
	Charitable Engagement	Volunteering as a family; Donating to the needy; Religious community outreach
	Mentorship and Faith Circles	Bible study groups; Family mentoring sessions; Peer spiritual dialogue
5. Meaning and Purpose Orientation	Family Mission and Calling	Shared life purpose; Faith-based goal setting; Commitment to divine plan
	Existential Reflection	Conversations on afterlife; Understanding suffering; Sense of divine timing
	Gratitude and Contentment	Expressing thanks in daily life; Appreciating small blessings; Journaling gratitude moments
	Hope and Optimism	Belief in providence; Expectation of positive change; Reframing adversity spiritually
6. Interfaith Respect and Inclusivity	Religious Tolerance at Home	Respect for diverse beliefs; Joint celebrations of different faith holidays; Open discussions on religion
	Spiritual Dialogue and Curiosity	Asking faith-related questions; Sharing sacred texts; Exploring spiritual experiences
	Mixed-Faith Family Adaptation	Blending rituals; Negotiating faith practices; Teaching inclusive prayer habits
	Universal Values Promotion	Love, peace, and justice; Emphasizing shared humanity; Rejecting prejudice

1. Shared Religious Rituals

The first theme, *Shared Religious Rituals*, emerged as a foundational mechanism through which families reinforce unity, meaning, and continuity in their relationships. Practices such as collective prayer, weekly worship attendance, and the creation of home altars or sacred spaces were found to strengthen the emotional and spiritual connection among family members. Rituals surrounding religious holidays, fasting periods, and pilgrimages not only create a rhythm of togetherness but also reinforce collective

identity and belonging. Families who engage in sacramental traditions such as baptism, communion, or meal blessings express faith in ways that mark significant life events with spiritual meaning. Moreover, religious music, chanting, and storytelling were identified as emotionally bonding tools that transmit beliefs across generations while promoting joy, gratitude, and a sense of shared devotion.

2. Moral and Ethical Alignment

The second major theme, *Moral and Ethical Alignment*, reflects how spirituality serves as a moral compass that shapes family norms and interpersonal conduct. Within this category, families emphasize teaching moral principles and modeling ethical behavior through parables, scripture, and daily actions, allowing faith to guide decisions and emotional regulation. Intergenerational moral guidance—often led by grandparents or elders—was a recurring subtheme, highlighting the role of storytelling and mentorship in value transmission. Many families use their faith frameworks to navigate conflict resolution, turning to prayer and forgiveness rituals to repair relational tensions. Additionally, discipline and boundary-setting based on religious teachings promote accountability, self-control, and respect. Overall, families that align their daily life with faith-driven ethics appear to cultivate harmony, empathy, and a coherent sense of right and wrong within the household.

3. Emotional and Relational Spirituality

The third theme, *Emotional and Relational Spirituality*, focuses on how spirituality fosters emotional intimacy, empathy, and mutual support. Families that intentionally practice compassion and empathy grounded in spiritual teachings demonstrate greater patience and understanding toward one another. Joint activities like reflective meditation, gratitude journaling, and spiritual counseling provide shared emotional healing experiences, especially during times of distress. Faith-based emotional regulation—such as acceptance, surrender, and trust in divine will—helps members manage anxiety, anger, and loss in constructive ways. Moreover, spiritual support during crises, including prayers for healing or rituals of hope, emerged as a central bonding factor that transforms adversity into collective resilience. This emotional dimension of faith transcends dogma, creating a relational climate of openness, warmth, and psychological safety within families.

4. Community and Social Belonging

The fourth theme, *Community and Social Belonging*, captures how family spirituality extends beyond the household into broader communal networks that reinforce solidarity and shared purpose. Families participating together in collective worship, religious gatherings, and community service activities experience an expanded sense of identity and support. Acts of charity and volunteering are perceived not only as moral obligations but also as opportunities to strengthen family cohesion through joint altruistic engagement. Participation in faith-based mentoring or study groups allows families to form meaningful connections, learn from others, and share collective spiritual growth. The sense of belonging cultivated through community involvement provides emotional resources and a shared moral framework that nurtures inter-family cooperation and social responsibility.

5. Meaning and Purpose Orientation

The fifth theme, *Meaning and Purpose Orientation*, centers on how spirituality gives families a shared existential direction. Many families articulate a collective sense of calling or mission, framing their life goals within a faith-based vision of service, gratitude, and divine purpose. Existential reflection, including discussions about suffering, the afterlife, and divine timing, provides interpretive coherence during difficult life events. Families that emphasize gratitude and contentment foster emotional balance and optimism, recognizing blessings in daily life as signs of divine care. Additionally, hope and positive expectation, grounded in spiritual faith, empower families to cope with uncertainty and maintain perseverance. This orientation toward purpose and meaning acts as a psychological anchor, motivating members to act compassionately and sustain long-term emotional investment in family life.

6. Interfaith Respect and Inclusivity

The final theme, *Interfaith Respect and Inclusivity*, reflects the growing recognition of pluralism within modern families and highlights how spirituality can bridge, rather than divide, different beliefs. Families that cultivate religious tolerance and interfaith respect encourage open dialogue, celebrate diverse holidays, and foster curiosity rather than fear of difference. Subthemes such as spiritual dialogue and mixed-faith adaptation show how families negotiate religious diversity by blending rituals or creating inclusive spiritual practices that honor all members' traditions. The promotion of universal values like love, peace, and justice transcends doctrinal boundaries, allowing families to align around shared ethical principles. This inclusive spiritual environment nurtures empathy, mutual respect, and the capacity for coexistence—key foundations for harmony in multicultural and intergenerational households.

The second phase of the study aimed to rank and prioritize the identified spiritual and religious practices according to their perceived importance in strengthening family bonds. Building upon the qualitative findings, a structured questionnaire containing the six major categories derived from the NVivo analysis was distributed among 200 participants from Italy. Each participant rated the degree to which each practice contributes to family cohesion on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *1 (very low importance)* to *5 (very high importance)*. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, applying Friedman's test to determine the relative ranks of the categories. Descriptive statistics including mean rank values were calculated to identify the most and least influential practices.

Table 2

Ranking of Spiritual and Religious Practices Strengthening Family Bonds

Practice Category	Mean Rank	Rank Order
Shared Religious Rituals	4.68	1
Moral and Ethical Alignment	4.51	2
Emotional and Relational Spirituality	4.32	3
Community and Social Belonging	4.09	4
Meaning and Purpose Orientation	3.88	5
Interfaith Respect and Inclusivity	3.47	6

Figure 1

Ranking of Spiritual and Religious Practices Strengthening Family Bonds
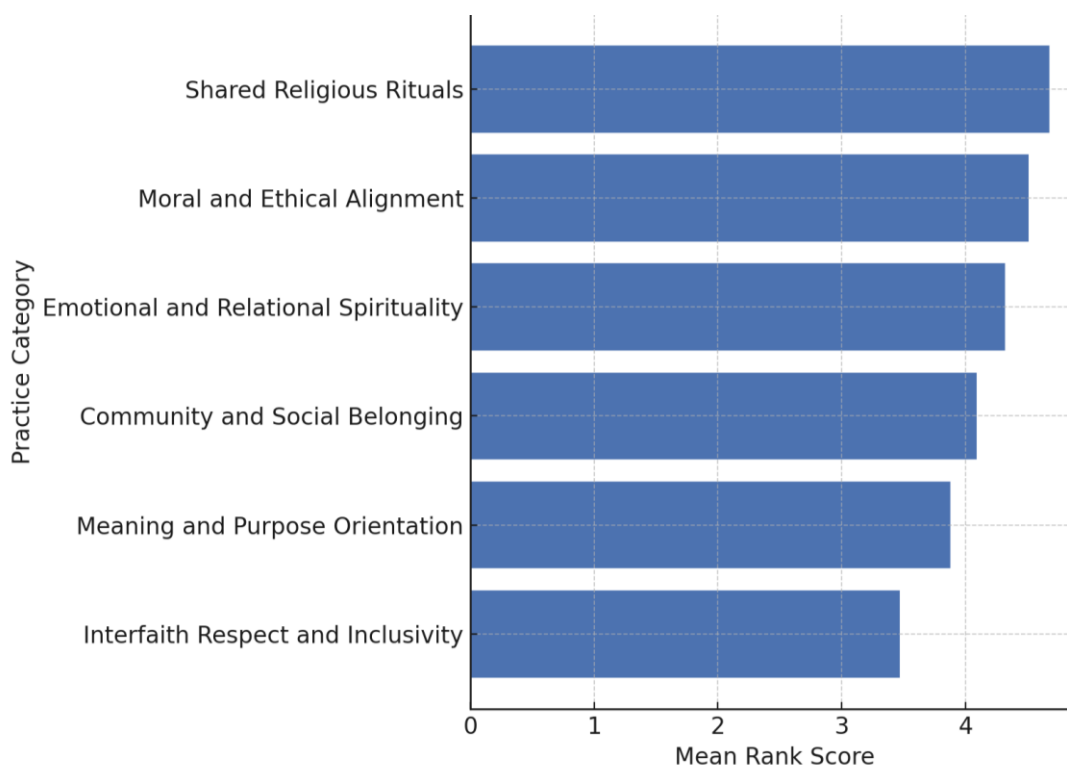
The quantitative analysis revealed that Shared Religious Rituals achieved the highest mean rank (M = 4.68), indicating that collective faith-based activities such as family prayer, worship attendance, and shared religious celebrations are perceived as the strongest contributors to family unity. Moral and Ethical Alignment followed closely (M = 4.51), suggesting that shared ethical frameworks rooted in spiritual values significantly enhance mutual respect and cohesion among family members. Emotional and Relational Spirituality ranked third (M = 4.32), highlighting the importance of empathy, compassion, and emotional healing within faith contexts. Community and Social

Belonging (M = 4.09) and Meaning and Purpose Orientation (M = 3.88) occupied mid-level positions, reflecting their supportive but secondary influence. The lowest mean rank was recorded for Interfaith Respect and Inclusivity (M = 3.47), implying that while pluralistic and inclusive practices are valued, they may not yet hold the same perceived strength in reinforcing traditional family bonds. Overall, the ranking results demonstrate a pattern emphasizing ritual participation and moral coherence as the central mechanisms through which spirituality fortifies family relationships.

4   Discussion and Conclusion

The present study sought to identify and rank the spiritual and religious practices that strengthen family bonds, integrating qualitative findings derived from literature-based content analysis with quantitative rankings from 200 Italian participants. The results revealed six core categories of family spirituality: shared religious rituals, moral and ethical alignment, emotional and relational spirituality, community and social belonging, meaning and purpose orientation, and interfaith respect and inclusivity. Among these, *shared religious rituals* and *moral and ethical alignment* emerged as the most influential practices in reinforcing family unity, trust, and moral coherence. This pattern underscores the centrality of collective religious activities and shared moral systems in maintaining the integrity and emotional resilience of family life.

The high ranking of shared religious rituals (M = 4.68) indicates that structured and routine expressions of faith—such as prayer, worship attendance, and ritual celebrations—serve as the strongest foundation for family cohesion. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that collective religious engagement fosters emotional intimacy and shared meaning (Hartanto et al., 2025; Sitepu et al., 2024). Rituals act as anchors of belonging, turning abstract faith principles into embodied family experiences (Pieja, 2022). The *mudik* and *halal bihalal* traditions in Indonesia, for example, integrate spirituality with kinship values, reflecting how religious celebrations can restore relational harmony after separation (Hartanto et al., 2025). Similarly, within Catholic families, participation in daily prayer and Eucharistic rituals provides a spiritual rhythm that reinforces unity and forgiveness (Sitepu et al., 2024; Wasosa, 2025). The continuity of such practices also supports intergenerational bonding by linking younger members to ancestral traditions, thus embedding faith within the fabric of daily life (Andriningsih & Sokarina, 2025; Smoljo-Dobrovoljski, 2025).

The second-ranked category, moral and ethical alignment (M = 4.51), illustrates how shared values derived from spiritual teachings function as an internal compass for regulating family interactions. Families that uphold consistent moral standards grounded in religious ethics tend to exhibit higher trust, empathy, and cooperation (Goudarzi et al., 2025; Rahmatullah & Syafi'i, 2025). As noted in Islamic and Christian frameworks, moral instruction begins within the home through modeling, parables, and open dialogue (Arief et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2024). This study supports the view that when parents teach virtues such as forgiveness, compassion, and self-control as expressions of faith, children develop stronger moral reasoning and emotional security (Arifin & Futriani, 2024; Miftahurrahmat et al., 2025). Consistent with (Asadzandi & A, 2023), spiritual pathology theory posits that harmony between belief and behavior enhances both psychological health and relational stability. Hence, families aligned in their ethical worldview not only minimize conflict but also deepen their spiritual and emotional connection.

The third-ranked dimension, emotional and relational spirituality (M = 4.32), highlights the emotional benefits of shared faith-based coping and reflection. Families who engage in prayer, meditation, and gratitude journaling collectively manage emotional distress more effectively than those relying solely on secular strategies (Berry & Lazcano, 2024; Norwood & Boulton, 2021). As the results demonstrate, spiritual practices provide frameworks for empathy, mutual forgiveness, and acceptance of life's challenges. This resonates with prior research suggesting that family spirituality enhances coping during bereavement and illness by offering symbolic meaning to suffering (Agudelo et al., 2023; Job et al., 2022). Emotional resilience derived from spirituality has also been linked to reduced anxiety and strengthened relational bonds (Goudarzi et al., 2025; Kaur et al., 2025). The family becomes a site of spiritual healing, where compassion, reflection, and trust in divine providence facilitate the regulation of emotions and foster long-term relational satisfaction (Barbarin, 2025; Munif, 2023).

The category community and social belonging (M = 4.09) reinforces the notion that spirituality extends beyond the household, connecting families to larger moral communities. Participation in religious gatherings, charitable events, and faith-based social groups enhances the sense of belonging and purpose shared among family members (Firdous et al.,

2023; Manungo & Rukuni, 2021). The communal dimension of spirituality transforms faith into a lived social ethic, promoting empathy and service beyond kinship boundaries (Akbar et al., 2025; Andriningsih & Sokarina, 2025). These findings are consistent with the view that altruistic behavior—such as volunteering and charitable giving—is an extension of family spirituality into the public sphere (Gadingan, 2025; Goudarzi et al., 2025). Community participation not only reinforces collective moral identity but also provides psychological resources through social support, reducing feelings of isolation and fostering resilience during adversity (Rahmatullah & Syafi'i, 2025; Wasosa, 2025).

Ranked fifth, meaning and purpose orientation (M = 3.88) emphasizes the existential role of spirituality in guiding family life. Families that frame their experiences within a divine plan report higher life satisfaction and coherence (Agudelo et al., 2023; Smoljo-Dobrovoljski, 2025). This alignment with transcendental purpose enables families to interpret suffering as a process of growth rather than despair (Asadzandi & A, 2023; Berry & Lazcano, 2024). As reflected in (Pieja, 2022), family spirituality provides moral narratives that infuse meaning into mundane routines and challenges. The act of reflecting together on gratitude, purpose, and divine providence fosters optimism and emotional equilibrium (Job et al., 2022; Norwood & Boulton, 2021). These results are aligned with (Barbarin, 2025), who notes that preparation for adversity within a faith context enhances coping and promotes psychological strength. Thus, cultivating shared purpose transforms faith into an enduring motivational structure that sustains family unity across generations.

The lowest-ranked but conceptually significant category, interfaith respect and inclusivity (M = 3.47), illustrates an evolving dimension of spirituality in multicultural societies. Although this practice ranked lowest, its inclusion reflects an emerging shift toward pluralistic and tolerant forms of family spirituality (Arifin & Futriani, 2024; Odilova, 2024). Interfaith families often face challenges of negotiating rituals and doctrines, yet those who embrace inclusivity demonstrate greater adaptability and empathy (Arief et al., 2024; Zulfikar & Fathinuddin, 2023). These findings resonate with the global movement toward spiritual humanism, which prioritizes shared ethical values such as compassion and justice over theological boundaries (Andriningsih & Sokarina, 2025; Firdous et al., 2023). As religious diversity increases, especially in Europe, cultivating interfaith understanding becomes crucial for sustaining peace and cohesion within families (Manungo & Rukuni, 2021; Wasosa, 2025). Although less traditionally emphasized, interfaith inclusivity represents the adaptive capacity of family spirituality to integrate diversity while maintaining moral unity.

Overall, the pattern of rankings reveals a hierarchy in which ritual and moral coherence form the structural foundation of family spirituality, while emotional reflection, community involvement, and inclusivity provide complementary layers of meaning. This suggests that families derive their primary sense of unity from tangible, shared spiritual acts and shared moral systems, which in turn foster emotional well-being and social solidarity. The results align with theoretical models of family spirituality that describe it as a multidimensional construct encompassing ritual, moral, emotional, and social dimensions (Asadzandi & A, 2023; Goudarzi et al., 2025; Smoljo-Dobrovoljski, 2025). By combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of how specific faith practices operate within family systems to strengthen bonds and cultivate resilience.

Another important insight emerging from this study is that spirituality operates at multiple ecological levels—from intrapersonal faith awareness to communal and institutional participation (Gadingan, 2025; Hartanto et al., 2025). The findings demonstrate that families who integrate spirituality into their daily lives report higher levels of psychological well-being and moral satisfaction (Berry & Lazcano, 2024; Kaur et al., 2025). Furthermore, the presence of shared faith routines appears to buffer against contemporary social stressors, including the fragmentation of traditional family structures and the decline of communal values (Goudarzi et al., 2025; Manungo & Rukuni, 2021). The multidimensional model proposed here supports previous conceptualizations that view spirituality not as a single behavior but as an integrated system of values, rituals, and emotional practices (Pieja, 2022; Rahmatullah & Syafi'i, 2025). Therefore, fostering spirituality in families may contribute not only to relational health but also to the broader stability of moral communities.

This study's findings also bridge gaps between religious doctrine and applied family psychology, offering evidence that spiritual beliefs translate into tangible psychosocial benefits. Families that cultivate shared prayer routines and moral reflection exhibit higher trust and empathy, confirming the therapeutic potential of spiritual engagement (Job et al., 2022; Norwood & Boulton, 2021). Such results corroborate previous assertions that spiritual practices

enhance emotional regulation and strengthen resilience by embedding family struggles within a sacred narrative of purpose and meaning (Agudelo et al., 2023; Asadzandi & A, 2023). Moreover, the inclusion of interfaith tolerance as a ranked category indicates that modern family spirituality is not static but dynamic, responding to globalization and cultural hybridity (Arifin & Futriani, 2024; Odilova, 2024). These findings underscore the continued relevance of spirituality as both a psychological and sociocultural phenomenon shaping family well-being in the 21st century.

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the qualitative phase relied solely on literature-based data rather than primary field interviews. Although theoretical saturation was achieved, empirical triangulation with lived experiences would enrich contextual understanding. Second, the quantitative phase involved participants exclusively from Italy, which may limit generalizability across cultural and religious contexts. The sample size of 200, while sufficient for descriptive analysis, restricts inferential scope. Additionally, participants may have interpreted "spiritual" and "religious" practices differently depending on personal faith backgrounds, potentially introducing subjective variability. Lastly, the self-report nature of the ranking questionnaire could have been influenced by social desirability bias, particularly given the moral overtones associated with spirituality.

Future studies should adopt cross-cultural comparative designs to examine whether the identified hierarchy of spiritual practices holds across different faith traditions and sociocultural contexts. Longitudinal studies could explore how these practices evolve over time and affect family outcomes such as marital satisfaction, adolescent adjustment, and intergenerational communication. Moreover, integrating qualitative interviews and ethnographic observation could capture nuanced dynamics of spirituality in everyday family life. Researchers might also investigate the mediating roles of psychological constructs—such as resilience, gratitude, and attachment style—in explaining how spirituality influences family cohesion. Finally, examining interfaith and secular families would provide insight into how inclusive and adaptive spiritual practices can coexist with modern pluralism.

Practically, the results highlight the need for family counselors, educators, and faith leaders to integrate spirituality as a resource for enhancing family communication and emotional health. Counseling interventions can incorporate faith-based rituals or gratitude exercises that resonate with clients' belief systems. Religious institutions may design programs encouraging families to engage collectively in spiritual practices that reinforce empathy and shared purpose. Educational systems could collaborate with religious organizations to promote moral development grounded in compassion and inclusivity. At the community level, policymakers and practitioners should recognize the positive social capital generated by family spirituality, supporting initiatives that foster moral education, interfaith dialogue, and social cohesion. Ultimately, strengthening families through spirituality represents an integrative pathway toward both personal and collective well-being.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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