

Daily Stress, Family Functioning, and Mental Health among Palestinian Couples in Israel During COVID-19: A Moderated Mediation Model

Authors : Niveen M. Hassan-Abbas

Abstract : The COVID-19 pandemic created a range of stressors, among them difficulties related to work conditions, financial changes, lack of childcare, and confinement or isolation due to social distancing. Among families and married individuals, these stressors were often expressed in additional daily hassles, with an influence on mental health. This study examined two moderated mediation models based on Bodenmann's systemic-transactional stress model. Specifically, the models tested the hypothesis that intra-dyadic stress mediates the association between extra-dyadic stress and mental health, while two measures of family functioning, cohesion, and flexibility, moderate the relationship between extra and intra-dyadic stress. Participants were 480 heterosexual married Palestinians from Israel who completed self-report questionnaires. The results showed partial mediation patterns supporting both models, indicating that family cohesion and flexibility weakened the mediating effect of intra-dyadic stress on the relationship between extra-dyadic stress and mental health. These findings increase our understanding of the variables that affected mental health during the pandemic and suggested that when faced with extra-dyadic stress, married individuals with good family environments are less likely to experience high levels of intra-dyadic stress, which is in turn associated with preserved mental health. Limitations and implications for planning interventions for couples and families during the pandemic are discussed.

Keywords : Palestinian families in Israel, COVID-19 pandemic, family cohesion and flexibility, extra-dyadic stress, intra-dyadic stress, mental health

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