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ANXIETY AND STATE TRAIT ANXIETY OUTCOMES IN MENTAL WELLBEING PRIME DETERMINANTS IN QUALITY OF MARRIAGE AMONG MARRIED COUPLES

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ABSTRACT

Aim: *This study aimed to examine the relationship between anxiety, state anxiety, trait anxiety, marital quality, and mental well-being among married individuals aged 35 to 45 years.* ***Method:*** *Employing a cross-sectional, correlational design, the study utilised standardised self-report* ***tools:*** *the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), and Quality of Marriage Index (QMI).* ***Sample:*** *The sample comprised 100 married individuals (49 males and 51 females) selected through purposive sampling from urban settings in Vashi and Thane area of Mumbai State.* ***Statistical analyses****, including Pearson's correlation, moderation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 5), and independent samples t-test, were conducted.* ***Results:*** *revealed a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between state anxiety and mental wellbeing ($r = .208$, $p = .038$), and a strong negative correlation between trait anxiety and mental wellbeing ($r = –.540$, $p < .001$). Marital quality displayed a statistically significant but extremely weak negative correlation with mental well-being ($r = –.048$, $p = .036$). This counterintuitive finding suggests that higher perceived marital satisfaction may coexist with role strain or hidden stressors, requiring cautious interpretation with mental well-being ($r = –.048$, $p = .036$). Notably, marital quality significantly moderated the relationship between state anxiety and mental well-being ($p = .037$) but did not moderate the link between trait anxiety and well-being. Additionally, Gender differences emerged, with males reporting moderately higher levels of mental well-being than females ($p = .001$, Cohen's $d = .670$), underscoring the need to consider gendered expectations and sociocultural pressures in marital dynamics. ($p = .001$, Cohen's $d = .670$).* ***Conclusion:*** *The study concludes that while marital quality can buffer the effects of situational anxiety, trait anxiety poses a persistent threat to mental health.*

KEYWORDS: *State Anxiety, Trait Anxiety, Mental Wellbeing, Marital Quality, Anxiety Disorders.*

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety, Quality of Marriage, Married Couple

Anxiety plays a significant role in shaping the quality of marital life, often acting as both a symptom and a cause of relational distress. For many married couples, Within systemic and dyadic frameworks such as the Family Stress Model, unresolved conflicts and daily stressors can amplify anxiety, which in turn weakens emotional attunement and marital satisfaction, and emotional disconnect can gradually translate into persistent anxiety, weakening the emotional fabric of the relationship (Bahadori et al., 2024). When anxiety becomes a regular part of a marital relationship, it may affect communication, intimacy, and satisfaction, ultimately deteriorating the overall marital bond (Postler et al., 2022). Studies show that high levels of perceived stress can heighten anxiety, which in turn lowers marital satisfaction, especially among younger couples navigating academic or career pressures(Bahadori et al., 2024).

State Trait Anxiety, Quality of Marriage, Married Couple

Marriage, while often a source of emotional support, can also be a complex environment where psychological vulnerabilities such as anxiety are amplified(Nicolini et al., 2021). State anxiety refers to temporary emotional responses to specific situations, whereas trait anxiety reflects a more stable tendency to experience anxiety across time and settings(Sayalı et al., 2025). Within marital relationships, both forms of anxiety can significantly impact communication, intimacy, and emotional availability between partners(Yang et al., 2023). Individuals with high trait anxiety are more likely to misinterpret their spouse's actions as threatening, leading to increased conflict and dissatisfaction in the relationship(Sayalı et al., 2025). Research suggests that perceived emotional support within the marriage can moderate the effects of anxiety, creating a buffer that protects the relationship from psychological strain(Yuan et al., 2022).

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Mental Wellbeing, Quality of Marriage, Married Couple

Mental well-being and the quality of marriage are closely intertwined, influencing not just individual health but also the emotional climate of a marital relationship(Kravdal et al., 2023). A healthy marriage can be a powerful source of psychological resilience, while marital strain can severely compromise emotional well-being(Yang et al., 2023). Couples with strong relationship quality often experience lower levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms, indicating that emotional connection within marriage is vital for mental health(Brown et al., 2022).

Ultimately, prioritising mental well-being within marriage is not only essential for individual happiness but also for nurturing a resilient, emotionally fulfilling partnership(Eboh & Efedoma, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anxiety and State–Trait Anxiety Outcomes in Mental Well-being as Prime Determinants of Quality of Marriage among Married Couples

Anxiety, including both state and trait dimensions, has emerged as a significant psychological factor impacting the mental well-being and quality of marriage among couples(Sayalı et al., 2025). State anxiety reflects temporary emotional responses to situational stressors, while trait anxiety refers to a more stable personality disposition to perceive various situations as threatening(Bahadori et al., 2024). Both types of anxiety are shown to influence the emotional dynamics of marriage, shaping how partners perceive, interpret, and respond to one another(Bahadori et al., 2024). Elevated anxiety levels are consistently associated with decreased marital satisfaction, reduced intimacy, and higher emotional strain between spouses(Postler et al., 2022).

Moreover, the presence of emotional divorce, characterised by physical cohabitation without emotional connection, has been linked to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness, particularly among women in restrictive cultural settings(AL-shahrani & Hammad, 2023). Conversely, perceived partner responsiveness has been shown to mitigate the negative effects of emotional reactivity and anxiety on marital quality, indicating the crucial role of emotional support and empathy in sustaining mental well-being and relationship satisfaction(Yuan et al., 2022).

In summary, anxiety, particularly when unaddressed, undermines both mental well-being and marital satisfaction(Bahadori et al., 2024). State and trait anxiety not only increase emotional strain but also reduce marital intimacy and stability(Freeman et al., 2023). At the same time, a nurturing and emotionally supportive marital environment can buffer the adverse outcomes of anxiety(Yuan et al., 2022), highlighting the importance of integrating psychological care and relational interventions in couple therapy(Alyana et al., 2024).

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate the relationship between state anxiety, trait anxiety, mental well-being, and marital quality among married individuals aged 35 to 45. Additionally, it seeks to explore how marital quality moderates the impact of anxiety on mental well-being and whether gender differences influence these associations.

OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the relationship between state anxiety and mental well-being among married individuals.
2. To determine the relationship between trait anxiety and mental well-being among married individuals.
3. To examine the association between the quality of marriage and mental well-being.
4. To evaluate whether marital quality moderates the relationship between anxiety (state and trait) and mental well-being.
5. To assess whether there is a significant gender difference in mental well-being among married individuals.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant relationship between state anxiety and mental well-being among married individuals.
2. There is no significant relationship between trait anxiety and mental well-being among married individuals.
3. There is no significant association between marital quality and mental well-being among married individuals.
4. Marital quality does not significantly moderate the relationship between anxiety (state and trait) and mental well-being.
5. There is no significant gender difference in mental well-being among married individuals.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a cross-sectional, correlational research design to explore the relationship between anxiety (state and trait), mental well-being, and marital quality among 100 married individuals aged 35 to 45 years. Data were collected at a single point in time using standardised psychological scales: the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), and the Quality of Marriage Index (QMI). A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit 100 participants from urban areas, excluding those undergoing divorce or separation. This design allowed for the assessment of associations and moderation effects without manipulating variables or establishing causality.

Table A. Reliability Analysis Result (2025, By the Researcher)

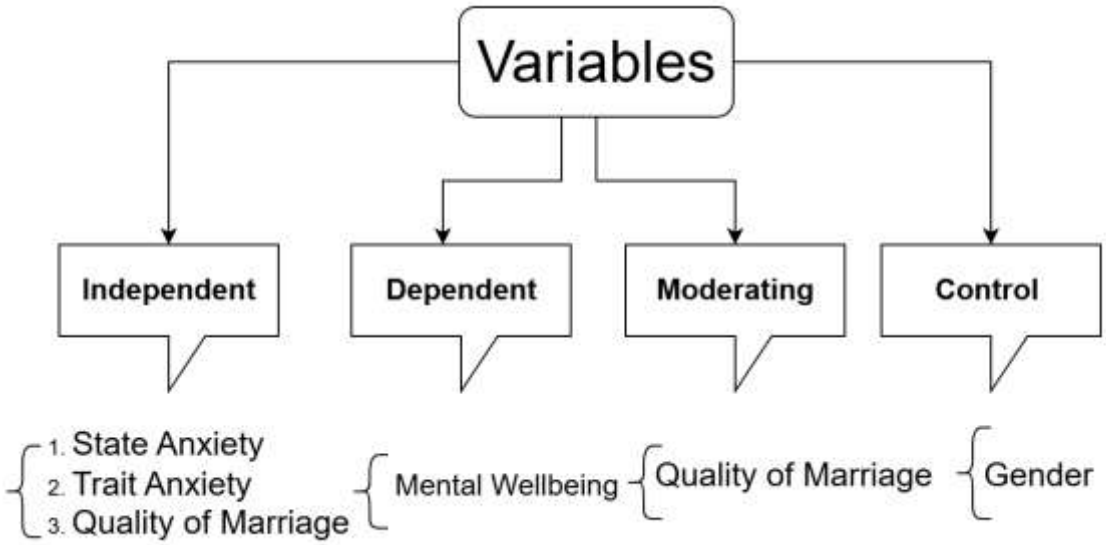
Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Quality of Marriage	.901	6
State Anxiety	.857	20
Trait Anxiety	.710	20
Mental Wellbeing	.742	14

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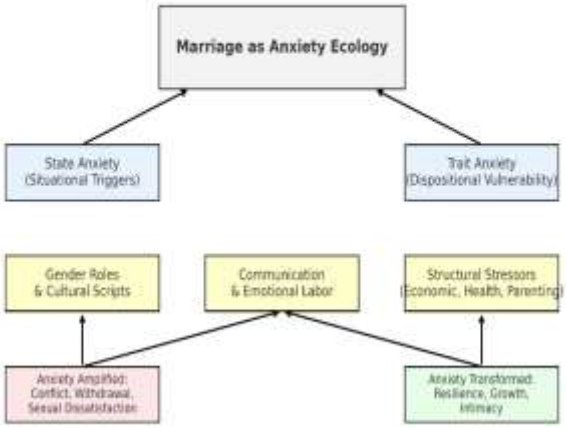
Location

Respondents were chosen from Vashi and Thane area of Mumbai State.

Variable



Anxiety and State-Trait Anxiety Outcomes in Mental Well-being as Prime Determinants of Marital Quality



Flow Chart of Anxiety and State-Trait Anxiety with Mental Well-Being

Analysis Techniques

The present study employed Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation to assess the strength and direction of associations between the variables. To examine the moderating role of marital quality on the relationship between anxiety and mental well-being, moderation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 5) in SPSS. Additionally, an independent samples t-test was applied to determine gender differences in mental well-being.

RESULT

Table 1: Demographic Result Table (N = 100)

Gender		
Group	N	%
Male	49	49.0%
Female	51	51.0%

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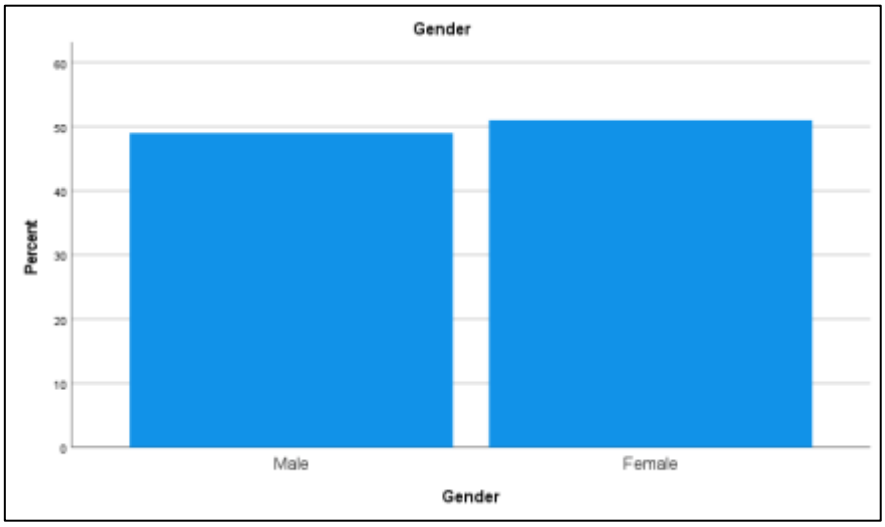


Figure 1: Participation by Gender

There were 100 participants, with males and females (husband and wife) participating individually in the study. 49% of the respondents were male and 51% were female (fig. 1).

H_{01}: *There is no significant relationship between state anxiety and mental well-being among married individual*

***Table 2: Correlation* between State Anxiety and Mental Wellbeing (N = 100)**

Correlations

		Trait Anxiety	Mental Wellbeing
Trait Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.208*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.038
	N		100
Mental Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N		

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis (Table 2) indicates a weak, although statistically significant, positive association between state anxiety and mental well-being among married adults (r = .208, *p* = .038).

H_{02}: *There is no significant relationship between trait anxiety and mental well-being among married individuals.*

***Table 3: Correlation* between Trait Anxiety and Mental Well-being (N = 100)**

Correlations

		Trait Anxiety	Mental Wellbeing
Trait Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		100
Mental Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N		

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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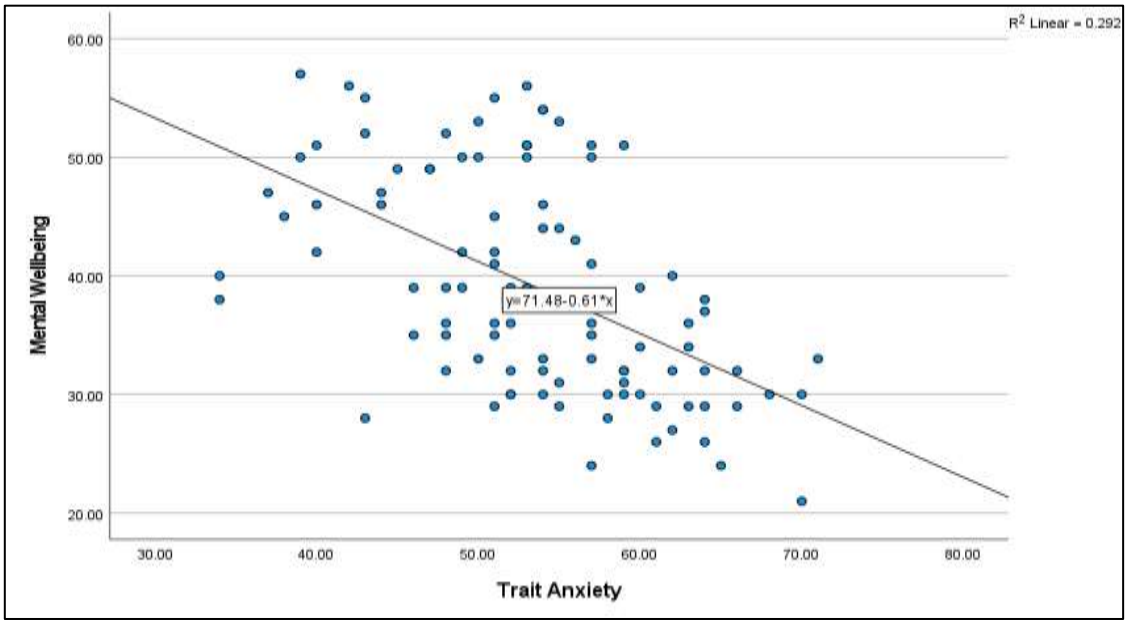


Figure 2: Scatterplot showing the Correlation between Trait Anxiety and Mental Well-being

The analysis (Table 3) reveals a significant negative relationship between trait anxiety and mental well-being among married individuals (r = –.540, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of trait anxiety are associated with lower mental well-being. The scatterplot (Fig. 2) further supports this finding, showing a downward trend with the regression equation $y = 71.48+0.61x$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.292$) suggests that approximately 29.2% of the variance in mental well-being can be explained by trait anxiety alone.

H_{03}: *There is no significant association between marital quality and mental well-being among married individuals.*

Table 4: Correlation between Quality of Marriage and Mental Well-being (N = 100)

Correlations

		Quality of Marriage	Mental Wellbeing
Quality of Marriage	Pearson Correlation	1	-.048*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.036
	N		100
Mental Wellbeing	Pearson Correlation		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N		

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The analysis (Table 4) reveals a negative significant association between marital quality and mental well-being among married individuals (r = –.048, $p = .036$). The correlation is weak and negative, but statistically significant, suggesting that variations in the quality of marriage do meaningfully influence mental well-being.

H_{04}: *Marital quality does not significantly moderate the relationship between anxiety (state and trait) and mental well-being.*

Result of State Anxiety

Table 5: Moderation Analysis of Marital Quality on the Relationship Between State Anxiety and Mental Well-being (N = 100)

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI for B(U,L)
Constant	39.40	0.90	43.94	< .001	[37.62, 41.18]
State Anxiety (SA)	0.25	0.11	2.36	.020	[0.04, 0.46]
Marital Quality (QMT)	-0.21	0.27	-0.78	.435	[-0.74, 0.32]
SA × QMT (Interaction)	-0.07	0.03	-2.11	.037	[-0.13, -0.004]

$R^2 = .093$, $F(3, 96) = 3.27$, $p = .025$
ΔR^2 for interaction = .042, $F(1, 96) = 4.46$, $p = .037$

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Note- B: Unstandardised Regression Coefficient; SE: Standard Error; t:t-statistic (test for significance of B); p: p-value (significance level); CI: Confidence Interval, U: Upper; L: Lower; R^2: Coefficient of Determination (explained variance); ΔR^2: Change in R-squared (due to adding interaction term)

Result of Trait Anxiety

Table 6: Moderation Analysis of Marital Quality on the Relationship Between Trait Anxiety and Mental Well-being (N = 100)

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI for B(U,L)
Constant	39.11	0.78	50.14	< .001	[37.56, 40.66]
Trait Anxiety (TAT)	-0.60	0.10	-6.16	< .001	[-0.79, -0.41]
Marital Quality (QMT)	-0.04	0.23	-0.17	.869	[-0.50, 0.42]
TAT × QMT (Interaction)	-0.02	0.03	-0.67	.507	[-0.08, 0.04]
R^2 = .295, F(3, 96) = 13.41, p < .001					
ΔR^2 for interaction = .003, F(1, 96) = 0.44, p = .507					

The moderation analysis (Table 5 and 6) examined whether marital quality influenced the relationship between anxiety (state and trait) and mental well-being. For state anxiety (Table 5), the interaction term was significant (B = –0.07, *p* = .037), The moderation effect was statistically significant but modest (ΔR^2 = .042), indicating that marital quality explains only a small additional proportion of variance. Specifically, the negative impact of state anxiety on mental well-being was stronger at lower marital quality levels and non-significant at higher levels. However, for trait anxiety (Table 6), the interaction was not significant (B = –0.02, *p* = .507), suggesting no moderating effect.

H_{05}: There is no significant gender difference in mental well-being among married individuals.

Table 7: Independent Samples t-test for mental well-being between males and females

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's d	Result
Mental Wellbeing	Male	49	42.0408	9.74884	3.351	98	.001	.670	Sig.
	Female	51	36.2157	7.53210					

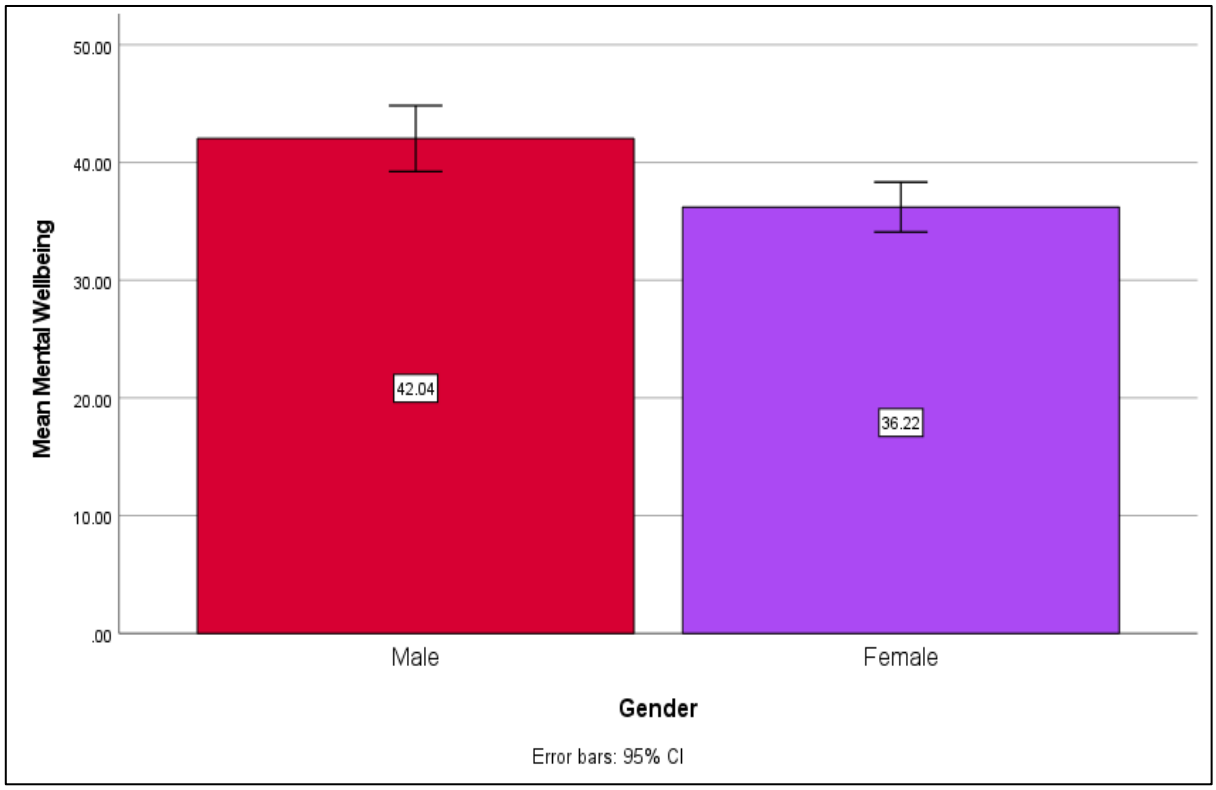


Figure 3: Error Bar Graph for mental well-being between males and females

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An independent samples t-test (Table 7) revealed a significant gender difference in mental well-being among married individuals ($t(98) = 3.351$, $p = .001$). Males (M = 42.04, SD = 9.75) reported significantly higher levels of mental well-being compared to females (M = 36.22, SD = 7.53). The effect size was moderate (Cohen's $d = 0.670$), indicating a meaningful difference between groups. Males in this sample scored higher on mental well-being, a difference that was not trivial (Cohen's d = .670). The error bar graph (Figure 3) visually supports the result, with non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to examine how state anxiety, trait anxiety, and marital quality influence mental well-being among married individuals. It further evaluated the moderating role of marital quality and explored gender differences in well-being.

The first hypothesis (H_{01}), which posited no significant relationship between state anxiety and mental well-being, was rejected. A weak yet statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .208$, $p = .038$) was observed, suggesting that higher state anxiety slightly improved mental well-being scores. While counterintuitive, this finding may reflect context-dependent emotional arousal. This aligns partially with (Sayalı et al., 2025), who reported that under certain conditions, heightened state anxiety may stimulate engagement and focus. However, it diverges from the dominant narrative presented by (Bahadori et al., 2024; Postler et al., 2022), who identified state anxiety as a negative predictor of marital satisfaction and psychological health. This discrepancy may reflect adaptive coping mechanisms among middle-aged married individuals when facing acute but manageable stressors.

For the second hypothesis (H_{02}), a robust negative association between trait anxiety and mental well-being was established ($r = –.540$, $p < .001$). This strongly supports existing literature, which recognises trait anxiety as a chronic psychological vulnerability undermining emotional stability. This result resonates with(Postler et al., 2022), who highlighted that individuals with high trait anxiety often perceive interpersonal cues as threatening, leading to emotional withdrawal and dissatisfaction. Similarly, (Karakose et al., 2023) found that chronic anxiety substantially erodes both sexual satisfaction and relational harmony.

Regarding the third hypothesis (H_{03}), a statistically significant but weak negative relationship between marital quality and mental well-being ($r = –.048$, $p = .036$) was found. Interestingly, this contradicts much of the prior literature, such as(Brown et al., 2022; Kravdal et al., 2023), which typically supports a positive correlation. One possible explanation could be that participants with high marital satisfaction may also carry heavier emotional burdens (e.g., caregiving or career strain), thereby complicating the direct relationship. Alternatively, social desirability bias may have inflated marital quality reports.

The moderation hypothesis (H_{04}) yielded nuanced results. Marital quality significantly moderated the relationship between state anxiety and mental well-being ($B = –0.07$, $p = .037$), but not for trait anxiety ($B = –0.02$, $p = .507$). This suggests that a strong marital bond can buffer the acute effects of stress-induced anxiety but may not alleviate long-term anxiety tendencies. This supports findings by(Ermer & Proulx, 2022; Yuan et al., 2022), who emphasised the protective role of perceived partner responsiveness. It also aligns with(Rakhshani et al., 2024), who posited that quality social and emotional bonds mitigate the psychological toll of external stressors.

Lastly, the gender hypothesis (H_{05}) was rejected, with males reporting significantly higher mental well-being than females ($t = 3.351$, $p = .001$). This result aligns with(AL-shahrani & Hammad, 2023), who noted that married women in conservative settings are particularly vulnerable to emotional distress due to traditional gender roles, lack of autonomy, and emotional disengagement. The moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.670$) underlines a meaningful difference, possibly driven by caregiving stress, role overload, or societal expectations placed disproportionately on women. The patterns in the data make more sense when read through established theories. The small positive link between state anxiety and well-being may reflect the old Yerkes–Dodson principle: a touch of arousal can sharpen focus and engagement. In contrast, trait anxiety appears corrosive, eroding well-being regardless of marital quality a reminder that personality dispositions are stubborn forces.

CONCLUSION

The findings collectively highlight that trait anxiety is a consistent risk factor for poor mental well-being, while state anxiety's impact may be contingent on contextual and relational buffers. Marital quality emerges as both a direct and moderating variable, offering protection particularly in transient emotional upheaval. The gender disparity further calls for culturally sensitive mental health interventions.

Statements and Declarations

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding Statement

No funding was received for this research.

Ethical Approval

This study did not involve human participants/animal subjects and therefore ethical approval was not required. Not applicable.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

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