

Family resilience as an outcome in relation with marital satisfaction

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Abstract: In literature, individuals, families and communities are seen differently. If the field of individual resilience is pretty clear, the one for family resilience has a lot of gaps. The specific definition of the protective and risk factors needs to be clarified. In this study we try to identify the connection between marital satisfaction and family resilience. We used the self-efficacy to try to explain how this concept mediates the link between marital satisfaction and family resilience. The results also show us that gender has a moderation effect in this process, in the sense that self-efficacy mediates the link between couple satisfaction and family resilience only for women.

Keywords: family resilience, marital satisfaction, self-efficacy, moderated mediation

Introduction

The international research and practice field has strongly emphasized the need for resilient concepts, ones that can shed the light on the strengths of individuals and groups and not just on their limitations (Lopez & Snyder, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Still, individual, dyadic, family and communities have their own dynamics, and resilience is different for each of them. The individual perspective emphasizes resilience as a personality trait, an enduring one or triggered as a contextual characteristic (ex. trauma, adversity, abrupt change). The dyadic and family resilience concepts are similar in the fact that they involve personalized interactional patterns that have an important impact on how members interact toward each other, how they develop and also for their fulfillment. Compared to this, community or group resilience is rather governed by support indicators (ex. norms, opportunities, available support, etc.) that help people to thrive (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009).

The general goal of this article is to investigate whether an integrative view on fostering family resilience can be validated. Thus, the main objective is

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to investigate how marital satisfaction, as a dyadic factor and self-efficacy, as an individual factor, can foster family resilience. Although there is little theoretical data regarding this process, we believe that it is important to explore how dyadic and individual factors work together in explaining family resilience. We believe that marital satisfaction is related to family resilience, but there are no explicit data on how family resilience is fostered. Therefore, we explore self-efficacy as a mediator for explaining the mechanism between marital satisfaction and family resilience. Besides this, we also account for gender to have a significant impact regarding these relations, due to women's predominant needs to pay attention to a certain category of internal needs and motives oriented towards the relational system (ex. building and nurturing relationships, showing affections) (Buss, 1999; Diekman and Eagly, 2008).

Family resilience

Family resilience is defined as „characteristics, dimensions and properties of families which help a family to be resilient to disruption in the face of change and adaptive in the face of crisis situations” (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988, p. 247). The authors support this theoretical perspective after they analyzed the phenomenon of rising above challenges through the strength-based model of resilience; examining positive coping factors rather than deficits. In a more general way, this theoretical perspective assumed that healthy or strong families may be defined as sharing resilient processes in response to stress or change.

The concept of healthy family functioning to situations and adversities could be easily assimilated with family resilience. It involves dynamic processes fostering positive adaptation within the context of a significant adversity (Luthar et al., 2000). In the case of healthy families, the plus of resilience in stressful situations do not only exceed the critical moment but even develop an ability to improve their resistance and capabilities to overcome future difficulties.

McCubbin and McCubbin (1993) identified that for a successful overtaking of crisis and challenges, protective and recovery factors work synergistically and interchangeably. The role of protective factors is to facilitate adjustment or the ability to maintain integrity and functioning of the family and to fulfill developmental tasks. In the other hand, recovery factors appear when the family is challenged, and they have the role to promote the ability to adapt or rebound.

Couple satisfaction and self-efficacy as determinants for resilient families

The level of couple satisfaction is a very important part when it comes to the healthy functioning of the family. Partners with higher relationship satisfaction tend to be more committed, and they also tend to be more invested in the relationship (Henrik, 1998). A couple's level of relationship satisfaction can reliably predict whether the couple will remain together or separate. Satisfying

relationships are also associated with positive benefits for the individual (Hand et al., 2013). We can tell that the level of relationship satisfaction can influence the couple's future a great deal, referring of the couple's good or bad functioning. Moreover, according to gender studies, women will believe even stronger in their ability to protect their family when they see that their efforts have been compensated through marital satisfaction.

Self-efficacy is defined as „beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands” (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 408). Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with people's beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning and over events that affect their lives. Beliefs in personal efficacy affect life choices, level of motivation, quality of functioning, resilience to adversity and vulnerability to stress and depression (Bandura, 1994).

There are studies which show that between self-efficacy and couple satisfaction is a great connection. Some of the studies use self-efficacy as input, and others use it as output. Shell, Murphy, and Bruning (1989) measured self-efficacy in terms of perceived capability to perform various reading and writing activities, and they assessed outcome expectancies regarding the value of these activities in attaining various outcomes in social pursuits, employment, education, citizenship and family life. The results presented the fact that a great level of self-efficacy is important in family functioning. Gottman (1993) suggested the fact that conflict occurs in all marriages at some point, and that it is the means couples use to resolve disputes that distinguishes them between successful and less satisfying relationships. In the same way, there are results in literature that shows a significant relation between self-efficacy and family satisfaction (Baker, Cobb, McNulty, Lambert & Fincham, 2016; Martel, Lafontaine, Thériault & Balbinotti, 2016)

The level of self-efficacy of the individual could influence external aspects of his live. For example, when we feel distressed and believe we are incompetent and helpless, we are likely to ignore or discount information from significant others as well as our own behavioural successes that is inconsistent with our negative self-beliefs (Barone et al., 1997). This fact could influence the good functioning of a family, the peace and understanding of its members.

In a study developed for an adolescent who suffers from diabetes (Winsett et al., 2010), results show the fact that self-efficacy correlates significantly with resilience but also with the age. As age increases, levels of resilience also increase as an independence of the adolescent from his parents. We can conclude that for adults, self-efficacy correlates very strongly with resilience, in all manners.

Still, there are too few studies which analyze the role of gender in the relation between self-efficacy and satisfaction. Following the evolutionist perspective and also their emphasized social role, it seems reasonable that the

more a woman feels able to successfully handle the demands entailed in her life roles, the less is her experience of role conflict and overload (Erdwins et. al, 2001). Weiser and Weigel (2016) found that there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and marital satisfaction, meaning that when self-efficacy was high, people were more likely to be satisfied with their relationship.

The impact role of gender for family resilience and self-efficacy

The connection between gender role strain and psychological well-being has been intensively studied (Erdwins et al, 2001). The literature shows that there are significant differences between men and women generally but for families too. In a meta-analysis (Erns-Kossek & Ozeki, 1998) the authors found that conflict between family roles and work was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction for women than men. Also, there were longitudinal evidence from families with dual careers that wives' perceived self-efficacy to enlist spousal aid in childcare improves their health and emotional life (Ozer, 1995).

The unit of family is viewed differently by women and men, and the relationship between marriage and well-being is very complex. For women, it is important to express warmth, being gentle and to respond to the needs of others (Cancian, 1986). The emotional qualities of marriage are crucial to the woman's role within the family. For men, the status of being married, regardless of the emotional quality of the relationship, is a more important link to well-being (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Gove et al., 1983; O'Neil, 2008). Thus, wives stand to benefit more than husbands from an emotionally fulfilling marriage, but they also risk a greater psychological cost from an emotionally strained marriage.

Thus, since family life and family work are more crucial for a woman's sense of overall well-being than for a man, it follows that satisfaction with the quality of family relationships should be a stronger determinant of psychological factors for women in a relationship than for men in a relationship.

Self-efficacy is an internal factor that demonstrated to play a key role in many important fields of development. Previous studies reveal mixed findings. Some research report gender differences in self-efficacy favouring men (Anderman & Young, 1994; Meece & Jones, 1996), some report differences favouring women (Britner & Pajares, 2001), and others reveal no gender differences (Pajares & Graham, 1999; Smith, Sinclair, & Chapman, 2002). Thus, we believe that exploring the role of gender in this process is important and could bring more information about how family resilience is nurtured in relational settings.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this current paper is to explore the relations between couple satisfaction and family resilience, mediated by a level of self-efficacy, for men and women. The role of gender is explored here as a moderator.

Hypothesis

According to the available theoretical information and also our beliefs, we explored the following hypotheses for this study:

1. Marital satisfaction directly relates to family resilience (c` path).
2. Self-efficacy directly relates to family resilience (b` path).
3. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between marital satisfaction and family resilience
4. Gender moderates the indirect relation of self-efficacy for the relationship between marital satisfaction and family resilience (a1, a2 and a3 paths).

Method

Participants

The instruments were applied on 224 subjects who were in a relationship. 50% of them were men and 50% were women. 47.8% were from rural area and 52.2% from urban area. The men's mean age was 33.08 (SD 11.39; range: 18-58) and the women's mean age was 30.08 years (SD 11.85; range: 18-57). On average, the marriage duration was 92.79 months (SD 132.114). The couples had on average .83 children (SD 1.353). Regarding their educational level, 4.9 had finished middle school; 46.4 had a high school diploma; 47.7 had a bachelor's degree; and 0.9 had postgraduate education. According to the occupational status, 49.6 were employed; 3.6 were unemployed and 46.9 were still students. The socioeconomic status of the sample, defined by family income, was representative for Romania, where the mean income is 1400 lei. The subject's mean income is 1449.48 lei (SD = 1347.94) with 0 minimum and 9000 maximum.

Instruments

Couple satisfaction. We measured marital couple satisfaction with the Quality Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983) to assess the respondents' levels of marital wellbeing and happiness. The scale consists of six items, none of them reversed. The first 5 items have a response scale on a seven-point Likert scale, from 1 (Very strongly disagree), to 7 (Very strongly agree). The last item has a scale of 10 points, from 1 (unhappy) to 10 (perfectly happy) and refers to the level of happiness the subject feels according to his/her relationship. The scale reported very good internal consistency ($\alpha = .916$).

Family resilience. This concept was measured with the Family Resilience Scale (Pănoi & Turliuc, 2016). The scale is an improved version, with 24 items grouped on 8 subscales (family hardiness, family coherence, family time and routines, valuing family time and routines, family flexibility, family bounding, family celebrations and family traditions). For this research we used all the subscales as components of the principal concept. Items 5, 7, 11 and 14 are

reversed items. The responses are arranged on a six-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (not at all), to 6 (always). The scale reported good internal consistency ($\alpha = .706$).

Self-efficacy. The construct was measured with the Romanian version of Self-Efficacy Scale (SES – Vasiliu, Marinescu, Marinescu & Rizeanu, 2015). The scale contains 10 items, measured on a four point likert scale from 1 (completely untrue about me), to 4 (completely true about me). There are not reversed items. The scale reported very good internal consistency ($\alpha = .830$).

Socio-demographics were measured by items about age, gender, type of relationship, relationship duration, marriage duration, number of children, cohabitation and education.

Results

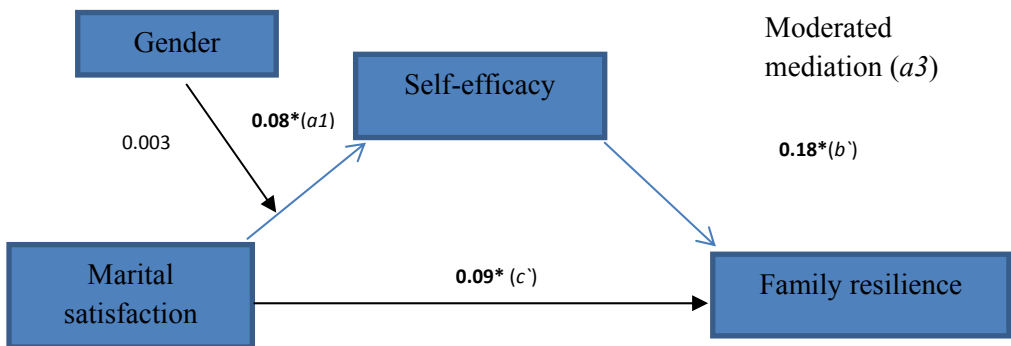
For statistical analyses we used SPSS. We also used the extension (PROCESS version 3.0 by Andrew F Hayes), and the models proposed by Hayes (2013). We are investigating the mediation role of self-efficacy, and the moderation role of the gender in the relation mediated by self-efficacy between couple satisfaction and family resilience. First of all, correlational analysis showed that there is a positively significant association between self-efficacy and the family resilience and marital satisfaction. Table 1 shows detailed results of the Pearson correlation analysis between variables. Family resilience is associated with self-efficacy for women ($r = .30$, $p < 0.01$), and also for men ($r = .18$, $p < 0.05$). We compared statistically these two correlational coefficients and results show that there is no significant difference between these two, meaning there is no stronger relation for women than men ($z = 0.94$, $p = 0.14$). Marital satisfaction is also significantly strongly connected with family resilience for women ($r = .29$, $p < 0.01$) and men ($r = .20$, $p < 0.05$), and comparison of these two coefficients showed no statistic significant difference between them ($z = 0.70$, $p = 0.24$). Secondly, we conducted an independent t -test comparing women and men on self-efficacy, our mediator, and family resilience and marital satisfaction. The results of the difference test are significant for self-efficacy ($t(222) = 2.77$, $p < 0.01$) and showed that women ($M = 3.36$, $sd = .43$) significantly differ from men ($M = 3.20$, $sd = .44$). There were no significant differences for the other two variables.

Table 1. Pearson correlations, means, standard deviations (SDs) for the study variables

	Women (N = 112)				Men (N = 112)			
	M	SD	1	2	M	SD	1	2
1. Family resilience	4.77	.37			4.76	.40		
2. Self-efficacy	3.46	.43	.30**		3.20	.44	.18*	
3. Marital satisfaction	6.61	.96	.29**	.18**	6.73	.77	.20*	.14

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; N=224

The model we proposed is significant, meaning that there is a moderated mediated effect of self-efficacy for women. Consistent with literature (Hayes, 2015), the Index of moderated mediation had the corresponding 95% confidence intervals not crossed by 0 ($b = 0.001$, 95% confidence intervals [0.020 to 0.027]) (see Table 2). Results show that interaction between gender and marital satisfaction is significant ($a3$ path; $b = 0.003$, $p < 0.05$), and we also tested the indirect effects at the levels of the moderator. As results show there is a significant connection between marital satisfaction and self-efficacy ($a1$ path; $b = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$), marital satisfaction and family resilience (c' path; $b = 0.09$, $p < 0.05$) and self-efficacy and family resilience (b' path; $b = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$) (see Table 2 and Figure 1). The mediation effect is significant only for women ($b = 0.015$, 95% confidence intervals [0.0018 to 0.033]), showing that this strength is dependent on the moderator.



Note. N = 224 subjects. * $p < 0.05$

Figure 1. Diagram of the link between marital satisfaction and family resilience mediated by self-efficacy and moderated by gender.

Table 2. OLS regressions estimates and corresponding standard deviation within the link between marital satisfaction and family resilience mediated by self-efficacy and moderated by gender.

		<i>Self- efficacy</i> B(SD)	<i>Family resilience</i> B(SD)			Indirect effect (via self-efficacy) – family resilience
<i>Marital satisfaction</i>	a ₁	0.08 (0.10)*	c' 0.09 (0.24)*			(a ₁ + a ₃ Gender)b
<i>Self-efficacy</i>			b' 0.18 (0.06)*	Female	0.150 (0.008)	95% Bias- Corr. Boot. CI [0.0018 to 0.033]
<i>Gender</i>	a ₂	0.073 (0.46)		Male	0.035 (0.002)	[- 0.0008 to 0.45]
<i>Marital satisfaction x Gender Constant</i>	a ₃	0.003 (0.068)* 2.49 (0.67)* R ² =0.37* F(3, 220) = 2.78, p< .05	3.57(0.24)** R ² =0.101** F(2,221) = 12.52, p < .001	Index for moderated mediation	0.001 (.0117)	[0.020 to 0.027]

Note. N = 224 subjects

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001

Discussion

Hypothesis were formulated starting from the existing theory and have been confirmed. The first thing is that there is a really important connection between self-efficacy, family resilience and couple satisfaction. The second important reason is that in literature are a good number of fields where there are significant differences between genders. In the family area, for example, women are more interested in the emotional aspects of their family status, and men in the well-being of the relationship, have more practical aspects (Rubin, Peplau & Hill, 1981).

The results prove the fact that marital satisfaction has an indirect influence on family resilience, mediated by self-efficacy, only for women. Men did not show this effect.

Self-efficacy was expected to be a mediator of the relation between family resilience and marital satisfaction. Previous research concluded that the level of family resilience increases with the ability acquired by the family after exceeding a stressful moment (VanBreda, 2001). Overtaking a stressful event, means bonadjustment of the family. Self-efficacy, defined as the ability of the individual to be confident in himself / herself, has a great influence in the well-being of the person and of the family too.

We expected to find gender as a moderator. If we dig deeper into literature, we will find that men tend to be more practical, more pragmatic and in search for well-being without much emotional implications or effort. Women, instead, are very involved emotionally. They engage more actively in the family than men who let things change by themselves (Connell, 2014).

To summarize, the present research brings evidence about the relation between couple satisfaction and family resilience. For a better explanation, self-efficacy mediates this relation, significantly contributing to its improvement. Individuals who feels powerful and able to face the problems that appears, have the straight to help their relationship. Unlike men, self-efficacy of the women proved to be significantly more important in relationship between couple satisfaction and family resilience.

Thus, we can conclude that the women`s level of self-efficacy is a proper mediator of relationship between couple satisfaction and family resilience.

Conclusions

Using a pretty large sample of subjects in a couple relationship, this study tested the relationship between family satisfaction, family resilience, self-efficacy and gender. The results of this study presented the fact that marital satisfaction has an indirect effect on family resilience. This relation is mediated by self-efficacy, but only for women. We can conclude that for women, a great level of self-efficacy improves the relationship between marital satisfaction and family resilience. On the other hand, this relation is not valid for men. This fact could be explained by the rigidity of men and the poor implication in the emotional part.

As such, these findings add to the existing body of literature emphasizing the complex effect of factors needed to influence family resilience level. Applying these findings to practice, therapist could work family resilience level, through improving women`s self-efficacy, and marital satisfaction of both spouses.

Limits

One of the limits of the study is that the tests used in this study were completed by the subjects in their homes. They received the battery of tests and brought them back in few days. This fact could affect the results. They were not monitored when they completed them and disturbing factors could have appeared, or breaks that bring changes in their moods. Another limit of the study is given by the relatively low coefficients obtained. The regression coefficient for women is pretty low (0.015) and do not explain a lot of the dependent variable variance. In order to correct this aspect, the study could have been made on a greater number of subjects.

Another problem of the study is the fact that is a cross-sectional study. A longitudinal study would have offered a better explanation of the results. We could have seen if the effect was constant, or was only a random occurrence of it. For future research it would be interesting to use other individual factors, as personality traits as individual resilience or locus of control.

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