



Determining the contribution of attachment styles and coping styles in predicting the instability of married life with the mediating role of resilience in conflicted couples

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

Article type

Original research

Pages: 47-54

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Email:

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Article history:

Received: 2022/09/07

Revised: 2022/10/06

Accepted: 2022/10/12

Published online: 2023/06/10

Keywords:

Instability of married life, coping styles, attachment styles, resilience.

Background and Aim: Marital stability is considered a core index of continuity and durability of mutual independence, trust and friendship, and it is considered a predictor of marital happiness, and is influenced by many individual and interpersonal factors. Therefore, the aim of this research was to develop a structural model for predicting the instability of married life based on attachment styles and coping styles: the mediating role of resilience in conflicted couples. **Methods:** The descriptive research method was correlation type. The statistical population included couples who were referred to police counselling centres in Tehran in 2019, and 300 people were selected as a statistical sample using the available (voluntary) sampling method. The members of the statistical sample responded to Edwards et al.'s marital stability instability scale (1987), coping styles questionnaire by Lazarus and Folkman (1985) and Connor and Davidson resilience questionnaire (2003). **Results:** The findings showed that coping styles directly predict the instability of marital life in conflicted couples, and resilience had a significant mediating role in the relationship between emotion-oriented and problem-oriented coping styles and marital instability. In addition, the results showed resilience had a significant mediating role in the relationship between secure attachment style, insecure-avoidant attachment style and marital instability ($P < 0.01$). However, resilience did not have a significant mediating role in the relationship between bisexual attachment style and marital instability ($P > 0.01$). **Conclusion:** It can be concluded that teaching effective coping styles, paying attention to resilience and identifying attachment styles of couples can prevent injuries that threaten the stability of married life.



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How to Cite This Article:

Bijani, J., Hashemi, N., & Saadati Shamir, A. (2023). Determining the contribution of attachment styles and coping styles in predicting the instability of married life with the mediating role of resilience in conflicted couples. *Jayps*, 4(3): 47-54.

Introduction

Marriage is the origin of creating a family life cycle (Waring, 2013) and healthy and lasting marital relationships indicate a directed system and a system of shared beliefs (Kang & Jawswal, 2019). While the spread of marital instability in today's society has caused many concerns (Amunii Oyafunek, Fala and Salav, 2014), high levels of marital conflicts have shown a direct relationship with marital tensions and instability (Frosakis, 2010). Marital stability is known as an indicator of the nature of mutual identity and the sharing of responsibilities and obligations of the spouses' past marital period. Therefore, marital stability is considered as a nuclear continuity and durability index of independence, mutual trust and friendship, and the factor of stability is considered as a predictor of marital happiness and happiness (Kang and Jaswal 2019). Marital stability is defined as the duration of each couple's marriage without divorce or separation (Mersado et al., 2018). Marital instability occurs when one or both members of a couple think about divorce or separation, or take actions that tend to end the marriage (Halog and Richer, 2020). Effective factors in marriage instability include: personal growth separated from each other and different interests, inability to talk with each other, spouse's personal problems and insufficient attention (Hawkins, Willoughby, and Doherty, 2012); husband's irresponsibility, infidelity, violence, alcoholism, causal relatives, unemployment, age difference and polygamy (Musa, Kisui, and Otor, 2015); Social and cultural differences, psychological, economic, health, sexual and conflict factors (Asa & Nekan, 2017).

Instability of marriage originates from transitory intra-personal and interpersonal factors. In the meantime, one of the factors affecting marriage instability is attachment. Attachment is a stable emotional bond between two people, so that one of the parties tries to maintain proximity to the attachment concept and act in a way to make sure that the relationship continues (Flanagan, 1999, cited by Nazari et al., 2010). Attachment behavior is activated when a person has feelings such as fear, sadness, and illness, and makes a person seek or stay close to a familiar person (Zimmerman & Baker, 2010). In the attachment theory, it is emphasized that early childhood relationships shape attachment styles and influence a person's view of himself, others, and

the way interpersonal relationships are organized (Yarnouz-Yaben, 2010). Three attachment styles, secure, avoidant and ambivalent, have been described in childhood and have been confirmed in adulthood. People with a secure attachment style are comfortable in establishing intimate relationships, show a desire to receive support from others, have a positive image of themselves, and have positive expectations and expectations from others. People with avoidant attachment style are considered emotionally cold and suspicious. They find it difficult to trust others and feel worried when others get too close to them. People with an ambivalent attachment style see themselves as misunderstood and lacking in self-confidence, and worry about being abandoned or not truly loved by others. (Marcus, 2013). Studies based on developmental pathology also emphasize the relationship between early negative educational and family experiences and the problems of adults in performing developmental tasks and psychological problems and defective marital networks (Yang, Klasko and Wishar, 2013). One of the methods of coping with stress that has been the focus of researchers in relation to the quality of marital relationship is coping styles (Pitt and Kaiser, 2016). Stress as a psychological phenomenon is one of the important factors in the occurrence of many mental disorders (Solaz, Salten, and Garachaga, 2012). Therefore, in recent years, stress and strategies to deal with it, which has a significant relationship with the quality of life, have received much attention in different groups (Cheng, Ku, and Lee, 2012). Employees of military families and their families bear additional stress due to being in the military, among the reasons for their increased stress are factors such as the following: Participation in war and critical missions, successive migration, worry about loss, conflict between home and work environment, distance from family and lack of individual freedoms (Ahmadi et al., 2006). These coping methods, which are learned and acquired and genetic factors also play a role, may change and develop. The family plays an important role in children's practice of coping with stressful events (Yousfi, Ghorbani, and Azizi, 2018). Coping methods are cognitive and behavioral strategies used by people to control a controlling life situation, these coping methods are learned and acquired. Genetic factors also play a role in it, it may change and grow. Lazarus

and Folkman (1998) defined coping strategies as a set of behavioral and cognitive responses that aim to minimize the pressures of stressful situations. According to their opinion, there are two main methods of coping with stress, which are known as problem-oriented and emotion-oriented coping methods. Problem-oriented coping style refers to behaviors and cognitions whose purpose is to change the stressful situation or variable. This style has two components. The first component is preparation, in which information search and planning are done. The second component is called action, in which problem solving and active coping takes place and includes strategies such as collecting, organizing and interpreting information. Emotion-oriented coping style includes behaviors and cognitions in which the goal is to change a person's response to a stressor. Its strategies include thinking about oneself, daydreaming, and focusing on emotional aspects (Aghapour et al., 2018). Any coping strategies include many activities. However, most of them show an attempt to improve a difficult situation such as: Designing a plan and practical action (problem-oriented coping) or to regulate emotional helplessness such as seeking others for emotional support or reducing the severity of the situation cognitively (emotion-oriented coping). Effective coping strategies make a person's reaction to stress levels appropriate (Ahmadi & Mehrabi, 2020).

But the question raised here is, how do these factors affect the process of marital life instability? Mediation models seem to be able to provide a suitable explanation for this process. A mediation hypothesis tries to identify the mechanism underlying the observed relationship between two variables. One of the internal factors that is considered as a positive psychology construct is psychological resilience. In the past decades, the role of resilience in growth and health has been proven, and recently it has found a special place in the field of family (Hosseini & Hossein Chari, 2011). Block and Block (1980) in the definition of resilience say: It is a personality trait that helps a person adapt to environmental changes and stresses. They believe that people with the characteristic of psychological resilience can choose easier methods in life, because they develop problem-solving skills and show more resistance to stressful situations (Ogelman & Errol, 2015). Research results indicate that resilience is a

construct that is related to many aspects, including marriage and family therapy (Kris et al., 2015). The results of research regarding the relationship between resilience and the family and spouses' relationships indicate that resilience can predict marital satisfaction (Mikaili et al., 2012). Resilience helps individuals and spouses to be less affected by adverse events. Spouses who do not have the characteristic of resilience do not have the ability to adjust the adverse conditions and stresses caused by marital problems, which increases conflicts and marital dissatisfaction (Gatezadeh et al., 2014).

Finally, according to the mentioned contents and the increasing growth of marital conflicts and jeopardizing the family center, in addition to personal injuries, it will also lead to social injuries. Considering the difficult conditions that the families of police forces are facing and taking into account the fact that, based on the researcher's investigations, no research was found that predicted the instability of married life based on the variables of the present study. Therefore, the current research aims to answer the question whether the instability of married life can be explained in the form of a model based on attachment styles and coping styles: the mediating role of resilience in conflicted couples?

Method

The present study was a correlational descriptive study in terms of its applied purpose and descriptive research design, the statistical population of the study included all couples who referred to police counseling centers in Tehran in 2019. 300 people were selected as a statistical sample using available sampling method. Criteria for entering the research: informed consent to participate in the research; People who have been married for more than one year; free of any psychiatric disorders that do not require medication and psychotherapy sessions; One of the spouses should be an employee of the police force (Naja). Criteria for leaving the research: unwillingness to continue participating in the research; Distorted questionnaires.

Materials

1. Edwards et al.'s marital stability measurement tool (1987): The marriage instability index, which is a 14-question tool, was developed by Edwards et al. (1987) to measure marital instability and especially the susceptibility to divorce. This tool relies on the idea that both cognition and behavior should be taken into account in order to assess the instability and possible risk of divorce between

husband and wife. This scale comes in two parts, the first part, along with the measurement of several other risk factors of marriage which are mentioned in the second part, can increase the accuracy of the interviewer's prediction of the probability of divorce in the next three years of married life. In the scoring of this scale, the number of answers indicating the possibility of divorce is counted (I don't know answers are counted as yes). If a person's score is between 0 and 2, the probability of divorce in the next three years is equal to 22%, between 3-4, 26%, between 5-6, 31%, between 7-9, 38%. If it is more than ten, the probability of divorce in the next three years will be 43%. The reliability coefficient of this scale in the research of Yaripour (2000) quoted by Sanai Zakir (2007) was 0.70. This index has great predictive power. Its construct validity has been shown in several studies.

2. Adult Attachment Styles Questionnaire (AAQ): This questionnaire was compiled by Hazen and Shaver (1993) and includes two parts. In the first part, three secure, avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles are distinguished by 21 questions on a 5-point Likert scale (none, little, moderate, high, very high). In the second part, the subject determines his attachment style by choosing one of three options that describe three types of attachment with questions such as (I often worry that others will not value me as much as I value them). In the second part, the same descriptions are presented again, but this time the subject expresses his similarity with one of the descriptions by marking only one of them. The second part of the questionnaire is based on a categorical scale and its results are used to group the respondents' attachment styles. The reliability coefficient is reported as 0.79 and 0.73, respectively, through Cronbach's alpha and retest. The validity of the Big Year Attachment Questionnaire is satisfactory and significant (Crowell, Farley, and Shaver, 1999). In Iran, the reliability coefficient of this questionnaire was reported by Bashart (1379) using the retest method as 0.92.

3. Connor and Davidson (2003) Resilience Scale: The questionnaire was created by Carr and Davidson (2003). The psychometric properties of this scale have been performed in six groups, the general population, primary care patients, psychiatric outpatients, patients with generalized anxiety disorder and two groups of

post-traumatic stress patients. The producers of this scale are of the opinion that this questionnaire has been able to distinguish resilient people from non-resilient people in clinical and non-clinical groups, and it can be used in research and clinical situations. The original version of this scale was received from the producers themselves. This questionnaire has 25 items that are scored on a Likert scale between zero (completely false) and four (always true). The minimum resilience score of the subject in this scale is zero and his maximum score is 100. To determine the validity, first the correlation of each item with the total score of the category was calculated and then the factor analysis method was used. Calculating the correlation of each score with the total score showed that, except for item 3, the coefficients were between 0.79 and 0.80. In the next step, the scale items were subjected to factor analysis using the principal components method. After extracting these factors, based on the correlation matrix of the items, two KMO indices of the "Crowlit Bartlett" test were calculated. The value of KMO was 0.87 and the value of chi-square in Bartlett's test was 556.28, which both indicated the adequacy of the evidence for the coherence of the factor analysis. After this step, to determine the number of factors, the slope of the Scree graph line and the eigenvalue higher than one were used. The reliability and validity of the Persian form of the resilience scale has also been investigated and confirmed in preliminary studies of normal and patient samples. Regarding this research, according to the relevant table about the resilience variable, which included 25 questions, the Cronbach's alpha index of 0.86 is acceptable and confirms the reliability of the questionnaire. The validity of this construct has been confirmed by Basharat (2007). Meshalpour (2010) has shown that this construct has a relatively high reliability by correlating it with the psychological hardness scale by calculating a significant correlation coefficient of $r = 0.64$.

4. Lazarus-Folkman Coping Styles Questionnaire (CWQ): The coping styles questionnaire prepared by Lazarus and Folkman (1985) includes 66 items. These materials include eight problem-oriented and emotion-oriented coping methods for measuring matters, which are as follows. 1) Problem-oriented methods: seeking social support, taking responsibility, thoughtful problem solving,

positive reappraisal. 2) Emotion-oriented methods: confrontational coping, avoidance, self-restraint. The validity of the coping styles questionnaire has been evaluated by testing the internal consistency of the coping dimensions obtained by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The estimation of internal consistency of coping measures is generally in the lower limit of the common acceptable range. Lazarus and Folkman (1988) have reported internal consistency of 0.79 to 0.66 for each of the coping methods.

Implementation

The ethical considerations of the present study were as follows: All people received written information about the study and participated in the study if they wished. The subjects were assured that all information is confidential and will be used for research purposes. Data analysis was done in two parts, descriptive and

inferential. Descriptive statistics included frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics included structural equation models.

Results

The number of women participating in the research is equal to 150 (50%) and the number of men participating in the research is equal to 150 (50%). The average age of all participants is 31.55 with a standard deviation of 5.87. The average age of female participants in the research is 30.08 (with a standard deviation of 5.55) and the average age of male participants is 33.03 (with a standard deviation of 5.83). 53 of the participants had a degree lower than a diploma (17.7 percent), 144 had a diploma (48 percent), 73 had an associate's degree (24.3 percent), and 30 had a bachelor's degree (10 percent).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics related to research variables

Variable	Skewness		Kurtosis		Mean	SD
	Statistics	Error	Statistics	Error		
Resilience	.659	.141	.659	.141	36.4600	16.04306
Secure attachment	.021	.141	.021	.141	22.5967	6.67902
Avoidant insecure attachment	.176	.141	.176	.141	16.7300	5.43282
Ambivalent attachment	.250	.141	.250	.141	18.3600	6.02590
Problem-oriented coping strategy	.393	.141	.393	.141	31.1933	12.59144
Emotional coping strategy	.375	.141	.375	.141	27.7400	9.95067
Marital instability	.426	.141	.426	.141	18.2900	6.58461

Table (1) shows the mean, standard deviation, and other descriptive scores of the participants in each of the research variables. According to the

results reported in this table, it is clear that the dispersion distribution of all research variables are normal.

Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficients between predictor and mediator variables with dimensions and total score of marital instability

Row		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	Secure attachment	.438**	1	-.366**						
3	Avoidant insecure attachment	-.318**	-.366**	1						
4	Ambivalent attachment	-.276**	-.259**	.586**	1					
5	Problem-oriented coping style	.356**	.271**	-.223**	-.126*	1				
6	Exciting confrontational style	-.288**	-.235**	.293**	.256**	-.195**	1			

7	Resilience	.596**	.489**	-.202**	-.232**	.512**	-.375**	1		
10	Marital instability	-.405**	-.382**	.300**	.230**	-.335**	.255**	-.448**	.418**	.370**

** p<.01; * p<.05

Table (2) reports the Pearson correlation coefficients between research variables. According to the results reported in this table, it is clear that the relationship between all mediator and predictor variables with the total score of marital instability is statistically significant. That

is, the direct relationship between marital justice, family-work conflict, work-family conflict, problem-oriented coping strategy, emotion-oriented coping strategy with marital instability is significant.

Table 3. Direct standard regression coefficients of the assumed research model

	Sig	T	Error SD	Std coefficient
Resilience -> marital instability	-0.272	0.069	3.918	0.000
Secure attachment -> marital instability	-0.109	0.061	1.793	0.074
Avoidant insecure attachment -> marital instability	0.045	0.080	0.563	0.574
Ambivalent insecure attachment -> marital instability	0.015	0.060	0.255	0.799
Secure attachment -> resilience	0.248	0.048	5.191	0.000
Avoidant insecure attachment -> resilience	0.175	0.050	3.519	0.000
Ambivalent insecure attachment -> resilience	-0.086	0.048	1.772	0.077
Problem-oriented coping style -> resilience	0.311	0.049	6.368	0.000
Emotional coping style -> resilience	-0.183	0.044	4.168	0.000
Emotional coping style -> marital instability	-0.036	0.057	0.629	0.529
Problem-oriented coping style -> marital instability	-0.023	0.057	0.405	0.683

According to the findings reported in Table 3, it is clear that the size of the regression coefficient of resilience on marital instability is equal to -0.272, which is significant at the level of $P > 0.01$. This finding shows that resilience inversely affects marital instability. The findings of the structural model show that none of the attachment styles could significantly directly predict marital instability. On the other hand, two secure attachment styles ($B = 0.248$, $P < 0.01$) and avoidant insecure attachment style ($B =$

0.175, $P < 0.01$) significantly predicted resilience, and however, ambivalent insecure attachment style was not a significant predictor of resilience. The research findings showed that both problem-oriented and emotion-oriented coping styles significantly predict resilience. The regression coefficient of emotion-oriented coping style on resilience is inversely significant ($B = -0.183$, $P < 0.01$) and the regression coefficient of problematic coping style on resilience is equal to ($B = 0.311$, $P > 0.01$).

Table 4. Bootstrap test to investigate the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between coping styles and attachment styles with the mediating role of resilience

	RC	SD	T	P
Problem-oriented coping style -> Resilience -> Marital instability	-0.085	0.026	3.283	0.001

Emotion-oriented coping style -> Resilience -> Marital instability	0.050	0.017	2.953	0.003
Secure attachment -> Resilience -> Marital instability	-0.067	0.023	2.922	0.004
Insecure avoidant style -> resilience -> marital instability	-0.048	0.020	2.359	0.019
Ambivalent insecure style -> Resilience -> Marital instability	0.023	0.015	1.523	0.128

According to the findings reported in Table (4), it is clear that resilience has a significant mediating role in the relationship between emotion-oriented coping styles and marital instability ($B=-0.085$, $P>0.01$) ($B=-.085$; $P<.01$). Resilience had a significant mediating role in the relationship between problem-oriented coping style and marital instability ($B = -0.050$, $P < 0.01$). Resilience has a significant mediating role in the relationship between secure attachment style ($B = -0.048$, $P < 0.01$); Avoidant insecure attachment style ($B = -0.048$, $P < 0.01$) was associated with marital instability. However, resilience did not have a significant mediating role in the relationship between ambivalent attachment style and marital instability.

Conclusion

The findings showed that coping styles directly predict the instability of marital life in conflicted couples, and resilience had a significant mediating role in the relationship between emotion-oriented and problem-oriented coping styles and marital instability. In explaining the role of stress coping styles in the instability of married life, it can be said that coping skills are one of the important variables for facing stressful life conditions and an effort to increase a person's adaptation to the environment or an effort to prevent the occurrence of negative consequences of stressful life conditions. This becomes more concrete among couples, because in this area, instead of an individual, it is the interaction and confrontation of two people, both of whom can try to increase the level of compatibility. If this issue is realized, it is possible to talk about marital satisfaction in their lives, followed by an increase in stability and a decrease in instability. When couples face stressful life events and use emotional strategies such as escape, direct confrontation, distance, and self-control, these couples cope with psychological stress by crying, getting angry, and shouting. This style is sometimes revealed in the form of avoidant coping, which causes couples to act in order to adapt to stressful factors, by distancing themselves from it, or by focusing on their feelings, which has no result other than increasing conflicts and reducing marital satisfaction. Resilience and religious coping variables predict 43% of the variance of life satisfaction variable. The results were consistent

with the studies of Hosseini, Daulatabadi and Saadat (2015) and Besharat, Tashak, and Rezazadeh (2006). Resilience acts as a mediating variable in relation to coping styles of marital instability. Resilience is considered a form of immunity against threatening conditions and can improve a person's social ability during problems. Marital conflict is also considered a threatening condition; Therefore, couples who have high resilience are better able to overcome their problems and use problem-oriented coping styles in facing stressful life events, thus they do not allow their conflicts and differences to reach high levels and threaten the stability of their married life. Nemati et al. (2019) showed that the variables of resilience and religious coping predict 43% of the variance of the variable of satisfaction with life. The results were in line with the studies of Hosseini Dolatabadi and Saadat (2015), Motahari, Behzadpour and Sohrabi (2013), Bashart, Tashek and Rezazadeh (2006) and Navabinejad, Rostami and Parsakia (2023). The results showed that resilience had a significant mediating role in the relationship between secure attachment style, insecure avoidant attachment style and marital instability. However, resilience did not have a significant mediating role in the relationship between ambivalent attachment style and marital instability. According to Balbi et al. (1982), secure attachment strengthens coping skills, self-worth, and personal competence. Moreover, secure attachment reduces anxiety and increases the capacity to adapt to stress. Resilience as one of the protective factors that causes the adaptation of more effective people. Secure attachment provides the resilience needed to deal with many adverse events in the future as an adult without causing psychological damage. Carmen and Wingerhast (2012) showed that secure individuals even from low social class reported higher resilience and insecure individuals even from high social class reported lower resilience. At low levels, people with an anxious attachment style show confused and contradictory behaviors. This feature contrasts with resilience because resilient people expect to adapt and manage behavior in all situations, including crises. Therefore, the result obtained is quite remarkable that people with avoidant and anxious attachment style are not able to manage their behavior and as a result

experience more stress. In married life, these people do not have the ability to adapt to issues and problems and face the tensions of life. Therefore, the existence of problems in married life and the couple's inability to solve them will lead to conflicts and eventually instability of married life. Every research has limitations and problems, and the current research was not an exception to this rule, among the limitations that the researcher faced were: Since the current research was of the correlation type, it is unable to show the causal relationships between the variables; The participants of the present research were the employees of NAJA in Tehran and the results may not be generalizable due to local, regional, climatic and cultural conditions. Therefore, the external validity of the research is reduced and caution should be observed in generalizing the results to other jobs. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers, if possible, conduct causal research to find the cause and effect relationship between the variables of the present study. It is suggested that the present survey be conducted for couples of other occupations as well as NAJA employees in other geographical or cultural regions to compare the results with the current research. Finally, it is suggested that NAJA uses the capacities of psychologists and counselors in recruitment tests to improve the skills of employees and the necessary trainings to strengthen the family foundation of police force employees.

Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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