Investigating the Mediating Role of Positive and Negative Religious Coping in the Relationship between Resilience and Hardiness among Female-Headed Households

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Quantitative Study

Abstract

Background: The quality of life (QOL) experienced by women heads of households can be impacted in various aspects due to the stressful factors they encounter. These factors include economic, social, physical, psychological, legal, and family issues. The purpose of the current research was to investigate the mediating role of positive and negative religious coping in the relationship between resilience and hardiness among women-headed households.

Methods: This research was a descriptive-correlative research with structural equation modeling (SEM) design. The statistical population of the study consisted of all women heads of households who belonged to the Tehran Welfare Organization, Iran, between July and October 2023. The sampling method was chosen 297 based on the cluster method. Research instruments included the Religious Coping Activities Scale (RCOAS), Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and the Hardiness Questionnaire (KHQ). SPSS software was used to perform descriptive statistics and SmartPLS software was used to analyze data trends and standard coefficients.

Results: The direct effect of hardiness on resilience (β = 0.29, P < 0.01), hardiness on positive religious coping (β = 0.83, P < 0.01), hardiness on negative religious coping (β = -0.75, P < 0.01), Furthermore, hardiness also had a significant negative influence on negative religious coping (β = −0.75, P <0.01). Similarly, positive religious coping showed a significant direct effect on resilience (β = 0.32, P < 0.01). In contrast, negative religious adjustment has a significantly negative effect on resilience (β=-0.403, P<0.01).

Conclusion: Women heads of the household are exposed to psychological problems due to constant and chronic pressures. Positive religious coping can improve these women by improving their hardiness and resilience.

Keywords: Positive and negative religious coping; Resilience; Hardiness; Female heads of household

Introduction

In Iran, official data indicate a growing trend in the number of women heads of households in recent decades; therefore, according to censuses, women heads of households constitute 12.5% of Iranian household heads (Dorahaki & Noubahkt, 2021). Women heads of households are forced to play multiple roles in society, which are often in conflict with each other, and this problem causes them to face physical, psychological, economic, communication, and other problems (Shiyani & Zare, 2020). These difficulties encompass personal issues such as feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities, experiencing conflicts between different roles, ending a romantic relationship, and psychological problems (Yoosefi Lebni, Mohammadi Gharehghani et al., 2020). Most of the women heads of the household do not have the necessary abilities and capabilities such as literacy, higher education, and physical health to get out of poverty, and this severely limits their choices for life (Ghaderi, Karimi et al., 2022). Women who are heads of households also encounter family problems such as reduced independence, family tension, continuation of poverty, and reproductive issues within the family. Furthermore, they confront social problems such as being stigmatized for not receiving care, experiencing social insecurity, feeling socially isolated, and social rejection (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2020).

A characteristic that can help alleviate the adverse impacts of stress in women heads of households and enable them to focus more on positive life events is hardiness (Eskandarnejad, Hoseinzadeh, & Mollaei Zangi, 2022). Hardiness encompasses several qualities, including a strong sense of curiosity, a belief in change as a natural process, the recognition that any significant stimulus can lead to growth and progress, and the ability to endure and resist. These distinct characteristics can assist in adapting to stressful life events (Parvaneh, Khaftan et al., 2020). Ultimately, hardiness involves accurately perceiving one's surroundings and making favorable assessments about oneself (Golchin, Mirhashemi, & Pasha Sharifi, 2021). According to research, there is a significant difference in psychological hardiness and its various aspects among women heads of households compared with regular women (Aflakifard, Ghalehnoei, & Ramezan Khani, 2022).

In Iranian society, assuming the role of household head presents various economic and social difficulties for women, which can have psychological, emotional, communication, and personal repercussions (Hosseini Tabaghdehi, 2022). These circumstances often decrease women's resilience, which refers to their ability to endure stress and adverse situations (Gashghaei, Delavar, Khalatbari, & Shaeiabadi, 2022). Resilience is commonly described as the capacity, process, or result of effectively adapting to challenging circumstances. Essentially, it is a characteristic that enables individuals to grow and maintain strength when confronted with hardships, such as the death of a family member (Hasani, Rezazadeh et al., 2021). Women heads of households with higher levels of resilience demonstrate better psychological adjustment (Li, 2023). Parvaneh et al. proposed that resilience contributes to an enhanced quality of life (QOL) and increased psychological fortitude among female caregivers (Parvaneh, Khaftan et al., 2020). Moreover, according to Li (2023), bereaved women who display internal protective factors of resilience, such as hardiness, resilience, tolerance, and effective seeking of social support, are better equipped to cope with their loss (Li, 2023).

Pargament et al.'s research suggests that an individual's level of religiousness is closely linked to the methods of adaptation they employ, with individuals who possess a greater degree of religious spirituality using more religious adaptation

techniques (Gholamzadeh, Dehghanrad, Pasyar, Zarshenas, Kargar, & Magharei, 2018). Similarly, authors demonstrate a significant positive correlation between positive religious coping and the psychological well-being of women household heads, whereas negative religious coping exhibited a negative relationship with their psychological well-being (Nikmansh & Kalantari, 2017). Spirituality and religious coping strategies can enhance adaptability potential and the sense of support from a higher power, ultimately bolstering resilience (Nemati, Imanzadeh et al., 2019). Moreover, positive religious coping exhibits a positive and significant relationship with psychological hardiness, whereas negative religious coping exhibits a negative and significant relationship with psychological hardiness (Momenjoo, Rabbani et al., 2021). Furthermore, the significance of resilient structures and religious conflicts as coping strategies for managing difficult life circumstances is essential (Almurumudhe, Mahdad, Abdulkadhim Johni, & Yousefi, 2024); Godarzi, & Khojaste, 2020); Mahvash, Yamini, & Mahdian, 2024); Safikhani, 2022). Thus, this study examined whether positive and negative religious confrontation influences the hardiness and resilience of women household heads (Figure 1).

Methods

Design study and participants: This research was descriptive-correlative research with structural equation modeling (SEM) design. The statistical population of the research included all women heads of households covered by the Welfare Organization of Tehran City, Iran, in the number of 1574, between July and October 2023. The sampling method was chosen based on the cluster method. Sampling was conducted in such a way that, first, a list of all women heads of households covered by the Welfare Organization of Tehran City was prepared. In the next step, 14 districts in Tehran City were identified, and women heads of households were randomly selected from among them. Randomization was performed by the authors, and the participants were selected using the throwing method. In the next step, the research community was determined on the basis of the criteria of entry and exit in the research. All women heads of households with files in the Welfare Organization of Tehran City were selected, and other women heads of households were excluded from the study. Likewise, all women heads of households who did not want to participate in the study were excluded. The sampling method was conducted in such a way that, first, the necessary permits were obtained from the university for research, and in the next step, it was coordinated with the Welfare Organization of Tehran City. In the following, 3 people from the cases were removed from the research due to not answering more than 10 questions of the questionnaires, and
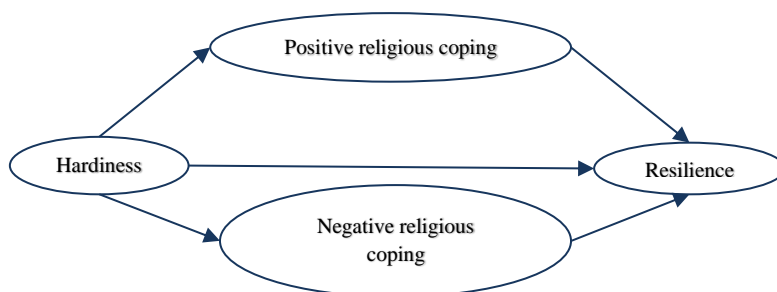

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the research

297 people participated in the research and the data of 297 people were analyzed. Four variables of positive and negative religious coping, hardiness, and resilience were measured for each member of the sample.

Sample Size: The sample size was determined according to the number of research variables and the statistical model. The number of SEM parameters was calculated according to the number of direct paths, exogenous variables, and error variances. According to Loehlin and Beaujean (2001), the number of paths and variables (250-350 participants) is sufficient to test the proposed model and research hypotheses (Momenyan, Alhashemi and Salimi 2020).

Instruments and variable

Religious Coping Activities Scale (RCOAS): This questionnaire was created by Pargament et al. (2000) with the aim of evaluating people's religious coping with negative and positive events in life, and its validity and reliability have been confirmed by the researcher (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The Pargament Religious Coping Questionnaire (RCOPE) has 100 questions and 17 subscales. This questionnaire is a short form and has 14 questions. At the end, the person's scores on the scale are added together and the total score is calculated for the person. This questionnaire was scored on a 4-point Likert scale. In general, this questionnaire is divided into two components: positive and negative religious coping, each of which has seven items. The score of each component is placed in the range of 7 to 28. A person's higher scores in each component indicate higher positive and negative religious coping in the respondent, whereas lower scores indicate less positive and negative religious coping in the respondent. The reliability of this scale in Iran using Cronbach's alpha test in one studies has been found to be 0.88 and 0.9, respectively (Keyhani, Taghvaei et al., 2015). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.793.

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC): The CD-RISC was created by Connor and Davidson (2003) with the aim of evaluating people's resilience, and its validity and reliability have been confirmed by the researcher (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982). This scale includes 25 items, each of which is scored on a five-point Likert scale from zero (completely false) to four (always true). At the end, the person's scores on the scale are added together and the total score is calculated for the person. The range of scores of people in the test is between 0 and 100. Higher scores indicate greater resilience in the subject. The reliability of this scale in Iran using Cronbach's alpha test is equal to 0.669 (Keyhani, Taghvaei et al. 2015). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire for positive and negative coping was 0.917 and 0.912, respectively.

Kobasa Hardiness Questionnaire: Kobasa's Hardiness Questionnaire (1982) was created with the aim of evaluating the level of hardiness of people (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982), and its validity and reliability have been confirmed by the researcher (Hakimi, Khosropour, & Khojasteh Chatroudi, 2021). This scale includes 20 items, each of which is scored on a four-point Likert scale from zero (never) to three (often). At the end, the person's scores on the scale are added together and the total score is calculated for the person. The range of scores of people in the test is between 0 and 60. Higher scores indicate more hardiness of the subject. Cronbach's alpha obtained from Kobasa et al. is 0.81 (Kobasa et al., 1982). The reliability of this scale in Iran is 0.91 using Cronbach's alpha test (Dehestani, Mahdavi, & Abdollahi, 2019). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.981 for this questionnaire.

Analysis: In the present study, the structural model analysis method was used using SmartPLS 4 software. Similarly, SPSS software (version 27, IBM Corporation,

Armonk, NY, USA) was used to perform descriptive statistics. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check the normality of the distribution of the research variables and this test was significant for the research variables. Similarly, Sobel test was used to check the significance of the mediator variable.

Ethics: To comply with the ethical principles, before the implementation of the questionnaires, a willingness to cooperate form was taken from the participants in the research, and there was no obligation to participate in the research and continue it. They were told that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. It was also explained to them that these tests did not contain identity information. It should be noted that this study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Islamic Azad University, Tehran Branch (IR.IAU.TB.REC.1402.104).

Results

In this study, the participants were categorized into three age groups: 20 to 30 years, 31 to 40 years, and 41 years and older. The distribution of participants in these groups was 41.1%, 36.4%, and 22.6%, respectively. Table 1 displays the mean scores of positive religious coping, negative religious coping, hardiness, and resilience as 19.24 ± 6.06, 19.61 ± 6.44, 35.54 ± 15.57, and 54.48 ± 23.95, respectively.

According to table 2, the research variables had a significant relationship with each other ($P < 0.01$).

Based on the results presented in table 3 and figures 2 and 3, all path coefficients associated with the final model were significant. When analyzing the standardized coefficients in table 3, it is clear that the direct effect of hardiness on resilience was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.29$, $P < 0.01$). It is also worth mentioning the significant direct influence of hardiness on the positive approach to religion ($\beta = 0.83$, $P < 0.01$). Furthermore, hardiness also had a significant negative influence on negative religious coping ($\beta = -0.75$, $P < 0.01$).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variables	Groups	n (%)
Age (year)	20-30	122 (41.1)
	31-40	108 (36.4)
	41 and up	67 (22.6)
Education	Diploma	121 (40.7)
	Bachelor's degree	62 (20.9)
	Master's degree	69 (23.2)
	Doctoral degree	45 (15.2)
Number of children	1-2	182 (61.3)
	3-4	108 (36.4)
	5 and up	7 (2.4)
Income level (Toman)	1-5 million	27 (9.1)
	6-10 million	191 (64.3)
	11-15 million	69 (23.2)
	16 million and up	10 (3.4)
Marital status	Divorced	67 (22.6)
	Disabled or sick husband	153 (51.5)
	The husband is dead	77 (25.9)
	Mean ± SD	**Minimum-maximum**
Positive religious coping	19.24 ± 6.06	8-28
Negative religious coping	19.61 ± 6.44	8-28
Hardiness	35.54 ± 15.57	10-52
Resilience	54.48 ± 23.95	20-89

SD: Standard deviation

Table 2. Correlation matrix between research variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	P-value
Positive religious coping	-				< 0.001
Negative religious coping	-0.832[*]	-			< 0.001
Hardiness	0.830[*]	-0.752[*]	-		< 0.001
Resilience	0.899[*]	-0.890[*]	0.861[*]	-	< 0.001

[*]Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Similarly, positive religious coping showed a significant direct effect on resilience (β = 0.32, P < 0.01). In contrast, negative religious adjustment had a significantly negative effect on resilience (β = -0.403, P < 0.01). Therefore, these results support the structural model used in this study.

As it is clear from table 4, the reliability and validity of the model have been confirmed. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the variables was higher than 0.7. The composite reliability (CR) of these variables was also higher than 0.7. Similarly, convergent validity was also checked using the average variance extracted (AVE) index. The minimum value of AVE should be 0.5, which means that the latent variable in question explains at least 50% of the variance of its observables. Since its value is higher than 0.5 for research variables, it can be concluded that the validity of the model is confirmed.

Discussion

The present study focused on the mediating role of positive and negative religious coping on the hardiness and resilience of women household heads. Research findings show that the relationship between positive religious coping and hardiness is positive among women household heads. The association between positive religious coping and resilience among women household heads was also positive. On the other hand, the negative variables of religious coping were negatively related to hardiness and resilience. This means that the relationship between these variables is inverse. The relationship between the variables of hardiness and resilience was also positive. The results of this research regarding positive and negative religious coping and hardiness among women household heads are implicitly consistent with previous research (Mehrgan, Asadi Majareh, & Moghtader, 2022; Mohammad Karimi, Talepasand, & Rahimian Bogar, 2023).

Additionally, according to a study, there is a positive and significant correlation between positive religious coping and psychological resilience. Conversely, there is a negative and significant correlation between negative religious coping and psychological resilience (Jafari, Marzband et al., 2022). Another study demonstrated that engaging in religious practices positively predicted an individual's psychological hardiness and level of resilience (Tadayoni, Sharbaf, & Moeenizadeh, 2021). From the explanation above, it can be inferred that individuals who adopt a negative religious coping style perceive fear of punishment and rejection from God.

Table 3. Standard research coefficients in general

Relationship of variables	Path coefficient	P-value	T-value	Result
Hardiness-resilience	0.29	< 0.001	8.620	Confirmation
Hardiness-positive religious coping	0.83	< 0.001	56.360	Confirmation
Hardiness-negative religious coping	-0.75	< 0.001	29.270	Confirmation
Positive religious coping-resilience	0.32	< 0.001	6.434	Confirmation
Negative religious coping-resilience	-0.40	< 0.001	9.283	Confirmation

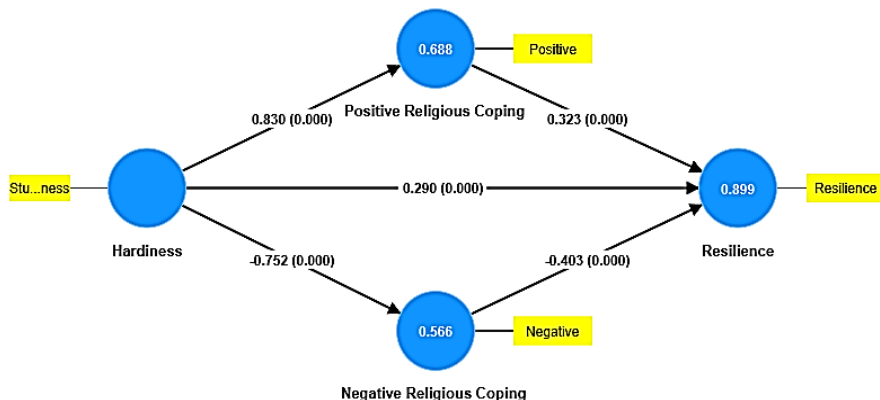In this research, the researcher set the bootstrap value to 500.

Figure 2. Path coefficients between variables and significance level

They view God as a source of pain and punishment rather than love and affection. On the other hand, positive religious coping is characterized by a romantic relationship with God, a sense of spiritual connection with others, belief in God's forgiveness, recognition of purpose in the world, and ultimately, a positive perspective of creation (Jafari, Marzband et al., 2022).

Concerning another finding from the research, specifically the impact of religious confrontation on the resilience of women who are heads of households, this study aligns itself implicitly with previous research (Sadeghi & Rahimipour, 2017; Ramazani & Hejazi, 2020; Momenjoo, Rabbani et al., 2021). Additionally, a separate study has indicated a significant correlation between resilience and its various components and religious coping and its associated components (Momenjoo, Rabbani et al., 2021). Furthermore, another study has established a direct and substantial relationship between positive and negative religious coping and resilience (Jenaabadi & Javadifar, 2022).

Based on the explanation provided, it can be asserted that resilience increases as positive emotions accumulate over time, triggering positive thoughts. This improvement in problem-solving abilities ultimately leads to an enhancement in psychological well-being and resilience.
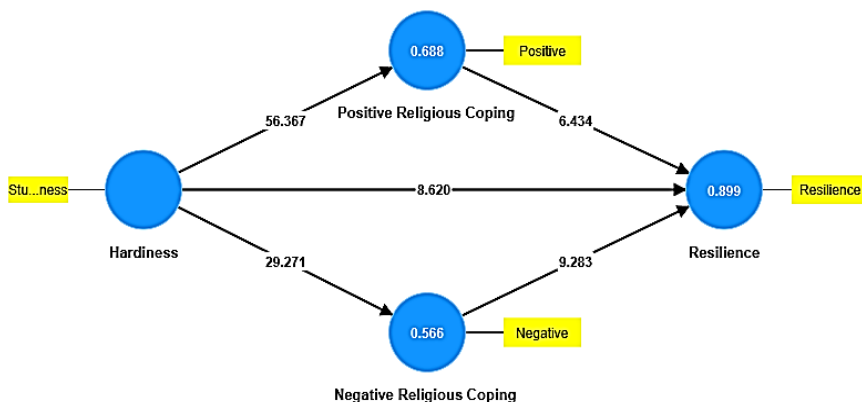

Figure 3. T-value between variables and significance level

Table 4. Reliability and validity of the model

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	
Positive religious coping	0.917	0.928	0.77	
Negative religious coping	0.912	0.938	0.79	
Hardiness	0.981	0.987	0.67	
Resilience	0.793	0.882	0.66	
Investigating divergent validity by Fornell-Larcker method				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Positive religious coping	0.870	-	-	-
Negative religious coping	-0.831	0.880	-	-
Hardiness	0.863	-0.875	0.818	-
Resilience	0.795	-0.779	0.799	0.810

AVE: Average variance extracted

By bolstering the resilience of women heads of households, they are motivated to confront life challenges and expand their skills and capabilities, rather than merely accepting a certain level of growth (Ramazani & Hejazi, 2020).

Findings in this research are aligned implicitly with previous studies when considering the relationship between hardiness and resilience (Sadeghi & Rahimipour, 2017; Hosseini Tabaghdehi, 2022; Jenaabadi & Javadifar, 2022). Additionally, a study demonstrated a positive and significant correlation between psychological hardiness and resilience among the partners of drug addicts (Jenaabadi & Javadifar, 2022). Similarly, another study found that resilience led to a substantial improvement in the average scores of QOL components and psychological hardiness in female caretakers (Aflakifard et al., 2022). To explain this finding, it should be noted that individuals with high mental hardiness tend to perceive anxiety-provoking situations as more positive, manageable, and easily surmountable by employing mental strategies and maintaining a positive attitude. Consequently, mental hardiness serves as a favorable psychological trait that can aid in the prevention of psychological issues, including those faced by women household heads (Gashghaei et al., 2022).

The self-reporting tools used in the present study are one of its drawbacks. Due to the potential bias associated with these instruments, participants may respond with a subjective bias. Additionally, the lack of cooperation from numerous women heads of household is another constraint of the current research.

The study focused on women who are the heads of households and are recipients of welfare assistance in Tehran City. It is advised that researchers increase the size of the sample and incorporate different cities to accommodate possible disparities in living conditions. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the research, it is challenging to establish causality. However, it is necessary to acknowledge the role of positive and negative religious coping in influencing the resilience and perseverance of these women. It is suggested that the Welfare Organization and Relief Committee prioritize the empowerment and psychological resilience of women heads of households through educational and cultural initiatives. These women will gain crucial skills and strategies to effectively manage their daily lives and enhance their mental well-being through the execution of these initiatives.

Conclusion

The findings of this research revealed that positive and negative religious coping played a significant role in influencing the resilience and hardiness of women heads of households. These women face ongoing and long-term pressures, which often

result in psychological challenges. It is recommended that future studies incorporate structured or semi-structured interviews alongside questionnaires to gather data and measure outcomes. Overall, incorporating positive religious coping strategies can enhance the resilience and hardiness of these women. Hence, it is advisable to offer training workshops for them and their families to empower them and mitigate potential future problems.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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