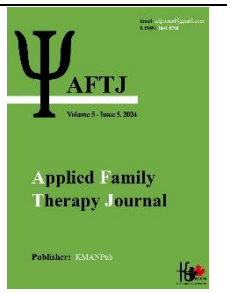
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Conditional Process Structural Equation Modeling of Couple Relationship Quality Based on Economic Pressure, Psychological Distress, Hostile Couple Interaction, and Family Resilience

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction paragraph beginning “Family resilience represents one such protective resource,” the manuscript describes resilience using a broad systemic framework but does not sufficiently distinguish family resilience from related constructs such as dyadic coping, family functioning, perceived social support, relationship quality, and communication competence. Because family resilience is later modeled as both a direct predictor and a moderator, construct overlap is particularly important. The authors should clarify what is unique about family resilience conceptually and empirically, and why it is expected to moderate specific structural paths rather than simply covary with relationship quality. This would also help address the relatively strong correlation reported between family resilience and couple relationship quality.

In the final paragraph of the Introduction, the manuscript states that “family resilience was additionally expected to predict better relationship functioning and to attenuate both the association between economic pressure and psychological distress and the negative association between hostile interaction and relationship quality.” These moderation hypotheses require stronger path-specific justification. Why should resilience moderate these two particular paths but not, for example, psychological

distress → hostile interaction or economic pressure → hostile interaction? The authors should explain the theoretical logic for selecting these exact moderation locations before presenting the Methods. Doing so would make the conditional process model more confirmatory and less susceptible to the impression that moderation paths were selected after inspecting the data.

In the Data Analysis section, the authors state that "for the present structural model, item parcels were formed to represent the latent psychological distress construct." The parceling strategy requires substantial clarification. The authors should report the number of parcels, the number of items assigned to each parcel, the method used to construct them, and the rationale for parceling. Parceling can conceal multidimensionality and residual misfit; therefore, the dimensionality of the K10 should first be established at the item level. The manuscript should also state whether parcel construction occurred before or after examining factor loadings, since post hoc parceling may artificially improve model fit.

In the Data Analysis paragraph, the authors report that "latent interaction terms were estimated using the product-indicator approach with mean-centered indicators." This methodological description should be expanded because moderation in latent-variable SEM is technically sensitive. The manuscript should specify whether matched-pair product indicators, all-pairs products, residual centering, or double-mean centering was employed, how indicators were matched, and how interaction model fit was evaluated. If Mplus was used, the authors should also clarify why product indicators were preferred over latent moderated structural equations using XWITH, which is a commonly implemented approach in that software.

In the Findings section, Table 1 reports Pearson correlations among the five primary constructs, including a correlation of r = -.62 between hostile couple interaction and couple relationship quality and r = .58 between family resilience and relationship quality. These comparatively strong correlations raise the possibility of conceptual and measurement overlap. The authors should provide a more complete discriminant validity assessment, preferably including the entire HTMT matrix or Fornell–Larcker results rather than only the "maximum HTMT" for each construct. Reporting only a maximum value prevents readers from identifying which specific construct pair generated the highest ratio.

In Table 2, the manuscript reports excellent measurement-model fit, including CFI = .952, TLI = .946, RMSEA = .053, and SRMR = .044. However, the structural model fit is not separately reported after the directional paths and interactions are introduced. The authors should distinguish clearly between measurement-model fit and structural-model fit and provide fit indices for the baseline structural model before latent interactions are estimated. If conventional fit indices are unavailable for the latent interaction model, this should be stated explicitly, and model comparison criteria such as log-likelihood, AIC, BIC, or likelihood-ratio testing should be reported where appropriate.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Study Design and Participants section, the manuscript reports that "participants were recruited from Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island through community organizations, family and relationship networks, online community advertisements, workplace mailing lists, and social media recruitment." The recruitment process requires considerably more detail. The authors should specify whether sampling was convenience-based, quota-based, stratified, or panel-based; whether recruitment targets were established by province; whether French-speaking participants were excluded; and how duplicate participation was prevented. Given the broad geographic description, readers may otherwise infer a level of national representativeness that the sampling method does not support.

In the Study Design and Participants paragraph, the authors state that "the final analytic sample therefore consisted of 428 partnered adults" and that this sample "exceeded the minimum requirement for structural equation modeling based on model complexity." This statement should be supported by a formal a priori or sensitivity power analysis. The authors should report the assumed effect size, alpha level, desired power, number of latent variables, number of estimated parameters, and the

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procedure or software used to determine sample adequacy. A general assertion that the sample was sufficient for SEM is not adequate, particularly because latent interactions typically require larger samples than conventional mediation models.

In the Study Design and Participants section, the eligibility criterion requiring participants to "complete the questionnaire in English" is potentially consequential in the Canadian context. The manuscript should acknowledge that this criterion may systematically exclude Francophone participants, especially in Quebec and New Brunswick, as well as some immigrant populations. The authors should report whether validated French versions of the measures were available and, if so, explain why they were not used. This issue should also be added to the limitations because linguistic restriction may affect the cultural and regional generalizability of the findings.

In the Data Collection Tools section, the description of the Economic Pressure Scale states that it was "derived from the economic pressure indicators commonly employed in family stress research," but the precise source, developer, publication year, and item derivation procedure are not reported. This is a serious reproducibility issue. The authors should identify the original instrument or source studies, explain whether the 12 items were used verbatim or adapted, provide evidence supporting the dimensional structure, and describe any pilot testing. If the scale was constructed for this study, it should not be presented as though it were an established standardized measure; instead, its development and psychometric evaluation should be reported explicitly.

In the description of the Hostile Couple Interaction Scale, the manuscript similarly refers to "an eight-item self-report scale reflecting antagonistic interaction patterns frequently included in family stress and couple-process research" without clearly identifying the scale's origin. The authors should provide the name of the original instrument, authors, publication year, original response format, prior validity evidence, and any modifications made for the present sample. If the items were assembled from multiple sources or adapted specifically for this investigation, the manuscript should report content validation procedures and provide stronger evidence of construct validity beyond Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability.

In the description of the Family Resilience Assessment Scale, the manuscript states that "the instrument contains 54 items" and later indicates that "subscale scores were used as indicators of a latent resilience factor." This modeling decision requires additional psychometric justification. The authors should report exactly which FRAS subscales were used, whether all original subscales were retained, their individual reliability coefficients, and the standardized second-order factor loadings. Because the scale has a multidimensional structure, collapsing its domains into a single higher-order latent factor should be empirically demonstrated rather than assumed.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.

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