Stress and Adaptation among Iranian Families: A Multisystem Model of Personal, Couple, Family, and Work System

This research identifies relationships between stress and adaptation/satisfaction among Iranian families at four system levels: the personal, couple, family and work. Analysis of data from 147 Iranians, including 58 men and 89 women, revealed that stress is negatively related to adaptation/satisfaction at all four areas of life (personal, couple, family, and work). The findings also revealed that couple and family coping resources (problem solving & communication) and couple and family systems (cohesion & flexibility) are highly correlated. Contrary to what were hypothesized, Iranian men and women did not significantly differ with respect to personal and work stress. There were no significant gender effects for personal, couple, family, and work satisfaction, communication, problem solving, cohesion, or flexibility.

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ABSTRACT

This research identifies relationships between stress and adaptation/satisfaction among Iranian families at four system levels: the personal, couple, family and work. Analysis of data from 147 Iranians, including 58 men and 89 women, revealed that stress is negatively related to adaptation/satisfaction at all four areas of life (personal, couple, family, and work). The findings also revealed that couple and family coping resources (problem solving & communication) and couple and family systems (cohesion & flexibility) are highly correlated. Contrary to what were hypothesized, Iranian men and women did not significantly differ with respect to personal and work stress. There were no significant gender effects for personal, couple, family, and work satisfaction, communication, problem solving, cohesion, or flexibility. The expected gender differences in Middle East couple and family relationships were not found.

Iran is a country with a controversial recent history. This is mainly due to the socio-political changes following the Iranians' Islamic revolution in 1979, the antagonistic relationship between Iran and the United States since that time, and eight years of war from 1980 to 1988 between Iran and Iraq. There is little research, however, on Iranian families apart from information generally available on Iranian life. This information comes from sources such as news reports in the United States media; views espoused by outside observers, and some scanty research data studying small segments of the population. Iranian family stress and family adaptation have not been studied systematically, other than in research on Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) among victims of Iran-Iraq war (Izadi, 1991; Dezhkam & Sohanian, 1991).

The goal of this research is to identify possible relationships between stress and adaptation among Iranian families at four system levels: the personal, couple, family and work systems. Greater understanding is sought about the universal and possibly cross-cultural perspective on the relationship between stress and adaptation at four levels (personal, couple, family and work). It is believed that stress is a combination of personal and contextual factors including marital, family, and work stress.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Stress research in the social science has resulted in extensive investigations of primarily of individuals. Family stress researchers have proposed theoretical models to explain the major components of the stress process. These include Hill's ABCX model of family stress (1949, 1958), McCubbin and Thompson's (1988) Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response Model (FAAR), Boss's (1988) family stress theory and cultural context, Lazarus et al. (1985) stress research and Pearlin et al. (1978, 1981) studies of stress, appraisal and adaptation. Since there is no culturally or contextually specific theoretical model to explain the major components of stress for Iranian families, the Multisystem Assessment of Stress and Health, (MASH), (Olson & Stewart, 1990) which

has combined the elements of previous family and individual stress models and also has cross-cultural applicability, is used in this research study.

MASH Model: A Biopsychosocial Approach

Multisystem Assessment of Stress and Health is an integrated model that has four system levels: personal, couple, family, and work systems. The model has four main components: stress, coping resources, system types, and adaptation. The coping resources and system types are mediating variables between stress and adaptation. The MASH model focuses on stress at four levels, coping resources at four levels, and adaptation at four levels. It is believed that each of the resources interact to produce a level of adaptation at the personal, couple, family, or work level. This integration across system levels enables one to capture the inter-connection and interplay of the dimensions *within* and *across* system levels.

The MASH model is an attempt to develop a biopsychosocial model by providing a more integrative and ecosystemic approach to the relationships between stress, coping, system variables, and adaptation at four different system levels. The model can provide a within-system analysis that would examine, for example, aspects of couple stress, the variety of couple coping behaviors and styles, and the degree of couple satisfaction (adaptation). This could be done separately for any of the four levels-individual, couple, family or work levels. The model can also provide a between-system analysis that would examine stress across the four levels, resources at all four levels that might mediate the stress, and the final adaptation at one or all four levels.

The need to include more than one system to the diagnosis and treatment of physical illness was raised by Dym (1987) in which cybernetic concepts were applied. Later, the clinical application of the biopsychosocial approach and its advantages was clearly presented by McDaniel, Campbell, and Seaburn (1989). A unified biopsychosocial filed is assumed to supersede previous designations of illness as being merely “physical” or “psychological.” Illness can be located in the ongoing interaction

of biochemical, psychological, and social experience. Dym argues that designating an illness as "physical" is an arbitrary punctuation of the larger field. Assuming a biopsychosocial model would move beyond such limitations and allow for diagnosis and treatment in a more holistic and culturally sensitive framework.

In this research study The MASH model was used in order to assess the relationship between stress and adaptation among Iranian families. (See Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Studies validating MASH Model

American study validating MASH Model

A study by Stewart (1988) investigated 440 adults using the initial version of the Coping and Stress Profile in order to test the validity of the MASH model. More specifically, the study was designed to assess what resources at each of the four system levels were most characteristics of those who coped well with stress versus those who were under high levels of stress and high levels of physical or psychological symptoms.

In order to test the significance of various resources for coping with stress at the individual, couple, family, and work levels, five separate multiple regression analyses were done with satisfaction as the outcome for each level. Multiple regressions were also done predicting overall satisfaction with life, which was based on a summary standardized score of personal, couple, family, and work satisfaction.

The result of these five analysis strongly support the value of a multi-system level model since they demonstrate that resources at all four levels were important in distinguishing people who managed stress well from those who were not managing stress well. Another analysis demonstrated that they could use resources from all other aspects of their life to cope with their overall life stressors.

If the MASH model and Coping and Stress Profile assessment only focused at one of the levels (i.e. individuals, couple, family, or work) it would not have given a realistic or comprehensive picture of all the resources that people actually have in their life. Although these findings are intuitively obvious, this study clearly demonstrates the value of a multisystem model.

German study validating MASH Model

Klaus Schneewind and Joachim Weiss (1995) at the institute for Psychology at the University of Munich translated the entire CSP into German. They had 171 German adults complete the CSP, and they completed a variety of analyses. The mean score and alpha reliability on the CSP were very similar to the results of studies in the United States. An interesting finding from the German data was the intercorrelation of stress from the four areas of life. This data demonstrates the value of the multisystem perspective and the interplay between the various areas of life.

Norwegian study validating MASH Model

Joyce Piper (1996) studied Lutheran clergywomen in Norway (n=70) and in the USA (n=64) using Coping and Stress Profile. Work stress outcomes and its relation to other personal and cultural variables were examined. Results of this cross-national comparative study revealed that Norwegian and US Lutheran clergywomen reported remarkably similar levels of high work stress, despite differences among the clergywomen in terms of marital status (married vs. single) and spousal occupation (clergy vs. nonclergy). Higher work stress related significantly to lower self-esteem and lower work satisfaction for both Norwegian and US Lutheran clergywomen.

Iranian study validating MASH Model

All three studies mentioned above have validated the MASH Model in the Western cultural context. The major contribution of his research study is to investigate the validity of this model in the Eastern cultural context of Iran.

National and Cultural Characteristics of Iranian Families

Iran is a country of 627,000 square miles; over five times the size of Britain (Heyat, 1983). The population of Iran has increased from 10 million in 1900 to over 60 million today (The Iranian Center for Population Studies, 1995). Given the regional and ethnic diversity among Iranians, it is unlikely that we could construct a single profile with universal applicability. For the most part, Iranians are individualistic in a cultural sense, fatalistic in a religious sense, and nostalgically tied to the past. They are also proud people who believe deeply in their own uniqueness (Jalali, 1996).

Islam is the most widely practiced religion in Iran. Currently, 98% of Iran's population is Muslim, and 93% of these adhere to Shiism. Shiism is a highly emotional and mystical form of Islam that focuses on a series of martyrs: the 12 divinely designated descendants of the prophet, or the Imams. The spoken language is Farsi (Persian), which has Indo-European roots. Even though the Arabic alphabet has been integrated into the Persian language, it is distinctly different from the Arabic language spoken by the Lebanese, Jordanians, Iraqis, and other groups.

The family is the most significant element of Iranian culture and society. The individual's total life is dominated by the family and family relationships in a way similar to other nonindustrial countries (Jalali, 1996). People rely on family connections for influence, power, position, and security. The importance of the family as a social unit for

Iranians dates back to Zoroastrian times (the pre-Islamic period), when the rearing of children and the duties of children toward their parents were considered sacred (Jalali, 1996).

The extended family has traditionally been the basic social unit. However, in urban areas, geographic dispersion of the extended family and differences in status and material holdings diminish the significance of the extended family as a functional unit. Still, the Iranian family has preserved its significance as an important psychological and bonding entity (Fathi, 1985).

METHODOLOGY

Research Method

This research study focuses on testing the MASH Model developed by Olson and Stewart (1990) with a sample of 147 Iranian individuals to examine the relationship between couple and family stress and couple and family adaptation within the ecological context of Iran. The Coping and Stress Profile (CSP), which is a self-report scale based upon the MASH Model, was used as an assessment tool. The CSP assesses stress, coping resources (cohesion, flexibility, communication and problem solving) and satisfaction for four areas of life (personal, couple, family, and work).

All the CSP scales have high reliability, content validity and construct validity (Olson, 1995) within the Western cultural context (Stewart, 1988; Piper, 1995; Schneewind & Weiss 1995). One important contribution of this study is to test the reliability and validity of CSP and the MASH Model when used with an Iranian population within the Eastern cultural context. This methodological section describes the questionnaire translation process, sample selection, and data analysis.

Translation of Coping & Stress Profile from English to Farsi

Translation-backtranslation method (Dana, 1993; Marsh, 1967) was used for translating CSP to Farsi. First, a bilingual Iranian person who had learned English in the United States translated the sentences from English to Farsi. Then, an English translator who had learned English in Iran reviewed the English-to-Farsi translation and also back-translated the questionnaire from Farsi into English. Through this process, differences in cultural context were identified. Then, two bilingual Iranian marriage and family therapists reviewed the questionnaire to see if the items in the questionnaire were relevant to Iranian's cultural expectations, experiences, and family relationships. The last step was to administer the CSP questionnaire to one man and one woman who had high school diplomas to test the readability and comprehension of the questionnaire.

Description of Sample

This study adapted quota sampling as a form of nonprobability sampling to reflect the numerical composition of various subgroups in the Iranian population. These subgroups were selected based on religion, city of residence, language and gender. About 98% of Iranians are Muslim, and the other 2% are Christians, Jewish, and Zoroastians. More than 15 million individuals live in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. The majority are Persian and speak Farsi. The ratio of men to women is about 40 to 60. An attempt was made to have a sample that would relatively reflect these subgroups.

Data for this study were collected from 147 Iranians (including 89 women and 58 men) over a five-month period. The sample had more females than males (60% vs. 40%), was racially homogeneous (white, Middle Eastern), and relatively well educated (32% had a high school diploma, and 56% percent had at least an associate degree or higher). There was a wide age distribution with 83% of the sample between the ages of 20 to 50, and with a mean age of 35. The majority of individuals (92%) were married, and most couples (85%) had children. Only 5% of the sample included both husband and wife. The majority of the participants (57%) were government workers, 18% were housewives;

8% were professionals, 17% were technical, sales, laborer, and farmers. Given that the majority of industry is government-owned and operated, the 57% figure is not abnormally high. Ninety five percent of the participants were Muslim, while 3% were Zoroastian and 2% were Jewish.

It is important to note that 5% of participants lost a family member in the war, 14% claimed that the war has changed their lives entirely, and 69% stated that the war has effected their lives in many ways.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were completed using 27 scales in the Coping & Stress Profile. Alpha reliability analyses were run on all scales using all subjects and were also run by gender using all subjects (See Table 1). Alpha reliabilities were between .67 and .97 for all scales and also for males and females with an overall average reliability of .82.

Insert Table 1 About Here

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1. *Stress will have a negative relationship to adaptation/satisfaction for Iranian families in all four areas of life (personal, work, couple and family).*

Table 2 shows the correlations between the four measures of stress and the four measures of satisfaction. As was expected, overall satisfaction was highly correlated in a negative way with each of the stress measures. Also, total personal stress correlated negatively with personal satisfaction (r=-.37). The same negative correlation existed between couple stress and couple satisfaction (r=-.79), family stress and family satisfaction (r=-.57), and work stress and work satisfaction (r=-.54) (See Table 2).

Insert Table 2 About Here

Several stepwise regression analyses were conducted to observe the predictive power of personal, couple, family, and work stress on personal, couple, family, work, and overall satisfaction. Total personal stress and couple stress were the most significant predictors of overall satisfaction, accounting for 55% of the variance. Total personal stress and couple stress were also the most significant predictors of personal satisfaction, accounting for 30% of the variance. Couple stress and total personal stress were the most significant predictors of couple satisfaction, accounting for 60% of the variance. Couple and family stress were the most significant predictors of family satisfaction, accounting for 64% of the variance. Work stress was the only significant predictor of work satisfaction, accounting for 29% of the variance. This hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis 2. *Personal satisfaction correlates negatively with physical symptoms and psychological distress.*

The findings were statistically significant with personal satisfaction being correlated negatively (r = -.51) with psychological distress and negatively (r = -.43) with physical symptoms (see Figure 1). As expected, psychological distress and physical symptoms were highly correlated (r = . 73).

Hypothesis 3. *Resources (problem solving & communication) will be positively related to satisfaction for Iranian couples and families.* The correlations between couple satisfaction and couple communication (r=.73) and couple satisfaction and couple problem solving (r=.72) were highly significant. Also, the correlation between family satisfaction and family communication (r=.78) and family satisfaction family problem solving (r=.66) were highly significant. This shows the centrality of communication and problem solving in Iranian's couple and family satisfaction. In general, this hypothesis was strongly supported at the couple and family level.

Hypothesis 4*. Couple and family systems high in cohesion and low in flexibility will have higher levels of adaptation/satisfaction.*

The first part of the hypothesis focused on the positive relationship between cohesion, and satisfaction at both the couple and family level.

The second part of this hypothesis was predicting a negative correlation between couple and family satisfaction and couple and family flexibility. This was based on the assumption that because of Islamic ideology that has strict roles and regulations, Iranians do not value flexibility and change often is kept at the minimum. It was expected that this lack of flexibility make life less chaotic and more harmonious for Iranian families.

Correlational analyses were run on couple and family systems, and couple and family satisfaction. There were highly positive correlations between couple cohesion and couple satisfaction (r=.78), couple flexibility and couple satisfaction (r=.66), family cohesion and family satisfaction (r=.79), and family flexibility and family satisfaction (r=.69). In general, it can be concluded that Iranian families highly value both closeness and flexibility in their couple and family relationships.

Hypothesis 5. *Couple and family systems (cohesion and flexibility) will be negatively related to stress.*

Table 3 shows the correlations between the four measures of stress and the couple and family cohesion and flexibility. As was expected, couple and family cohesion and flexibility were highly correlated in a negative way with each of the stress measures. Couple stress correlated negatively with couple cohesion (r=-.79) and couple flexibility (r=-.69). The same negative correlation existed between family stress and family cohesion (r=-.51) and family flexibility (r=-.45). Because of these significant negative correlations at all system levels, hypothesis 4 was strongly supported (See Table 3).

Insert Table 3 About Here

Hypothesis 6. *Couple and family resources will be negatively related to couple and family stress.*

Table 3 shows the correlation between the four measures of stress and the couple and family resources. As was expected, couple and family problem solving and communication were highly correlated in a negative way with each of the stress measures. Couple stress correlated negatively with couple problem solving (r=-.80) and couple communication (r=-.86). The same negative correlation existed between family stress and family communication (r=-.41) and between family stress and family problem solving (r=-.50). Because of these significant negative correlations, hypothesis five was supported (See Table 3).

Hypothesis 7. *Iranian men will have a higher level of personal and work stress and the same level of couple and family stress as compared to Iranian women.*

To test for gender differences in personal, couple, family and work stress as measured by CSP, a t-test analysis was computed. Table 3 shows that Iranian men did not report higher levels of personal and work stress as was hypothesized. There were also no significant differences between couple and family stress for men and women. This shows that the level of personal, couple, family, and work stress were the same regardless of gender. Hypothesis 8 was not supported (See Table 4).

Insert Table 4 About Here

Hypothesis 8. *Iranian men will have similar levels of resources in all four areas of life (personal, couple, family, and work) as compared to Iranian women.*

T-test analysis revealed that, as was hypothesized, Iranian men and women did not differ in perceptions of the level of personal, couple, family and work resources. This hypothesis was strongly supported (See Table 4).

Hypothesis 9. *Iranian men will have higher levels of cohesion and flexibility at couple and family level as compared to Iranian women.*

T-tests analysis showed that there are no significant differences in couple, family, and work levels of cohesion and flexibility. Men and women did not differ significantly

in the way they perceived the sense of closeness and equality in their couple and family relationships. This hypothesis was not supported (See Table 4).

Hypothesis 10. *Iranian men will have higher level of adaptation (satisfaction) as compared to Iranian women in all areas of life (individual, couple, family and work).*

T-tests analysis revealed that Iranian men did not significantly differ with respect to the level of personal, couple, family, work, and overall satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported (See Table 4).

SUMMARY & DISCUSSION

Analysis of data from 147 Iranians, including 58 men and 89 women, revealed that personal, couple, family and work stress correlated negatively with satisfaction at all four levels. Personal, couple, family, and work stress also correlated negatively with couple and family resources and couple and family systems. In addition, the findings revealed that couple and family coping resources and couple and family systems are highly correlated (See Figure 1).

Contrary to what were hypothesized, Iranian men and women did not significantly differ with respect to personal and work stress. In addition, there were no significant gender effects for personal, couple, family, and work satisfaction; couple, family, and work communication; couple, family, and work problem solving, couple, family, and work cohesion, or couple, family, and work flexibility.

Stress (personal, couple, family and work) related to other Variables

Findings from hypothesis one for personal stress revealed that, as was expected, there was a negative relationship between total personal stress and personal satisfaction (r=-. 37). This scale was comprised of personal stress, physical health and emotional distress. Personal stress assessed a wide range of stress and strains, including: household, financial, work, environment, social, home maintenance, health, personal life, and family/friends hassles. Because there are items assessing work, household, and family

hassles within the stress scale, the correlations of personal stress with couple, family and work stress were generally high (r=. 47, r=. 61, r=. 49 respectively). The personal stress scale also had a very high correlation with physical health problem (r=), and psychological distress (r=. 91). These results are consistent with Monroe's (1983) and Kanner's (1981) findings that the "daily hassles" or personal stress are strongly correlated with physical health problems and psychological symptoms.

The findings for hypothesis one relating stress and satisfaction was supported at all four system levels. The correlational analysis showed that couple, family and work stress had significant negative correlations with overall satisfaction and with couple, family, and work satisfaction. It is interesting to note that work stress has a less negative correlation with overall satisfaction (r=-.48) compared to couple stress and overall satisfaction (r=-.68) and family stress and overall satisfaction (r=-.63). Boss (1988) and Dilworth et al. (1993) in their discussions of the issue of contextual factors and stress emphasized the linkage between stress and cultural factors in understanding how families perceive stressful events. For Iranian families, the more proximal aspects of the couple and family relationship account for the greater impact of couple and family stress over work stress. Stress from work may be painful for an Iranian individual, but stress in the more socially intimate couple and family relationship is more critical for psychological well being.

The findings from hypothesis four revealed that there is a negative relationship between couple and family cohesion and flexibility and couple and family stress. Also, findings from hypothesis five showed that couple and family problem solving and couple and family communication are highly correlated with couple and family stress. It is interesting that the correlation between couple stress and couple cohesion, couple flexibility, couple problem solving, and couple communication were much higher than the correlation between the same variables at the family level.

These findings show that from the cultural perspective, couple stress has a much more profound effect on Iranians' sense of closeness and flexibility than family stress has on family cohesion and flexibility. Also, couple stress has a stronger effect than does family stress on Iranians' problem solving patterns and the way they communicate with each other.

The fact that Iranian men and women do not differ with respect to personal and work stress is interesting. Because within the Iranian's cultural framework, financial and home maintenance are expected to be men's responsibility, and Iranian men are expected to be the main breadwinners and providers. It appears that in the post-revolutionary Iran, couples have to share the burden of the financial responsibility and work stress and the experience of "daily hassles" equally effect their personal lives. Future studies have to focus on specific factors effecting Iranian men and women in relation to personal and work stress.

Iranian men did not perceive their couple and family relationship as more cohesive and flexible than women and they also did not experience higher levels of satisfaction at all four areas of life compared to Iranian women. These findings are important because Middle Eastern cultures are assumed to be hierarchical and men are expected to have more power within the couple and family relationships. The fact that Iranian men and women perceive their relationship as fairly equal, and that their sense of cohesiveness, and flexibility have strong relationship with their sense of couple, family, and overall adaptation/satisfaction, regardless of gender, challenges the stereotyped image of men and women relationships within the Iranian culture.

Limitations

As is often the case, strengths and limitations go together. In this instance, the use of Coping and Stress Profile provided important and useful information on the lives of Iranian families but had several limitations as well.

In the most general sense, family relationships in the eastern cultural context of Iran might be viewed differently than in the Western cultural context. Specific traits and regularities of social phenomena might display a variation from Iranian society to American society. For example, the meaning of a given trait or variable is dependent on the cultural context in which it occurs. A central issue in the translation of CSP from English to Farsi was that of equivalence of meaning from American society to Iranian society. Thus, the attempt was to use functional equivalence (meaning-based translation) instead of formal equivalence (direct/identical translation). In some cases, there were no Farsi equivalents for a construct. In these instances, the translator had to use low frequency words in the Iranian language. There was a risk that the stimulus of the words would differ even though the "meanings" were the same. The fundamental task of the translator in this study was to decode messages presented in English and encode them in Farsi so that the two sets of messages could have approximate equivalence of meaning.

Thus, one might argue that due to the value and cultural differences between Iranian and American society, use of such a questionnaire may not be appropriate. An indigenous scale might have yielded more useful information. However, the high reliability of all of the scales show that there are some universal traits within couple and family relationships that could be captured by using this instrument even within a Eastern cultural context.

Nevertheless, there were some caveats of using CSP with Iranian families. For example, some Iranian families live with their extended families but there are no questions in the CSP's background information regarding the living arrangements. Thus, there is no way to know whether living with the extended family would have effected the quality of couple and family relationships.

The CSP work scales assess work relationships, productivity, and teamwork, work environment, job locations and job characteristics. Due to the fact that Iranian's work system is greatly different than American work system, Iranian men and women

who participated in this study had questions regarding the applicability of the work scales to their own work system. A more culturally specific work scale would have been more applicable and might have yielded more useful information.

In addition, for the past 16 years, Iranians have been dealing with serious changes (e.g., a political and social revolution, an 8-year war with Iraq, a U.S.-sponsored economic embargo) and many traumatic events in their lives. This instrument is not capturing the essence of their struggles because it has not been designed to do so.

Moreover, religion is an important factor in family adaptation to stress among Iranian families. Even though there is a ten-item scale to measure spiritual beliefs, the different ways that Iranians make use of spirituality for adaptation may have not been adequately assessed.

Also, this study did not identify the contextual factors that are related to when and how the various general strategies for adaptive coping are and are not helpful. The focus of this study was to identify coping resources rather than to propose clinical intervention techniques.

The fact that the majority of participants were living in a metropolitan area, were more educated, and were more likely to be professionals than the general population might have affected the findings of this study. Future research with this model could include more representative cross sections of the population, including more diverse groups and lower income and rural populations to further establish the validity of the model.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that personal, couple, family and work stress are negatively related to Iranian's levels of satisfaction/adaptation.

Olson's (1997) suggests that family stress is something that families in all culture have in common, although the cause of the stress and the ways of coping with the stress may greatly differ. Some of the commonalties about family stress across cultures is that 1) families from all cultures experience family stress; 2) all stressors either begin or end up in the family; 3) all families must find resources; 4) all families have some internal strengths that they use for managing stress in their family system; 5) families will tend to first use internal resources; and finally 6) families from various cultures will use a variety of different approaches or strategies to successfully manage family stress (Olson, 1997).

The findings of this study is greatly consistent with this universal perspective regardless of the Western versus Eastern cultural context and it also might alter the perception of a Middle Eastern culture in several ways. First, Iranian women are working and sharing the burden of work stress with their spouse. Second, both Iranian men and women have similar levels of family stress and both equally share the responsibility of raising a family. Finally, Iranian men and women do not perceive their relationship as hierarchical and do not differ in the levels of flexibility and cohesion.

Future research is necessary in many areas of study that were tapped in a very limited way by this project. In particular, research needs to address specific stressors, resources in lives of Iranian families, and the effects of the socio-political changes in Iran on the lives of Iranian people.

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Table 2: Correlations of Overall, Individual, Couple, Family, and Work Stress and Satisfaction

	Overall Satisf.	Pers. Satisf.	Couple Satisf.	Family Satisf .	Work Satisf.
T.Personal Stress(1)	**-.64****	**-.37****	-.55**	-.48**	-.31**
Couple Stress	-.68**	-.38**	**-.79****	-.64**	-.28*
Family Stress	-.63**	-.33**	-.53**	**-.57****	-.33**
Work Stress	-.48**	-.28*	-.29*	-.26*	-.**54****

*P<.01 **P<.001

Bold is used to signify important correlations.

1-Total Personal Stress=Personal Stress score + Physical health Score + Emotional Distress Score.

Table 4: Male & Female Personal, Couple, Family and Work Stress,
Coping Resources, Systems, and Satisfaction

	Male Score	SD	Female Score	SD	t value	df
Personal Stress	112.9	25.6	115.1	29.2	-.47	145
Total Personal Stress(1)	176.7	35.9	185.0	41.1	-1.39	144
Couple Stress	43.1	14.3	49.4	15.5	-2.38	131
Family Stress	38.8	13.1	44.7	13.8	-2.48	134
Work Stress	66.1	15.6	65.8	34.6	.09	117
Overall Stress(2)	259.1	53.4	282.0	64.4	-.1.89	142
Personal Coping Resources(3)	141.8	17.1	138.0	15.1	1.44	142
Couple Coping Resources(4)	76.0	14.0	69.0	15.2	2.71	131
Family Coping Resources(5)	76.0	13.7	70.1	14.0	2.35	131
Work Coping Resources (6)	56.2	8.1	53.3	9.1	1.80	113
Couple System(7)	71.2	12.3	66.5	13.0	2.14	131
Family System(8)	72.2	10.1	70.0	11.7	1.22	129
Work System (9)	65.1	12.5	64.0	12.1	.50	112
Personal Satisfaction	34.7	6.2	31.4	7.9	2.60	144
Couple Satisfaction	37.0	8.4	33.3	7.9	2.52	131
Family Satisfaction	38.4	8.0	35.0	8.5	2.47	128
Work Satisfaction	32.1	7.2	29.3	7.1	2.13	114
Overall Satisfaction(10)	143.8	21.3	132.1	24.0	2.56	96

*P<.01 **P<.001

1- Total Personal Stress=Personal Stress score + Physical Health Score + Emotional Distress Score.

2- Overall Stress=Personal Stress + Couple Stress + Family Stress + Work Stress.

3- Personal Coping Resources=Personal Spirituality + Personal Social Support.

4- Couple Coping Resources=Couple Communication + Couple Problem Solving.

5- Family Coping Resources=Family Communication + Family Problem Solving.

6- Work Coping Resources=Work Communication + Work Problem Solving.

7- Couple System=Couple Cohesion + Couple Flexibility.

8- Family System=Family Cohesion + Family Flexibility.

9- Work System=Work Cohesion + Work Flexibility.

10- Overall Satisfaction=Personal Satisfaction + Couple Satisfaction + Family Satisfaction + Work Satisfaction.

Table 3: Correlation of Couple and Family System & Resources with Personal, Couple, Family and Work Stress

	Couple Comm	Couple P.Sol	Family Comm.	Family P.Solv.	Couple Coh.	Couple Flex.	Family Coh.	Family Flex.
Personal Stress	-.36**	-.26*	-.33**	-.36**	-.38**	-.44**	-.33**	-.34**
T.Personal Stress (1)	-.45**	-.37**	-.63**	-.48**	-.50**	-.86**	-.43**	-.44**
Couple Stress	**-.79****	**-.69****	-.63**	-.48**	**-.80****	**-.86****	-.57**	-.63**
Family Stress	-.52**	-.45**	**-.51****	**-.45****	-.51**	-.55**	**-.41****	**-.50****
Work Stress	-.15	-.07	-.25*	-.26*	.17	-.27*	-.30*	-.27*
Overall Stress(2)	-.56**	-.47**	-.53**	-.48**	-.54**	-.61**	-.52**	-.54**

*P<.01 **P<.001

Bold is used to signify important correlations.

1-Total Personal Stress=Personal Stress score + Physical health Score + Emotional Distress Score.
2-Overall Stress=Personal Stress + Couple Stress + Family Stress + Work Stress.

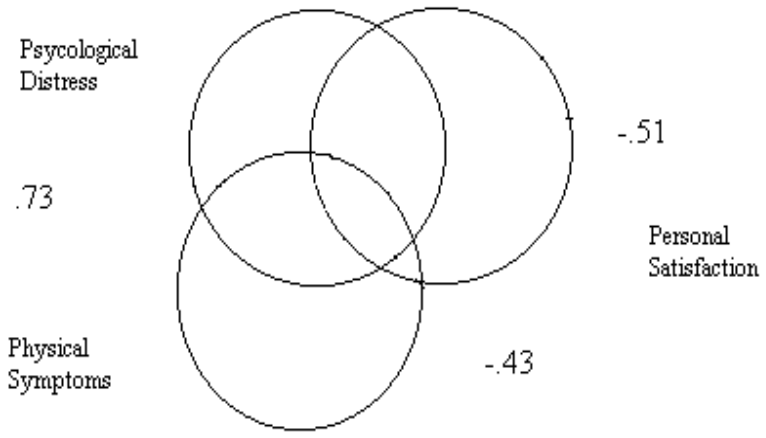

Fig. 1 Interconnection of health and satisfaction