

Designing a Conceptual Model of Family Relationship Quality among Adoptive Couples: A Meta-Synthesis Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to develop a comprehensive conceptual model of family relationship quality among adoptive couples by synthesizing evidence from previous qualitative and empirical studies.

Methods and Materials: This qualitative study was conducted using a meta-synthesis approach based on the seven-step model proposed by Sandelowski and Barroso (2007). A systematic search was performed in relevant national and international scientific databases using keywords related to adoption, adoptive couples, family relationships, marital relationships, parent-child relationships, and family cohesion. After identifying potentially relevant records, the studies were screened according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and subsequently subjected to methodological quality appraisal. Ultimately, 20 eligible articles were included in the final synthesis. Data extracted from the selected studies were organized into initial codes and analyzed through secondary coding, conceptual comparison, and thematic integration. The codes were progressively classified into concepts, categories, and overarching themes to construct the final conceptual model.

Findings: The meta-synthesis indicated that family relationship quality among adoptive couples is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of psychological-identity, relational, and sociocultural factors. Psychological and identity-related challenges included unresolved infertility grief, anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, and difficulties in reconstructing parental identity. At the relational level, the quality of parent-child attachment, marital cohesion, emotional communication, mutual support, and adaptive patterns of interaction emerged as central determinants of family stability. Sociocultural influences included adoption-related stigma, social pressure, cultural attitudes, and limitations in formal and institutional support. Conversely, adequate social support, access to counseling services, cultural acceptance, and supportive family environments facilitated psychological adjustment, relational cohesion, and positive adaptation following adoption.

Conclusion: Adoption should be conceptualized as a dynamic and transformative family process rather than a single event. The proposed model demonstrates that favorable family relationships emerge through the reciprocal interaction of psychological adjustment, effective couple and parent-child relationships, and supportive sociocultural conditions. The model may provide a useful framework for assessment, counseling, and interventions designed to strengthen family functioning among adoptive couples.

Keywords: Family Relationship Quality; Couples; Adoption; Adoptive Parents; Family Cohesion; Meta-Synthesis

1. Introduction

Adoption is a complex family-building pathway that extends far beyond the legal transfer of parental responsibility and encompasses profound psychological, relational, developmental, social, and cultural processes. For many couples, particularly those who have experienced infertility, adoption represents both a response to the loss of anticipated biological parenthood and the beginning of a new family identity. The transition into adoptive parenthood therefore entails a reorganization of individual expectations, couple dynamics, parental roles, and broader family relationships. Unlike biological parenthood, adoptive parenthood often develops within a context marked by previous grief, uncertainty, social scrutiny, legal procedures, and concerns about the child's history and future adjustment. These distinctive conditions make the quality of family relationships among adoptive couples an especially important subject of inquiry because relational functioning influences not only marital well-being but also parent-child attachment, family cohesion, adjustment to parenthood, and the long-term stability of the adoptive placement (Ali Akbari & Tavakol, 2010; Baltimore & Crase, 2009; Dehghan Manshadi et al., 2024).

The concept of family relationship quality is multidimensional and includes emotional intimacy, communication, mutual support, conflict management, marital satisfaction, coparenting coordination, parent-child bonding, role clarity, and the family's ability to adapt to developmental and contextual stressors. Meta-synthesis research on marital quality indicates that the quality of couple relationships cannot be explained by a single dimension; rather, it emerges from the dynamic interaction of emotional, communicative, behavioral, and contextual components (Nemati Sogli Tappeh et al., 2020). Within adoptive families, these dimensions are further complicated by adoption-specific experiences, including infertility-related grief, uncertainty surrounding placement, concerns about biological origins, the child's pre-adoption experiences, and social attitudes toward nonbiological parenthood. Accordingly, family relationship quality in adoptive couples should be understood as a systemic phenomenon in which the marital subsystem, the parent-child subsystem, family identity, social support, and institutional context are closely interconnected.

For a substantial proportion of adoptive couples, the pathway to adoption begins after infertility and unsuccessful attempts to achieve biological parenthood. Infertility can

produce a prolonged experience of grief, disappointment, emotional exhaustion, and altered self-perceptions related to masculinity, femininity, parenthood, and family continuity. Qualitative evidence among infertile couples with adopted children has shown that the decision to adopt frequently develops after extended periods of treatment burden, repeated disappointment, and psychological distress, and that the transition to adoption involves a gradual reconstruction of the meaning of parenthood (Dehghan Manshadi et al., 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2023). Earlier studies similarly showed that adoptive families may carry unresolved experiences of infertility into the post-adoption period, even when adoption ultimately brings satisfaction, hope, and emotional fulfillment (Ali Akbari & Tavakol, 2010; Baltimore & Crase, 2009). This background is particularly relevant to family relationship quality because unresolved grief or unprocessed expectations may influence parental self-efficacy, couple communication, emotional availability, and the ability to respond sensitively to the adopted child.

The transition into adoptive parenthood itself is frequently characterized by psychological and emotional complexity. Longitudinal research has shown that adoptive parents may experience significant changes in emotional well-being across the transition from pre-placement to post-placement, with some parents reporting depressive symptoms, fatigue, uncertainty, and stress during different phases of the adoption process (Foli et al., 2017; Foli et al., 2016). Qualitative studies of adoptive mothers have further identified unrealistic expectations, pressure to perform idealized parenthood, exhaustion, insufficient support, difficulties bonding with the child, and anxiety about whether their reactions are considered legitimate within the adoption system (Kohn-Willbridge et al., 2021). These findings emphasize that the adoption transition does not automatically resolve previous psychological strain; instead, new forms of pressure may emerge when parents confront the realities of caregiving, the child's emotional needs, and the discrepancy between anticipated and actual family life.

One of the most important determinants of post-adoption family functioning is the development of parental identity. Adoptive parents may need to establish a psychologically secure and socially legitimate sense of themselves as "real" parents despite the absence of biological ties. This process can be influenced by cultural beliefs regarding kinship, genetic relatedness, and normative parenthood. Narratives of adoptive parents indicate that family identity is gradually constructed through everyday interaction, emotional

commitment, caregiving, and the integration of the child's pre-adoption history into a shared family narrative (Canzi et al., 2021). The reflective capacity of adoptive parents is also central to this process because understanding the child's experiences, intentions, and emotional states helps parents interpret difficult behaviors more accurately and respond with greater sensitivity (Genis et al., 2020). Consequently, parental identity in adoptive families is not merely an individual psychological achievement but a relational process that shapes the quality of attachment, communication, and family cohesion.

The parent-child relationship constitutes another central component of family relationship quality. Adopted children may enter the family with experiences of loss, institutional care, neglect, maltreatment, disrupted caregiving, or multiple placements, all of which can influence emotional regulation, trust, behavioral functioning, and attachment. Iranian qualitative research has documented behavioral and attachment challenges such as aggression, emotional dysregulation, insecure attachment, developmental difficulties, and problems in establishing stable emotional relationships with caregivers (Anbari & Nazari bin Abdulrahman, 2024; Kamrani Fakour et al., 2019). Similar findings in international research indicate that adoptive parents may experience direct and indirect trauma while caring for children affected by early maltreatment, including fear, emotional exhaustion, hypervigilance, helplessness, and concern about the child's long-term future (Duncan et al., 2024). These child-related difficulties can place substantial strain on parents and marital relationships, particularly when families lack adequate trauma-informed services or specialized post-adoption support.

At the same time, the formation of attachment in adoptive families is not inherently impaired. Rather, it appears to be a gradual, transactional process influenced by parental sensitivity, emotional availability, reflective functioning, and the broader relational climate of the family. Therapeutic research suggests that interventions designed to enhance parents' understanding of trauma, emotional communication, and relational safety can strengthen parent-child bonds and improve parental confidence (Wingfield & Gurney-Smith, 2019). The quality of attachment is therefore closely linked to the couple's broader relational functioning because parents who feel emotionally supported by each other may be better able to regulate stress and respond consistently to the child. In this sense, secure parent-child relationships and healthy couple relationships may function

as mutually reinforcing processes within the adoptive family system.

The marital relationship is itself subject to significant change following adoption. Research examining adoptive couples from pre-placement to post-placement has demonstrated that relationship quality may fluctuate during the transition to parenthood and may be affected by caregiving stress, shifting roles, unmet expectations, and differences in adaptation (South et al., 2019). More broadly, the presence of a child can operate either as a source of marital enrichment or as a source of relational stress depending on the couple's pre-existing relationship quality, expectations, communication skills, and capacity to manage new responsibilities (Tavakol et al., 2019). In adoptive families, these dynamics may be amplified because partners must cope simultaneously with parenting demands, adoption-specific concerns, the child's behavioral or emotional needs, and interactions with professionals or biological family members. Thus, the consequences of adoption for the couple relationship are neither uniformly positive nor uniformly negative.

Coparenting provides an important framework for understanding how adoptive couples manage these demands. Effective coparenting involves coordination, mutual support, shared decision-making, role flexibility, agreement about childrearing, and the ability to manage conflict constructively. Research among foster and adoptive parent dyads has shown that supportive coparenting can strengthen couple cohesion, parental efficacy, family stability, and resilience, whereas poor coordination and conflict can intensify stress and weaken family functioning (Cooley & Petren, 2020). This is particularly important in families caring for children with behavioral, developmental, or trauma-related difficulties, because consistency between parents may facilitate the child's sense of security and improve the predictability of the family environment. Coparenting can therefore be viewed as a central mediating process through which marital quality is translated into broader family relationship quality.

Adoption also reshapes sibling relationships and broader family boundaries. Some adoptive families decide to adopt additional children, and the second transition to parenthood may require new decisions concerning sibling compatibility, family structure, openness, contact with biological relatives, and preservation of family cohesion (Frost & Goldberg, 2020). Sibling relationships may contribute to belonging, continuity, emotional support, and identity development across the life span, but they may also introduce

complexities when biological and adoptive sibling networks overlap (Ottaway, 2012). These considerations demonstrate that the quality of family relationships cannot be restricted to the marital dyad or the parent–child bond; rather, it is embedded in an extended relational system shaped by multiple forms of kinship and belonging.

Questions of belonging are especially important because adoption involves ongoing negotiation of biological, social, cultural, and emotional identities. Research with adult adoptees suggests that early experiences of separation and adoption may continue to influence attachment, trust, intimacy, fear of abandonment, and perceptions of relational security in adulthood (Domyancich-Lee, 2022). Systematic review evidence also indicates that the psychological adjustment of adults adopted in childhood is heterogeneous, with outcomes varying according to individual, familial, and contextual factors rather than reflecting a single inevitable trajectory (Melero & Sánchez-Sandoval, 2017). These findings underscore the long-term significance of family relational quality: secure, supportive, and open family environments may play a critical role in helping adopted individuals integrate their histories and develop a stable sense of belonging.

Adoption openness and social stigma further affect family functioning. Social attitudes that privilege biological kinship can create feelings of difference, judgment, secrecy, or diminished legitimacy for both adoptive parents and adoptees. Evidence suggests that adoption stigma can influence identity processes and perceptions of openness, particularly when individuals feel that adoptive status is socially devalued or misunderstood (Grigoropoulos, 2022). Qualitative accounts of adoptive parents similarly describe fear of judgment, pressure to conceal adoption-related difficulties, concerns about disclosure, and the emotional consequences of being compared with biological families (Groves, 2012). In some contexts, parents may attempt to protect the child or family by limiting social interactions or concealing the adoption, but such strategies can also create additional relational pressure and impede open family communication.

Cultural context is therefore particularly important in understanding adoptive-family relationships. In Iranian families, adoption occurs within a sociocultural environment in which biological continuity, family reputation, infertility, and the meaning of parenthood may carry strong social significance. Iranian studies have identified concerns about social judgment, disclosure, acceptance by extended family members, inadequate parenting knowledge, and the need for

stronger professional and social support systems (Anbari & Nazari bin Abdulrahman, 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2023). Recent phenomenological evidence likewise demonstrates that adoptive parents experience challenges related to social perceptions, parenting preparedness, support from relatives, counseling needs, and the necessity of greater public awareness and cultural acceptance (Mostajeran et al., 2026). These findings suggest that family relationship quality is not generated solely within the household but is continually shaped by the social and cultural environment surrounding the family.

Institutional systems and professional services may either buffer or intensify these challenges. Families often require support before, during, and after adoption, including psychological preparation, trauma-informed parenting education, counseling, peer support, and guidance regarding communication with biological families. However, studies have repeatedly reported gaps in post-adoption services and parents' perceptions that formal support systems do not adequately address their needs (Groves, 2012; Kohn-Willbridge et al., 2021). When support is insufficient, adoptive parents may become isolated and overwhelmed, particularly when caring for children with complex developmental or behavioral needs. Conversely, appropriate therapeutic and professional interventions can improve parental understanding, reduce blame, strengthen reflective functioning, and support family cohesion (Wingfield & Gurney-Smith, 2019). These findings highlight the importance of institutional support as a contextual determinant of relational quality.

In more severe circumstances, accumulated stress may threaten placement stability itself. Research on adoption disruption has illustrated how developmental trauma, behavioral challenges, parental exhaustion, unsuccessful attempts to obtain professional support, and deterioration in family relationships can converge and place adoptive families under extreme strain (Parker et al., 2024). Such experiences show that adoption disruption should not be interpreted solely as an individual parental failure; rather, it may reflect a complex interaction among child-related needs, parental resources, relational dynamics, and institutional limitations. This systemic perspective is essential for understanding why some families experience increasing cohesion and growth while others encounter profound relational crisis.

Importantly, adoption is not defined only by vulnerability. Many families describe considerable positive transformation following adoption, including increased

meaning, emotional connection, strengthened commitment, personal growth, family cohesion, and enhanced appreciation of parenthood (Ali Akbari & Tavakol, 2010; Baltimore & Crase, 2009). Some couples report that joint coping with infertility and adoption-related challenges strengthens their marital bond, while the gradual development of attachment and shared family identity contributes to emotional healing. Such findings align with a resilience-oriented perspective in which family adaptation emerges through the interaction of stressors and protective resources rather than through the absence of difficulty. Meaning-making, spirituality, supportive relationships, and coherent family narratives may all contribute to this adaptive process.

From a methodological perspective, the diversity of findings across qualitative studies creates a need for integrative synthesis. Meta-synthesis is particularly appropriate for phenomena such as adoptive family relationships because it enables the researcher to move beyond the findings of individual studies and identify recurring concepts, deeper interpretive patterns, and relationships among psychological, relational, and contextual dimensions. Previous meta-synthesis studies have demonstrated the usefulness of this approach in constructing integrated conceptual models from heterogeneous qualitative evidence, including studies addressing marital quality and complex family phenomena (Arab et al., 2015; Nemati Sogli Tappeh et al., 2020). Given that the adoption literature encompasses infertility-related experiences, parental identity, child trauma, attachment, coparenting, stigma, institutional support, marital adjustment, and resilience, a meta-synthesis can provide a more comprehensive account than any single qualitative study.

Despite the expanding literature, existing studies tend to focus on specific dimensions of the adoption experience in isolation, such as parenting challenges, attachment problems, post-adoption depression, relationship quality, identity, or disruption. For example, some studies emphasize psychological distress and depression among adoptive parents (Foli et al., 2017; Foli et al., 2016), whereas others focus on attachment and trauma (Anbari & Nazari bin Abdulrahman, 2024; Duncan et al., 2024), coparenting (Cooley & Petren, 2020), marital relationship changes (South et al., 2019), or adoption narratives and identity formation (Canzi et al., 2021). Although each perspective contributes valuable knowledge, the fragmented nature of this evidence limits understanding of how these factors

operate together within a unified family system. A comprehensive conceptual model is therefore needed to explain how psychological vulnerabilities, parental identity, couple dynamics, parent-child attachment, child characteristics, cultural stigma, social support, institutional services, and adaptive resources collectively shape the quality of family relationships among adoptive couples.

Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to develop a comprehensive conceptual model of family relationship quality among adoptive couples through a meta-synthesis of qualitative research findings.

2. Methods and Materials

The present study was descriptive-analytical in terms of its implementation and was conducted using the meta-synthesis method. Meta-synthesis is a qualitative approach within the broader domain of meta-study that is used to examine, compare, interpret, integrate, and re-synthesize findings obtained from previous studies. This method enables researchers to move beyond the separate description of individual studies and, through the systematic analysis of concepts, categories, and patterns extracted from different studies, achieve a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In other words, meta-synthesis is not limited merely to collecting the findings of previous research; rather, through reinterpretation and integration of findings, it provides a basis for generating more coherent knowledge and developing conceptual frameworks (Beck, 2002; Zimmer, 2006). Moreover, this approach can provide an appropriate foundation for extending theoretical explanations in the field under investigation through the systematic integration of qualitative evidence. In the present study, meta-synthesis was employed to identify, analyze, and integrate the findings of qualitative studies related to the quality of family relationships among adoptive couples. The study population comprised qualitative studies published in this field, which were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and their adequate methodological quality. Given the multidimensional, interpretive, and context-dependent nature of the research topic, the use of meta-synthesis made it possible to reinterpret and recombine the dispersed findings of previous studies within a coherent analytical framework. The research process was organized according to the seven-step model proposed by Sandelowski and Barroso (2007). These stages included formulating the research questions, systematically reviewing the literature,

searching for and selecting appropriate studies, extracting information from the selected studies, analyzing and synthesizing qualitative findings, quality appraisal, and, finally, presenting the findings. The application of this model enhanced the transparency, methodological coherence, and traceability of the meta-synthesis process and ensured that the final findings were grounded in a systematic and rigorous analysis of previous studies.

3. Findings and Results

To achieve the objectives of the study, the seven-step roadmap developed by Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) was adopted as the methodological framework. The details of these stages are presented below.

Stage One: Formulation of the Research Questions

The first step in the meta-synthesis process is the precise formulation of questions that determine the principal direction of the study. To structure these questions, various parameters were considered, including the target population, the nature of the phenomenon under investigation (what), the time frame, and methodological considerations (how). In the present study, with a focus on the qualitative dimensions of the lives of adoptive couples, the following questions guided the systematic exploration and search process:

1. What are the constituent components and dimensions of family relationship quality among adoptive couples?
2. What contextual and mediating factors contribute to either the enhancement of relationship quality or the emergence of qualitative challenges in the relationships of these couples?
3. How can a comprehensive conceptual model explaining the quality of family relationships in adoptive families be structured?

Stage Two: Systematic Review of the Research Background

In the second stage, a systematic search of the literature was conducted to identify studies relevant to the research topic. The search was not restricted to a specific qualitative design and included phenomenological studies, grounded theory studies, thematic analyses, and ethnographic research. The search period was defined as 2001–2026 for Persian-language sources and 2000–2026 for English-language sources. Specialized keywords were developed in

both Persian and English based on the fundamental concepts of the study. Persian search terms included combinations equivalent to “adoption,” “adoptive couples,” “family relationship quality,” “marital adjustment,” “coparenting,” and “family cohesion.” The corresponding English terms included *adoption*, *adoptive parents*, *marital adjustment*, and *family functioning*. To ensure comprehensive coverage, searches were conducted in major Iranian databases, including SID, Magiran, IranDoc, and ISC, as well as prominent international databases and repositories, including Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. To select studies relevant to the research questions and enhance the methodological coherence of the meta-synthesis process, inclusion and exclusion criteria were explicitly established before the screening stage. These criteria guided decision-making during title screening, abstract screening, full-text review, and methodological quality appraisal.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies were considered eligible for inclusion if they met the following conditions:

They employed an original qualitative approach, including phenomenology, grounded theory, thematic analysis, or other recognized qualitative designs, or constituted the qualitative component of mixed-methods research.

They were published in Persian or English in reputable scientific journals.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they met any of the following conditions:

They were non-qualitative studies conducted exclusively using quantitative approaches.

They consisted of systematic reviews, narrative reviews, books, theses or dissertations, or conference abstracts.

Stage Three: Searching for and Selecting Appropriate Studies: Screening and Quality Appraisal

In the third stage, the systematic process of identifying and selecting sources was undertaken to obtain studies with the greatest thematic and methodological relevance to “family relationship quality among adoptive couples” (Table 1). The initial search across the selected databases identified 1,053 articles using the search functionalities of the respective databases and search engines.

Table 1

Results of the Initial Search Across the Selected Databases

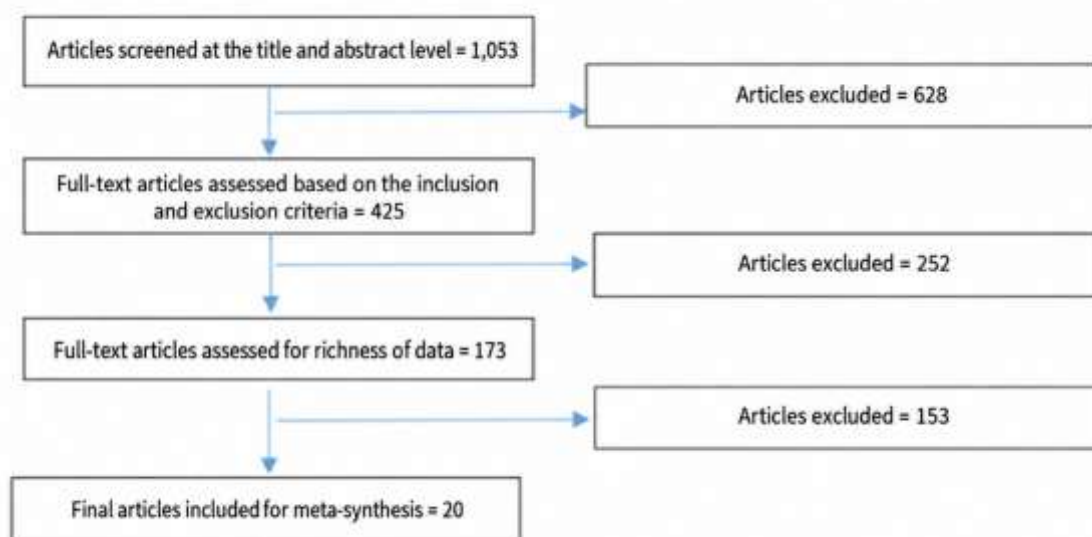
No.	Persian Database	Total Records	No.	International Database	Total Records
1	Scientific Information Database (SID)	98	5	Scopus	212
2	Magiran	84	6	Web of Science	176
3	IranDoc	72	7	PubMed	154
4	Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC)	45	8	Google Scholar and other sources*	212
Total	Persian-language sources	299	Total	International sources	754
—	—	—	—	Overall total	1,053

In the first screening stage, restrictive filters were applied and the titles and abstracts of the identified articles were examined. Sources that corresponded directly or conceptually to the selected keywords were retained for further consideration. With emphasis on the objectives of the study and the identification of articles addressing relational dimensions and adjustment within adoptive families, 628 records were excluded because of thematic irrelevance or duplication, leaving 425 articles for more detailed assessment. In the second stage, the remaining studies were subjected to an in-depth examination according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. At this stage, the articles were evaluated in terms of the clarity of operational definitions and the comprehensiveness with which qualitative findings were presented. Studies using

exclusively quantitative approaches, as well as books, theses or dissertations, and narrative reviews, were excluded from further analysis. Accordingly, an additional 252 records were removed, leaving 173 articles eligible for final assessment. During the final screening stage, the full texts of the selected articles were carefully reviewed and evaluated in terms of scientific rigor and the richness of their qualitative findings. At this stage, a further 73 articles were excluded because of insufficient interpretive data or inadequate methodological quality. The search process was iterative and continued until confidence in source saturation was achieved. Ultimately, 20 core and eligible articles were selected. These studies constituted the primary evidence base for the final synthesis and meta-synthesis.

Figure 1

Algorithm for Selecting Appropriate Sources for Analysis



Stage Four: Extraction of Information From the Selected Studies

Following the identification and selection of appropriate sources, the next stage involved an in-depth review and final refinement of the texts to extract the information required for the study. At this stage, the selected articles were examined in full, and information pertaining to “family relationship

quality among adoptive couples” was extracted. Following content analysis and classification of the studies according to the selection criteria, concepts, components, and factors influencing family relationship quality, marital adjustment, coparenting, family cohesion, and the lived experiences of adoptive couples were identified and recorded as initial codes. This stage provided the basis for the coding process,

conceptual categorization, and extraction of the main themes in subsequent stages of the meta-synthesis.

Stage Five: Analysis and Synthesis of Qualitative Findings

In the present study, following the selection of the final 20 studies, concepts, components, and factors related to family relationship quality among adoptive couples were extracted from the texts and recorded as initial meaning units. At this stage, a total of 764 initial codes were extracted from the findings of the selected studies. These codes were then organized and classified through an iterative process involving repeated review, constant comparison, integration of semantically similar items, and removal of duplicate items. As a result, 27 core concepts were identified and ultimately organized and synthesized into nine major themes.

Stage Six: Quality Control

The basis of validity in the present qualitative study was theoretical validity. To establish this form of validity, strategies such as extensive examination of the field, theoretical pluralism, and consultation with specialists and experts in the field of family studies were employed. To ensure the quality and authenticity of the research, the researcher repeatedly returned to previous stages throughout the meta-synthesis process in an iterative manner to verify that each stage had been conducted correctly. Furthermore,

to maintain transparency in article selection and achieve the required rigor in the systematic examination of the literature, efforts were made throughout the study to document each methodological step using clear, reasoned, and substantiated descriptions. Because an incomplete literature search constitutes one of the most significant threats to the credibility of a meta-synthesis, the systematic literature review was conducted using reputable national and international scientific databases. Diverse research approaches were considered in the selection of sources and integration of studies to minimize publication and methodological bias. In addition, to examine the reliability of the meta-synthesis and assess intercoder agreement, Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated with the participation of an expert in psychology and family counseling who was a faculty member at a public university and had expertise in adoption and family psychopathology. A random sample comprising 10% of all initial codes, concepts, and extracted themes was provided to the second expert, whose independent coding was then compared with that of the researcher. The coefficient was calculated using SPSS and indicated strong and statistically significant agreement between the evaluators, thereby demonstrating adequate reliability of the coding and extraction process. Following final discussion and consensus, three initial codes within two concepts were reviewed and revised.

Table 2

Interrater Agreement Based on Cohen's Kappa

Index	Agreement Value	Standard Error	Significance Level (Sig.)
Cohen's kappa	.82	.11	.001

Stage Seven: Presentation of Findings

At this stage, the final results obtained from the meta-synthesis process, including the extracted themes associated with family relationship quality among adoptive couples, are presented in tabular form.

During the initial coding stage, the full texts of the selected studies were reviewed systematically and line by line to extract all statements, concepts, and evidence associated with family relationship quality among adoptive couples. Meaningful units were identified within the findings of each study and transformed into initial codes.

These codes reflected various dimensions of the adoption experience, including couple relationships, parent-child interactions, parents' emotional and psychosocial challenges, and contextual and supportive factors affecting family cohesion. The codes were subsequently organized according to their conceptual and semantic similarities through constant comparison across studies, as shown in Table 3, thereby providing a foundation for conceptual integration, identification of common patterns, and ultimately the development of the major themes and final conceptual model.

Table 3

Initial Coding for the Development of a Conceptual Model of Family Relationship Quality Among Adoptive Couples

Author(s) and Year	Title	Method	Initial Codes
Frost and Goldberg (2020)	Adopting Again: A Qualitative Study of the Second Transition to Parenthood in Adoptive Families	Qualitative; in-depth interviews and thematic analysis	Desire to expand the family; importance of sibling relationships; attention to the needs of the first child; influence of the first adoption experience on subsequent decisions; greater selectivity in adopting a second child; reduced anxiety compared with the first adoption; greater confidence in the adoption process; waiting for a suitable child; managing uncertainty in adoption; family adjustment to the arrival of a new member; redefinition of family roles; psychological preparedness for a second child; attention to family-system cohesion; joint parental decision-making; importance of long-term family goals
Parker et al. (2024)	Making Sense of Adoption Disruption	Qualitative; interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)	Relational identity of the adoptive family; reliance on social support; continuous efforts to preserve the family; parenting-related burnout; pressure arising from the child's developmental trauma; parental helplessness; perceived parental failure; pressure on the marital relationship; parental perseverance in crisis; continuous search for professional support; inadequacy of support services; disappointment with the support system; acceptance of adoption disruption; rebuilding life after crisis; preservation of personal boundaries; changes in the parent-child relationship; post-crisis growth; concern about the child's mental health; need for trauma-informed interventions; importance of pre-adoption preparation
Kohn-Willbridge, Pike, and de Visser (2021)	"Look After Me Too": A Qualitative Exploration of the Transition to Adoptive Motherhood	Qualitative; semi-structured interviews with nine adoptive mothers; reflexive thematic analysis	Unrealistic expectations of adoption; idealized image of family life; discrepancy between expectations and reality; lack of preparedness for child behavioral problems; difficulty establishing attachment; disruption in parent-child communication; post-adoption anxiety; post-adoption depression; feelings of failure in the maternal role; helplessness; traumatic experiences during adjustment; uncertainty regarding the adoption process; powerlessness in relation to the adoption system; exhausting administrative delays; stress caused by continuous assessment; parental physical fatigue; emotional exhaustion; caregiving burnout; sleep deprivation; stress arising from aggressive child behaviors; concealment of difficulties from professionals; fear of adoption revocation; social isolation; distancing from the extended family; limited family support; feeling different from biological parents; insufficient professional support; misconceptions about adoption among others; need for parental respite and self-care; infertility grief; grief for the idealized child; ambiguity in the development of parent-child love; gradual development of attachment; ambivalence about the maternal role; pressure to be perfect; need for continuous emotional support
Domyancich-Lee (2023)	Experiences of Adult Korean Adoptees in Romantic Relationships: An Attachment Perspective	Qualitative; in-depth interviews, coding analysis, and thematic analysis	Fear of rejection; fear of abandonment; anxiety in intimate relationships; fear of losing a partner; fear of the death of loved ones; sensitivity to separation; emotional dependency; remaining in relationships because of fear of loss; fear of emotional vulnerability; concealing genuine feelings; avoidance of emotional intimacy; emotional distancing; difficulty trusting others; self-imposed mistrust; self-sabotage in relationships; withdrawal during conflict; conflict avoidance; maintaining harmony at the expense of personal needs; emotional suppression; withdrawal when the relationship is threatened; abruptly ending relationships; extreme behaviors during conflict; oscillation between closeness and distancing; relational insecurity; anxious attachment style; avoidant attachment style; fearful-avoidant attachment style; feeling "not good enough"; sense of personal defectiveness; low self-esteem; low self-worth; feelings of worthlessness; self-blame for relationship failures; guilt; excessive efforts to preserve relationships; one-sided relationships; intense need for others' approval; dependence of self-worth on romantic acceptance; feeling unlovable;

			reactivation of early abandonment wounds; impact of adoption on personal identity; existential insecurity; equating romantic rejection with early rejection by biological parents; excessive conformity and adaptation to preserve relationships; loss of authenticity in relationships
Foli et al. (2017)	The Transition to Adoptive Parenthood: A Mixed-Methods Analysis	Mixed methods; content analysis and assessment of depression	Transition from uncertainty to family stability; unique experience of adoption; fatigue and insufficient rest; everyday life stress; role of spirituality and faith; infertility grief; grief over the loss of a biological child; joy and love following adoption; parental role strain; changes in family identity; concerns about the child's future; financial challenges of adoption; fear of social judgment; pressure to be a perfect parent; changes in couple relationships; need for professional support; family resilience; rebuilding life after adoption
Baltimore and Crase (2009)	A Phenomenological Exploration of Adoption	Qualitative; semi-structured interviews	Positive adoption experience; satisfaction with parenting; gratitude and a sense of blessing associated with having a child; adoption as a means of completing the family; perceiving the child as a gift in life; role of religious beliefs in adoption; spiritual meaning-making; emotional preparedness for parenting; financial readiness for childrearing; greater appreciation of the parental role; valuing family relationships; influence of infertility on perceptions of family; infertility grief; importance of honest communication about adoption; early disclosure of adoption; open parent-child communication; gradual understanding of adoption by the child; development of adoptive identity; trust in family relationships; sense of family belonging; acceptance of family differences; family cohesion; role of transparent communication in family health; satisfaction with family life
Duncan et al. (2024)	A Qualitative Examination of Adoptive Parents' Experiences of Direct and Indirect Trauma Resulting From Their Child's Early Maltreatment	Qualitative; semi-structured interviews	Child-to-parent violence; fear of physical harm from the child; concern for family safety; concern about the child's future; avoidance of thinking about the future; persistent hypervigilance; chronic anxiety; trauma re-experiencing; intrusive images of the child's past; emotional avoidance; suppression of painful thoughts; emotional exhaustion; parental depression; psychological burnout; feelings of failure and helplessness; grief regarding the child's suffering; sorrow regarding missed opportunities in the child's life; anger toward biological parents; anger toward the support system; profound empathy for the child; understanding the child's behaviors in light of trauma; empathy for the child's biological family; parental traumatic experiences increasing empathy; reactivation of parents' personal trauma; social isolation; feeling judged by others; contraction of the support network; loss of some friendships; importance of family and peer support; importance of connections with other adoptive parents; pressure to be a perfect parent; doubts about parenting competence; feelings of inadequacy; fear of rejection by the child; incomplete sense of belonging with the child; perceived distance from biological parents; parental shame; reduced parenting confidence; dissatisfaction with parenting performance; perceived value of adoptive parenting; sense of growth and meaning in the parental role
Canzi et al. (2021)	Writing About Our Adoption: A Qualitative Study of Intercountry Adoptive Parents' Narratives During the First Year After Adoption	Qualitative; narrative analysis using T-LAB	Legitimation of the parental role; acceptance of adoptive-parent identity; acceptance of the child's differences from the family; integration of the child's cultural background into family identity; importance of family communication; open dialogue about adoption; narrative construction of adoption history; helping the child make sense of adoption; strengthening adoptive identity; supporting the child's ethnic and cultural identity; acceptance of the child's biological origins; development of family belonging; need for greater understanding of the child; concern about the child's future; challenges of adjustment with older children; excitement and joy at the child's arrival; ambiguity and concern in parenting; differences in maternal and paternal experiences; mothers' greater need to understand and control the situation; fathers' focus on everyday interactions with the child; positive influence of previous parenting experience; greater awareness of the child's needs among experienced parents; importance of close relationships and everyday interactions; construction

			of family identity through communication; simultaneous acceptance of family similarities and differences
Frost and Goldberg (2020)	Adopting Again: A Qualitative Study of the Second Transition to Parenthood in Adoptive Families	Qualitative; in-depth interviews and thematic analysis	Desire to expand the family; feeling that the family is incomplete with one child; importance of having more than one child; value of sibling relationships; long-term sibling support; influence of parents' own sibling experiences; decisions based on the first child's needs; promotion of the child's social development through siblings; attention to family structure; importance of family-system cohesion; value of biological ties between siblings; maintaining contact between biological siblings; perceived responsibility to preserve the child's biological family connections; prioritization of the child's interests; influence of ethical values on adoption decisions; application of previous adoption experiences to renewed adoption decisions; greater confidence in the adoption process; repeated use of the same adoption route or agency; reduced ambiguity because of prior experience; attention to compatibility between the second and first child; importance of racial similarity between children; support for the child's racial identity; importance of shared sibling experiences; attention to contact with biological families; concern about differences in levels of biological-family contact across siblings; management of open-adoption complexities; consideration of the second child's age; importance of age proximity between children; family adjustment to the new child; redefinition of family roles
Wrobel and Dillon (2005)	Adoptive Parents' Experiences of Adoption Reunion Relationships: A Qualitative Study	Qualitative; in-depth interviews and thematic analysis	Fear of losing the child; perceived threat from the biological family; weakening of the parent-child relationship; parental insecurity; fear of rejection; perceived parental inadequacy; concern about judgment; negative evaluation by the child; grief regarding the parent-child relationship; anxiety surrounding searches for origins; emotional concealment; competition with biological parents; sense of threat; need for validation; feeling monitored; parental perfectionism; doubts about competence; parental identity crisis; redefinition of the parental role; ambiguity of parental roles; duality of belonging; acceptance of dual roles; ambiguity regarding the "real parent"; identity reconsideration; confrontation with the unknown; adjustment to biological parents; reactivation of infertility grief; grief for a biological child; unresolved grief; biological deprivation; infertility-related guilt; infertility-adoption conflict; persistence of infertility-related suffering; reactivation of past wounds; empathy with the biological mother; understanding biological parents' suffering; compassion toward biological parents; reconsideration of relinquishment; emotional responsibility; anger toward biological parents; perceived threat from the biological mother; dissatisfaction with biological family involvement; perceived neglect of adoptive parents' needs; prioritization of the child's needs; emotional suppression; insufficient professional support; inadequate counseling services; child-centered service provision; psychological isolation; lack of opportunities for emotional expression; reconsideration of beliefs about adoption; awareness of adoption complexity; identity-related unpreparedness; mistrust of the adoption system; conflict with the "real parent" stereotype; social awareness of adoption; understanding the adoption triad; growth in empathy; emotional confusion; acceptance of multilayered family relationships
Daniluk and Hurtig-Mitchell (2003)	Themes of Hope and Healing: Infertile Couples' Experiences of Adoption	Qualitative; in-depth and semi-structured interviews	Infertility grief; acceptance of infertility; desire for parenthood; redefinition of family; legitimacy of the adoptive family; adoptive-parent identity; acceptance of a nonbiological child; reduced importance of genetic ties; hope associated with adoption; parental commitment; reconstruction of the family's future; couple growth; losses associated with infertility treatment; mourning rituals; acceptance of adoption; psychological healing; personal transformation; helplessness during the adoption process; powerlessness; administrative frustration; waiting-related stress; exhaustion caused by waiting; parental ambiguity; identity suspension; maintenance of hope; life balance; social support; family support; strengthening of the marital relationship; couple solidarity; shared goals; joint activities;

			couple resilience; professional support; insufficient legal support; legal insecurity; fear that the child might be reclaimed; post-adoption anxiety; immediate assumption of parenting responsibilities; parental unpreparedness; parenting education; parental adjustment; parental identity; attachment to the child; love without genetic ties; family belonging; parental transformation; spiritual meaning-making; primacy of emotional bonds; parenting competence; acceptance of the parental role; completion of the family; hope; family healing
Wingfield and Gurney-Smith (2018)	Adoptive Parents' Experiences of Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy	Qualitative; interpretative phenomenological analysis; semi-structured interviews	Better understanding of the child; curiosity about the child's mind; awareness of the impact of trauma; understanding the child's past; reduced blaming of the child; empathy with the child; reinterpretation of the child's behavior; acceptance of differences; changes in parenting perspectives; new parenting strategies; perceived parenting efficacy; parental security; suitability of the therapeutic approach; acceptance of the child's emotions; emotional validation; parental empathy; parental emotional presence; parenting flexibility; acceptance rather than control; initial skepticism regarding therapy; need to observe evidence of effectiveness; commitment to therapy; active parental participation; sustained therapeutic effort; difficulty of the therapeutic process; emotional exhaustion; time pressure; confrontation with painful emotions; parental self-reflection; tolerance of ambiguity; hope for change; perceived value of treatment; shared family experience; strengthened trust; relational security; emotional co-regulation; improvement in the parent-child relationship; therapist support; therapist's nonjudgmental stance; feeling accepted; parental reassurance; increased reflective capacity; growth in parental insight; maintenance of family cohesion; prevention of family disruption; continuation of positive changes
Groves (2012)	Adoptive Parents' Experiences and Narratives: A Family Constructionist Perspective	Qualitative; phenomenological/narrative analysis	Infertility-related trauma; infertility grief; loss of a biological child; failed infertility treatment; couples' emotional pain; neglect of parental experiences; needs of adoptive parents; diversity of parental experiences; professional sensitivity; need for psychological support; need for parenting education; need for support groups; continuing support; family adjustment; redefinition of family roles; redefinition of family rules; family instability; adjustment challenges; role negotiation; maintenance of family balance; threats to adoption stability; parent-child relationship problems; feelings of abandonment; reduced social support; social isolation; ambiguity regarding service access; inadequate post-adoption support; continuing support needs; dissatisfaction with services; insufficient professional knowledge; adoption-insensitive interventions; parenting concerns; child behavioral problems; poor family relationships; reduced family intimacy; need for supportive relationships; neglect of parents' narratives; value of parental experiences; limited research; need for specialized training; therapist bias; professionals' inaccurate assumptions; denial of differences; acceptance of the child's differences; authentic family relationships; parental guilt; professional judgment; parental blame; formal support; informal support; extended-family support; social support; school support; community support; emotionally safe environment; expression of emotions; fear of judgment; fear of rejection; legitimacy of adoptive parents; "real parent" stereotype; meaningful parent-child relationships
Genis et al. (2020)	Adoptive Parents' Experiences of Bond Formation With Their Adopted Child	Qualitative; interpretative phenomenological analysis; semi-structured interviews	Waiting for the child; mental image of the child; difficulty in initial interaction; challenges of the first meeting; the child's emotional ambiguity; understanding the child's experience; mutual acceptance; reciprocal adoption; adjustment to the child; acceptance of the child's unique characteristics; interpretation of the child's behavior; understanding the child's background; parenting experience; learning the parental role; impact of adoption on family bonding; adoptive identity; perceived differences of adopted children; attachment security; emotional bonding; sense of family belonging; development of the parent-child relationship; family cohesion; family adjustment; understanding the child's needs; acceptance of differences; relational security

Cooley and Petren (2020)	A Qualitative Examination of Coparenting Among Foster and Adoptive Parent Couples	Qualitative; grounded theory; dyadic interviews with foster/adoptive parents	Supportive coparenting; parental cooperation; parental coordination; parenting agreement; parental alliance; emotional support between partners; effective couple communication; conflict resolution; mutual trust; couple cohesion; relationship satisfaction; couple intimacy; division of responsibilities; participation in childcare; role flexibility; shared parental identity; parental teamwork; family stability; family well-being; family resilience; stress management; parenting pressures; parental fatigue; caregiving burnout; child behavioral challenges; children's special needs; family disruption; interparental conflict; undermining of coparenting; parental role strain; couple stress; maintenance of family balance; family adjustment; organizational support; support services; respite care; insufficient institutional support; need for parent education; professional support; social support; extended-family support; maintenance of relationship health; perceived parenting competence; parental self-efficacy; sense of worth; family stability; family security; couple commitment; family growth; psychological well-being; family quality of life
Ali-Akbari and Tavakol (2010)	Psychological Experiences of Families With Adopted Children	Qualitative; phenomenology; in-depth semi-structured interviews	Acceptance of the parental role; acceptance of the child; attachment to the child; parent-child relationship; family cohesion; family warmth; improvement in couple relationships; reduction of marital tension; filling the emotional void associated with childlessness; psychological changes; personal transformation; satisfaction; hopefulness; reduced hopelessness; overcoming infertility; infertility grief; depression related to infertility; feelings of incapacity; concern about disclosure of adoption; fear of the child learning about adoption; fear of abandonment; restriction of social relationships; relocation; concern about others' judgment; influence of significant others; interpersonal interaction; need for social support; need for counseling; family adjustment; lifestyle changes; changes in family relationships; acceptance of family identity; family belonging; emotional security; family stability; strengthening of the family foundation; fulfillment of emotional needs; acceptance of parental responsibility; concern about the child's future; support for the child; emotional connection with the child; social acceptance of adoption
Motajeran et al. (2026)	A Phenomenological Explanation of Adoptive Parents' Lived Experiences of Parenting Challenges	Qualitative; phenomenology; in-depth interviews with adoptive parents; thematic analysis	Attitudes and judgments of others; social pressure and judgment; role of extended-family support; reassurance from others' support; family participation in adoption; strengthening the sense of belonging; reconsideration of the adoption decision; experience of child illness and parenting doubts; pleasures of parenting; sense of becoming a mother/father; renewed hope in life; development of rewarding responsibilities; need for parenting skills; importance of parental education; necessity of joint decision-making by couples; need for patience and resilience; role of spirituality and trust in God; spiritual facilitation; need for social awareness-building; role of the media in adoption acceptance; need for public education; role of welfare organizations in information provision; need for specialized counseling; role of psychologists in reducing challenges; necessity of professional support; parental emotional challenges; sensitivity of private issues; difficulty expressing experiences; building trust during interviews; time-consuming nature of adjustment; digression while describing experiences; interviewer guidance back to the main topic; recommendation of educational programs for adoptive parents; need for continuous supportive interventions; importance of social awareness-building
Kamrani Fakour et al. (2019)	Adoptive Families' Experiences of Problems Among Adopted Children	Qualitative; grounded theory; in-depth interviews	Child behavioral problems; child emotional problems; attention and concentration difficulties; impaired inhibitory control; attachment disorders; indiscriminate social behavior; high-risk behaviors; separation anxiety; child aggression; poor self-regulation; developmental delays; language delay; cognitive delay; motor delay; learning disorders; undiagnosed medical problems; pre-adoption trauma; maltreatment by biological parents; childhood neglect; institutional care experiences; emotional deprivation; caregiving deprivation; insecure attachment; child adjustment problems; parental

			psychological distress; parental helplessness; parenting fatigue; reduced parental social interaction; family social isolation; decreased couple intimacy; financial burden of care; need for treatment and support services; child communication problems; parenting challenges; parental unpreparedness; adoption-related stress; satisfaction with adoption; threats to adoption stability; protective factors; social support; family support; professional support; pre-adoption education; parental psychological preparedness; joint decision-making; pre-adoption information; specialized counseling; parenting skills; gradual child adjustment; improvement in child behavior in the new environment; role of a supportive environment; role of responsive caregiving; satisfaction with adoption
Dehghan et al. (2024)	Lived Experiences of Infertile Couples With an Adopted Child	Qualitative; thematic analysis using systematic coding; semi-structured interviews	Long-term infertility; failed IVF treatments; failed IUI treatments; psychological burden of infertility treatment; hope associated with adoption; joint decision-making; role of the spouse in coping with infertility; marital tensions during infertility; spousal emotional support; feelings of reproductive failure; infertility grief; future-related anxiety; fear of remaining childless; acceptance of adoption as a solution; change in attitudes toward children; adjustment to adoption; improved marital relationships after adoption; strengthened couple intimacy; feeling that the family has become complete; reduced marital tension; increased family cohesion; parental identity challenges; concern about adoption disclosure; fear of social judgment; extended-family support; need for psychosocial support; financial burden of treatment; infertility-treatment exhaustion; redefinition of the meaning of parenthood; satisfaction with parenting; personal growth of the couple; lifestyle changes following adoption; social acceptance of the child; feelings of peace after adoption; strengthened family emotional bonds; hope for the future
Anbari et al. (2024)	Behavioral and Attachment Challenges in Iranian Adoptive Families	Qualitative; thematic analysis/conceptual modeling with a combined cultural–psychological approach	Attachment disorders; avoidant child behavior; excessive dependence on the caregiver; emotional outbursts; inability to regulate emotions; aggression; difficulty with soothing; self-regulation problems; need for structure and routine; use of positive reinforcement; seeking professional help; extended-family support; social stigma of adoption; concealment of adoption; fear of social judgment; cultural influences on attachment; cultural barriers; disruption in the development of secure attachment; complexity of the child's identity; developmental delays; early-life trauma; role of discontinuous caregiving; parental resilience; problem-focused coping; emotion-focused coping; social support; role of specialized counseling; importance of parent education; family support network; role of structure and routine in child behavior; gradual improvement in attachment; influence of stigma on relationships; role of religion and beliefs in resilience; reduced parental social interactions; social isolation; parental emotional challenges; parenting fatigue; chronic psychological pressure; reconstruction of the parent–child relationship; gradual family adjustment; need for post-adoption support services; role of social policies; necessity of supportive interventions
Mohammadi et al. (2023)	Lived Experiences of Infertile Couples Regarding Adoption Challenges in Yazd	Qualitative; content analysis/exploratory approach	Physical costs of infertility; psychological costs of treatment; financial costs; pressure on marital relationships; damage to social relationships; infertility-related exhaustion; failure of infertility treatments; administrative difficulties of adoption; concern about others' reactions; insufficient adoptive-parenting skills; spousal support; extended-family support; positive role of significant others and the media; fear of the child's biological family returning; concern about the child's future; meaning-making in life after adoption; improved couple relationships; increased hope and satisfaction; feelings of failure in the absence of support

During the secondary coding stage, the initial codes extracted from the selected studies were systematically compared, refined, and integrated to move the analysis from

dispersed descriptions toward more abstract concepts (Table 4). Through constant comparison among the codes, the researcher identified semantic similarities and differences

and formulated higher-order categories by integrating conceptually equivalent codes. Thus, secondary coding was not merely a restatement of the data; rather, it represented a stage of conceptual organization that established the foundations of the explanatory model. The findings of this stage demonstrated that family relationship quality among adoptive couples is a multidimensional and context-dependent phenomenon emerging from the interaction of several principal domains. First, parents' psychological and emotional challenges—including infertility grief, anxiety, fear of rejection, parenting burnout, and feelings of inadequacy—were identified as a major domain. These components influence parents' psychological preparedness to establish a secure and stable relationship with the child. Second, parental identity and the redefinition of the parental role, particularly in the form of ambiguity about parenthood and duality of belonging, demonstrated that adoption requires reconstruction of the meaning of being a parent. Third, the parent–child relationship and attachment formation, in association with gradual acceptance, fear of abandonment, and difficulties in establishing emotional bonds, emerged as a decisive domain affecting the quality of family relationships.

Alongside these components, children's behavioral and developmental problems and their pre-adoption experiences increased the family's emotional and interactional burden and affected the adjustment process. At the couple level, marital relationships and coparenting patterns could either promote greater cohesion, intimacy, and cooperation or, conversely, lead to conflict and deterioration of the marital relationship. Social and institutional support, social pressure and adoption stigma, and the quality of counseling and educational resources were also identified as important contextual factors that facilitated or undermined family adjustment. Finally, gradual adjustment, resilience, post-crisis growth, and meaning-making in relation to the adoption experience indicated that adoptive families, despite their difficulties, possess considerable capacities for reconstructing relationships and strengthening family cohesion. Accordingly, secondary coding facilitated the formulation of a coherent conceptual framework in which family relationship quality among adoptive couples is understood as the product of interactions among parental psychological vulnerabilities, identity processes, couple and parent–child relationships, child characteristics, social and institutional support, cultural pressures, and the family's adaptive and meaning-related resources.

Table 4

Secondary Coding for the Development of a Conceptual Model of Family Relationship Quality Among Adoptive Couples

Theme	Concepts	Representative Codes
Psychological–emotional challenges of adoptive parents	Grief and loss; anxiety and fear; parenting burnout; frustration and feelings of inadequacy	Infertility grief; fear of rejection; anxiety about the child's future; feelings of parental inadequacy; psychological burnout; chronic emotional pressure; helplessness; post-infertility depression
Parental identity and redefinition of the parental role	Identity crisis; ambiguity of parenthood; redefinition of the parental role	Parental identity crisis; ambiguity regarding being a “real” parent; duality of parental belonging; redefinition of the adoptive-parent role; identity conflict
Parent–child relationship and attachment	Insecure and gradual attachment; fear of rejection; reconstruction of the emotional relationship	Attachment disorder; insecure attachment; fear of abandonment; reconstruction of emotional bonds; gradual acceptance of the child; child communication difficulties
Child behavioral and developmental problems	Behavioral problems; developmental delays; pre-adoption trauma	Child aggression; emotion-regulation problems; developmental delay; learning difficulties; institutional care; pre-adoption trauma
Couple relationships and coparenting	Couple intimacy and conflict; parental cooperation; marital cohesion or tension	Decreased/increased couple intimacy; parenting conflict; joint decision-making; family cohesion; pressure on the marital relationship
Social and institutional support	Presence or absence of support; role of counseling and education	Extended-family support; insufficient counseling services; need for parent education; ineffective support systems; role of welfare organizations and counselors
Social pressure and adoption stigma	Social stigma; judgment; concealment of the child's adoptive identity	Fear of social judgment; adoption stigma; concealment of adoption; concern about disclosure; cultural pressure
Adjustment and growth of the adoptive family	Gradual adjustment; family cohesion; post-crisis growth	Family cohesion; gradual adjustment of the child and parents; family growth; resilience; lifestyle changes
Spirituality and meaning in adoption	Meaning-making; acceptance; spiritual growth	Role of spirituality; acceptance of adoption as destiny; hope for the future; personal growth following adoption

At this stage, the concepts and categories derived from secondary coding were re-examined not merely as independent themes, but in relation to one another and within the context of the selected studies, with the aim of revealing their semantic interrelationships in explaining family relationship quality. Accordingly, the objective was not simply to place similar concepts alongside one another, but to identify the underlying relational logic governing them and to demonstrate how apparently dispersed concepts represent different dimensions of a shared experience at a deeper level. From this perspective, family relationship quality among adoptive couples is not the consequence of a single factor; rather, it results from the interaction of psychological, identity-related, interpersonal, and social processes that gradually develop within the context of adoption and influence one another. Comparative analysis of the studies demonstrated that concepts such as infertility grief, anxiety, fear of rejection, parenting burnout, and feelings of inadequacy, although expressed differently across the literature, semantically refer to a shared core of parental psychological vulnerability. Such vulnerability is not merely an internal emotional condition; rather, it functions as a relational context that influences how parents enter the parental role, their readiness to accept the child, and the quality of their interactions with one another. Therefore, concepts described in some studies as psychological distress and in others as insecurity, helplessness, or burnout actually represent different manifestations of an underlying condition that can either undermine or enhance parents' capacity to establish stable, secure, and accepting relationships.

Closely related to this psychological dimension, parental identity appeared across studies through concepts such as ambiguity regarding being a "real" parent, duality of belonging, parental identity crisis, and redefinition of the parental role. Analysis of the semantic relationships among these concepts demonstrated that, for many couples, adoption entails more than assuming responsibility for the care of a child; it involves a process through which the meaning of parenthood must be reconstructed psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Within this framework, parental identity can be regarded as an intermediary link between parents' internal experiences and the quality of family relationships. The more confidently, legitimately, and coherently parents internalize the parental role, the more favorable the conditions become for establishing secure interactions with the child and coordinating the couple relationship. Thus, the semantic relationship between psychological vulnerability and

parental identity suggests that family relationship quality depends substantially on parents' transition from uncertainty toward a stabilized sense of themselves in the parental role. In the domain of the parent–child relationship, concepts such as gradual attachment, attachment insecurity, fear of abandonment, difficulty establishing emotional bonds, and reconstruction of a secure relationship similarly revealed clear semantic connections. Taken together, these concepts indicate that emotional bonding in adoptive families does not necessarily emerge immediately or spontaneously but is instead the product of a gradual and sensitive process influenced by the prior experiences of both parties to the relationship. In other words, the child's previous experiences, behavioral or emotional difficulties, parents' psychological preparedness, and the emotional climate of the family all contribute to the development or weakening of this bond. Consequently, the semantic relationships among these concepts indicate that the parent–child relationship should be understood within a reciprocal and context-sensitive framework in which interaction quality depends neither solely on the child's characteristics nor solely on parental readiness, but on the ongoing interaction between the two within the family context.

The review of the studies further showed that couple relationships and coparenting constitute another major focal point in the semantic network of concepts. Concepts such as increased or decreased intimacy, parenting conflict, joint decision-making, pressure on the marital relationship, and family cohesion may appear to describe different conditions, yet at a semantic level they all reflect the fact that adoption can simultaneously expose the couple relationship to both strain and greater cohesion. This means that the arrival of a child may, on the one hand, foster greater closeness, cooperation, and a sense of family completion and, on the other hand, lead to erosion of the couple relationship when accompanied by emotional pressures, child behavioral difficulties, or poor coordination in parental roles. Thus, the semantic relationship among these concepts indicates that the couple relationship in adoptive families is not a peripheral element but rather a fundamental axis of family relationship quality that both influences and is influenced by other dimensions. Moreover, concepts related to social and institutional support, social pressure, adoption stigma, concealment, and concerns about disclosure demonstrate that family relationship quality cannot be explained solely in terms of intrafamilial relationships. The semantic connections among these concepts indicate that adoption invariably occurs within a broader social and cultural

context, and families experience and recalibrate the quality of their relationships through interactions with that context. When families lack professional support, sufficient education, and social acceptance, external pressures may intensify intrafamilial tensions. Conversely, supportive networks, access to counseling services, and a socially accepting environment may mitigate pressures and strengthen the family's adaptive capacity. From this perspective, the semantic relationship between social variables and intrafamilial dynamics demonstrates that family relationship quality among adoptive couples is profoundly context-dependent.

Alongside these challenges, concepts such as resilience, gradual adjustment, post-crisis growth, family cohesion, spirituality, and meaning-making regarding the adoption experience repeatedly appeared across the studies and revealed another important semantic connection. These concepts demonstrate that adoptive families are not merely exposed to stress and vulnerability but may activate reparative and reconstructive capacities while confronting difficulties. Meaning-making in relation to adoption, reliance on internal and external resources, and the ability to redefine relationships under difficult circumstances can assist families in moving from tension toward adjustment and cohesion. Therefore, the semantic relationship among these concepts demonstrates that family relationship quality is shaped not only through vulnerabilities but also through adaptive and restorative resources. Overall, analysis of the semantic relationships among the concepts showed that family relationship quality among adoptive couples arises from dynamic and multidirectional relationships among parental psychological vulnerabilities, the development of parental identity, the quality of the parent-child bond, couple dynamics, the child's characteristics and prior experiences, social and support conditions, and the family's adaptive resources. Consequently, this phenomenon should be conceptualized as a multilayered and interactive process in which family relationships are not static conditions, but rather the outcome of continuous family reconstruction in response to the psychological, relational, and social demands of adoption.

Within the meta-synthesis process, explaining "divergences" is as fundamentally important as identifying "convergences," because such divergences illuminate the multidimensional nature of family relationship quality among adoptive couples. Critical examination of the findings indicated that differences across studies do not necessarily reflect methodological contradictions; rather,

they represent the mediating effects of contextual variables on the adoption experience. In contrast to reductionist perspectives that conceptualize adoption as an absolute cause of either strengthening or weakening the couple relationship, the present synthesis demonstrated that relational resilience constitutes a key variable shaping the direction of this experience. In families characterized by emotional stability and problem-solving skills before adoption, the arrival of a child functioned as a catalyst for intimacy. In contrast, among couples with pre-existing vulnerabilities, the adoption experience operated as a secondary stressor that intensified relational fractures. Therefore, divergence across findings appears to be rooted partly in the quality of the couple's relational infrastructure before adoption.

In the domain of parent-child attachment, differences among study findings were largely associated with the continuity of lived experiences and the child's age at adoption. The developmental trajectory of attachment among children with histories of severe trauma differs from that of children without such adverse experiences. Positive findings in this area were associated with parents who possessed secure internal working models and were able to reduce the child's anxiety through responsive emotional regulation. In contrast, reports of insecurity were directly related to parental emotional burnout and difficulties in managing the child's behavioral responses. Similarly, discrepancies in reports concerning parental identity may partly result from insufficient attention to the temporal dimension. Parental identity among these couples is not an endpoint but rather a long-term developmental process that, during its early stages, may involve perfectionistic idealization. The transition toward a consolidated parental identity depends on social legitimation and the realistic acceptance of parenting challenges over time.

Furthermore, divergence regarding whether child characteristics constitute sources of strain or cohesion appears to be strongly influenced by institutional and social support. When supportive structures—including specialized training, peer groups, and cultural acceptance—are available, children's behavioral challenges may become opportunities for relational growth. Conversely, when these resources are absent, even normative developmental characteristics may escalate into family crises. Ultimately, synthesizing these divergent patterns indicates that family relationship quality among adoptive couples is determined by a multifactorial configuration in which parents' individual resources, the child's history, and supportive

social contexts interact dynamically. Therefore, differences reported in the literature should not necessarily be interpreted as scientific contradictions; rather, they delineate a broad spectrum of lived experiences ranging from adjustment crises to relational flourishing. Family relationship quality is thus better understood not as a static variable, but as an outcome of the balance or imbalance among individual, relational, and social forces over time.

To develop a comprehensive conceptual framework and achieve an interpretive synthesis of the selected studies, the findings derived from secondary coding and the analysis of semantic relationships were organized into a dynamic three-level model (Table 5). This conceptual model explains family relationship quality among adoptive couples not as a static phenomenon, but as the complex interactive outcome of macro-level social structures, intervening intrafamilial processes, and psychosocial outcomes. The conceptual structure demonstrates that family relationship quality among adoptive couples is a multilayered and interactive

phenomenon arising from the interplay among macro-level sociocultural factors, intrafamilial processes, and psychosocial outcomes. At the macro level, cultural contexts, social attitudes, and institutional support structures operate as conditions that shape the adoption experience. At the intermediate level, psychological and relational mechanisms—including parents' emotional states, the redefinition of parental identity, the quality of parent–child interactions, and couples' coparenting patterns—play a central role in the development of family relationship quality. At the outcome level, these interactions lead to consequences such as the degree of family adjustment and cohesion, the quality of the couple relationship, parents' psychological growth, and the construction of meaning in relation to the adoption experience. The proposed conceptual model therefore represents a dynamic and interactive system in which family relationship quality is considered the direct product of interactions between social structures and psychological–family processes.

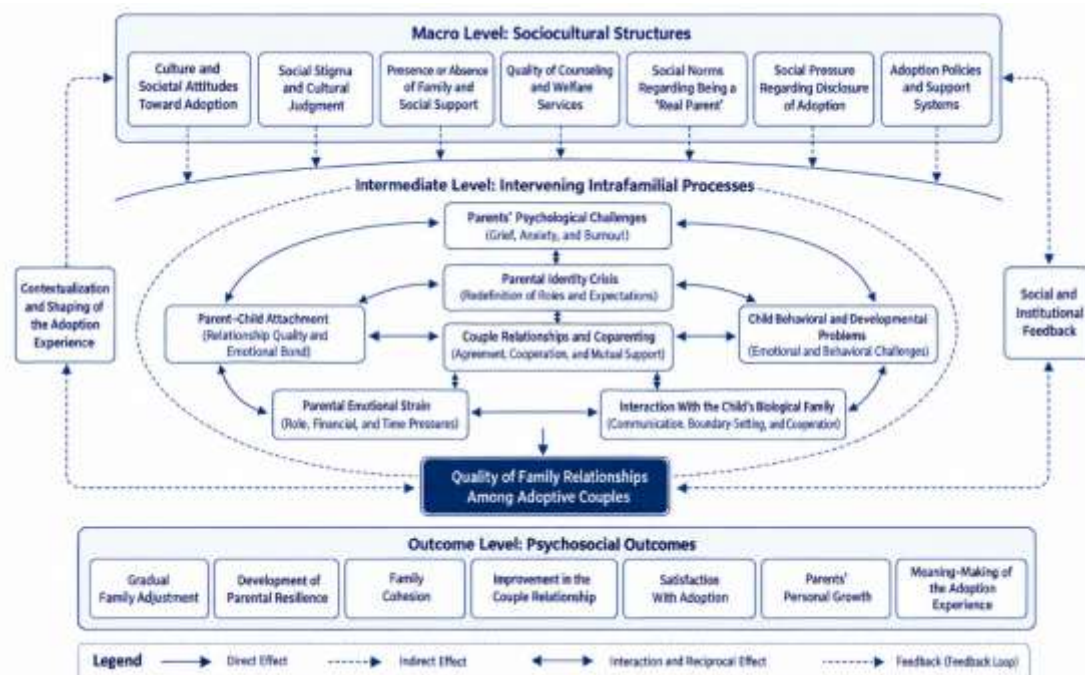
Table 5

Conceptual Model of Family Relationship Quality Among Adoptive Couples Based on Meta-Synthesis

Contextual Factors	Intervening Conditions	Outcomes
Culture and societal attitudes toward adoption	Parents' psychological challenges (grief, anxiety, and burnout)	Gradual family adjustment
Social stigma and cultural judgment	Parental identity crisis	Development of parental resilience
Presence or absence of family and social support	Parent–child attachment	Family cohesion
Quality of counseling and welfare services	Child behavioral and developmental problems	Improvement in the couple relationship
Social norms concerning “real parenthood”	Couple relationships and coparenting	Satisfaction with adoption
Social pressure surrounding adoption disclosure	Parental emotional pressure	Parents' personal growth
Adoption policies and support systems	Interaction with the child's biological family	Meaning-making regarding the adoption experience

Figure 2

Conceptual Model of Family Relationship Quality Among Adoptive Couples Based on Meta-Synthesis



4. Discussion

The present meta-synthesis was conducted to develop a conceptual model of family relationship quality among adoptive couples by integrating findings from qualitative and mixed-methods studies. The findings demonstrated that family relationship quality in adoptive couples is a multidimensional, dynamic, and context-dependent phenomenon that develops through the interaction of psychological–emotional vulnerabilities, parental identity processes, parent–child attachment, child behavioral and developmental characteristics, couple relationships and coparenting, social and institutional support, adoption-related stigma, adaptive family processes, and meaning-making. Secondary coding resulted in nine major themes: psychological–emotional challenges of adoptive parents; parental identity and redefinition of the parental role; parent–child relationship and attachment; child behavioral and developmental problems; couple relationships and coparenting; social and institutional support; social pressure and adoption stigma; adjustment and growth of the adoptive family; and spirituality and meaning in adoption. The synthesis of these themes further led to a three-level conceptual model consisting of sociocultural contextual factors, intervening intrafamilial processes, and psychosocial outcomes. This structure indicates that the quality of family relationships cannot be attributed to a

single psychological or relational variable; rather, it results from continuous reciprocal interactions among parents, children, the couple subsystem, the extended social environment, and institutional structures.

One of the most prominent findings concerned the psychological and emotional challenges experienced by adoptive parents. Infertility grief, anxiety, fear of rejection, emotional exhaustion, parenting burnout, feelings of helplessness, and perceived parental inadequacy emerged repeatedly across the reviewed studies. These findings are consistent with research showing that adoption may follow a prolonged period of infertility-related distress and failed reproductive treatments, leaving parents with unresolved grief that can remain active during the transition to adoptive parenthood (Dehghan Manshadi et al., 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2023). Earlier Iranian studies also showed that families with adopted children may continue to experience emotional consequences of infertility, even after the child enters the family, particularly when the meaning of biological parenthood remains psychologically salient (Ali Akbari & Tavakol, 2010). Similarly, longitudinal work on adoptive parents has demonstrated that depressive symptoms, uncertainty, and emotional strain may emerge or fluctuate across the post-placement period (Foli et al., 2017; Foli et al., 2016). Therefore, the present findings suggest that psychological vulnerability should be regarded as an underlying condition that shapes how parents respond to

subsequent relational demands rather than as an isolated individual problem.

The results also identified parental identity and redefinition of the parental role as a central component of family relationship quality. Adoptive parents may need to reconcile prior expectations of biological parenthood with a new form of family identity and establish a stable sense of legitimacy in their parental role. The present synthesis showed that ambiguity about being a “real” parent, duality of belonging, uncertainty regarding biological families, and the need to reconstruct the meaning of parenthood are important processes in adoptive families. This finding is consistent with qualitative evidence indicating that parental identity in adoption is gradually constructed through caregiving, family narratives, emotional commitment, and the integration of the child’s adoption history into the family system (Canzi et al., 2021). It also aligns with work emphasizing parental reflective functioning, which enables parents to understand the child’s internal experiences and thereby strengthen their own parental identity and emotional responsiveness (Genis et al., 2020). The findings therefore support the view that secure parental identity is not established automatically after placement but develops progressively as parents integrate emotional, social, and relational aspects of adoptive parenthood.

The parent–child relationship and attachment constituted another major theme. The findings indicated that attachment in adoptive families is often a gradual process influenced by the child’s previous experiences, parental sensitivity, emotional availability, and the broader quality of family functioning. Problems such as insecure attachment, fear of abandonment, difficulty in developing emotional bonds, and impaired trust were frequently identified. Iranian research similarly reported attachment disturbances, emotional dysregulation, aggression, and difficulties in establishing secure relational patterns among adopted children, particularly when they had experienced deprivation or discontinuity of care before placement (Anbari & Nazari bin Abdulrahman, 2024; Kamrani Fakour et al., 2019). International findings have also shown that early maltreatment can expose adoptive parents to direct and indirect trauma, intensifying emotional exhaustion, fear, and helplessness in the parent–child relationship (Duncan et al., 2024). These findings indicate that attachment difficulties should not be interpreted merely as characteristics of the child but as relational phenomena produced through the interaction between prior adversity and current caregiving conditions.

The importance of understanding child behavior through a trauma-informed and relational perspective was also evident. The present synthesis identified behavioral problems, developmental delays, emotional dysregulation, learning difficulties, and the effects of institutional or adverse pre-adoption experiences as factors that increase the emotional and interactional burden on families. These results are in line with studies showing that adopted children may present a wide range of adjustment difficulties rooted in early deprivation, neglect, maltreatment, or disrupted caregiving (Kamrani Fakour et al., 2019; Melero & Sánchez-Sandoval, 2017). At the same time, the findings showed that parental understanding and responsive caregiving can moderate these difficulties. Dyadic developmental psychotherapy, for example, has been associated with improved parental understanding of trauma, greater emotional attunement, reduced blame, and stronger parent–child relationships (Wingfield & Gurney-Smith, 2019). Thus, the present findings reinforce the importance of interpreting behavioral challenges in developmental and relational context rather than as isolated child pathology.

At the couple level, the findings highlighted marital relationships and coparenting as critical determinants of family relationship quality. Adoption was found to have the potential to strengthen or weaken the couple relationship depending on pre-existing relational quality, communication patterns, parental coordination, role distribution, and the couple’s capacity to manage stress. This is consistent with research showing that relationship quality may change from pre-placement to post-placement and that adoptive couples can experience both increased closeness and heightened tension during this transition (South et al., 2019). The presence of a child has also been described as either an opportunity for greater marital satisfaction or a source of strain, depending on how couples manage new expectations and responsibilities (Tavakol et al., 2019). The present meta-synthesis extends these findings by suggesting that coparenting functions as a key mechanism linking marital quality to broader family functioning. Supportive coparenting, characterized by cooperation, joint decision-making, mutual emotional support, and role flexibility, has been shown to enhance family resilience and stability (Cooley & Petren, 2020).

The findings further demonstrated that family relationship quality is strongly shaped by social and institutional support. Extended-family support, professional counseling, parenting education, peer networks, and responsive welfare services were identified as important

protective factors, whereas insufficient services and lack of professional understanding intensified family stress. This finding is consistent with qualitative studies in which adoptive parents described insufficient post-adoption support, unmet counseling needs, and frustration with systems that did not adequately address the complexities of adoptive family life (Groves, 2012; Kohn-Willbridge et al., 2021). Recent Iranian findings similarly emphasize the role of professional counseling, public education, extended-family support, and social awareness in reducing parenting challenges (Mostajeran et al., 2026). Therefore, the present conceptual model appropriately places institutional and social support at the macro level because these factors influence the extent to which intrafamilial vulnerabilities are either buffered or intensified.

Social stigma and cultural judgment were also identified as significant contextual influences. Fear of disclosure, anxiety about social judgment, concealment of adoption status, and concerns about the legitimacy of adoptive parenthood were recurring themes. These findings are consistent with research demonstrating that adoption stigma can shape openness, identity development, and perceptions of belonging (Grigoropoulos, 2022). Such stigma may also increase pressure on parents to present an idealized family image, discourage them from seeking help, and intensify feelings of inadequacy. In cultural contexts where biological kinship is strongly emphasized, these pressures may become especially salient. Iranian studies indicate that concern regarding others' reactions and judgments may affect family communication, disclosure decisions, and the psychological adaptation of adoptive parents (Anbari & Nazari bin Abdulrahman, 2024; Mohammadi et al., 2023). Accordingly, family relationship quality should be understood not only as an internal family phenomenon but also as one embedded in cultural definitions of parenthood, kinship, and legitimacy.

Another important finding was that adoptive families can demonstrate substantial resilience and growth despite significant stressors. The themes of gradual adjustment, family cohesion, post-crisis growth, strengthened relationships, and personal transformation indicate that adoption may become a source of psychological development and relational reconstruction. This finding is consistent with studies reporting increased family meaning, gratitude, emotional connection, and satisfaction following adoption (Ali Akbari & Tavakol, 2010; Baltimore & Crase, 2009). It also corresponds with evidence that families may gradually develop more confidence, flexibility, and

relational competence through repeated experiences of adaptation (Frost & Goldberg, 2020). The present findings therefore support a resilience-oriented perspective in which positive family functioning is not defined by the absence of difficulties but by the capacity to mobilize resources, reinterpret challenges, and sustain meaningful relationships despite adversity.

Spirituality and meaning-making were also identified as adaptive resources. Parents in several studies used religious beliefs, hope, acceptance, and personal meaning to reinterpret infertility, the adoption process, and the demands of parenthood. This finding suggests that meaning-making may function as a mechanism that connects psychological adaptation with family cohesion. Adoption can become integrated into a broader life narrative in which caregiving, commitment, and nonbiological parenthood are viewed as meaningful and legitimate. Such interpretations may reduce the salience of genetic connectedness and strengthen emotional belonging. The importance of narrative construction has also been demonstrated in studies of intercountry adoptive families, where parents actively created coherent stories to support family identity and the child's understanding of adoption (Canzi et al., 2021). These processes may be particularly important when families must integrate complex histories, cultural differences, or continued contact with biological relatives.

The present findings also showed that sibling and broader kinship relationships contribute to family cohesion and identity. Adoption is often embedded in a wider network involving siblings, biological relatives, extended family members, and in some cases subsequent adoptions. Research on second adoptions shows that decisions about adopting another child are influenced by sibling relationships, family structure, prior adoption experiences, and concerns about family balance (Frost & Goldberg, 2020). Similarly, lifelong sibling connections may influence belonging and identity among adopted individuals (Ottaway, 2012). These findings reinforce the systemic interpretation of the present model, which conceptualizes family relationship quality as a product of multiple interconnected relational subsystems rather than only the marital dyad.

The analysis of contradictory findings across studies was also informative. Some studies described adoption as strengthening the marital relationship, increasing intimacy, and creating family completion, whereas others reported strain, burnout, conflict, or even adoption disruption. The present meta-synthesis suggests that these apparent contradictions can be explained by differences in pre-

existing relationship quality, parental psychological resources, the severity of child-related difficulties, and the availability of social and institutional support. Research on adoption disruption similarly demonstrates that relational breakdown usually reflects a convergence of developmental trauma, parental exhaustion, inadequate services, and prolonged stress rather than a single causal factor (Parker et al., 2024). Consequently, variability across the literature should be understood as evidence of heterogeneity in family contexts rather than inconsistency in the evidence base.

5. Conclusion

The three-level conceptual model developed in this study synthesizes these findings by positioning sociocultural structures at the macro level, intrafamilial processes at the intermediate level, and psychosocial consequences at the outcome level. This structure is compatible with systems-oriented understandings of family functioning because it recognizes reciprocal influences between contextual and relational processes. It also reflects previous meta-synthesis research showing that complex family phenomena are best explained through integrated conceptual models rather than single-variable frameworks (Arab et al., 2015; Nemati Sogli Tappeh et al., 2020). The present model therefore contributes by integrating dimensions that have often been examined separately, including parental grief, identity, attachment, child behavior, coparenting, stigma, institutional support, resilience, and meaning-making. In this sense, family relationship quality among adoptive couples can be conceptualized as an evolving equilibrium generated through the interaction of vulnerability and support, stress and resilience, as well as relational challenge and relational growth.

6. Limitations & Suggestions

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the meta-synthesis depended on the methodological quality, reporting depth, and conceptual orientation of the original studies, meaning that underreported experiences could not be fully represented. Second, the included studies varied considerably in cultural context, adoption type, child age, duration since placement, family structure, and qualitative methodology, which may have increased conceptual heterogeneity. Third, the evidence base was dominated by retrospective and self-reported accounts, and many studies relied primarily on adoptive parents rather than simultaneously including

children, biological family members, or professionals. Finally, although systematic searches were conducted across multiple databases, some relevant unpublished or non-indexed qualitative studies may not have been identified.

Future research should test and refine the proposed conceptual model using longitudinal, mixed-methods, and cross-cultural designs. Particular attention should be given to examining the temporal development of parental identity, attachment, marital adjustment, and family resilience from the pre-adoption period through different post-placement stages. Studies should also incorporate multiple informants, including both partners, adopted children, siblings, biological relatives where appropriate, and professionals involved in adoption services. Future research could additionally examine whether the relationships proposed in the model vary according to child age at placement, history of trauma, type of adoption, degree of openness, socioeconomic status, and availability of post-adoption services.

In practice, adoption services should adopt a family-system and trauma-informed framework that extends beyond legal placement procedures. Pre-adoption preparation should include realistic education regarding attachment, behavioral challenges, parental identity, couple adjustment, disclosure, and contact with biological families. Post-adoption services should provide accessible counseling, coparenting support, parent training, peer-support groups, and respite or crisis services where necessary. Professionals should also assess the emotional needs of both parents, including unresolved infertility grief and parenting burnout, while strengthening couple communication and reflective parenting skills. At the broader level, public education and culturally sensitive awareness programs are needed to reduce adoption stigma, normalize diverse family forms, and create social conditions that support the long-term stability and well-being of adoptive families.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

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

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors have equally contributed to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

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

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