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Address: Women Research Center, 6th floor, Kharazmi Building, Alzahra University, Vanak Square, Tehran, Iran

Fax: +98(0)21-88049809

Email address: jwfs@alzahra.ac.ir

Postal code: 1993891176

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Editor's note

Research in the humanities, particularly in the special, widely used, and necessary domains and topics in the present age, are one of the concerns of thinkers, especially in the disciplines and fields that address social pathologies. Undoubtedly, appropriate and scientific planning in this field needs to be supported by rigorous research with various basic, applied, and developmental approaches.

The issue of science production and new theorizations, especially in women and family, which is one of the new challenges of the present age, has various dimensions in the legal, social, economic, political, psychological, and cultural aspects. And the direct and indirect effects of these aspects on the family institution in particular and women in general double the necessity of localization and deepening of research.

The Quarterly "*Journal of Woman and Family Studies*" the scientific journal of the *Women Research Center* of Alzahra University, tries to

prioritize the publication of original articles resulting from theory construction articles with new ideas in women and the family.

The present publication welcomes new research findings and scientific and applied articles that include the issues needed by the Iranian society among its strategic goals.

This journal accepts new research findings and scientific and applied research articles whose strategic goals have addressed topics needed by Iranian society.

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Relationship between Mothers' Mindfulness and Self-efficacy with Mother-Child interaction of Primary School Children during Coronavirus-Induced Home Quarantine (Covid-19)

Zohreh Hashemi^{*1} , Ava Azimian Moghaddam² , Samereh Asadi Majareh³

1- Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Humanities, University of Maragheh, Maragheh, Iran.

2- Bachelor in Psychology, Psychology Department, Rasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran.

3- Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Rasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

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Corona, mindfulness, self-efficacy, mother-child interaction.

The corona pandemic is a health issue, and the resulting home quarantine, family, and relationships between families have been affected. This study aims to determine the relationship between mothers' awareness and self-efficacy with mother-child interaction during quarantine caused by Coronavirus.

The research design was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population of the study included all mothers with children aged 6 to 12 years in Rasht in the February of 2021, from which 205 people were selected by the available sampling. They completed the (FMI-S), (PSAM), and the mother-Child Relationship Scale. Data were analyzed using SPSS-24, Pearson correlation coefficient, and stepwise regression. The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between parents' mindfulness and mother-child relationship, and the relationship between parents' self-efficacy and mother-child interaction is positive and significant. Finally, data showed that Parental awareness and self-efficacy play a significant role in explaining the mother-child relationship. The results have practical implications for psychologists and family counselors regarding the quarantine and pandemic conditions such as coronavirus _ by improving the level of mindfulness and self-efficacy of mothers, the quality of mother-child relationships can be improved.

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¹Correspondence: zhashemi1320@gmail.com

Introduction

Corona pandemic is one of the health and treatment issues. Iran's health system and Iranian society have been severely affected by this pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). Coronavirus (Covid19) is a large family of viruses that can cause respiratory infections from colds to more severe diseases such as MERS and Sars. Recently, this virus has been named COVID-19; the outbreak of the new virus started in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (World Health Organization, 2020). Coronavirus also spread in Iran and quickly endangered physical and mental health. The symptoms of this virus vary from mild to severe and include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing (Wu & Mc. Cogan, 2020). The onset of the disease can have psychological effects on people, leading to psychological distress and also experiencing fear and anxiety of getting sick or dying. Psychological disorders such as anxiety, fear, depression, emotional changes, insomnia, and post-traumatic stress disorder are common in these patients (Shahyad & Mohammadi, 2019). The school closures and home quarantine of students due to the prevalence of corona disease also affects the physical and mental health of children (Wang et al., 2020). The decrease in children's physical activity, the emergence of stressful stimuli at home, such as long-term fear of contracting the coronavirus, unpleasant thoughts, lack of communication with classmates, friends, and teachers, lack of suitable space at home, and in some cases problems Parents' finances can have lasting effects on the mental health of children and adolescents (Brooks et al., 2020).

In addition, recent studies on the coronavirus have shown that the anxiety caused by the corona disease and quarantine make families and children prone to symptoms of psychological disorders (Shahyad & Mohammadi, 2019; Alipour et al., 2018).

Parent-child relationship refers to strong and effective interaction, mutual understanding and acceptance between parents and children, and meeting the real needs of children (Ronsan et al., 2012). Carnes Holt (2012) believes that parent-child interaction is an important and vital relationship for creating security and love, which consists of a combination of behaviors, feelings, and expectations that are unique to a particular parent and a particular child. This interaction is the first representative of the world of communication for the



child, and the feeling of love, security, and intimacy is directly rooted in these relationships.

The parent-child relationship is one of the protective factors against the risk of children's psychological and behavioral problems (Golamo Romanes et al., 2006).

Parental interactions play an important role in the healthy development of children. The quality of parent-child interaction reduces the likelihood of academic achievement and low self-esteem in children (Bard & Poly, 2017). Studies have shown that positive parent-child interactions are associated with fewer externalizing symptoms (Levin et al., 2012), reduced levels of antisocial behaviors (Dualos et al., 2005), reduced depression (Yu et al., 2006), and aggression. (Mirzaei Kotnai et al., 2016).

Mother-child interaction should be considered one of the most important factors affecting the psychological and social development of every child; Because the family is the first and most important platform for all-round human development, and the quality of mother-child interaction in the early years of childhood lays the foundation for the child's cognitive, social and emotional development (Mantima, 2006). During the quarantine, mothers and fathers faced several tasks such as daily care of children while managing work duties, attending to online education, demands, and balancing the needs of different family members (Prime et al., 2020). In addition, children have been reported to experience higher levels of emotional, self-regulation, and behavioral problems compared to before the outbreak of the coronavirus (Di Giorgio et al., 2020; Jiao et al., 2020; Orgiles et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020).

The factor that may potentially affect the parent-child interaction during the corona pandemic is mothers' mindfulness because it seems that mindfulness leads to a person's focus in order to reduce the tensions experienced, including Corona pandemic and quarantine. Mothers' mindfulness can lead to the promotion of positive interactions between parents and children, as well as happiness and satisfaction with mothers' parenting (Singh et al., 2010). In recent years, mindfulness is a concept that has attracted the attention of psychologists, psychotherapists, and researchers under the influence of Buddhist thought.

Mindfulness is defined as a state of aroused attention and awareness of what is happening in the present moment. This attention is purposeful attention, along with non-judgmental acceptance of ongoing experiences. Mindfulness allows a person to respond with thought and reflection instead of responding to events involuntarily and thoughtlessly (Emanuel et al., 2010). Mindfulness is a way to live better, relieve pain, and enrich and make life meaningful (Siegel, 2010), well-being (Coles et al., 2009), and high life satisfaction (Baster et al., 2016). An increase in mindfulness is associated with an increase in psychological well-being. Mindful people are more capable of recognizing and managing and solving everyday problems. Mindfulness has positive consequences on psychological health and leads to an increase in happiness (Blin, 2015). On the other hand, mental well-being including (psychological, emotional, social) and mind awareness have a close relationship (Malinovsky & Lim, 2015; Carmody & Beer, 2007).

Yi et al. (2019) investigated the positive effects of mindfulness on well-being and mental health in research and came to the conclusion that mindfulness improves people's mental health. Parental awareness has an effect on parenting styles, parental tension (Julaiyeh et al., 2017), and parent-child relationships (Duncan et al., 2009). Mindful parenting program has an effect on children's well-being and happiness (Bagheri et al., 2017). The results of Potartes et al.'s (2020) research showed that mindful parenting has an effect on the quality of parenting behavior and mother-child interactions.

One of the variables that can help in the psychological support of mothers for children and creating positive experiences during the quarantine period is parental self-efficacy; because previous studies have reported a relationship between mothers' self-efficacy and improved parent-child interactions (Bahadri & Khosrowshahi, 2016). Mothers who feel efficient in their parenting role have close and regular relationships with their children, which leads to the formation of healthy parent-child relationships (Jamalinejad, 2013). Parents with low parenting self-efficacy experience more stress and physiological arousal when facing difficult and complex parenting situations (Holloway et al., 2016). Parental self-efficacy refers to parents' beliefs in their ability to perform. Self-efficacy beliefs in parents play an important role in adaptation to changes, motivation to invest and energy in various parental activities; care and creating positive interactions with children, perseverance



in the face of problems, decision-making, and emotional well-being (Bandura, 2001). Parental self-efficacy is an important cognitive structure in relation to parenting performance and it refers to parents' assessment of their abilities in fulfilling their role as a father or mother (Cohen & Carter, 2006). Mothers and fathers with a high level of parental self-efficacy strive for appropriate parenting skills and effectively deal with problems related to the development of their children, while parents with a low level of parental self-efficacy are able to restrain themselves in difficult situations (Jones & Prinz, 2005) and they are more likely to communicate with their children in an aggressive and hostile manner (Mohajiri et al., 2013).

Parental self-efficacy is related to mother-child interaction (Bahadori Khosrowshahi, 2016). The study by Gambin et al. (2020) showed that the role of parental self-efficacy in parent-child interaction during the coronavirus quarantine is significant. In general, parental stress has increased in quarantine, which has led to parents being harsh with children at home (Chang et al., 2020) and has affected the favorable mother-child interaction. Therefore, it can be said that the mother's interaction with her children will be at the optimal level when the anxiety in the family system is low and the parents have a good relationship with their family members. Considering the conditions of quarantine and the increasing responsibility of mothers in this era, it is very important to identify the psychological capabilities of mothers during the pandemic and home quarantine, which, in addition to positive effects on the mental health of mothers, improves their interactions with their children. Therefore, taking care of a child and having good interaction with him requires abilities such as the mother's awareness and self-efficacy. There is very little research evidence regarding parent-child interactions in the Corona pandemic, but there is a research gap regarding the role of variables affecting it, especially the role of the mother in the country, so the current research aims to answer the question of whether is there a relationship between parents' mindfulness and self-efficacy with parent-child interaction during the quarantine period of the Corona epidemic?

Methods

The present research is a descriptive correlation type that was carried out in the framework of a correlation scheme. The statistical population of the

research included all the mothers with elementary school children (6-12 years old) living in Rasht city in the winter of 2019, out of which 220 people were selected by sampling method. Due to the lack of access to the size of the statistical population of mothers and because the minimum sample size for each variable in correlation studies is 50 people (Delavar, 2016), and previous similar studies, and the possibility of dropping questionnaires, the sample size 220 people were selected. Due to the special conditions of the society, the limitation of traffic and social relations during the quarantine, and the impossibility of conducting it in person, the research questionnaires are made in the form of a link and it was published through social networks (Telegram and WhatsApp) in virtual groups of primary schools in Rasht, and finally, 205 questionnaires were analyzed by screening the questionnaires and discarding the distorted ones.

It should be mentioned that the criteria for entering the research were explained at the beginning of the questions and mothers were asked to be the only people who can proceed to complete the questionnaire based on the criteria for entering the research by the researcher. The criteria for entering the study were: having a child between 6 and 12 years of age, having at least one cycle of education, not taking psychiatric drugs by the mother or the child, quarantine of the mother and the child during the corona epidemic, no history of psychological disorders in the mother and the child. Before the spread of the coronavirus, the criteria for leaving the research included incomplete completion of the questionnaires.

Measurements

Parent-child Relationship Questionnaire

This questionnaire was prepared in 1983 by Fine et al. (1983), which contains 48 questions _ 24 questions for the relationship with the mother and 24 questions for the relationship with the father. In this research, 24 questions related to the relationship with the mother were used. On this scale, a score from 1 to 7 is considered for each question. Questions 9, 13, and 14 are graded in reverse. This scale was implemented by Fine et al. (1983) on 241 students (100 men and 141 women). The parent-child interaction scale with alpha coefficients of .61 to .94 for the subscales related to the mother, as well as the overall alpha of .96, has an excellent internal consistency of the questions. The



validity of the parent-child interaction scale benefits from well-known groups and good predictive validity and differentiates children of divorced and integrated families meaningfully (Khazadeh & Mirzaei Kotnai, 2017). In the research of Khazadeh and Mirzaei Kotnai (2017), Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine reliability, and the values of the alpha coefficient for the subscales related to the mother were .61 to .91, and the alpha coefficient was .92 for the overall relationship of the parents. In the research of Nowrozi and Asadi Majreh (2017), the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method of .81. The internal homogeneity coefficient in the present study was .85.

Freiburg Mindfulness Scale (FMI-SF)

The Freiburg Mindfulness Scale (FMI) was designed by Buchhild et al. (2001) and had 30 questions. Later, the short form (14 items) of this questionnaire, which is more suitable for use in the general population, was designed by Wallach et al. (2006). The short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Questionnaire has 14 questions and is organized on a 4-point scale: rarely (1), sometimes (2), often (3), and always (4). All questions except question 13 are scored directly. Regarding question 13, scoring will be from rarely (4) to always (1). This scale gives a total score for mindfulness that ranges from 14 to 56 and a higher score indicates more mindfulness. Wallach and colleagues (2006) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale as .86. The study of Ghasemi et al. (2014) investigated the psychometric properties of the short form of the Freiburg Mind-Awareness Scale in a study on 400 students of Yasouj University who were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. In order to check the concurrent validity, the correlation coefficients of the mindfulness questionnaire with the emotional regulation subscale and the self-control scale were used. The correlation of this scale with the self-control questionnaire was .69 and with the emotion regulation questionnaire was .73. In this research, the retest reliability of the short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Questionnaire based on the results of the test twice was .83 and its internal consistency according to Cronbach's alpha coefficients was .92 in the case of the sample group. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirm that the structure of the questionnaire has an acceptable fit with the data. The results of their research showed that the short form questionnaire of

the Freiburg Mindfulness Questionnaire is a suitable tool with acceptable psychometric properties to measure the level of mindfulness of people in Iranian society. In this research, the homogeneity of the instrument was obtained with Cronbach's alpha method of .81.

Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale (PSAM)

This scale was used for the first time by Domka et al (1996). This scale includes 10 statements (5 positive and 5 negative statements) and measures parents' general sense of confidence in their role as parents. Its scoring is based on the Likert scale from rarely (1) to always (7). The minimum score of this scale is 10 and the maximum score is 70. Tyler (2006) announced the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha of 0.54. In Iran, Talei et al. (2011) reported its reliability as .70. In the research of Ashuri et al. (2014), the validity of this scale was reported as .79 and its reliability as .73. In this research, the homogeneity of the tool was obtained by Cronbach's alpha method .79.

The research was conducted in such a way that among all the mothers with children aged 6 to 12 living in Rasht city, those who met the criteria for entering the research were selected by available sampling. The questionnaires were given to the participants (mothers of the students) and they were asked to answer the questions honestly. The implementation was individual and there was no time limit to complete the questionnaires. The research data were analyzed using SPSS-20 statistical software. In order to provide descriptive information, average and standard deviation statistics were used, and in the inferential part, the data were analyzed with the help of Pearson's correlation coefficient and step-by-step regression methods.

Finding

The mothers were in the age range of 23 to 46 years with an average age of 39.11. 68.7% of mothers were housewives and 30.3% worked in the private and public sectors. 42.65% of the mothers had a diploma, 39.2% had a bachelor's degree, and 18.15% had a master's degree. In Table 1, the descriptive indices and correlation matrix of the research variables are presented.

**Table 1. Descriptive indices and correlation matrix of research variables**

Variables	Average	standard deviation	Mindfulness	Self-efficacy
Mindfulness	27.61	9.71	-	
Self-efficacy	40.19	7.63	.16*	-
Mother-child interaction	78.69	14.63	.77**	.35**
Positive emotion	11.11	3.02	.75**	.36**
Annoyance/ confusion of role	9.19	1.7	-.18*	-.24**
Replication	11.75	2.05	.49**	.09
Communication or conversation	22.43	4.06	.06	.23**

According to the correlation results of the variables in Table 1, there is a positive and significant relationship between parents' mindfulness and mother-child interaction ($p < .01$, $r = .77$) and a high score in mindfulness with a high level of mother interaction _ The child is accompanied. The relationship between mindfulness and all aspects of mother-child interaction is significant ($p < .05$). There is a positive and significant relationship between parental self-efficacy and mother-child interaction ($p < .01$, $r = .35$), and a high score in parental self-efficacy is associated with a high level of mother-child interaction. The relationship between parental self-efficacy and dimensions of mother-child interaction is significant, except in the dimensions of assimilation ($p < .05$). Stepwise regression was used to predict mother-child interaction based on mindfulness and self-efficacy. At first, the assumptions of the regression model have been examined. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the normality of the data distribution showed that the significance level of the test is .295 (more than .05) and the hypothesis of the normality of the data $p/pp0^{00}$ established. Also, Durbin-Watson's statistic with a value between 1.5 and 2.5, showed the independence of the residuals in the model. Also, to check the collinearity between the independent variables, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the tolerance index were used (was not observed). Also, in order to check the homogeneity of the variances of the residuals, a statistical distribution diagram was used, and after drawing

the above diagram, no trend was observed in the resulting diagram that shows the homogeneity of the variances of the residuals of the model. Therefore, all the conditions of the regression model are satisfied and multiple regression tests can be used to check the hypothesis.

Table 2. Variance analysis of predicting mother-child interaction based on parents' self-awareness and self-efficacy

Sources of changes	Sum of Squares	freedom	Average of square	F	<i>p</i>
Regression	28204.038	2	14102.019	25.182	.001
Remaining	15707.695	203	77.38		

According to the results of Table 2, the value of $F = 182.25$ obtained is significant ($P < .01$); Therefore, we conclude with .99 confidence that the role of parents' mindfulness and self-efficacy in explaining mother-child interaction is significant. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3. According to the results of Table 3, all predictor variables explain 80% of the changes in mother-child interaction.

Table 3. The results of the step-by-step regression model of mother-child interaction based on the mindfulness and self-efficacy of parents

Variable	R	R2	B	Beta	Standard error	<i>p</i>
Mindfulness	.77	.59	1.09	.73	.17	.001
Self- efficacy	.80	.64	.45	.23	.53	.001

The results of Table 3 shows that among the predictor variables, mindfulness variables and self-efficacy were significant predictors of mother-child interaction with explanatory coefficients of .59 and .64 respectively; The beta values listed in Table 3 also show that the standardized coefficient for the mindfulness variable ($\beta = .73$) and with an increase of one standard deviation in the mindfulness variable, the amount of mother-child interaction is .73; (0 standard deviation increases). The standardized coefficient for mothers' self-efficacy variable is ($\beta = .23$) and with an increase of one standard deviation in mothers' self-efficacy variable, the amount of mother-child interaction increases to .23 standard deviations. In other words, the standardized



coefficient results show that the variables of mindfulness and self-efficacy significantly explain the variance of the mother-child interaction variable.

Conclusion & Discussion

The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the relationship between mothers' mindfulness and self-efficacy with parent-child interactions during the quarantine period of the coronavirus epidemic. The first finding of the research showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between mindfulness and the mother-child relationship, and a high score in mindfulness is associated with a high level of mother-child interaction. The connection of mind-consciousness with all dimensions of mother-child interaction is meaningful except for communication (dialogue and listening). The relationship between mothers' awareness and parent-child interactions is positive and meaningful. This finding is consistent with the research results of Pourheidari et al. (2009) and Potartes et al. (2020). In explaining this finding, it can be mentioned that parents' mindfulness affects children's well-being and happiness (Bagheri et al., 2017) and parents' parenting methods (Yaqub Nejad et al., 2018). The skill of mindfulness and mindful parenting improves the ability to self-regulate and manage negative emotions, including anger. Mindfulness is an effortful form of thinking that can have a positive effect on the effectiveness of parenting by reducing child-parent conflict, facilitating more sincere communication, and reducing the conflict of conflicts created between parents or children (Julai et al., 2017). Parents who have high mindfulness ability pay full attention to the interactions, thoughts, and feelings of themselves and their children and receive these feelings more correctly, which in turn reduces conflict and disagreement (Harwas & Lee, 2015). Parents who have high levels of mindfulness, experience less tension (Malveiro, 2013). In the conditions of the coronavirus epidemic and home quarantine, this reduction in stress makes parents better able to understand the needs of their children, to provide them with emotional support.

The findings did not show a significant relationship between the mother's mindfulness scores and the communication component (conversation), which is in agreement with the results of the few previous studies in this field is asymmetrical (Pourheidari et al., 2016; Potarts, 2020). Since mindful

parenting through mechanisms such as listening with full attention, acceptance without judgment, compassion, self-regulation, and emotional awareness, leads to parent-child relationships and, as a result, increases psychological well-being in children. (Bagheri et al., 2017), it was expected that this finding would be obtained in the conditions of corona epidemic and home quarantine, but this finding was not consistent with previous studies. The reason for this disparity can be factors such as cultural differences, social factors such as the level of social support, the socio-economic level of the family, and even characteristics such as the mother's temperament. On the other hand, it can be acknowledged that in the conditions of home quarantine, the responsibility of mothers at home has increased and the stress of parents has increased, and in these conditions, mothers' mind-awareness and focus on themselves can lead to neglecting communication (Be with children). Another finding of the research showed that the relationship between mothers' self-efficacy and mother-child interaction is positive and significant, and a high score in parental self-efficacy is associated with a high level of mother-child interaction. The relationship between parents' self-efficacy and the dimensions of mother-child interaction is significant, except in the dimensions of assimilation. This finding was consistent with the research results of Bahadri (2016) and Gambin et al. (2020). Gambin reported the role of positive experiences including empathy, emotion regulation, self-efficacy, and social support of parents on parent-child relationships during the quarantine of all corona epidemics (Gambin et al., 2020). Also, Maghribi Sinki et al. (2014) found in their study, those mothers who had weaker self-efficacy showed less sensitivity and were weaker during parent-child interaction and in fact, in communicating with their child. On the other hand, mothers who felt more and stronger self-efficacy in their parental role established warm, intimate, and regular relationships with their children. In explaining this finding, it can be said that mothers who feel self-efficacy in their parenting role, have warm and regular relationships with their children, and on the contrary, mothers who feel ineffective have problems in their relationship with their children (Cotronzo, 2006). However, the mother's input affects the child's development in some way, and the child's characteristics are the direct consequences of the mother-child interaction and the communication characteristics of the parents and their self-efficacy. The lower levels of parents' self-efficacy make them



more inclined to use negative methods in raising their children and to benefit less from treatment programs and services provided for their children and also in making decisions about the most appropriate treatment strategies for child failure. This has negative effects on the child's growth and leads to more destructive behaviors (Maghribi Sinki et al., 2016). In fact, parents who set less strict rules with their children and had more positive behaviors and interactions with their children had higher self-efficacy. On the other hand, people with weaker self-efficacy are more likely to communicate with their children in an aggressive and hostile manner, and they rejected their children most of the time (Tranzo, 2006).

The results of the regression analysis showed that the role of parents' mindfulness and self-efficacy is significant in explaining the mother-child relationship, and all predictor variables explain 80% of the changes in the mother-child interaction: (1) The mother's awareness leads to attention, interest and is available to the child and creates a constructive and supportive interaction between the child and the mother. (2) The mother's awareness leads to an increase in the emotional awareness of the mother and her non-judgment towards the child. During the quarantine period of the coronavirus, the mother's awareness can be effective in reducing the tension experienced by the mother during the quarantine period and lead to improved interaction (becoming mother and child). In addition, mothers who have high self-efficacy are better able to establish a constructive relationship with their children, have empathy with their children, and have positive and supportive behavior towards their children, therefore, this structure also plays a decisive role in explaining mother-child interaction. Mindfulness and self-efficacy of mothers are able to positively predict mother-child interaction and have important research and clinical implications for psychologists and counselors active in the field of family and child to improve parent-child interactions. The limitations of the present study are the selection of people in an accessible and nonrandom way, which is of course due to the conditions of the coronavirus epidemic, which suggests that in future similar studies, the selection of people should be done randomly. Also, the lack of control of demographic variables such as the socio-economic status of the family was another limitation of the research; because due to the conditions of the coronavirus epidemic, it was not

possible to select a homogeneous sample in terms of demographic characteristics. Therefore, it is suggested to take these cases into consideration in future similar studies to reveal new patterns of correlations.

Ethical considerations: All participants were informed of voluntary participation, and also were assured that personal information would remain anonymous.

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The Effect of Intervention Based on Changing Perceptions of Power Structure in Family on Attitudes toward Patriarchy and Self-Compassion in Women Victims of Domestic Violence: A Baseline Case Study

Fateme Badakhsh¹ Yasser Rezapour Mirsaleh*²
Azade Choobforoushzadeh³

1- MA in Family Counseling, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ardakan University, Ardakan, Iran

2- Associate Professor of the Department of Counseling, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ardakan University, Ardakan, Iran.

3- Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ardakan University, Ardakan, Iran.

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BSTRACT

Many factors affect the incidence of domestic violence and its acceptance in women. This study aimed to investigate the effect of intervention based on changing perceptions of family power structure on attitudes toward patriarchy and self-compassion in women, victims of domestic violence. According to the baseline case study design, two women victims of domestic violence were selected by purposeful sampling method and received an intervention program in 8 sessions. The Domestic Violence Scale and Self-Compassion Scale were used to collect data during the baseline, treatment, and follow-up phases. The data were analyzed using visual analysis, improvement percentage, and reliable change index. The reliable change index and the trend of changing scores showed that with the continuation of intervention sessions, attitudes toward patriarchy and self-compassion in women had decreased, and increased, respectively, and changes were maintained after a month follow-up. According to the findings, it can be concluded that the intervention based on changing the perception of family power structure can change the traditional and patriarchal misconceptions of women victims of domestic violence and improve their self-compassion.

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Introduction

Violence against women as a violation of human rights is known as a global health problem in all societies, ethnicities, races, and religious schools; According to WHO, approximately 35% of women have experienced violence at least once in their lives (World Health Organization, 2014) and 38% of women's murders were committed by their partners. Although the level of violence against women in Iran is not clearly mentioned in the official statistics, studies show the extent of violence. In a study conducted on a sample of women living in Tehran, the prevalence of violence against pregnant women was 46%, which includes mental violence (35%), physical violence (8.7%), and sexual violence (2.3%), respectively.

The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm"; Also, exposing women to suffering by threatening them, arbitrating deprivation of their liberty, whether occurring in public or private life, is defined as domestic violence (United Nations, 1993). These injuries lead to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal thoughts in women (Perez et al., 2012). Victims' reaction to violence is to use unfunctional coping strategies such as surrendering and blaming themselves, which can increase the intensity and duration of their distress (Bauman et al., 2008). In such situations, women victims of violence report that they need emotional support, security, help to cope with negative emotions, and improve self-esteem; Self-compassion can be helpful for these women who have experienced very complicated and traumatic events in their lives (Allen et al., 2021). Teaching self-compassion helps victims cope more effectively with physical and psychological abuse (Tesh et al., 2015). As a result, it can reduce their depression, anxiety, self-harm, surrender, and self-loathing and increase self-confidence (Gilbert & Procter, 2006).

The violence against women is related to patriarchal culture and attitude in society, so many people mistakenly think the power in a healthy family belongs to the father or the husband exclusively. Gender stereotypes and gender inequalities that reinforce each other can be two critical factors in committing violence against women (Mashhadi & Karami, 2020). Gender

socialization approaches hold that the language families use to describe boys often focuses on physical attributes, strength, and agility, while families may refer to characteristics such as affection, expressiveness, delicacy, or fragility when describing girls (Burke, 2009). The different strategies of families in dealing with children lead to girls and boys internalizing these beliefs and building their identity based on their parent's attitudes and defining their identity and position after marriage according to these stereotypes and beliefs. These attitudes, which are legally, customarily, and religiously supported in patriarchal societies, create a gap in the rights, privileges, and rights of men and women in the family and marriage, which can provide a platform for violence against women (Riahi & Aboohamze, 2020). In traditional societies, violence can occur when changes occur in traditional gender roles. For example, if a woman disobeys or challenges her husband or does not play her gender role, the husband can use violence to punish her. The man does this violence to maintain his power and control in the family (Benebo et al., 2018). Sikweyiya et al. (2020) showed that men use violence to control women and emphasize their authority and power. Evidence shows that women living in countries where domestic violence is more prevalent tend to view domestic violence as more acceptable than women living in other countries. A study in Ghana found that, in women's viewpoints, wife-beating is generally unacceptable; however, some interviewees stated that spousal violence is justified in some circumstances, including when a woman disobeys her husband and ignores or refuses to have sex with her husband (Asante & Premo-Minkah, 2016). In other words, in a patriarchal society, the attitude towards women is such that women are considered the weak sex and the second sex. In these societies, the rule of men over women is manifested in the form of humiliating women in the family and society, destroying their personal and familial rights. These humiliating behaviors with the female sex cause her to internalize this patriarchal attitude and think of herself as a being in the service of men and ignore the happiness and meaning of her life. This way of life causes self-alienation in the woman and as a result affects her lifestyle (Hajhashemi et al., 2017).

Women's perception of the power structure in the family can affect their patriarchal attitude. Power is defined as the potential or actual ability of each member to influence and change the behavior of other family members



(Cromwell & Olsen, 1975). According to structural family therapy, power refers to both authority (who makes decisions) and responsibility (who implements decisions). Power depends on circumstances and situations and is rarely absolute (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2017). Haley (1998) believes that every family should determine the hierarchy and rules regarding who is in the primary position and who is in the second position. According to Haley (1998), when the hierarchy in the family is disturbed, conflict occurs among the family members. A healthy and normal family has a hierarchy and each family member has a different strength with each other and complements each other (Minuchin, 1981). However, many mistakenly think that the distribution of power in a healthy family goes back to the father or the husband; In traditional cultures, the man is considered the head of the family. Bari (2016) argues that in traditional societies, women do not have much involvement in decisions such as children's education, marriage, divorce and child custody, pregnancy rights, and even choosing a job.

In Iran, as in other traditional societies, violence against women has become a social and ponderable issue. Due to the dominance of patriarchal attitudes, women have become so socialized as they justify most of the harassment of their husbands and hide the negative consequences of violence. On the other hand, accepting violence and justifying it on the part of women provides the basis for the increase in wife beating; For this reason, there are no accurate statistics on spousal abuse in Iran. Antai (2011) showed women who justified wife-beating was more exposed to physical and sexual violence; On the contrary, women who had independence in decision-making were less likely to experience physical and sexual violence. Also, Murugan et al. (2021) showed that women who had secondary education or higher, owned property, and had the power to make decisions at home, were less likely to experience spousal violence.

What makes this issue more critical is that violence against women is a reflection of a patriarchal society, a society whose people, including women themselves, have accepted the authority and dominance of men over women. Violence against women, in addition to its harmful effects on life, results in negative consequences such as disruption in social relations, feelings of insecurity, and lousy upbringing of children, and deprives women of the

opportunity to properly and adequately use their abilities and talents. In this study, by convincing women more than men and women to have the same right to express ideas, needs, and feelings and make decisions about important life issues, an attempt has been made to change women's beliefs and viewpoints regarding the power structure in the family. On the other hand, in this intervention, women are taught to repair negative feelings towards themselves with compassion and acceptance as people who deserve love and respect. This study aimed to investigate the effect of intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family on attitudes toward patriarchy and self-compassion in women victims of domestic violence.

Methods

Study Design

In the present study, a single-case experimental design was used. The statistical population of this study was all women victims of spousal violence referring to Yazd Welfare Organization. a single-case design was used because, despite the high prevalence of domestic violence, many women were not willing to participate in the intervention sessions due to cultural reasons, poverty, husband's opposition and access to the samples were difficult. Also, due to the in-depth discussion in the intervention sessions, which required an in-depth conversation with the clients, the intervention was conducted individually in the form of a single case study. Among women who were victims of domestic violence and referred to the welfare rehabilitation organization of Yazd City (Iran), in 2020, two women were selected by purposeful sampling. The criteria for inclusion included women victims of violence who had been exposed to physical violence at least two times in the last six months and had injuries such as bruises, fractures, deep wounds, or were hospitalized as a result of violence (which was confirmed by a legal physician or has been seen and confirmed by the social workers of the Welfare organization), had a proper understanding to answer the questions, had school education, had been married for at least two years, and had an age range of 25 to 50 years. The exclusion criteria were considered to have a physical and psychological disorder in themselves or their spouses. The intervention protocol was taken from Badakhsh (2018), which analyzed the perception of women victims of violence regarding the power structure in the family and derived an intervention program based on this qualitative analysis (Table 1).



Participants were measured in three baseline phases using the domestic violence against women questionnaire (Mohseni Tabrizi et al., 2012) and the self-compassion scale (Neff, 2003b). The intervention protocol was implemented in 8 sessions of 80 minutes. The participants in the intervention phase were measured four times in the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth sessions. Finally, one week and one month after the end of the intervention, the participants were measured in the follow-up phase. The data were analyzed using visual analysis, improvement percentage, and reliable change index.

Measurements

Domestic Violence Against Women Scale

This is a self-report questionnaire that includes 71 items and is scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 (completely disagree) to 4 (completely agree). This questionnaire measures spousal abuse, patriarchal beliefs, family traditions and upbringing, and learning violence. The items were designed based on the evidence of spousal abuse in the context of Iranian society; the face and content validity of this questionnaire was confirmed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .83. The scores had a significant relationship with the prevalence of violence in the family as well as the experience of violence in women (Mohseni Tabrizi et al., 2012). The test-retest reliability was .9 (Parhizkar, 2017). In another study, Cronbach's alpha of this questionnaire was .8 (Shafiei & Qudsi, 2019). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was .83. In this study, for evaluating the attitudes toward patriarchy, the entire domestic violence questionnaire was implemented, but only the second part of the questionnaire, which includes items 37 to 65 and measures the patriarchal attitude, was used. The reliability of the second part of the questionnaire was assessed using the test-retest method among 10 women who were victims of domestic violence; The correlation between test-retest in a two-week period was .91 and the standard deviation was 14.47. The test-retest method was used to calculate the reliable change index as one of the methods of data analysis in single-case studies.

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

This scale contains 26 items and 6 components of self-compassion, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification and is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to

strongly agree (5). The higher score indicates greater self-compassion (Neff, 2003b). The validity and reliability of the original version of the SCS have been confirmed (Neff, 2003b). The validity and reliability of the Persian version of the scale have also been confirmed. The factorial structure of the scale was confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis and its Cronbach's alpha was .76 (Khosravi et al., 2013). In this study, the test-retest reliability of SCS in 10 women who were victims of domestic violence was .88, and the standard deviation was 12.56.

Table 1. content of Interventions sessions based on changing the perception of women victims of violence

Session	Content of Sessions	Aim	Homework
First	Introduction, explain roles and goals; introduction of interventional sessions, the definition of violence and its components, discuss out negative consequences of domestic violence and consequences of accepting violence, discussing reasons why a person should not accept violence under any circumstances.	Awareness of the consequences of violence on the physical and mental health of women and their children	Pointing out the reasons why a person tolerates her husband's violence and suggesting ways to reject these reasons
Second	Reviewing the homework of the previous session, discussing the question of whether married life should be preserved in any situation. Are divorce and separation ugly forever? under what circumstances can a person stay in a relationship with domestic violence? discussing the consequences of domestic violence.	Familiarity with the characteristics of satisfactory relationships, awareness of false beliefs that prevent the right decisions in marital life	Answers to these questions: Does her relationship with her husband have the characteristics of a healthy relationship? When do men have the right to abuse their wives? What action has she taken against her husband's violence so far?
Third	Reviewing the homework of the previous session, defining the family structure and its necessity, discussing the factors that can cause the family structure to have an unhealthy function, The definition of family borders, and description of the problems that arise due to the lack of a border among the subsystems	Determining the family structure and extracting the family map, which includes subsystems, collusion, and coalitions, and understanding the type of family borders.	Determine the type of boundaries in the family. Determine the power hierarchy in the family and her position in this hierarchy.



Session	Content of Sessions	Aim	Homework
	of the family, understanding the importance of hierarchy in the family and describing the problems caused by the lack of hierarchy among family members.		
Fourth	Reviewing the homework of the previous session, the definition of imposition and coercion. Becoming aware of the necessity of dealing with issues that have been imposed on us, the consequences of accepting orders that are imposed on us by our spouse or any other person in our marital life, and discussing the reasons that make the client give in to the wishes of others.	Coming to the belief that it is up to us to make important life choices	Reviewing a few examples of decisions that others have made for her and examining the reasons that prevented her from carrying out her wishes, reviewing at least one or two decisions that she made decisively, and expressing how she felt at that moment.
Fifth	Defining extreme self-sacrifice and its consequences, encouraging women to pay attention to their interests and desires and the positive consequences that can bring in their lives, promoting independence in decision-making, and teaching self-assertion skills.	Prioritizing personal desires and interests, self-assertion	Express at least one desire boldly and try to implement it
Sixth	Investigating why women feel inferior and the consequences of accepting this feeling, discussing the role of childhood factors in creating a sense of inferiority in women and patriarchal culture, defining patriarchy and its effect on married life, introducing clients to new roles and abandoning traditional roles that Patriarchal culture has defined for men and women.	Creating a sense of self-worth, getting to know society's misconceptions about the roles of men and women	Realizing the differences in upbringing between girls and boys, not raising their children based on a patriarchal perspective and parenting based on gender equality
Seventh	Teaching skills for self-reliance and empowerment, challenging the attitude towards women's weakness, introducing women to their rights, and discussing	Awareness of the benefits of self-reliance and freedom from dependence, empowering women	Acquiring skills to earn income, following the example of women who have earned income with minimal means (in

Session	Content of Sessions	Aim	Homework
	that she and her husband have the same rights.		order to raise motivation)
Eighth	Reviewing the factors that are necessary to having a sense of happiness in life, teaching self-compassion, emphasizing the beliefs that make a person feel happier, and summarizing the contents of the previous sessions.	Getting to feel good about ourselves	self-compassion

Data analysis

Visual analysis of a graphic diagram was used to analyze the data (Lane & Gast, 2014). Trend, level, and stability of the graphic diagram of each participant between study conditions were assessed. In addition, the improvement percentage from pre- to post-treatment was also used to assess the clinical significance of the changes (Ogles et al., 2001). The following formula was used to calculate the improvement percentage:

$$\Delta A\% = (A0 - A1) / A0$$

% ΔA : Improvement percentage, A0: baseline or pre-treatment score, A1: post-treatment score.

Finally, the reliable change index (RCI) was used to assess the clinical changes (Jacobson, 1992). To calculate this index, the individual's score before the intervention minus their score after the intervention of follow-up is then divided by the standard error of the difference (Sdif). If the RCI is 1.96 ($p < .05$) and 2.58 ($p < .01$) or greater then, the difference is statistically significant.

Finding

Both participants were victims of domestic violence, were 30 years old, had a school education, were housewives, and had one child. Both participants had been together for more than 10 years.

Table 2. Participants' scores in baseline, intervention, and follow-up phases

Phases	Attitudes toward Patriarchy		Self-Compassion	
	PA 1	PA 2	PA 1	PA 2
Baseline 1	67	69	67	74
Baseline 2	50	56	70	73
Baseline 3	49	56	73	80
Mean of Baseline	55.33	60.33	70	75.66



Intervention Session 2	45	31	74	95
Intervention Session 4	43	26	76	96
Intervention Session 6	42	24	80	96
Intervention Session 8	40	11	85	96
Reliable Change Index	-2.50	-8.04	2.48	3.37
Improvement Percentage	-27.70	-81.76	21.42	26.88
Total Improvement Percentage		-54.73		24.1
Follow-Up 1	36	2	80	108
Follow-Up 2	38	4	82	110
Mean of Follow-Up	37	3	81	109
Reliable Change Index	-2.99	-9.35	1.82	5.52
Improvement Percentage	-33.12	-94.57	15.71	44.06
Total Improvement Percentage		-63.84		29.88

The first hypothesis was “the intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family can affect attitudes toward patriarchy in women victims of domestic violence”. In Table 2, the changing scores of attitudes toward patriarchy for both participants in the baseline, intervention, and follow-up phases were presented. The change reliable index in both participants was higher than 1.96, which shows that with 95% certainty, the intervention has led to a change in attitudes toward patriarchy in women victims of domestic, and the first hypothesis is confirmed. The change reliable index in the follow-up phase was also significant, which showed that the change in scores of attitudes towards patriarchy remained stable in the follow-up phase. The improvement percentage, both at the end of the intervention phase and at the end of the one-month follow-up, is higher than 54, which shows that the intervention had a great impact on changing women's attitudes towards patriarchy.

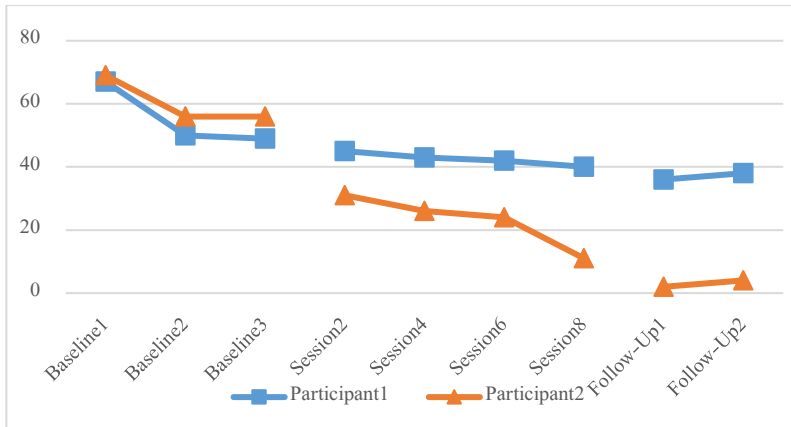


Figure 1. Changes in scores of attitudes toward patriarchy in the baseline, intervention, and follow-up phases

The changes in scores of the participants in attitude toward patriarchy during the baseline, intervention, and follow-up stages are also shown in Figure 1. As can be seen, the scores in the baseline phase do not change much, but in the intervention phase, the attitude towards patriarchy decreased and this reduction has been maintained in the follow-up phase as well.

The second hypothesis was “the intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family can affect self-compassion in women victims of domestic violence”. The same results as the first hypothesis were obtained. The change reliable index was greater than 1.96 both in the intervention phase and in the follow-up phase, which showed that the intervention has led to an increase in self-compassion in the participants. The improvement percentage, both at the end of the intervention phase and at the end of the one-month follow-up, is higher than 24, which shows that the intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family results in an increase in the self-compassion of women. The changes in score of self-compassion during the baseline, intervention, and follow-up stages are also shown in Figure 2. As can be seen, the scores in the baseline phase do not change much, but in the intervention phase, the self-compassion of women increased and this increase has been maintained in the follow-up phase as well.

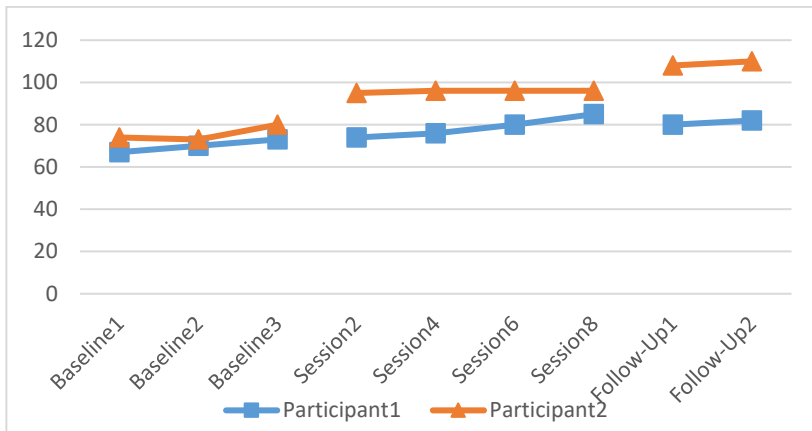


Figure 2. Changes in scores of self-compassion in the baseline, intervention, and follow-up phases

Conclusion & Discussion

The results showed that intervention based on changing perceptions of the power structure in the family had a significant effect on attitudes toward patriarchy and this intervention has been able to reduce the patriarchal attitude of women victims of domestic violence. This finding is consistent with the research of Heidarinejad and Navah (2019), who showed that acceptance of male authority has the greatest contribution to the level of violence against women, and with the study of Haj-Yahia (2003) who showed that stereotypes related to male gender roles, negative and traditional attitudes towards women, expectations related to unequal marital roles and family patriarchal beliefs were the most important predictors of beliefs about wife beating. Also, Sayem et al. (2012) showed that even women victims of spousal violence sometimes think that some types of violence by their spouses are normal and justified. For this purpose, in this study, an intervention program based on changing the perceptions of women victims of violence was designed with the aim of informing women about the equal rights of men and women and challenging their wrong patriarchal thoughts and attitudes. For this purpose, in this study, an intervention program based on changing the perceptions of women victims of violence was designed to inform women about the equal rights of men and women and challenge their wrong patriarchal thoughts and attitudes.

We explained to the participants that although most of the women who were victims of violence grew up in a family with a patriarchal culture and when choosing a spouse, they chose unhealthy marital relationships willingly or unwillingly, the responsibility of how to respond to the violence of their husbands is with them. Abused women may feel powerless to change their lifestyle when they are subjected to violence. By changing their beliefs, they will no longer have to accept their husbands' violence. But the results of this study were inconsistent with the findings of Asnet and Permominka (2017). They showed that women who challenge accepted gender norms are likely at risk of domestic violence because they may be punished for not conforming to established behavioral norms.

In addition, in this intervention, women were helped to learn about their rights and duties and not feel weak and self-blaming just because they are women. The women participating in this study came to the belief that they should pay attention to their desires and interests in their married life and value themselves as human beings. But since some women who are victims of domestic violence are financially dependent on their husbands, and because of the economic and social support that they receive from their husbands, they have to endure some violence (Sanawar et al., 2019). This finding was consistent with Madhani et al. (2017), which showed that patriarchal attitudes, women's lack of financial independence, and women's dependence on men are effective in the formation of violence against women. Others, however, argue that women's empowerment may increase the risk of male violence, as the woman appears to challenge gender norms and threaten her husband's position of dominance or power (Choi & Ting, 2008). In other words, as women gain economic independence, men who feel their authority is being challenged or undermined may use violence to reassert their control (Abramsky et al., 2019). Therefore, according to Dalal (2011), economic empowerment is not the only protective factor; Economic empowerment, combined with higher education and modified cultural norms against women, may protect women from intimate partner violence.

In this study, abused women became aware of the characteristics of an efficient family structure, which includes the equality of power between men and women so that the share of women in the power structure is not less, the existence of hierarchy between family members, and the existence of clear



boundaries between individuals and sub-systems; They came to know that the more efficient the family structure is, the fewer conflicts and fights they will witness. Also, this intervention protocol was able to increase self-care and self-compassion by affecting the traditional view of women as victims of violence. In other words, components of self-compassion training protocol were included in this intervention, which could have led to coping with loneliness, distress, and suffering in women. Teaching self-compassion heals negative feelings about oneself and prepares one for a healthy relationship (Karakasidou & Stalikas, 2017).

In the intervention program from the fourth session, in addition to changing women's perception of the power structure in the family and the patriarchal attitude, it tried to work on self-worth and self-kindness in abused women. Also, by teaching women empowerment and self-assertive skills, the goal was to reduce their feelings of shame and helplessness, which was similar to the concepts of self-compassion therapy. Evidence suggests that self-compassion is a combination of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness that may help victims reduce self-critical thoughts and feelings of isolation, as well as teach them how to cope with difficult experiences to maintain self-balance (Neff, 2003a). Also, Valdez & Lilly (2016) showed that self-compassion could increase people's tolerance to anxiety and also reduce stress and anxiety.

According to the results of this study, it can be concluded that although women in patriarchal societies are exposed to spousal violence more than in other societies, implementing an educational protocol to change women's perception of the power structure in the family, is possible to change their patriarchal attitude and increase self-compassion. However, based on one study alone, such a general conclusion cannot be made and more studies are needed. We suggest that this intervention should not only be available to women but should be taught to other sections of society, especially men, in order to institutionalize the culture of equality and confront gender norms and wrong patriarchal attitudes. It is also suggested to implement this intervention in a group of single girls and even women who are in the stage of divorce and separation with the aim of changing their perception of the power structure in the family and their patriarchal attitude. Finally, it is suggested to repeat this intervention in future studies with a larger sample size in Yazd city; also

considering the cultural differences of each region, it is recommended to conduct a similar study in other cities to increase the validity of the results.

Ethical considerations: This study was derived from the master's thesis at Ardakan University.

Conflict of Interest: The authors thank the women participating in the study

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Job Stress and Marital Satisfaction in Married Nurses: The Mediating Role of Self-Regulation in Relationship

Seyyede Fatemeh Mousavi*¹ 

1- Department of Psychology, Women Research Center, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

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ABSTRACT

It is well acknowledged that the stress of work can influence marriage outcomes. Some jobs such as working in a hospital and dealing with patients are very stressful. However, despite the emphasis on the role of work stress in different areas and marital satisfaction in previous research, there is little information about the effect of adaptive processes such as self-regulation in the relationship on nurses' marital satisfaction. The Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model implies that a successful adaptive process can possibly help individuals mitigate stressful events and raise satisfaction in marriage. The current study aimed to investigate whether the job stress of married nurses can influence their marital satisfaction, and also to examine the mediating role of relationship self-regulation. A total of 252 married nurses from nine governmental and five private hospitals in Tehran were participated. Hospitals were selected by convenient sampling and voluntary to contribute. To collect data, Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), Relationship Self-Regulation (RSR) and the Job-Related Tension Index (JRTI) were given to volunteer nurses who agreed to complete the questionnaires. The results indicated a significant negative association of job stress with marital satisfaction and a positive relationship of relationship self-regulation with marital satisfaction. Also, it was confirmed that relationship self-regulation has a mediating role in the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction. The current study showed how the adaptive process may help to increase marital satisfaction in a stressful environment among married nurses.

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¹Correspondence: f.mousavi@alzahra.ac.ir



Introduction

Nursing is a profession characterized by a number of aspects not experienced in the utmost other occupations (Kirkcaldy & Martin, 2000). Working long hours, variable shifts, weekends, and involving death are some of the situations that nurses are dealing with (McGrath et al., 2003). Some research on Iranian nurses has demonstrated that nurses perceive high-stress levels and revealed that the working conditions of Iranian nurses lead to tensions as high as 57.4%, (Mortaghi Ghasemi et al., 2011). Selye (1976) indicated that nursing is one of the most stressful professions and that the quality of their personal lives declines under stressful situations. Other studies have reported that the working condition of nurses influences negatively their family life and other activities and disrupts their mutual activities with their spouses, which also influence their psychological health and marital life (Elquist, 2004; Ahram & Karwowski, 2012; Heidari & Hosseinpour, 2007), and may diminish the quality of marital relationships lead to marital dissatisfaction (Peiman et al., 2013; Rajabi et al., 2013). Marital satisfaction as a result of interactions between couples is used to assess the level of happiness and stability of marriage and is sometimes defined as an important indicator of success in marriage (Khalatbari et al., 2013), and is defined as a feeling of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by spouses considering all aspects of their lives (Anderson et al., 1983). Marital satisfaction as a sensitive construct is always exposed to various life stressful events and affected by them (Murray et al., 2015; Cohan & Cole, 2002). Stress is a multidirectional construct resulting from the interaction of the person and his living environment (Bilotta & Evans, 2013), and job stress is defined as an emotional and physical reaction to job requirements, especially when it does not match a person's resources and capacities (Lindholm, 2006; Nakasis & Ouzouni, 2008).

Shreds of evidence showed that work anxieties, including the intense workload or work strain, have been related to lower marital quality as demonstrated by a considerable bulk of cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys (Carnes 2017; Debrot et al., 2018; Ford et al., 2007; Kazmi et al., 2017). Job stress has further been linked to aggressive psychological and

physical disposition, communication problems, and relationship discontent and termination (Buck & Neff, 2012; Lavner & Clark, 2017; Vatharkar & Aggarwal-Gupta, 2020). An instance of scarce investigation working on stress levels in spouses monitored communications between couples before and after their involvement in a stress-driving job. After such a stressful job, a 40% drop was observed in the spouses' interaction quality (Bodenmann & Shantinath, 2004). Additionally, some studies imply that rises in daily work stress were linked to less acceptance of opinions by members of the family (Crouter et al., 2001). Likewise, a longitudinal study examined marital satisfaction and changes in acute stress during a period of 4 years and found less satisfaction in participants with their connections during high-stress periods (Kamey et al., 2005).

To understand how job stress affects marital satisfaction, the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation (VSA) model was introduced by Karney and Bradbury (1995) the explains the consequences of marital quality arise from experiencing adaptive and conflicting processes. This model justifies how stressful events affect couples' interactions through an adaptive process (Cohan, & Bradbury, 1997). Relationship Self-regulation (RSR) as an adaptive and relationship maintenance mechanism that was first proposed by Halford, et al., (1994) originated from the theory of self-regulation and refers to the regulation of behaviors, thoughts, and emotions in relation to others (Halford et al., 2007). RSR is the ability of couples to perceive relationship activity patterns and vigorously participate in supporting a healthy marital relationship (Halford et al., 2007) and consists of two components including relationship strategies (activities that lead to relationship development) and relationship effort (consistency in the use of strategies) (Halford et al., 1994, Wilson et al., 2005).

Relationship strategies include self-change conducts accomplished to make an effective relationship; for instance, trying to enhance an individual's own self-expression hoping to manage marital struggle in a better manner (Wilson et al., 2005; Rackham et al., 2017). The amount or strength of consistency applied in the change process for those particular conducts is defined as relationship effort (Halford et al., 1994). The RSR strategy concentrates on ways of successfully changing partners' own behaviors within the association instead of focusing on the incidence of specific relationship



actions (Brown et al., 2016). Studies showed that couples who use the RSR mechanism have a higher experience of marital satisfaction (Halford et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2016) and greater levels of commitment in their marital life (Novak et al., 2018), and vis-versa couples reported poor RSR exhibited reductions in marital satisfaction for both associates over time (Ripoll-Nuñez & Cifuentes Acosta, 2019). In addition, RSR has a mediating role between family dysfunction and marital satisfaction (Hardy et al., 2014). Since job stress as a stressful event affects adaptive procedures within marital relationships, the VSA model explains this association (Alexandrov et al., 2005), and so, the RSR fits with the VSA model; in empirical terms, such adaptive procedures as RSR are linked to both quality and stability of relationship according to a theory initially developed by Karney and Bradbury (1995).

Since there is little knowledge about the effect of self-regulation on marital satisfaction (Halford et al., 1994; Hardy et al., 2014; Girgždė et al., 2014) and the expectation that the current study could help the further expansion of investigation on nurses' marital life issues by considering how RSR is related to marital satisfaction of married nurses, the present survey tried to investigate the possible contributions of external stress in confining intimate experiences within the relationship. Moreover, a proposition of this research is that external stress may indirectly influence the marital outcomes of nurses through RSR. Thus, the current study evaluates how married nurses' marital satisfaction is predicted by the stressors they typically confront in the hospital. The effect of RSR is also assessed as a mediator in the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction. The hypotheses offered below were examined based on the theoretical model proposed by Karney and Bradbury (1995) and the experimental research concerning stressors, adaptive process, and marital satisfaction,

1. Relationship self-regulation significantly mediates the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction.

Methods

Participants

Data were collected from 252 married nurses from nine governmental and five private hospitals in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. The married

nurses and hospitals were selected by convenient sampling and voluntarily contributed. The inclusion criteria included the Iranian nurses who were married for over one year and lived jointly in the same location. Exclusion criteria include nurses who were widowed or divorced or nurses whose marriage duration was less than one year. To collect data, questionnaires were given to volunteer nurses who agreed to complete the questionnaires. In order to comply with the ethics of the research, permission to enter the hospital and permission to complete the questionnaire were obtained from the supervisors. All nurses were informed about the confidentiality of personal information and the name of the hospital where they work. A total of 350 questionnaires were given to participants. Completed questionnaires were collected after five months. The total completed survey for analysis in the current study consisted of 252 married nurses of which 191 (75.7%) and 61 (24.3%) were women and men, respectively. The participants' average age was 37.19 years ($SD=6.9$, range=22-70). They were married for on average 11.6 years ($SD=7.53$, Range 1-36), and the number of their children ranged between 0-4.

Measurements

Marital Satisfaction (MS).

Marital satisfaction was evaluated herein using the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (Hendrick et al., 1988). It contains 7 items with a seven-point Likert scale from *low* to *high* in which better satisfaction is represented by greater scores. RAS has been shown to have a high internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .86 (Hendrick et al., 1988). The convergence validity of this scale with the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale in the research of Dehshiri and Mousavi (2015) was reported as .74 and the Life Satisfaction Scale was .55. In the current study, the RAS reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .85$ was obtained.

Relationship Self-Regulation (RSR).

The Behavioral Self-Regulation for Effective Relationships Scale (Wilson et al., 2005) in 16 items was employed including two subscales of relationship strategies (10 items) and efforts (6 items) on a 5-point scale of *not true at all* to *very true*. The internal consistency of this assessment was .88 (Wilson et al., 2005). Items 4, 6, 7, and 11 were deleted because of their low factor loading. In the current study, after deleting 4 items, its alpha was estimated at



.83. This scale was used by the forward-translations and back-translations method, so it was first translated into English by a professional familiar with English and then translated back into English to know the accuracy of the translation.

Job Stress (JS).

The Job-Related Tension Index (JRTI) (Wooten et al., 2010) contains 12 items detailing symptoms of job conflict or ambiguity. The responders were requested to approximate the frequency of being troubled by every sort of symptom on a 6-point Likert scale (from *never* to *almost always*). This scale has three subscales including performance, workload, and organizational design. Two items had a low factor loading (Below .30) and were deleted to fit the model. JRTI has reported internal consistency reliability of .87 (Wooten et al., 2010), and Barkhordari et al. (2019) calculated the correlation of this scale with the work-family conflict questionnaire -.42. with an alpha of .77 estimated in this investigation.

Data analysis

The “Statistical Package for Social Sciences” (SPSS) version 24 (IBM Corporation, 2018) was used for descriptive statistics and correlations. The mediation hypothesis was tested by SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) and the bootstrapping method with the software “Analysis of Moment Structure” (AMOS) version 24 (Ackerman, 2003). So, for analyzing the data using the structural equation modeling (SEM) method, the univariate normative assumptions were tested by estimating skewness and kurtosis values, and outliers' values were measured using the MahalaNobis distance method. The covariance results between the observed variables showed that the assumptions of linearity and multicollinearity were observed.

Findings

The mean, standard deviation, and actual range of the variables of the current study, as well as inter-correlations of study variables are presented in Table 1. The correlations were all of statistical significance. Marital satisfaction had a positive and negative correlation with RSR ($r = .61, p < .05$) and job stress ($r = -.35, p < .05$), respectively.

Table 1. Mean, SD, and Pearson correlation coefficients of studied variables

Variables	1	2	3
1-Job stress	(.40)		
2-Relationship self-regulation	-.42**	(.30)	
3-Relationship satisfaction	-.35**	.61**	(.50)
Mean	36.92	56.96	34.96
Standard deviation	8.33	9.13	9.24
Actual Range	14-58	39-78	7-49

Note: Correlations are below the diagonal, AVE is presented on the diagonal, in parenthesis

Measurement Model Fit

The measurement model included marital satisfaction, job stress, and RSR as latent variables. The degree of the model fit for each construct is evaluated based on fit indices. To fit the model, Kline (2015) suggests using indices of the model fit such as the Chi-square/Degree of Freedom Ratio (*CMIN/DF*), the Goodness-of-Fit Index (*GFI*), the Comparative fit index (*CFI*), and the Tucker-Lewis Index (*TLI*). If three of the fit indices are equal or greater than 9, it is an acceptable fit index (Kline, 2015). Furthermore, when the root means the square error of approximation (*RMSEA*) ranges lower than .05 is good and between .05 to .08 is acceptable (Fabrigar et al., 1999). As noted by Kline (2015) and also according to the examination of the measurement model, the model fulfills the suggested requisites (*CMIN*= 615.6, *df*= 360, *CMIN/df* =1.71, *p* = .001, *CFI* = .90; *TLI*=.88; *GFI* =.87, *IFI*, .90, and *RMSEA* = .05).

Structural Model

In the current study, job stress and self-regulation were presented as exogenous variables and marital satisfaction was presented as an endogenous variable. The structural path coefficients between the job stress and relationship self-regulation, the independent variables, marital satisfaction, and the dependent variable were estimated by the structural model procedure which can see in Figure 1. Generally, the structural model outcomes revealed a good model fit for the data (*CMIN*= 644.5, *df*= 360, *CMIN/DF* = 1.79, *CFI* = .90, *GFI*=.87, *TLI* = .88, *IFI*= .90, and *RMSEA*= .05).

According to Figure 1, the result shows that RSR is positively affected marital satisfaction ($\beta = .66, p < .01$). This figure shows that the effect of self-



regulation in the marital relationship on increasing relationship satisfaction in married nurses is positive and direct. Furthermore, this figure shows a negative association between job stress and RSR ($r = -.61, p < .01$). With increasing job stress and decreasing self-regulation in nurses, the direct effect of job stress on marital satisfaction is negative and non-significant. The direct and indirect effects of job stress on marital satisfaction for investigating the mediating effect of self-regulation in the relationship are shown in Table 2.

Altogether, the above variables elucidate 45% of the variance of marital satisfaction among married nurses in Tehran. The results confirm hypotheses 1.

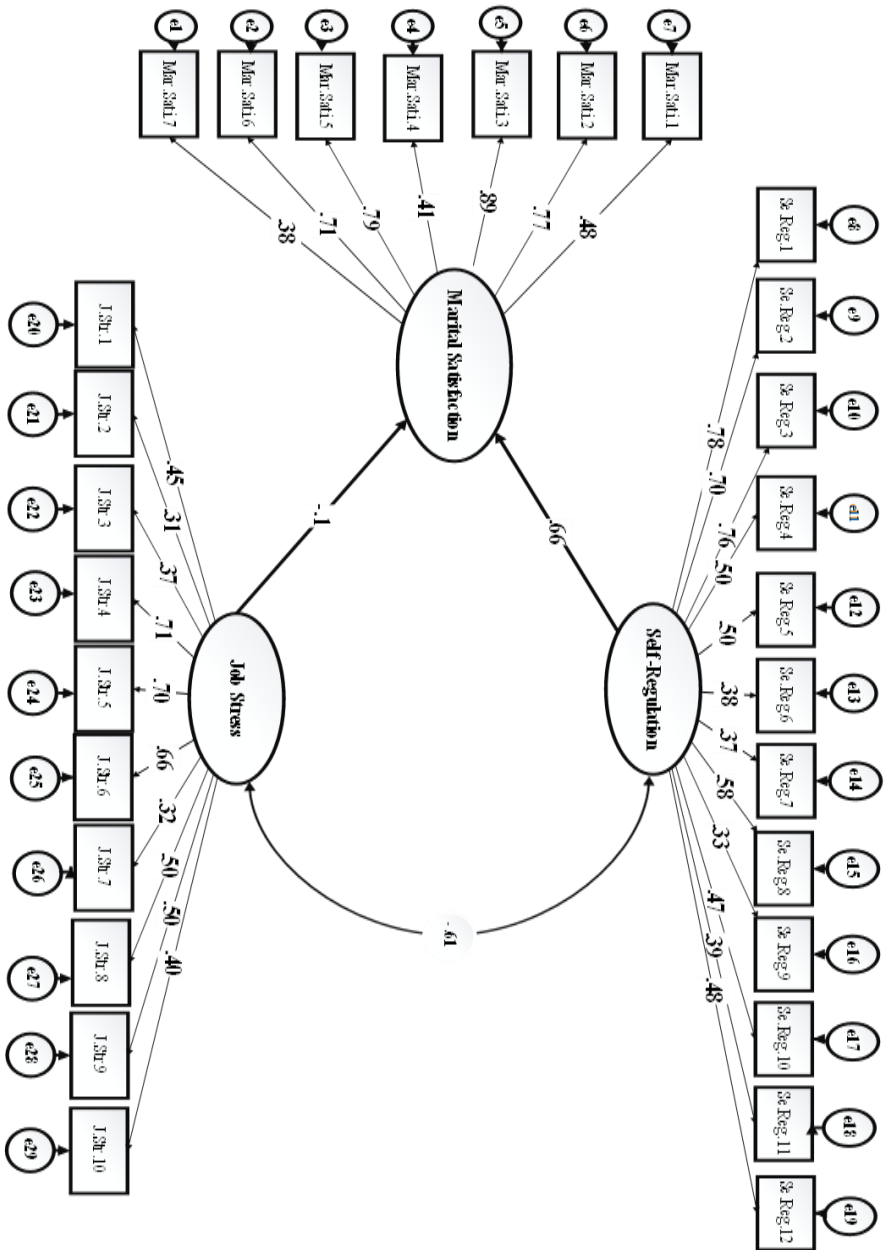


Figure 1- A path analysis of the relations between MS (endogenous variable) and JS & RSR (exogenous variables)



Mediation Test of Relationship Self-Regulation (RSR)

As shown in table 2, self-regulation plays the role of mediator in relation to job stress and marital satisfaction. The statistical significance of the indirect impact of job stress on marital satisfaction through RSR was examined by the bootstrapping approach. To this end, an alpha level of .05 through a 95% bias-corrected *CI* was established for the statistical significance of the indirect effect. Also, 5000 bootstraps for each sample with substitutes were taken out from the full dataset. A *CI* of zero implies that a significant mediation effect is absent at a level of .05. Additionally, a full mediation is proven with the inclusion of the mediator when the *p*-value is not significant for the association between exogenous (job stress) and endogenous variables (marital satisfaction). Partial mediation is, however, obtained with a significant *p*-value for the connection between exogenous (job stress) and endogenous (marital satisfaction) variables, which drops in the case of mediator inclusion (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Table 2 indicates that the associations between job stress and marital satisfaction are mediated by self-regulation in marital relationships. Approaching *CI* to zero implies that there is not a significant mediation impact at a level of .05. On the other hand, full mediation is established if the *p*-value is non-significant for the correlation between job stress and marital satisfaction. Table 2 indicates that the associations between job stress and marital satisfaction are mediated by self-regulation in a marital relationship in the full model ($\beta = -.41, SE = .19, 95\% CI = -.53, -.26$), whereas the direct model is non-significant ($\beta = -.01, SE = .19, 95\% CI = -.45, .45$). Based on the discussed results, it can be concluded that the hypothesis supports that RSR significantly mediates the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction. So, the association between job stress and marital satisfaction is fully mediated by self-regulation in marital relationships.

Table 2. Testing Mediation of Self-Regulation in Relation between Job Stress and Marital Satisfaction

Effect		Bootstrap estimate		Bias corrected 95% confidence interval	
		Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper
Direct Model					
Marital satisfaction	<--- Job stress	-.42**	.19	-.53	-.26
Full Mediation Model					
Marital satisfaction	<--- Job stress	-.01	.19	-.45	.45

Note: ** $p < .001$

Discussion

The current study gives additional insight into the marital relationships of nurses regards to the working environment. The survey has also explored different facets of how external stressors such as job stress impact marital quality outcomes and internal marital processes that promote or inhibit this association. This research will enrich the literature on the research conducted in the field of stress and marital relationships of nurses under the influence of the work environment. The findings also provide new insights for practitioners and educators working with couples. The findings of this study, which are based on the VSA model, test support the hypotheses of this study that job stress has a negative significant correlation with marital satisfaction among the studied married nurses in Tehran. As a result, the present outcomes recommend that job stress can play a contagious role and affect the marital experiences of married nurses. Also, the finding showed that higher RSR has a positive association with marital satisfaction. In addition, the mediation role of RSR between job stress and marital satisfaction has been confirmed. This research sampled a group of nurses, part of whose job stress can be considerably maximal and present extensive variation.

Consistent with the hypothesis, these observations confirm prior reports regarding possible negative aftermaths of job stress on marriages (Bodenmann, 2015; Falconier et al., 2015; Falconier, et al., 2016). Nurses' work situation (e.g., shifting hours) creates a conflict role between family and occupational chores and negatively affects marital satisfaction (Grosswald, 2004). The previous studies claimed that jobs with non-standard hours which engage with high stress have a negative effect on family and marriage



(Grosswald, 2004, Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004; Colligan & Rosa, 2001). These studies support the finding that job stress is associated with significant outcomes for nurses and that additional stress negatively affects marital satisfaction. The challenging job circumstances and the related aftermaths result in inconsistency and stress in the couples' relationships. Accordingly, work problems and issues can affect marital life. Besides, the findings reveal a significant effect of nurses' job stress on marital satisfaction. This is because a high amount of time is spent in the workplace by nurses, where they have many duties. They may also encounter restrictions in their tasks and functions, particularly in the home setting. Altogether, the results indicated that the impacts of job stress on couples functioning in marriage are primarily direct.

Regarding the association between RSR and marital satisfaction, the findings propose a positive association between RSR and marital satisfaction. This survey offers a significant development of prior studies that demonstrated RSR to be a dependable cross-sectional associate of marital satisfaction. The present study demonstrated that RSR is related to the interruption of marital satisfaction being a wide-range connection. The outcomes of this investigation endorse and develop preceding studies on RSR and its effect on developing marital satisfaction (Wilson et al., 2005). Moreover, satisfaction with marital relationships was found to be linked to RSR (Halford et al., 2007). Accordingly, RSR may conduct spouses to be capable of better adapting via modifications in beliefs, moods, and behaviors, as well as changing the way of interactions by means of emotional control and regulation. RSR also may have the potential as a beneficial instrument to understand how partners maintain relationship satisfaction, and also for directing teaching contents in educational curricula for marital relationships.

Furthermore, RSR accounts for the connection between stress and marital satisfaction. According to these results, although work-related stress as external stress reduces directly couples' satisfaction with their association, RSR can buffer this effect and helps couples to increase marital satisfaction. In other words, being involved in positive dual handling to cope with various stressors has been reported to be linked to greater degrees of relationship satisfaction (Falconier et al., 2016). Altogether, it is discussed that RSR affects the expansion and preservation of relationship satisfaction (Halford et al.,

1994). Moreover, it consists of Halford et al. (Halford et al., 1994) the finding demonstrated that the satisfaction of each spouse was greatly correlated to his/her own instead of the couple's self-regulation. This reveals that each spouse should try individually to improve and maintain a jointly satisfying relationship.

Conclusion

Based on the importance of self-regulation in the marital relationship, the present study provides a clearer view of the role of dyadic adaptive processes in the relationship between stress in the workplace and marital relationships. The survey has also explored different facets of how external stressors such as job stress impact marital quality outcomes and internal marital processes that promote or inhibit this association. By doing so, this work advances the literature on the stress and marriage of nurses, their marital processes, and their interplay. The present survey could help the further expansion of investigation on nurses' marital issues by considering how the adaptive process may help to increase marital satisfaction in a stressful lifestyle among married nurses.

Implications

The results of the present research could inform the community health nurses to provide a better environment to reduce the pressure and stress of nurses' jobs to help to decrease the conflict between their family and marriage. The finding also may be applied to marital education. Couple educators generally provide relationship self-regulation programs as a framework for intervention and education. In addition, the findings of this study give this perception of nurses' marital life and the effect of RSR to increase their marital satisfaction and give them this awareness of how job stress influences their marital life. Also, a high RSR might help nurses to have a better relationship with their patients and colleagues in the work environment, which reduces their job stress, which can be a topic in future research. The findings also provide more insights for practitioners and educators working with couples.

The cross-sectional nature of the research, the use of self-report questionnaires, and the possibility of social desirability in responding to the questionnaires, especially when the supervisors were aware of the completion



of the nurses' questionnaires, can be considered as the limitations of the present research, which the study on working conditions of nurses and its effect on marital relationships through in-depth interviews can provide more useful results for future research.

Ethical considerations

This investigation was administrated in accordance with the ethical standards of the 1964 Helsinki declaration. All participants were informed of voluntary participation, and also were assured that personal information would remain anonymous.

Conflict of Interest. There are no personal or organizational conflicts of interest for this study.

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Lived Experience of Iranian Married Men and Women in Interacting with Each other in a Marital Relationship: A Qualitative Research based on Functional Analytic Psychotherapy Approach (FAP)

Zahra Najafluye Torkamani^{1*} Ahmad Alipour²
Mahnaz Aliakbari Dehkordi³ Majid Saffarinia⁴

1- PhD student in Psychology, Department of Psychology, Payame Noor University (PNU), Tehran, Iran

2- Associate professor in Psychology, Department of Psychology, Payame Noor University (PNU), Tehran, Iran

3- Professor in Psychology, Department of Psychology, Payame Noor University (PNU), Tehran, Iran

4- Associate professor in Psychology, Department of Psychology, Payame Noor University (PNU), Tehran, Iran

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ABSTRACT

The present research is designed with the aim of deep and comprehensive identification of textual and cultural factors related to couples' interaction, explanation of its meaning and concept, and the model of factors related to the quality of couples' interaction and functional analytical psychotherapy approach (FAP). The research community was all married men and women in Tehran who had been married for at least two years. Although men's and women's relationship has been analyzed in the research, the unit of analysis is individual: married men and women. By purposive sampling technique, 30 married couples were selected in Tehran. Semi-structured interviews with related participants continued until theoretical data saturation was achieved. Each interview text was placed in ATLAS Ti software for coding system, semantic production, and analyzable codes, and then the software performed analysis. According to the aforementioned model, results were categorized based on seven themes including identifying and expressing needs, experiencing and expressing excitement, conflict and incompatibility, mutual relationship, disclosure and close relationship with spouse, verbal and nonverbal relationship, and attitudes.

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Correspondence: zahra.n.torkamani@gmail.com



Introduction

The intimate and romantic relationship is accompanied by inevitable pain which is hidden in the essence of intimacy. In fact, according to Irvin Yalom, humans are born, dead, hurt, and healed in relationships. (Yalom, 2015). One of the relationship forms is the interaction between couples. When the level of individual satisfaction from a relationship is suitable, the ground for human growth excellence and material and spiritual development will be provided. (Edatati & Redzuan, 2010). Researchers have found there is a relationship between happiness, physical health, and the quality of individual intimate relationships (Gambrel & Keeling, 2010). But all couples face problems in their relationships which can be severe or mild, long-time or short-time which originate from different factors. Some of these problems are solved easily, while others are not despite spending time and effort to solve them. (Khamseh, 2011). The unique background of couples and their life experience will result in the formation of behavioral collections and attitudes about the way of intimate relationship function. So, this behavioral collection can lead to strategies that destroy relationships and enforce additional pain for both parties of the relationship.

Human relationships are composed of different levels and angles which can be assessed from different points of view (Johnson & Whiffen, 2017). Functional analytical psychotherapy (FAP) is one of the third-wave therapies that focus on relationships and helps improve relationship problems (Garcia et al., 2006). Functional analytical psychotherapy (FAP) is a context-oriented-interventional approach that is designed suitably to target interpersonal relationships and to focus on the ways others have an impact on individuals' social interpersonal relationships in addition, it increases clients' ability to interact, love, and be loved (Kuczynski et al., 2020). Functional analysis is focused on explaining behavior and its circumstances and consequences. To describe precisely, functional analysis is defined as determining differential stimulus which advances the intended behavior (circumstance) and events that happen during this behavior (consequence) and have an impact on the occurrence probability of these events in the future and these effects can be recognized by the function (Callaghan & Darrow, 2015).

Approached-based therapies have been noticed in recent years which seek to increase our understanding of changing mechanisms of behavioral health interventions (Munoz-Martinez et al., 2022). A recent meta-analysis of mono-topic designs has shown that FAP is effective for a wide range of targeted behaviors (Singh & O'Brien, 2018). But, although mono-topic and mechanistic data are hopeful, clinical trials at a group level are still needed to assess FAP effectiveness (Kanter et al., 2017; Hayes et al., 2019; Hayes et al., 2021; Hafman & Hayes, 2019; Tolin et al., 2015; Holman et al., 2017).

Although FAP is a therapy based on behavior analysis principles it is considered inter-personal therapy and it is thought both reasons and therapy of psychological disorders are completely dependent on inter-personal relationships (Baruch et al., 2009). It seems that couple therapy replete with FAP can provide one analytical approach based on behavior to assess, conceptualize and treat the relationship crisis of couples which is based on topographic analysis of user behaviors and its function for clients and is completely contextual. The therapist must be sensitive about what is functional and non-functional for couples, instead of focusing on what should be done for them (Gurman et al., 2010). Individualist-oriented functional analytical psychotherapy is organized according to 5 main domains: skill in determining and expressing needs during relationships, sensitivity to response, receiving or providing feedback for others, problem in determining or expressing emotional and cognitive experiences, problems in close inter-relationship and disclosure, and problems in inter-relationship conflicts. Although FAP has existed for nearly 3 decades as a therapy, limited research is done to study its effectiveness and most studies of FAP effectiveness use single test data (Singh & O'Brien, 2018). Therefore, researchers of FAP believe that in the wide world of couples therapy and family therapy, it seems strange that couple therapy is replete with FAP has not been studied yet. (Lopez, 2003; Rabin et al., 1996; Gorman et al., 2010).

On the other hand, it seems that the social-cultural context can be considered one of the widest and most important contexts in couples' relationships (Cheraghi et al., 2017; Sadeghi et al., 2012). For the meaning of behavior for behaviorists is grounded in collocations of the present environment which support behavior and also historical collocations which shape behavior. We are the product of both our present and past environment.



Each clinical target behavior can be recognized by this method. The current environment includes the immediate environment (therapy room, therapeutic relationship), the client's current relationship, and stronger ethnic-cultural and political power which influence our behavior (Tsai et al. 2016). Kluckhohn states that: “*neither society nor individual can survive unless behavior has a certain minimum meaning according to ecological requirements*”. (Kluckhohn, 1956, 962). Culture is a source of behavioral rules, manners, ideas, and lifestyles which will possibly lead to positive consequences (admiration instead of scolding) in social and physical contexts (making a living instead of hunger) if adopted. So, we can explain it from a behavioristic point of view. If you follow cultural rules, positive reinforcement will possibly occur. This is part of the socialization process. Culture responds to ecological requirements which are sourced from it (Keller & Lamm, 2005); therefore, behavior and lifestyle are exposed to reinforcement-based events which are imposed upon them by the environment. Behaviors and lifestyles which increase the possibility of survival will be reinforced or selected to be transferred to the next generation and therefore “*those which were useful in the past*” will be transferred to the next generations. (Triandis & Gelfand, 2012). Consequently, cultures have an adaptive function that possibly increases the physiological survival of the certain ecological environment sourced from it (Salzman, 2020).

If we agree with the recent assessment, it is supposed that couples' relationships follow some cultural components which if neglected can be one of the important factors in the effectiveness of couple therapies. According to this, the present research has studied its dependence on cultural-social context based on the concept of couple therapy replete with functional analytical psychotherapy. In fact, according to the increasing rate of couples' conflicts and divorce during recent years, deep and comprehensive recognition of contextual and cultural factors related to couples' interactions, the explanation of its meaning and concept, and the model of factors related to couples' interactions seem necessary. Therefore, studying couples' relationships will help to identify the structural framework which shapes couples' relationships and will have an impact on our understanding of close relationships, the way they are interrupted, and identifying effective interventions based on culture.

Consequently, in addition to the analysis of couples' experiences of relationships and deep phenomenological understanding of the way of Iranian men and women interact, this research has classified, represented, and explained related factors of couples' interaction based on a functional analytical psychotherapy approach. The study has been performed to have a deep understanding of the way of interaction between couples based on the functional analytical psychotherapy framework and to find a cultural conceptualization of functional analytical psychotherapy requirements and components in a couple of relationships, and to find the answer to the following question:

How is the Lived experience of Iranian married men and women interacting with each other in a marital relationship based on a functional analytical psychotherapy context?

Methods

The research method is based on a qualitative approach framework using thematic analysis and the research questions are “WH” questions. The main purpose of the researcher is to achieve meanings, priorities, attitudes, experiences, and ways of Iranian men and women's perception of relationships: a mental and closed-culture phenomenon that necessitates qualitative research due to the lack of knowledge in this area. Thematic analysis is a way of identifying, analyzing, and expressing models or themes of textual data. This method organizes data and explains it in detail. (Zabihzadeh et al., 2018). However, thematic analysis is beyond organizing and describing details and according to Braun and Clarke (2006) this kind of qualitative research can explain various aspects of the research topic. The theme is the most abstract part of the data, and its formation and selection are highly dependent on the research structure and questions (Clarke et al., 2015). Among the common methods of thematic analysis, the “latent thematic analysis” strategy was used in this research. According to this method, the main focus on the extraction of hidden meaning can interfere with what is beyond the conscious mind of interviewees or was not mentioned explicitly by interviewees. In other words, in latent thematic analysis, the hidden meanings are revealed based on the researcher's point of view (Clarke et al., 2015). Achieving such hidden meanings require hard interpretative effort



from the researcher for which the main part will be obtained by designing investigative questions during the interview. (Hayfield & Halliwell, 2014)

The study population was all married men and women in Tehran who had been married for at least 2 years. Thus, although men's and women's interactions were analyzed in this research, the unit of analysis is individual: married men and women. Therefore, by purposive sampling technique, 30 married people in Tehran (15 men, 15 women) participated as study samples by having research inclusion criteria. The most important criteria taken into account for the participants in the research were: 1) satisfaction and voluntary attendance to participate in research, 2) being married for at least two years 3) having no psychological disease background 4) having the educational level of at least diploma to understand interview questions and provide a suitable answer. The age average of the interviewees (women and men) was 31/53-35/26 and marriage was 8/6-6/3.

Among the female interviewees: five had diplomas, one had associate degrees, six had a bachelor's, two had master's and one had Ph.D., as well as seven, were housewives, and eight were employed. Among the male interviewees: three had diplomas, eleven had bachelor's, one had mastered with no PhDs and all were employed. Semi-structured interviews with related participants continued until data saturation was achieved. In other words, it continued until there was no extra information in the interview and increasing accuracy in the new responses. To facilitate interaction during the interview and increase the response accuracy of interviewees, all interviews of the men and women of the study were performed by same-sex interviewers. The interview protocol was question oriented (instead of item-oriented) consisting of specific verification questions.

The data collection tools of this study were semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Before each interview, the aim of the research was explained to each participant and then their consent to participate in research which relied on information confidentiality, permission to record voice, and use interview content for research objectives were obtained. Each interview ranged from 45-70 minutes, so the average time for all interviews was 60 minutes. In this study, the six-phase strategy of Brown and Clark (2006) was used to code and extract themes: familiarizing with the study's theoretical foundations and the

content of interviews, coding semantic units, searching themes, reviewing themes, denomination, and definition of themes and writing a report. Therefore, after recording each interview, their contents were first checked by the researcher with the recorded interview to approve the final implemented copy. In the next step, each interview text was placed in ATLAS Ti software for coding system, semantic production, and analyzable codes and the analysis was performed by the software.

Additionally, to be assured of data validity in this research, the researcher took steps to enhance data acceptability and reliability by spending time collecting data, frequently a review of data, and also considering the diversity of interviewees in factors such as age, education level, and years of marriage. Besides this, “reviewing members” is the most important technique of reliability in all kinds of qualitative studies (Cresswell, 2013). In this study, while the relationship with interviewees during data analysis was maintained, after analysis, study results in the format of a report were presented to 2 men and 2 women who were interviewed to affirm the accuracy of the final copy of the results report. Also, a copy of the interview contents and assigned code of semantic units were provided for three researchers who were familiar with the qualitative methods in order to exchange views about possible disagreements in coding to achieve consensus. Plus, the researcher tried to explain all details of the research process from sampling to collecting and data analysis extensively to eliminate any doubts and ambiguities.

Finding

According to the suggested framework by Clark et al. (2015), the final report of the study results was classified in form of “main themes” “*themes*” and “*sub-themes*” and then a “*thematic map*” (Clark et al., 2015) related to the study question was designed. According to Clark et al. (2015), the main themes of thematic analysis are organization and regulation of analysis. These themes reflect underlying beliefs hidden behind the series of themes. The underlying layer of main themes is composed of themes for which the function is to describe and report the meaning related to the central organizing concept. Finally, the lowest level of the suggested model is allocated to sub-themes, the themes which have a role in creating a specific aspect of one central organizing concept. Results of the present study are categorized according to



the related model based on seven main themes including identifying and expressing needs, experiencing and expressing excitement, conflict and incompatibility, mutual relationship, disclosure and close relationship with spouse, verbal and nonverbal relationship and attitudes, 27 themes such as identifying needs, realistic expectations and assertiveness, attention awareness, recognition of excitement, expressing excitement, avoiding accepting excitement, avoidance, scolding and anger, conflict resolution and problem-solving, awareness of influence, communication skills, defensiveness and self-awareness, listening skill, trustworthiness, attachment styles, and intimacy, attitude towards a spouse, attitude towards spouse's family, self-attitude, attitude towards marriage and body language, the hidden meaning of words and selecting them and sub-themes.

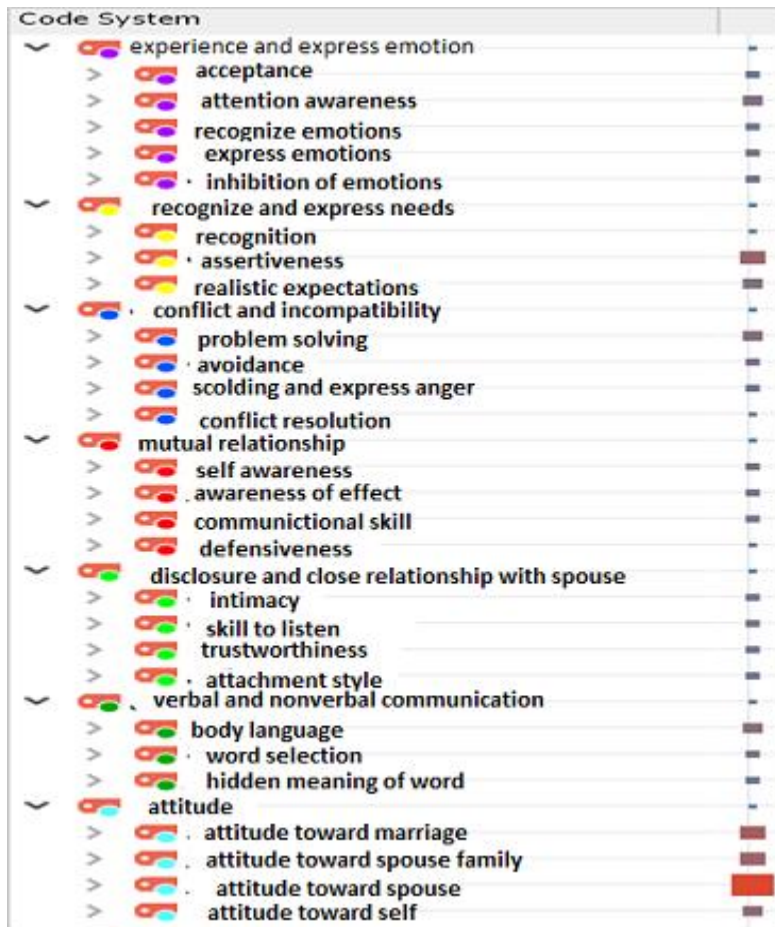


Chart1- A visual display of allocated code concentration in main themes and themes

1) Verbal and non-verbal communication: verbal and non-verbal communication is one of the main themes of the study consisting of three themes: the hidden meaning of the word, body language, and word selection. The hidden meaning of the word consists of two sub-themes which are using ironic words and indirect expression and correct usage of declarative sentences. Body language consists of four sub-themes including tone, intonation, moving hands and head, and eye contact. Word selection consists of three themes: vocabulary collection, using poems, and using narration and story.



Verbal communication is one of the most important communicative skills which play a main and effective role in interpersonal relationships. But another main conversational skill is body language and non-verbal communication. Body language reveals our feelings and attitudes before we say anything. We are judged by revealing our initial signs and indications and if these initial gestures are not friendly, it is hard to make a good and favorable conversation.

Hidden meaning behind the word: According to participants' opinions, hidden meanings of the word both provoke tension and turmoil or help solve conflicts better. Ironic conversations, indirect expressions, and correct usage of declarative sentences can make misunderstandings and can mislead verbal communication. "*She always talks about her friend's husband who betrayed her and insults men and expects me to say nothing and just listen, but I understand she beats me to frighten another...*" (A 38-year-old man)

Body language: recognizing body language is very important because 50% of messages' effectiveness results from body movements. Often the person accepts our body language more than our verbal messages: so, we should pay significant attention to body language (Mac key et al., 2013). According to participants' opinions, body language is one of the most important factors in a healthy or disturbed relationship. Factors such as tone, intonation, movement of head and hands, and eye contact. "*Respectability is very important to me. I tell him not to speak loudly but he shouts at our children. Neighbors have complained about us...*" (A 25-year-old woman). "*...When talking, he stares at me in such a way that I cannot keep talking...*" (A 25-year-old woman).

Word selection: vocabulary collection, using poems and narration, and story can add to the favorability of a relationship or if used radically and improperly, it can provoke tension and turmoil. "When I make a mistake, he immediately makes up a story and I don't like to listen to it" (a 45-year-old woman). "*I like my wife to talk to me, help me, even sometimes I like her to insult me, but not to be silent. I ask her why she does not say anything and she replies, "what can I possibly say?"*" (A 41-year-old man).

2) Disclosure and close relationship with spouse: disclosure and close relationship with a spouse is one of the main themes of this study which consists of four themes: intimacy, attachment style, trustworthiness, and

listening skill. Intimacy consists of four sub-themes including secrecy, too much interference, disclosure of secrets, events, and emotional risk-taking. Listening skill consists of four sub-themes including the reluctance of hearing about oneself, overstatement, attention, listening well, and talking about oneself. Trustworthiness consists of two sub-themes of secrecy and problem in trusting someone. The attachment style consists of two sub-themes requesting a lot of support and fear of intimacy and attachment.

One's feelings about intimacy and close relationship in an inter-personal relationship and the way of self-disclosure or speaking about self-experiences in interacting with others will form answers which imply intimacy. In another word, interpersonal closeness indicates a relationship or intimacy with another person. A close interpersonal relationship consists of relationships that require expressing our feelings about others, being understood by another one, and understanding others and their needs (Tsai et al., 1398).

2-1. Intimacy: Intimacy is an interactive process in which real and intimate communication occurs accurately and developmentally between two people. From the research participants' point of view, factors such as secrecy, interference, disclosure of the secret, events, and emotional risk-taking are parts of intimacy. Secrecy means that another part of the relationship hides his/her deep feelings and beliefs. *"I like him to talk to me about his job and concerns, but he says nothing."* (A 30-year-old woman). To create intimacy, while we need to have joint privacy and limit with each other, we also need to have little and safe privacy for ourselves. Communication with our friends and our family. It seems that much interference can even prevent individuals from creating intimacy at a normal level. *"She wants to know everything; my relations with co-workers in the office or, what the manager said and what we did. Sometimes, I like to say nothing to her because she makes me angry."* (A 36-year-old man). According to participants, disclosure of secrets and events is considered part of intimacy. *"I like him to talk to me, but instead he unburdens himself to his sister. Later, I hear something from his sister, and it bothers me a lot."* (A 35-year-old woman). It seems there is an interconnected relationship between emotional risk-taking and intimacy. Those who don't take the risk to create intimacy because of rejection or emotional inhibition or fear of intimacy or any other reason will create a sense of insincerity on the other side of the relationship. *"I ask him why he does not become intimate with*



me or my family and he says, "oh, I'm not in the mood" or he says, "because of your impudence" (A 25-year-old woman).

2-2. Attachment style: attachment style is one theme of disclosure and close relationship with the spouse which manifested in participants' responses in the form of a request for a lot of support and fear of intimacy and attachment. Couples who request a lot of support or are not interested in intimacy lead the relationships towards dissatisfaction. "She always wants to know where I am and what I am doing. I must call her and talk. She doesn't understand I am busy." (A 38-year-old man)

2-3. Trustworthiness: It seems that trust is one of the main pillars of the marital relationship and when it is damaged its repair would be difficult. Secrecy and the problem to trust both refer to individual and marriage backgrounds. "After his message to his female co-worker and when I saw it, how would he expect me to trust him?" (A 33-year-old woman). "My father always told me not to trust females, especially when they are rich." (A 35-year-old man)

3-4. Listening skill: In marital privacy, the depth of intimacy between couples depends on their ability to listen precisely and effectively to a large degree. The desire to have listened about oneself, overstatement, paying attention, precise listening and the amount of talking about oneself can lead to continual conversation or can bother someone and interrupt a relationship. "When he wants to explain something, he drags the discussion until I become tired and don't like to listen to it." (A 38-year-old woman). "I can't say anything about his behavior at all. He never accepts leaves the place." (A 33-year-old woman).

3) Experience and expressing feelings: Experience and expressing feelings are considered as parts of the main themes of this study which consist of five themes: attention awareness, acceptance, recognition of excitement, expressing excitement, and avoiding excitement. Attention awareness consists of four sub-themes of lack of knowledge about physical sensations when occurring, being overwhelmed with emotions, integration with sensations, and getting involved with negative self-talk during the manifestation of emotions. Acceptance consists of three sub-themes of inhibition and suppression of certain sensations, excessive focus on sensations, and inability to control

sensations. Recognition of emotions consists of three sub-themes of a problem with recognizing sensations, hiding emotions deliberately, and pretending fear and misfortune. Expressing emotions consists of three themes routine emotions and lack of intimacy in expressing them, and exaggerated expression in a way that annoys others. Inhibition of emotions consists of two sub-themes the problem with crying and the problem with expressing the sense of anxiety, fear, happiness, and sadness.

The term emotional experience refers to any type of experience or feeling, whether positive or negative. Feelings such as sadness, anxiety, loneliness, also love; pride, happiness, humor, etc. Feelings may occur at the moment of experiencing an event or interaction or may appear later when remembering an experience. (Baruch et al., 2009). According to Greenberg (2018). Emotions show people the nature of their communication links. Excitement informs people whether their relationships are developing or interrupted or need correction. *“As soon as something happens which is not in his favor, his mood changes immediately and he is not the same person and I fear him a lot in this situation, an angry and terrifying person.”* (A 34-year-old woman).

“It is hard for me to talk about my feelings. Maybe I don't know how I feel.” (A 30-year-old woman)

4) Recognition and expression of needs: Recognizing and expressing needs is one of the main themes of this research which consists of three themes: recognition, assertiveness, and realistic expectations. Recognition consists of two sub-themes: problem in recognizing needs and recognizing suitable time and place for expressing needs. Assertiveness consists of six sub-themes: expressing needs, fear of expressing, fear of being judged, sense of vulnerability when expressing needs, excessive indirect or clever expression, and fear of being rejected. Realistic expectations consist of four sub-themes excessive needs expression, putting someone under pressure, meeting needs immediately, and excessive independence.

Recognizing and expressing needs is very effective in couples' relations. People build relations through various needs and seek to meet their needs. Without accurate recognition and expression of needs, couples may feel failure or not being understood. This aspect consists of elements such as fear of expression, fear of being rejected, or problem in recognizing one's needs.



“I don't behave with tact. I don't know when to tell him my desires.” (A 33-year-old woman)

“I fear telling him I need something and he says no. So, I don't request him anything.”

5) Conflict and Incompatibility: Conflict and incompatibility are parts of the main themes studied in the research which consist of four themes: problem-solving, avoidance, scolding, anger, and conflict resolution. Problem-solving consists of four sub-themes: dodging the question, covering up, retaliation, and being stubborn. Avoidance consists of three sub-themes: avoiding conflict, unwillingness to talk, and apologies without any reason. Scolding and expressing anger consist of two sub-themes: creating unimportant conflict and unwillingness to forgive. Conflict resolution consists of two sub-themes: problem with tolerating conflict and conflict resolution skills.

Conflict and incompatibility mean difference of opinion or unfavorable interactions which occurs between couples.

“He is very proud and doesn't apologize. I must always apologize, even if I'm not guilty.” (A 27-year-old woman)

“He tells me I always blame him a lot...” (A 32-year-old woman)

6) Mutual relationship. Mutual relationship is one of the studied main themes of this research which consists of four themes: self-awareness, communication skill, awareness of effect, and defensiveness. Self-awareness consists of three sub-themes: perfectionism, realistic expectations, and feeling of failure. Communication skill consists of four sub-themes: constructive criticism, the skill to express, appreciation, and admiration. Awareness of effect consists of five sub-themes: awareness of the impact on the spouse, contiguous conversation, excessive silence, incompatibility of body language and word content, and problem to follow what is said. Defensiveness consists of two sub-themes being open to criticism and flexibility.

This aspect includes the way couples have an impact on each other and their reaction to their feedback. Feedback refers to responses and reactions people show against their behavior or others' behavior. The thing which allows people to be aware of their function is the information received from others (Tsai et al., 2016).

“He gabs so much that everyone gets bored. I always signal him but he doesn't understand” (A 4-year-old woman)

“I wish to goodness that she would appreciate me but she behaves in such a way as if it is my duty.” (A 49-year-old man)

“If I was not open to criticism, I would have left him a long time ago.” (A 37-year-old woman)

7) Attitudes: Attitudes are one of the main themes of this research which consist of four themes: attitude towards marriage, attitude towards spouse's family, attitude towards a spouse, and attitude towards yourself. Attitude towards marriage consists of eight sub-themes: patriarchy, equality of men and women, power division, life considerable decision-making, consulting the spouse, freedom of action, right to choose, and marriage formalities. Attitude towards a spouse's family consists of five sub-themes: the place of living, frequency of visiting each other, the right to comment, the number of financial transactions, and the concept of privacy. Attitude toward a spouse consists of twelve sub-themes: selfishness, regularity, planning, personal hygiene, being kind, being merciful, taking care, attitude towards gender, the need to consult, commitment and loyalty, carelessness, and carefree. Attitude towards self consists of eight sub-themes: being valuable, being attractive, being wise, trustworthiness, being merciful, personal privacy, personal goals, worthiness, and dignity.

Attitudes are considered important and powerful aspects of couples' interaction and are defined as behaviors and the way couples assess marriage concepts and each other's families. It seems that the way of people's attitude directs their behaviors can have a significant impact on appearing problems.

“I think I must make decisions about financial issues because she is not familiar with the market and doesn't know anything.” (A 41-year-old man)

“He tells me to bring everything I cook to his mother as well and we must go there all the weekend. It is not possible. I like to visit them once every two weeks.” (A 25-year-old woman)

“Our Gene is different. We can have two wives simultaneously. My uncles were like this.” (A 45-year-old man)

Figure 1 shows a thematic map of the Lived Experience of Iranian married men and women in a marital relationship in the context of functional analytic



psychotherapy. The relationship between main themes, themes, and sub-themes are drawn in parallel forms.

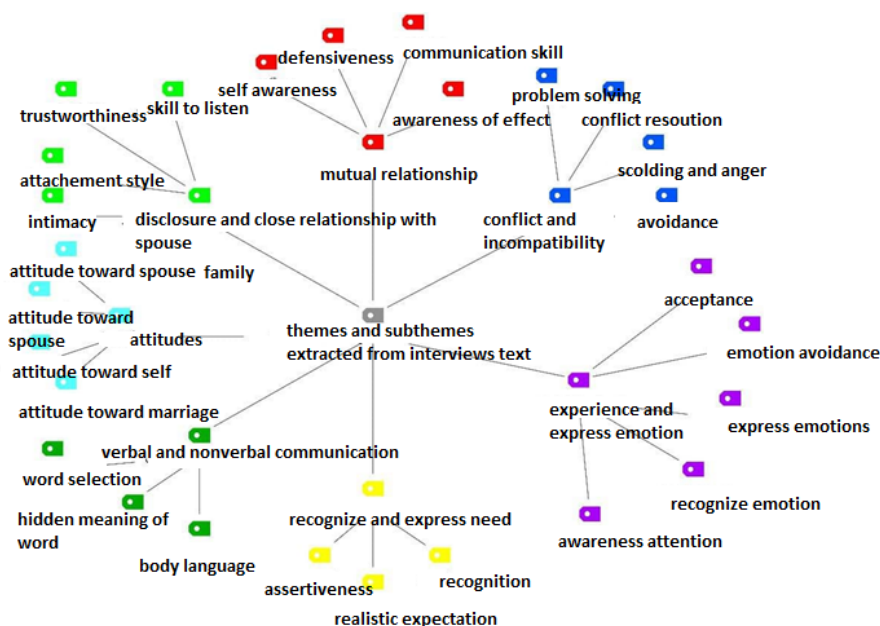


Figure 1. thematic map of the Lived Experience of Iranian married men and women in marital relationships in the context of functional analytic psychotherapy

Conclusion & Discussion

According to the results of the qualitative analysis of interviews, one of the aspects reviewed in this research is attitude. A lot of studies support the effect of attitude on behavior (Marvian & Karami, 2020). Attitudes have an impact on behavior by forming our perceptions about situations which in turn dictate our behavior. Attitudes are considered an assessment of every aspect of the social world. Attitudes are often ambivalent. It means that we are assessing objects and topics both positively and negatively which are often learned socially from others. This type of learning can occur during classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning, or observational learning (Baron et al., 2006)

One of the most important types of attitude which plays a significant role in couples' relationships is the traditional and modern attitude towards marriage and the opposite sex it seems these two types of attitudes have a dramatic impact on the way couples interact.

Verbal and nonverbal communication is another component of research that aligns with previous studies (Richmond & Mc.Crosi, 2003, Alexander et al., 2008, Florian, Hirschberger & Mikolincer, 2013; Jaberri et al., 2015; Rahmani et al., 2018). Non-verbal behaviors shape the main part of communication: Body movements, walking, sitting, way of speaking and tone of voice, eye contact, and the main communicational forms are the same in the world.

Couples' relationship is verbal and non-verbal (body language). No one can claim that she/he does not have a relationship with others, because even without talking, feelings and attitudes are transferable. Recognizing body language is very important because 50% of messages stem from body movements. In fact, the non-verbal relationship is the phonetic accuracy of speech which appear separate from verbal content. This part of language consists of tone, intonation, way of pronunciation, speed of speech, volume, and voice falling and rising. Implicit messages add another semantic level to sentences and often are different from verbal expressions. (McKay et al., 2013)

Another component is disclosure and a close relationship with the spouse. This element consists of excess and deficiency and suitable time to disclose. And also, intimacy and skills related to intimacy. A lot of studies study the relationship between intimacy and self-disclosure in relationships and its impact on couples' relations (Barzegar & Samani, 2016; Mansoori et al., 2013; Bichcusky, 2009). Self-disclosure consists of the process of disclosing thoughts, inner feelings, and previous experiences of oneself for another. Exchanging personal information is considered a main process to expand inter-relationship. Also, self-disclosure is a main part of interpersonal relationships and is necessary to be noticed so as to understand marital functions (Waring et al., 1998). In fact, intimacy is referred to as closeness and support that each member feels and expresses. A lot of studies showed that the ability to build an intimate relationship with others is one of the main factors in the mental health and mental welfare of adults. (Schumm et al.,



1981). Briefly, during the marriage, special behaviors appear among couples that alienate them from each other. Arguments, excessive criticism, and emotional rejection are such behaviors that eliminate couples' intimacy and lead to incorrect usage of communication patterns and a decrease in marital life quality (Barzegar & Samani, 2016). Markman et al. (1993) who probably are the most interested researchers of the self-disclosure area, believe it is considered as a very important feature of good psychological function and is a sign of personal and instrumental health to acquire a healthy personality.

Another element of this research is a mutual relationship. Kohlenberg et al. (2008) believes that mutual relationship during individual assessment consists of a wide range of problems related to the mutual relationship such as failure to consider or explain the individual impact on others, neglecting interpersonal consequences, failure to recognize others' needs, providing punitive feedback for others, misunderstanding gestures, long and boring discussions, or escaping and avoiding some important relationships.

In the research, the above-mentioned concepts were studied in couples' relationships. In fact, this element studies the effect of behavior or describing the effect of self-behavior on a spouse, providing feedback for the spouse or sensitivity towards feedback received from the spouse. A lot of studies checked the impact of various types of relationships and defensiveness in the relationship. For example, Laurenceau et al., (2005) mentioned the feature of an intimate relationship, the feeling of closeness and connection in by couple's relationship. As a result, when couples face relationship problems, it is possible that the whole relationship will be affected by negative feelings. Moreover, the present research is aligned with studies of Labate & McHenry (1993; Oliver & Margolin, 2008; Fowers, 2001; lorenzo et al., 2005; Weeks & Fife, 2014).

Another studied component is conflict and incompatibility. Conflict is an as inseparable part of interpersonal relationships but what is important is recognizing conflicts and being aware of them. When people face obstacles while achieving their goals, they express conflict. Therefore, behavioral collections consist of three classes of behaviors:

Passive behaviors: Passive people have problems with conflict and try to reject it.

Aggressive behaviors: Aggressive people also have problems with conflict and try to solve it anyway.

Assertive behavior: Assertive people seek suitable ways to express and resolve their conflicts (Mirenayat, 2019). In fact, conflict in an intimate relationship is inevitable. The question is not whether a conflict exists among couples or not, but the main point is when conflict occurs, and how it will be managed (Weeks & Fife, 2014). In fact, those couples who manage their conflicts by using positive methods and less use of negative interactions will create a situation in which there is more chance to self-disclose and reach an agreement about problems (Johnson, 2003). The results of the study align with the results of Gottman, 2008; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Hollist et al., 2007).

The last element studied in this research is emotional experience and expression. This element considers the recognition of emotions in couples' relationships and the awareness of whether these emotions are expected and suitable or not. Hise et al. (2005) State that emotional experience avoidance is considered an obstacle to behavioral changes. In recent years, the main role of emotion in marital distress and couple therapy was accepted more than before (Gottman, 1994). Therefore, the study of emotion continues. (Plautchik, 2000; Tomkins, 1991; Lewis & Haviland-Jones, 2000). The main role of emotional regulation and emotional participation in marital distress or happiness (Johnson & Bradley, 1999) and the emotional nature of human attachments (Bowlby, 1988; Johnson, 2003) are highly explained (Johnson, 2012).

Affirming the role of culture is not an overstatement. From FAP's point of view, we all are the products of our environment and culture is the main factor of it. Therefore, FAP therapists must deeply consider the suitable culture or subculture of clients. A rewarding or punitive behavior depends on the culture and FAP therapists must be skilled in assessing cultural differences and what naturally reinforces them. FAP therapists must be sensitive to the fact that language is the main channel of culture and should adjust their language accordingly. (Tsai et al., 2016). In fact, similar behaviors can have different functions within different frameworks. Different behaviors can especially have similar functions as well. It is the responsibility of the therapist to recognize and understand these main functional classifications for couples. Therefore, assessing background and cultural differences can help build culture-based assessment tools and increase treatment efficiency because



accurate assessment is the main channel to correct and practical conceptualization and regularity.

We faced limitations to perform in the present research such as limited studies about enhanced couple therapy with functional analytical psychotherapy. Another limitation was the impossibility of a complete and comprehensive assessment of enhanced couple therapy with functional analytical psychotherapy theory from the Iranian native culture's point of view for Iran is a big country with various cultures in which comprehensive cultural assessment is not possible with one research.

In addition to limitations, according to results for the assessment and conceptualization of couples' problems, it is possible to prepare suitable tools which arise from Iranian culture. In fact, couple therapists can study the dissatisfactions and conflicts within couples widely and theoretically based on 7 areas and start their therapy according to enhanced couple therapy with functional analytical psychotherapy.

In future studies, we can perform related studies from therapists' points of view because performing such studies and comparing their results with this study's results can help to answer some existing conflicts among therapists and clients.

Ethical considerations:

All processes are according to the ethical standards of human studies. Informed consent was received from all participants. The first writer is responsible to perform the study to provide a draft of the article, analyze data and write the results section. All writers studied and confirmed the final copy.

Conflict of Interest: Writers announce they have no conflict of interest.

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Childbearing Challenges in Educated Women with Three or More Children and Motivational Strategies

Sepideh Akbari^{*1}  Mehrangiz Shoaakazemi² 

1- Master of Women Studies, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran.

2- Associate Professor, Department of Women and Family Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Economics, Alzahra University, Iran, Tehran.

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ABSTRACT

Population and its changes have long been one of the most vital issues of a country. According to the latest data from the Statistics Center, the fertility rate has reached 1.7, which means less than the replacement level, which shows that we are facing the challenge of population decline. Changes in women's lifestyles and attitudes are one of the most critical factors affecting the issue of fertility. This study investigated the challenges of childbearing in women with three children. This study aimed to find the motivating factors for childbearing. The research was qualitative and phenomenological. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 mothers aged 26-42 years who had three or more children and were selected by the snowball sampling method. According to the analysis of the findings, three main categories, namely barriers to childbearing, motivating factors for childbearing, and expectations to facilitate childbearing, and 10 sub-categories and more than 100 concepts, were obtained. The findings indicated that people tend to have lots of children in accordance with their religious beliefs, and in this regard, the financial and emotional support obtained from both families may be an important element. In addition, the husband's assistance with domestic tasks and child care was a crucial and effective factor for the mother.

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¹Correspondence: akbari72s@chmail.ir

Introduction

Population and its growth are one of the great national challenges these days. The issue of fertility and population is very important. Nobody can deny the significance of the country's young population. In recent years, one of the significant challenges the country is facing is the decline in population growth. According to the most recent data from the Iranian Statistics Center, the population's total fertility rate in 2016 and 2017 was calculated to be 1.2% and .2%, respectively. (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2019). Changes in the fertility rate and its downward slope are evident at first glance. In recent years, fertility has fallen below the replacement level, indicating a population crisis, with a rate of approximately 1.8%. (Basten et al., 2014). This decline in fertility rates has begun in recent years. A bbasiShavazi (2001), examining the trend and age pattern of fertility in the provinces of the country in 1972 and 1996, came to the conclusion that since the second half of 1981, the fertility rate has been declining, and its speed has increased since the end of 1980s. This decline occurred several years before the change in government policies on family planning and was probably due to implicit government policies, such as increasing literacy, rural development, and expanding health in the country. According to statistics, the birth rate in 2015 was 1,570,000, which decreased to 1,196,000 in 2018.

According to statistics, the youth rate of the whole population shows that the youth population is declining; the proportion of the population under 15 years old in 1956 was 42.2%, and this rate in 2016 reached only 24% (Fathi et al., 2019). Using demographic indicators and statistics, it is expected that an explosion of aging will occur in the country around 2031, and this crisis will have adverse economic consequences, which can be attributed to a lack of economic growth and development. Reduced labor force, reduction of the country's young and elite population, increased maintenance costs for the elderly, and pressure on pension funds (Barzegari & Moghli, 2020).

All of this indicates the need for extensive research on this issue. Numerous researchers in recent years have studied the issue of fertility from a variety of approaches. In research on factors affecting fertility, several factors, including social, economic, sociological, and health factors, have been studied: In the health approach, infertility and its treatment, increased fertility age, and the



risks related to pregnancy in old age were examined (Behjati & Ardakani, 2007). In the sociological approach, modernization is viewed as the primary cause of a decline in fertility. It is analyzed that people have to adapt to the structural changes that come with modernization. In this process of urbanization and change of values, women control and reduce their fertility to improve their position and status in society and achieve equality with men (Shojaei, et al., 2019).

Also, from another viewpoint, after the Islamic Revolution, change and transformations have been influenced by both external and internal factors. On the one hand, the values resulting from the relationship with the West, and on the other hand, indigenous and cultural value systems have influenced individual values. Changing attitudes toward childbearing can also be analyzed as a function of these two factors: Today, the use of the internet and social media has made it easier for people to learn about the lifestyles of people around the world, modernity affects them, and individualism is increasing. Influenced by these changes, women also adopted person-centered values such as self-realization, body management, education, and intolerance of childbearing problems and difficulties. For women, the value of having children is lower than employment and education. It can be said that generations before the revolution were more influenced by religiosity in the field of childbearing, and the current generations, including women, are more influenced by modernity (Ojaghloo & Sarai, 2014).

In demographic approaches, more attention is paid to components such as health status and reduction of child mortality, increase in women's education, increase in age of marriage, use of contraceptives, migration, infertility, abortion, and experience in reducing fertility. In the economic approach, opportunity cost plays a significant role in fertility decisions and having a small family; In other words, childbearing is a kind of rational behavior in which people prefer to have fewer children due to economic conditions and the costs of childbearing and parenting (Shojaei, 2017). In light of this, it can also be said that the growing costs of having a child reduce the willingness to procreate. Concern for the future of children and fear of the economic problems of having a child is known as one of the essential obstacles to childbearing (Tavousi et al., 2016). Working women also face more

challenges in having children. Their labor rules are not flexible and make it difficult for them to have children. They face challenges such as childcare, work environment tensions, sometimes a lack of social support from family members, and sometimes even a lack of support from the head of the household, which causes couples to delay childbearing, reduce the number of children, and the age gap between children (Eshaghi et al. 2014).

According to research with different approaches, it can be concluded that women and the changes that have been made in their lifestyles and attitudes have played a pivotal role in reducing fertility, and the importance of addressing the role of women in this field is more than it has been already revealed. Therefore, this study has addressed this issue from a women's studies approach. The general purpose of this study is to determine the factors affecting childbearing from a woman's perspective. Considering that in most studies, women without children and with a maximum of two children have been studied, women with three children and more were selected as the statistical population; Women who, despite numerous environmental, cultural, and economic influences, have more children and tend to have more children in future, so that perhaps encouraging strategies for childbearing can be achieved. Other objectives of this study include identifying the challenges of having three or more children for families, especially their mothers, factors affecting the desire of mothers to have many children, and the demands of mothers in dealing with these challenges.

Background

Fertility decline is a challenge that has plagued many countries and has prompted researchers worldwide to investigate it. Among the foreign articles, Gunnar Anderson (2020), in his review article "*A Review of fertility Policies and Methods in Sweden*", examines Sweden's higher fertility rate compared to European countries in a similar welfare situation. Family policies in Sweden are not directly aimed at encouraging childbirth; Rather, their main goal is to support women's participation in the workforce and promote gender equality. These policies aim to strengthen women's dependence on the labor market and encourage gender equality, which has made it easier for women to integrate work and family life, and in such conditions, the fertility rate remains relatively high. Sikorska (2020), in his research, "*Is it possible to increase the*



fertility rate in Poland?” does not consider it possible to increase the fertility rate because various factors, including the pressure of costs on the mother, threaten the security of this increase. These include greater global access to childcare facilities for children under the age of three, increased access to kindergartens, support for flexible forms of employment, facilitating affordable housing for young people, government funding for infertility treatment (IVF), and measures to protect women’s fertility rights.

In another study on fathers’ participation in the family, fertility, and maternal employment: evidence from Central and Eastern Europe, researchers sought to answer whether increasing father participation in the family (housework and childcare) can increase fertility. The analysis of the results shows that when fathers are involved in household chores, women are more likely to have a second child as well as a full-time job. Policies that encourage a symmetrical division of labor between couples may also contribute to fertility rates and lead to a gender balance that helps mothers pursue both work and childbearing (Esther & Profeta, 2020). Assuming that non-parental care of children can be a significant factor in affecting decisions related to pregnancy, Wang and Zhao (2021) conducted research on grandparents’ care of the first child and second birth in China: Results from a dynamic model and empirical investigation. The Dynamic General Equilibrium (DGE) model has theoretically proven the positive impact of grandparental care on the number of children. In another study on more than 4,700 working women of childbearing age, the results showed that the care of grandparents had a positive effect on the fertility of working women (Hejun Gu et al., 2021).

Many national studies have been conducted due to the significance of population and childbirth. Some of them were considered according to the subject of the research. Chamani et al. (2016) sought to identify the factors affecting low childbearing in Iranian society and found that one of the factors affecting the decrease in childbearing is the fading of traditional female identity, which has led to women rethinking their identities and developing a more negative attitude towards children. Using an economical approach to childbearing, Abdullahi and Farjadi (2015), in a qualitative study employing an economical approach to childbearing, identified categories such as men’s procrastination in making decisions due to economic issues and the reduction

of employment opportunities, which indicated a sense of economic insecurity in the society. Also, in the current situation in Tehran, due to social rationality, childbearing seems costly and useless. In this study, by emphasizing quality over quantity, men and women consider having a few children a rational action. Modiri (2017) examines the effect of religiosity and gender attitudes on the intention to have children. The results show a significant relationship between religiosity and gender attitudes with the number of intended children. This relationship is stronger in women than men. The effect of religiosity on the number of children has the greatest influence in this study. Rad and Thawabi's (2015) research also mentioned religious beliefs as the most important factor in fertility tendencies. Rezvani Dioklai et al. (2020) examined the relationship between the Islamic lifestyle and childbearing. They found that people with religious beliefs had more children than others because their beliefs provided them with a sense of comfort, power, and hope for the future, resulting in a positive attitude toward childbearing. Rafiei Moghadam and Ashtiani (2020), in a systematic review, examined 231 articles on childbearing that were published from 2008 to 2018. It was found that the socio-economic middle class has a greater tendency to have children and that the lifestyle and its value frameworks are essential factors in the tendency to have children.

Razeghi Nasrabad et al. (2021) investigated the effect of attitudes and gender-based division of labor on the interval between the first and second births in Tehran. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between gender attitudes and the interval between the first birth to the second birth, and overall findings were consistent with the theory of gender equality. By examining the research backgrounds, it can be said that the bulk of qualitative and quantitative studies have focused on cultural, economic, social, and ethnic aspects, among other things, that have an impact on childbearing and have researched families with a small number of children. According to the background of the research, it can be said that most of the research articles on childbearing and women have looked at the issue from the perspective of explaining the decline in the number of and have sought the reasons for this issue and less research has been done on families with many children. Also, there is no research focusing on student mothers and educated women with many children. Therefore, in this study, an attempt was made to address this statistical population.



Theoretical considerations

Common theories about the issue of fertility can be categorized into three groups based on changes in values, rational, structural, and economical choice. In the first category, we can mention Inglehart's theory of value transformation. He believes that in advanced industrial societies, with the increase in the level of economic and physical security, material values have shifted towards metamaterial values. Because the newer generations are more materialistic and pay more attention to freedom, self-expression, and quality of life, they marry less, and because they have transcendental priorities, they are less interested in having children, and as a result, their fertility rate decreases (Inglehart et al., 2017). Knock (1987) also analyzes the decline in childbearing as women's traditional role change; The parenting pattern has changed, and the upbringing of the child has taken on a consumption aspect, which causes a lower birth rate.

In the lives of non-traditional women who came of age during the height of the feminist movement, children are separated from their lives and identities: instead of focusing on motherhood, they adapt childbearing and parenting to the rest of their lives. It is evident that women's lives have undergone significant changes in various ways and that this is affecting family and fertility issues (Nock, 1987). In the Theory of Gender Equality, McDonald explains that the cause of low fertility in developed countries is an imbalance between institutional gender equality such as education and the job market, and low levels of gender equality in family life; In other words, when women see lower gender equality in the family and family-related institutions, such as childcare services and women's employment conditions, they switch to working outside the home and child-rearing and working outside the home, which causes a decrease in women's inclinations. (Dorahaki, 2020; Ghodrati, 2013).

One of the theories based on rational and structural choice is Ajzen's theory of planned behavior. Another theory is the perceived social support developed by Cobb (1976), according to which it may be said that a pregnant woman who is cared for and supported by family and friends after giving birth will be more inclined to have children (Nasiri & Abdolmaleki, 2015; Tamnaeifar et al., 2013). Numerous economic theories about fertility have been proposed;

Becker, one of the pioneering theorists in this field, investigated childbearing in the context of consumption and linked the demand for childbearing to the quantitative and qualitative considerations of parents. Ermisch argues that the demand and timing of childbearing depend directly on the women's cost opportunity of women, which in turn is affected by the cost and availability of formal and informal childcare facilities (Aassve et al., 2006). Leibenstein also considers the child to be an accrual commodity in the sense that the child's expenses are an obligation that the parents undertake, and it is not a transient feeling. In his view, the child is a commodity with an upward trend up to a certain level of ultimate utility and then a downward trend after that level; hence, there is a negative relationship between income and fertility (Mehrbani, 2014).

Methods

According to the research topic, qualitative methodology and phenomenological analysis were used. For this purpose, women with three or more children in Tehran were selected by a purposive snowball or chain sampling method and were subjected to semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic and its travel restrictions, face-to-face interviews with observers were not possible, and a telephone interview was used instead. Given that the disease had also imposed restrictions on women, they were unable to schedule interviews during the day, and they preferred to use messengers instead of telephone interviews. In this way, the questions were sent to them through messengers on social platforms, and they answered the questions by sending a voice at any time of the day or night. According to the answers, additional questions were asked, and the work continued in the same manner. Moustakas's (1994) method was used to analyze the data. In this way, the first stage involved reading the text numerous times and grasping the wholeness of the data., as phenomenology is inherently holistic (Parvari, 2019). In the next step, the data were combined and horizontalized; In other words, all significant statements related to the topic were listed with equal value. The third step is the formation of semantic clusters, in which the researcher categorizes important statements into semantic themes or units and eliminates duplicates. In the last stage, the themes were described, such that, based on to the preceding three stages, a



description of how the phenomenon is experienced by the participants was provided (Creswell, 2018; Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). To validate the data, the process of member check was used, so that for data analysis and its interpretations, the explicit text of the interviews with the participants was given in the relevant sections and was referred to it. To protect the privacy of the participants in the present study, they were informed at the beginning of the interview process of the interviewer's name, the university where they studied, the purpose of the study, and that their consent was required for participation.

Finding

The ages of the mothers ranged from 23 to 46 years, with a mean age of 39.11 years. 68.7% of mothers were housewives and 30.3% worked in the private and public sectors. 42.65% of the mothers had a high school diploma, 39.2% had a bachelor's degree, and 18.15% had a master's degree. In Table 1, the descriptive indices and correlation matrix of the research variables are presented.

Table 1. The demographic information

	Age	Education level	Field of Study	University	Spouse's Education	Number of children	Desired number of children
1	42	MA	Hadith Studies, Narrative Interpretation	Quran & Hadith University, Rey City	MA	3	5 or 6
2	26	BA	Industrial Engineering	Islamic Azad University Science and Research Branch	Accepting a doctorate	3-fourth child has not yet been born	4
3	38	MA	Sociology	University of Tehran	MA	3	7
4	37	BA	General Chemistry		BA	4	The number is not known. Preference to

							have more children
5	35	MA	Computer Engineering	Shahid Beheshti University	MA	3	4 or 5
6	38	MA	Computer Science	Sharif University of Technology	MA	4	6
7	32	General Practitioner		Mashhad University of Medical Sciences	MA	3	4 or 5
8	34	MA	Women Studies	Alzahra university	MA	4	6
9	28	BA	Aerospace Engineering	Sharif University of Technology	MA	3	4
10	37	MA	Education Management	Imam Sadegh University	BA	3	4
11	32	MA	Industrial Engineering	Malek Ashtar University of Technology	PhD	3	The number of children has not been determined
12	34	seminarian-Level-three		Tehran University of	Advanced seminarian	3	4
13	35	MA	Educational Psychology	Tehran University of	BA	4	4
14	35	BA	Urban development studies		MA	4	5
15	32	seminarian-Level-two		Tehran University of	MA	3- the fourth child has not yet been born	6
16	32.5	BA	Computer Engineering	Tehran University of	BA	4	2



			ng, Software				
17	38	BA	Economic s	Allameh Tabataba'i University	PhD	4	6
18	36	MA	Math	Amirkabir University Of Technology	Diplo ma	4	6
19	33	Ph.D. student	Plant technolog y		MA	4	4
20	33	Seminar ian- Level- three			Begin ner semin arian	3	5 or 6

According to Table 1, the analysis of the contextual variables of the interviewees shows the statistical population has an average age of 34 years, with an average age of 34 years. Most of them had a MA degree with a frequency of 45%. According to the latest degree, they had studied more in engineering sciences. Most of their husbands also had higher education and held master’s or doctoral degrees, with a frequency of 65%. None of the participants was employed at the time of the study, and only three of them had short employment experience. The variance of the residence location of the interviewees was high, but it can be said that most of them lived in the eastern part of Tehran, and more than 60% of them had apartments as their primary residence. Analyzing the number of births of the interviewees reveals that cesarean deliveries are prevalent among them.

After analyzing semi-structured and in-depth interviews of mothers with three or more children, the extracted categories were classified into “*barriers to childbearing, motivational factors, and childbearing desires*”.

Table 2. Classification of barriers to childbearing

The main or core category	Sub-categories	Concepts
		Negative attitude toward a family with many children
		Physicians’ negative attitude toward childbearing, public hospitals’ negative attitude toward having multiple children

Barriers to childbearing	Society's cultural view	Lack of respect for a family with many children, the spouse's family's comments about the number of children, a destructive view of a large number of children even by families, and parents encouraging the couple to abandon their desire to have many children.
		Having many children is considered uncivilized
	Mother's physical condition	Limiting the number of children due to ageing
		Limiting the number of children due to the method of delivering birth
		Limiting the number of children due to physical problems, Limiting the number of children due to physical weakness
		A limiting number of children due to hospital costs, high costs of birth-giving and treatment, medical expenses before birth-giving, and difficult birth-giving due to the poor economic situation
	Economic issues	Limiting the number of children due to the uncertainty of the children's future
		The children's school and education cost, the importance of the quality of children's education in addition to its high costs
		Limited facilities for children in public areas, inappropriate distribution of facilities in Tehran's metropolitan area, lack of substantial amenities, lack of facilities for families with several children
		Housing as the most important issue in childbearing, Not renting a house to families with multiple children
Failing to consider family size in paying salaries		
A lack of transportation facilities for large families		
Governance policies	More economic pressure on families with larger populations	
	The mother's negative view of the government's performance in the family issues, the mother's negative view of women's laws	
	weak government policy in the area of childbearing, lack of support and assistance of government policies	
		Lack of support for working women, insufficient knowledge of motherhood-related laws, lack of job stability for mothers
		Lack of family support, inadequate counseling

According to Table 2, barriers to childbearing from the perspective of research participants are the cultural perspective of society, the mother's physical condition, economic issues, and governance policies. From their point of view, there is a negative view of the family with a high number of



children. A 26-year-old mother due to give birth to her fourth kid, who already has three children, states:

“If those who do not want children or who have one child are respected, why aren’t those who wish to have five children respected? Well, the number of children is undoubtedly the family’s decision, and there is no need to inquire whether the child is desired. For instance, it is believed that low-income and low-culture households have a greater number of children. For example, they hurt families with their remarks; such behavior is deemed rude. This family has a plan for their future. And there is no need to remind them of what meals they eat in this bad financial situation”.

Factors related to the mother’s body are factors that, from the participants’ perspective, have affected the number of their children and were discussed under the sub-category of the mother’s physical condition. They considered physical weakness, type of delivery, and aging in this category.

“I have severe anemia, and I am a minor and cesarean section ... I think I can’t give birth to more than 5” (37-year-old woman with 4 children).

I have severe anemia and I am a minor. I had a cesarean section delivery... I think I can’t give birth to more than 5 children.” (37-year-old woman with 4 children).

“... Because of my cesarean delivery, which was a cesarean section, the number of cesarean sections does not exceed four, but I want five or six ...” (26-year-old woman with three children and pregnant).

Addressing the economic strain on large families, a 36-year-old woman says:

“We have a small apartment. But we rented a bigger apartment because the kids need more space.”

It can be said that almost all participants had a negative view of policies in the field of family and childbearing and agreed that, in reality, these policies do not aid childbearing.

A 38-year-old woman with 4 children said:

“... Their policies are zero facilities, zero facilities in some places, the opposite, that is, the facilities are against entering a series of environments and jobs with a large population”

Table 3. Categories of motivating factors of childbearing

The main or core category	Sub-categories	concepts	
Motivating factors of childbearing	Religious beliefs	Order of supreme leader, reading biographies of martyrs, reciting the Qur’an, pilgrimage	
		Religious approach	
		Increase of Shiites in Iran	
	Support from others	Spouse’s assistance, spouse’s support in housework, spouse’s assistance in caring for children, spouse’s flexibility and support for mother in household chores	
		Family assistance, financial support of the spouse’s family in providing housing, intellectual reinforcement from the families, neighboring with the wife’s mother - maternity assistance, financial and emotional encouragement of the mother’s family in childbearing	
		Using a maid for housework	
		Good communication between father and children, the importance of the father-child relationship, The effect of the father-child relationship on their self-confidence, good father-child relationship, and vice versa	
		Mother’s friendly gathering, having similar friends with many children, using friends in playing with children	
		Using the neighbor’s potential because of being relatives, getting help from neighbors	
		Economic stability	Upper average income, satisfaction with income level, good income status
			having a private house
			Prioritizing mothering over education, prioritizing childbearing, prioritizing raising a child, home, and child over education
		Mothering priority	The value of childbearing
	Looking at children as the joy of the family		
	More effort to family satisfaction		
		Negative view of kindergarten	

According to in-depth interviews, the core category of motivating factors for childbearing can be extracted from the sub-categories of religious belief,



support of others, economic stability, and mothering priority, which can be achieved in the explicit text of the interviews:

One of the respondents said:

“... Islam also requires us to be a thoughtful woman, an active woman, in fact, a woman aware of the times, all women who were the wives of imams ...” (28-year-old woman with 4 children)

One of the reasons given by the interviewees for their interest in having a large number of children was to pay attention to the Supreme Leader’s order on the issue of family size.

One of the interviewees:

“The first, it was because of childbearing jihad and that the supreme leader was concerned about this...” (37-year-old woman with 4 children)

The 38-year-old mother with 4 children, in response to a question about the number of children of her choice, said:

“Actually, we had two children in mind.. The next two children were born due to the Velayat Plan because the Supreme Leader recommended for reproduction.”

“Actually, we had two children in mind. The next two children were born due to the Velayat Plan because the Supreme Leader recommended reproduction.”

A 38-year-old mother with 3 children said about her husband’s support:

“He helps me with household chores as much as he can because his working hours are long, which means that he is often at work on weekends, from morning to seven at night. If he was at home, he really would not have hesitated ...”

A 35-year-old woman with 3 children also talks about her mother’s countless help:

“My family is very supportive, and I talk to my mother almost every day. Either I leave the kids with them, I take one, two, or all of the kids to class

with me, or my mom takes the kids. As we arrive, lunch is prepared, and they extend a warm greeting to us. In a nutshell, my mum greatly assists.”

Another participant said the following about her father-in-law’s assistance and housing:

“The house was supplied for us by my father-in-law. We were living in an apartment until the last two months when we moved to a house. He provided for us. He paid the money and bought it”. (33-year-old woman with 3 children).

Another interviewee also responded to family assistance:

“ Both sides help significantly. Help with finances (obviously, not much, but providing for the house with the father-in-law) and occasionally caring for the children when I needed it.” (32-year-old woman with 3 children and pregnant).

Another participant describes his experience as a student who placed home and children first:

“... I did my best to prioritize my home responsibilities and perform them better and more thoroughly than in the past. The family has always been my top priority. I was active in the family as in the past “(34-year-old woman with 3 children and MA’s degree).

It can be said that in the event of a conflict between employment or further education and family difficulties, including caring for their children, family roles were prioritized by the women interviewed.

In addition, in-depth interviews with mothers revealed that they expect the government and governing body to remove barriers and encourage childbearing, as shown in the table below.

Table 4. Categories of expectations to facilitate childbearing

The main or core category	Sub-categories	concepts
		Free delivery, natural delivery facilities, reduced pregnancy and delivery costs, type of delivery available to the mother



Expectations to facilitate childbearing	Healthcare	Importance of mother's health till the child reaches the age of two
		Insurance
		Nursing, daycare, weekly or monthly nurse or maid,
	Social culture	Father's leave
		Advertising in the field of childbearing, government media work
	Economy	Rent cost, give a mortgage
		Providing housing loans and housing rentals
Increased compensation according to the number of children.		
Lowering the cost of products related to children, the condition of schools, low-cost education, establishing amenities for children in public areas, travel or recreation amenities, and emphasizing on kindergartens and schools for multiple-child families.		

Their expectations were categorized into three areas: health, social culture, and economy.

An interviewer said about the culture of the society in the field of families with many children:

“Changing attitudes is currently the most important task for the government. That is, the same broad advertisements that they ran in the 1990s should be run again, on television and elsewhere, in order to influence people’s attitudes. If you wish to conceive a child, you should do so in calmly, without fear of others’ judgment. The biggest thing that bothers that family in the first stage is fear of others’ judgment...” (37-year-old woman with 3 children).

The interviewee, who has four children, had the following healthcare expectations regarding childbirth and its expenses:

“... Reduce medical costs for pregnancy, tests, and sonography, in other words, free delivery for all young mothers ...”

Another mother suggested the following about economic issues:

“The same for men. Enhance their child benefits, for instance, by providing a living package when a new child is born, considering the price of their

diapers and powdered milk, and incentive packages for those who are not at all prepared to have children..." (37-year-old woman) Has 4 children and a tenant).

Based on the analysis of the findings, it can be concluded that educated women in research have given priority to motherhood to the extent that wherever employment or education was an obstacle for them to do better motherhood, they abandoned employment or education. From their point of view, motherhood included domestic roles and doing housework, satisfying their husband and accepting him as a manager, taking care of the children physically and mentally, and taking care of the children's education. During the research, women discussed various aspects of the impact of economic issues on their lives and considered the living conditions of their families as challenging, but despite all the economic problems, they did not see it as the main obstacle; Because some of the interviewees, with their low income and rented housing, tended to have more children. Perhaps the most important factor influencing childbearing in this study was religious beliefs; In the first place, they expressed concern about the population decline crisis raised by the Supreme Leader of the country and then raised other reasons such as the positive effects of raising many children or personal interest in many children.

Discussion and Conclusion

The population crisis is currently one of the main challenges in the country. Given that women play an essential role in changes in fertility rates, the study focuses on their challenges with fertility issues. Therefore, in this study, women with three or more children in Tehran concerned about continuing their education were studied to explore the issues affecting childbearing and the motivating factors. The extracted categories were classified as obstacles to childbearing, motivating factors for childbearing, and expectations to facilitate childbearing. The sub-categories of barriers to having children were the cultural view of the society, the mother's medical condition, economic issues, and governance policies. The economy was one of the most important factors that concerned women and their families and posed obstacles. They anticipated that the government would take action in this area and provide assistance to families with a large number of children, which is partly consistent with the findings of Abdullahi and Farjadi (2015), Daliri (2017),



Mazinani and Mohamadian (2022). It was consistent with one of Rafii Moghadam and Ashtiani's (2019) research findings that the economic and social middle class had a larger desire to have children, as the majority of the participants in the interviews were families from this class. Therefore, it cannot be argued that economic factors were the primary influence on these families' reproductive decisions because those interviewed were persons who, according to themselves, have three or more children while having a moderate or low salary and rented home. They expressed a wish to have additional children. In these instances, it can be claimed that economic theories of fertility were relatively inadequate.

Motivational factors for childbearing that were extracted according to interviews were religious beliefs, family support, economic satisfaction, and maternal priority. Religious beliefs were one of the most influential factors in encouraging families to have children; this finding was consistent with the results of Modiri research (2017) and Rezvani et al. (2020), which indicated that beliefs cause a positive attitude towards childbearing and increased childbearing. Most women talked about the support of those around them, such as their families, mothers, and spouses. Their spouses, who often had higher education, had a transcendent view of the division of domestic work and assisted their spouses in various housekeeping and parenting tasks as far as they could afford. The women also said there was a good relationship between their children and their fathers, which made them content. It can be said that this effect of a father's participation in childbearing is consistent with the results of research by Razeghi Nasrabad et al. (2021) and Esther and Profeta (2020) on its positive effect on childbearing and the theory of gender equality.

The findings on the positive impact of family support on childcare are also similar to that of Wang and Zhao (2021) in China. Motherhood was a priority for the interviewees, and they had a positive view of their traditional duty as a mother and a wife at home. They also viewed doing their homework as their duty and viewed it as a factor in encouraging childbearing, which was consistent with the findings of Chamani et al. (2016), who believed that the loss of traditional female identity was a factor in reducing childbearing. This study's interviews were conducted during the outbreak of Covid 19 disease,

which, because of limits on travel and face-to-face visits, prevented the opinions from being viewed in person and, to some extent, diminished the quality of the research. The time limitation allowed us to focus exclusively on Tehran women with three or more children. In addition, according to the snowball sampling method, the selected individuals were generally on the same ideological spectrum, which was one of the research's weaknesses. In light of the limitations of this study, it is recommended that the entire country's statistical population of women with three or more children be investigated and that quantitative research be used to achieve generalizable conclusions. In this study, none of the economic theories of fertility could adequately explain the findings. There is a need for scholars to examine all facets of financial concerns and give particular attention to other factors, such as religious and cultural issues.

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical codes of conducting human research; In order to comply with ethical issues in qualitative research, at the beginning of the interview process, they were informed in a message about the identity of the interviewer, the type of university where they studied, and the purpose of the study. Participants who were willing to respond gave their consent and answered questions. In addition, in order to protect their privacy, a number was allocated to each individual, and various participants were utilized in the references so as not to present an image of a particular individual.

Conflict of Interest. The paper's publication and writing have no financial benefits for the authors, and they haven't gotten any funding from organizations or institutions to write it. They also adhered carefully to publishing ethics when submitting the article, avoiding plagiarism and data fabrication.

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Shohre Rowshani , Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Woman Research center, Alzahra University

Azadeh Taheri, Ph.D.

Ph.D of Counseling , Alzahra University

Solmaz Dabiri, ph.D

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Islamic Azad University

GholamReza Dehshiri, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Psychology, Alzahra University

Yasser Rezapour Mirsaleh, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Counseling, Ardakan University

Balal Izanloo, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Curriculum Planning, Kharazmi University

Ali Reza Kakavand, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Psychology, Imam Khomeini International University

Leila Ganji, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Islamic Azad University of Medical Sciences

Gholamreza Rajabi, Ph.D.

Professor of Counseling , Shahid Chamran University

Shaghayegh Zahraei ,Ph.D

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Alzahra University



مطالعات زنان و خانواده

فصلنامه علمی مطالعات زن و خانواده

پژوهشکده زنان، دانشگاه الزهراء (س)

دوره ۱۰، شماره ۴، پیاپی ۲۷، زمستان ۱۴۰۱

