



Family Cohesion Prediction Model Based on Differentiation and Attitude to Love: The Mediating Role of Marital Intimacy in Married Women

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of the present research is to examine the predictive model of family cohesion based on differentiation and attitude towards love: the mediating role of marital intimacy in married women. **Method:** The research is descriptive-correlational, employing structural equation modeling. The study population consisted of all married women in the city of Isfahan who had been married for at least three years and were currently living with their spouses. A total of 225 individuals were selected as the sample using voluntary sampling. The data collection tools included the Fisher Family Cohesion Scale (Fisher et al., 1992), the Skowron and Smith Self-Differentiation Questionnaire (2003), the Hendrix and Hendrix Love Attitude Scale (1997), and the Thompson and Walker Marital Intimacy Questionnaire (1983), all of which have been validated. To achieve the objectives of the present research, initially, a descriptive analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires was conducted. Subsequently, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to reduce the independent variables. **Results:** The results of the data analysis indicated that the second to fifth hypotheses of the research regarding the relationships between the study variables were confirmed. Based on these relationships, in total, 88% of the variations in the dependent variable (family cohesion) were predicted by the variables of the final model. **Conclusion:** Furthermore, according to the final model obtained from structural equation modeling, the independent variables of attitude towards love, marital intimacy, and differentiation had a direct impact on the family cohesion of married women.

Keywords: Family Cohesion, Differentiation, Attitude to Love, Marital Intimacy, Married Women.

Introduction

Given the urgency and importance of the topic and the necessity to focus on factors influencing marital stability and family durability, it seems more essential than ever. The existence of lively, dynamic, and stable families is a requirement for a healthy society, and achieving a healthy family depends on healthy relationships among its members. Therefore, one of the most important determinants of a healthy family structure is intimacy between spouses. Considering that factors such as differentiation and attitudes towards love significantly impact life processes and interactions with others, affecting marital life and its quality and stability, addressing these issues and the stability of the marital relationship seems particularly important. Necessary awareness can be provided to families, family specialists, counselors, and officials for decision-making and required training in this plan to address potential future problems. Additionally, considering the research background and the fundamental role of the family in individual mental health, it is logical that family cohesion can effectively reduce the consequences of stressful events and incidents in family members. Friendly relations within a family can support individuals under stress and promote healthy physical and psychological growth. In a cohesive family, each member receives more support and help from others, strengthening the family foundation. Therefore, the present research aims to propose a model to determine whether differentiation and attitude towards love, considering the mediating variable of marital intimacy, can predict family cohesion in married women.

Method

The research is descriptive-correlational, employing structural equation modeling. The study population consisted of all married women in the city of Isfahan who had been married for at least three years and were currently living with their spouses. A total of 225 individuals were selected as the sample using voluntary sampling. The data collection tools included the Fisher Family Cohesion Scale (Fisher et al., 1992), the Skowron and Smith Self-Differentiation Questionnaire (2003), the Hendrix and Hendrix Love Attitude Scale (1997), and the Thompson and Walker Marital Intimacy Questionnaire (1983), all of which have been validated. To achieve the objectives of the present research, initially, a descriptive analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires was conducted. Subsequently, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to reduce the independent variables.

Results

The results of the data analysis indicated that the second to fifth hypotheses of the research regarding the relationships between the study variables were confirmed. Based on these relationships, in total, 88% of the variations in the dependent variable (family cohesion) were predicted by the variables of the final model.

Conclusion

This research aimed to develop a model of family cohesion based on differentiation and attitude towards love with the mediating role of marital intimacy among married women in Isfahan. The focus for assessing the adequacy of the model is on the fit indices. Based on the results presented, there is no significant difference between the measured model and the empirical data, indicating that the model is suitably fitted for the data. Also, the value of the coefficient of determination shows that the paths of differentiation, marital intimacy, and attitude towards love explain the variance of the family cohesion variable concurrently.

The results are based on data obtained from the administration of questionnaires, and individuals' mindsets and histories intervene in their responses to the questions. Therefore, there may be biases and personal values influencing the nature of the responses. Hence, caution must be exercised in generalizing the results of this study. Despite these issues, it is recommended to other researchers that in future studies, a sample should be selected from married men as well and they should also be examined. Additionally, it is suggested to consider other variables such as religious beliefs, spousal self-disclosure, and spousal similarity in the model. It is also recommended that marital life skills training be on the agenda of relevant centers to improve marital satisfaction in families, thereby enhancing marital health. Finally, it is suggested that in marriage and family counseling, couples should be introduced to concepts of love attitude, marital intimacy, family cohesion, and differentiation to help improve marital satisfaction and reduce divorce rates.

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