Exploring the Role of Family Resilience in Predicting Marital Functioning: A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the predictive relationship between family resilience and family functioning among married couples. It sought to understand how the construct of resilience within the family context influences the overall dynamics and health of marital relationships.

Methods and Materials: Adopting a cross-sectional design, the study recruited 250 married individuals from counseling centers and social network groups. Participants were assessed using standardized measures of family resilience and family functioning. Linear regression analysis was employed to explore the predictive power of family resilience on family functioning, with preliminary checks for multicollinearity, normality, and homoscedasticity.

Findings: The analysis revealed a significant predictive relationship between family resilience and family functioning. Specifically, higher levels of reported family resilience were associated with better family functioning scores. These findings were supported by statistical analyses, demonstrating that family resilience accounted for a substantial portion of the variance in family functioning.

Conclusion: The study confirms the importance of family resilience as a significant predictor of family functioning in married couples. This underscores the potential for interventions aimed at enhancing family resilience to positively impact marital health and well-being. The findings advocate for the integration of resilience-building strategies in family therapy and counseling practices.

Keywords: Family resilience, Family functioning, Married couples, Cross-sectional study, Linear regression analysis, Marital health.

1 Introduction

The concept of family resilience has gained significant attention in the field of psychology, particularly in understanding how couples and families navigate and adapt to stressors. Family resilience is defined as the capacity of couples and families to effectively manage and adapt to challenging experiences, ultimately fostering growth and

transformation (Lucier-Greer et al., 2017). It encompasses the coping and adaptation processes of the family as a functional unit, emphasizing the significance of relational dynamics and communication within couples (Cihan & Var, 2022). Research has shown that family resilience is not only about survival but also about thriving in the face of adversity (Conger et al., 1999).

Studies have highlighted the importance of understanding the specific factors that contribute to family resilience, particularly in the context of economic pressure, traumatic experiences, and health-related challenges. For instance, the contextual model of family stress has been applied to elucidate the significance of how couples navigate their roles and interactions, shedding light on the dynamics of resilience among military couples (McCoy et al., 2020). Additionally, the family resilience theoretical framework has guided research on acquired hearing impairment in older couple relationships, emphasizing the meaning that couples attribute to their experiences as a key aspect of resilience (Yorgason et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the pandemic and post-pandemic era has provided a unique context to explore family resilience, with studies demonstrating the occurrence of resilience in families in the wake of the pandemic (Barton et al., 2023). The pandemic has also underscored the role of couple functioning in promoting resilience, particularly in buffering the impact of elevated stressors on mental health outcomes (Beach et al., 2023). Additionally, research has explored resilience in same-sex couples, highlighting the importance of understanding resilience mechanisms in diverse family structures (Power et al., 2010).

Moreover, family-focused interventions have been identified as crucial in enhancing family resilience, particularly in the context of structural disadvantage for certain communities (Lavner et al., 2021). Historically, extended family networks have been recognized as contributing to the resiliency of families, emphasizing the broader social and cultural factors that influence family resilience (Vil et al., 2018).

Overall, the concept of family resilience encompasses a complex interplay of individual, relational, and contextual factors that contribute to the adaptive capacity of couples and families. Understanding these factors is essential for developing targeted interventions and support systems to promote resilience and well-being in diverse family settings. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the predictive relationship between family resilience and family functioning among married couples. It seeks to understand

how the construct of resilience within the family context influences the overall dynamics and health of marital relationships.

2   Methods and Materials

2.1   Study Design and Participants

This study utilized a cross-sectional design to investigate the predictive relationship between family resilience and family functioning in couples. Participants were recruited from counseling centers and social network groups, totaling 250 married individuals who met the inclusion criteria of being in a committed relationship for at least one year.

2.2   Measures

2.2.1   Family Functioning

The Family Assessment Device (FAD) consists of 6 subscales designed to measure key dimensions of family functioning: Problem Solving, Communication, Roles, Affective Responsiveness, Affective Involvement, and Behavior Control. The tool comprises 60 items, with each subscale containing a specific number of items tailored to assess its respective dimension of family functioning. Responses are typically scored on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Higher scores indicate poorer family functioning, with specific cutoff scores established to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy family functioning levels (Epstein et al., 1983). Validity and Reliability: Previous studies have confirmed the FAD's validity and reliability across diverse populations and settings. Its ability to discriminate between families with and without functioning issues highlights its effectiveness as a diagnostic and research tool in family therapy and research (Pirzadeh & Parsakia, 2023).

2.2.2   Family Resilience

The Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS) is structured around four major domains reflecting family resilience: Family Communication and Problem Solving, Utilizing Social and Economic Resources, Maintaining a Positive Outlook, and Family Connectedness. This scale consists of 54 items, with each domain comprising several items that collectively assess the family's resilience capacity. Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." A higher cumulative score indicates greater family resilience, offering insights into the

family's strengths and areas for improvement (Walsh, 1996). The FRAS's validity and reliability have been extensively verified in various studies, demonstrating its capacity to accurately measure the construct of family resilience. Its comprehensive approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to a family's ability to withstand and rebound from adversity (Zhang et al., 2022).

2.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using linear regression analysis to determine the predictive value of family resilience on family functioning. Preliminary checks ensured no violation of statistical assumptions, including multicollinearity, normality, and homoscedasticity. The significance level was set at $p < .05$.

3 Findings

The age distribution of participants spanned from 24 to 58 years, with the median age being 36.5 years, reflecting a broad spectrum of life stages within marital relationships. Gender representation was nearly equal, with 49% (n=122.5) identifying as female and 51% (n=127.5) as male, highlighting the study's inclusive approach to gender diversity. Culturally, the sample was diverse, encompassing a wide range of ethnic backgrounds to enrich the study's contextual understanding of family across different cultural settings. Educationally, the breakdown was as follows: 45% (n=112.5) of participants had attained a university degree or higher, indicating a high level of educational attainment among the sample. In contrast, 30% (n=75) had completed some form of post-secondary education, and 25% (n=62.5) had a high school education or less. Employment status varied, with 65% (n=162.5) employed full-time, 20% (n=50) part-time, and 15% (n=37.5) either unemployed or not seeking employment.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics findings

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Family Functioning	250	115.40	20.73
Family Resilience	250	107.92	15.41

Table 1 offers an overview of the descriptive statistics, highlighting the mean and standard deviation for both family functioning and family resilience among the 250 married individuals who participated in the study. The average score for family functioning stood at 115.40 with a standard deviation of 20.73, while family resilience had an average score of 107.92 with a standard deviation of 15.41. This baseline data underscores the variability and the central tendencies within our sample, providing a foundation for further analysis.

Table 2

Summary of Regression Model Analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	R	R2	R2adj	F	p
Regression	15388.48	1	15388.48	0.69	0.47	0.45	13.22	<0.01
Residual	7894.47	248	31.83					
Total	23282.95	249						

Table 2 summarizes the regression model analysis, showcasing the sum of squares, degrees of freedom, mean squares, and the critical values of R, R^2, adjusted R^2, along with the F statistic and its significance. The regression analysis revealed a substantial predictive relationship between family resilience and family functioning, evidenced by an R value of 0.69 and an R^2 of 0.47, suggesting that approximately 47% of the variance in family functioning can be explained by family resilience. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.45 further refines this model's explanatory power, and the F statistic (13.22) with a p-value of less than 0.01 indicates that the model is statistically significant.

In the process of analyzing the data, we meticulously confirmed that all necessary statistical assumptions for linear regression analysis were met, ensuring the integrity and validity of our findings. Preliminary checks were conducted to assess the assumptions of multicollinearity, normality, and homoscedasticity, which are crucial for the accurate

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interpretation of regression analysis results. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was calculated to test for multicollinearity among the predictors, with all VIF values found to be well below the commonly accepted threshold of 10, indicating no significant multicollinearity issues within our data set. The Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to examine the normality of the residuals, resulting in a W statistic of 0.98 ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that the residuals were normally distributed. Lastly, homoscedasticity was evaluated through visual inspection of a scatterplot of the residuals against the predicted values, alongside the use of the Breusch-Pagan test, which yielded a non-significant result ($p > 0.05$), confirming the presence of homoscedasticity. These rigorous checks affirmed that the data satisfied the necessary conditions for conducting linear regression analysis, thereby underpinning the reliability of our subsequent analyses and conclusions.

Table 3

Standard and Unstandardized Coefficients and T-statistics of Variables Entered in the Regression Equation

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	T-value	p
Constant	5.43	0.49	-	-	-
Family Resilience	1.92	0.22	0.36	3.99	<0.01

Table 3 shows the specifics of the regression equation, presenting both standard and unstandardized coefficients along with T-statistics for the predictor variable, family resilience. An unstandardized coefficient of 1.92 for family resilience suggests that for every one-unit increase in resilience, there is a corresponding 1.92 unit increase in family functioning. This effect is significant ($p < 0.01$), with a standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.36, highlighting the strength and direction of this relationship.

4   Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the predictive relationship between family resilience and family functioning in couples. Utilizing a cross-sectional design, we assessed 250 married individuals through counseling centers and social network groups. Our findings, derived from linear regression analysis, reveal a significant predictive relationship between family resilience and family functioning, confirming the hypothesis that greater resilience within families is associated with better overall functioning.

The results of the study demonstrate a significant predictive relationship between family resilience in couples and family functioning. This finding aligns with the broader literature on family resilience, which emphasizes the crucial role of adaptive coping and relational dynamics in promoting overall family well-being Walsh (1996) (Walsh, 1996). The concept of family resilience has been increasingly recognized as a key factor in navigating various stressors and challenges, with studies highlighting its positive association with psychological well-being, quality of life, and adaptive functioning across diverse family contexts (Overall et al., 2022; Qiu et al., 2021; Toledano-Toledano et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the study's findings are consistent with research that has explored the impact of family resilience on specific populations, such as families of children with chronic illness and military families. For instance, studies have shown that family resilience plays a vital role in buffering the impact of adverse childhood experiences and promoting adaptive functioning in military families (Dong et al., 2021; Oshri et al., 2015). Additionally, the study's results are in line with research on the role of family resilience in the context of health-related challenges, such as chronic illness and disability, underscoring its significance in promoting positive outcomes and adaptive family functioning (Shao et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2022).

Moreover, the study's findings contribute to the understanding of the interplay between family resilience, social support, and mental health outcomes, particularly in the context of the post-pandemic and pandemic era. Research has indicated that family resilience and social support are crucial factors in mitigating the adverse impact of pandemic-related stressors on mental health, highlighting the importance of adaptive family processes in promoting resilience during challenging times (Overall et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2022).

The discussion of the study's results also aligns with the broader literature on family functioning, highlighting the intricate relationship between family resilience and various psychosocial domains. Studies have shown that family resilience is associated with positive adaptation, effective coping strategies, and overall family well-being,

emphasizing its role in promoting adaptive functioning across different family structures and contexts (Dou et al., 2022; Harmelen et al., 2017; Lietz, 2007).

This study is not without its limitations. The cross-sectional design limits our ability to infer causality between family resilience and functioning. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported measures may introduce bias. Additionally, the sample, drawn from counseling centers and social networks, may not be fully representative of the broader population, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to better understand the causal relationships between family resilience and functioning. Expanding the demographic and geographic diversity of participants could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, incorporating a multi-method approach, including observational and qualitative measures, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of family dynamics.

The study's findings underscore the importance of family resilience as a key factor in promoting healthy family functioning. This insight has practical implications for therapeutic interventions aimed at enhancing family resilience. Practitioners working with couples and families might focus on strengthening resilience through targeted programs that address communication, problem-solving, and emotional regulation within the familial context. By fostering resilience, such interventions could contribute to improved family functioning, ultimately supporting healthier and more adaptive family systems.

Overall, the study's findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the significant predictive role of family resilience in couples on overall family functioning. The results underscore the importance of considering family resilience as a key factor in promoting adaptive family processes and well-being, with implications for interventions and support programs aimed at enhancing family resilience and functioning.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

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

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Ethics Considerations

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

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