

Strengthening Marriages Under Stress: The Role of Relational Resilience and Marital Therapy in Parental Well-Being and Marital Adjustment

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Abstract

Marital relationships among parents are often shaped by persistent stress arising from financial demands, work–family imbalance, and caregiving responsibilities, which may negatively affect both relationship quality and individual well-being. This study examines the association between marital stress, relational resilience, perceived usefulness of marital therapy, parental well-being, and marital adjustment. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among married parents using a structured questionnaire comprising Likert-scale items. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability assessment, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression techniques. The findings indicate that marital stress is negatively associated with both parental well-being and marital adjustment, whereas relational resilience shows a positive association with these outcomes. Perceived usefulness of marital therapy is also found to be positively related to marital adjustment and parental well-being. Regression results suggest that relational resilience and perceived usefulness of marital therapy contribute significantly to explaining variations in marital adjustment and parental well-being, even in the presence of stress. These findings highlight the importance of adaptive relational processes and supportive interventions in maintaining marital stability under stressful conditions. The study contributes to the existing literature by offering an empirically grounded yet methodologically accessible examination of marital functioning among parents. It also underscores the relevance of incorporating resilience-building strategies and promoting awareness of therapeutic support to enhance family well-being. Future research may build on these findings using more advanced analytical approaches and longitudinal designs.

Keywords: marital stress, relational resilience, marital therapy, parental well-being, marital adjustment, family functioning

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1. Introduction

The marriage relationship is one of the major relationship contexts where emotional intimacy, mutual support, and shared responsibility are experienced by adults. Marriage, however, is also influenced by several and sometimes intertwined stressors, such as financial pressure, caregiving demands, work-family imbalance, and emotional exhaustion, to the parents. These stresses may influence marital relationship's quality as well as psychological well-being of parents and the general life functioning in the family. During the times of high uncertainty and disruption, the well-being of the family is more reliant on how couples cope with stress, how they adjust to new demands, and how they maintain the relationships under pressure (Prime et al., 2020).

Recent relationship studies have highlighted that external stress does not stand alone in the intimate life, but it frequently transcends into the couple system and affects the communication, emotional responsiveness, and relational satisfaction. Stressful situations can escalate conflict, decrease emotional intimacy, and undermine supportive interactions between partners, especially when both partners are dealing with the parent-child responsibilities simultaneously.

Relationship science-wise, the ability to cope with such pressures is the main component of marital functioning and adjustment that needs to be understood to explain why couples react differently (Pietromonaco & Overall, 2021).

Dyadic coping is one of the significant frameworks to explain adaptive functioning in marriage; it implies how partners collectively cope with stress using supportive, collaborative, and emotionally responsive coping strategies. Dyadic coping moves the emphasis off of the individual coping behavior towards the process of relationships, emphasizing that couples tend to get adversely affected together rather than alone. This approach is especially applicable in the family setting, where the quality of marital relationships can be determined by the effectiveness of communication between partners in terms of stress, support, and managing common burdens (Bodenmann et al., 2019). The related literature also demonstrates that the concept of dyadic coping is tightly linked to positive relational functioning and provides the conceptual framework to study the process of resilience in close relationships (Falconier & Kuhn, 2019).

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Relational resilience is an important construct in this context. Instead of mentioning only the toughness of individuals, relational resilience is the ability of the couple to continue to be emotionally attached, flexible and collaborative in the face of adversity. This resilience has the power to empower parents to cope with stress without letting it affect marital stability and personal well-being. It has been found that family resilience is positively linked with parental well-being and more extensive adaptive functioning, and thus the notion that resilient family processes are a resource in times of stress (Aivalioti & Pezirkianidis, 2020). Other studies have found that aspects of resilience may have a strong ability to predict family stress outcomes in married adults, and this result supports the idea that protective relational processes can play a crucial role in unfavorable circumstances (Hassan-Abbas, 2022).

Another factor that is significant in explaining the functioning of marriage is parenting stress. Child-rearing needs can add to exhaustion, decrease time spent with the spouse, and cause emotional burden, all of which can influence relationship satisfaction. Studies have demonstrated a connection between parenting stress in the parenting years and marital satisfaction, which has emotional and psychological pathways, proving that parental strain and marital status are co-determined (Dong et al., 2022). Qualitative data also suggests that chronic parental stress is associated with a poorer quality of marriage among parents who encounter challenging caregiving environments, which is why the effects of marital or parental outcomes should be studied as a unit, and not individually (Rizvi & Batool, 2024). Furthermore, the psychological aspects on both the personal and couple-level have been also identified to have an impact on the relational and marital satisfaction which once again highlights the intricate interactions between parenting, emotional functioning and quality of relationships (Chiş et al., 2022).

Marital therapy is another significant direction of relationship enhancement during stress along with resilience. Therapeutic interventions avail the couples of systematic chances to enhance communication, emotional sensitivity, and maladaptive patterns of interaction. Intervention research evidence indicates that relationship-oriented checkup models have the potential to enhance marital functioning in practice (Trillingsgaard et al., 2016). More recent systematic reviews also reveal that couple interventions are effective in decreasing marital distress and improving relationship satisfaction (Joseph et al., 2025). Online

strategies have also proved to be potential opportunities of enhancing relationship satisfaction, increasing the availability of therapeutic services to couples under stress (Kernová et al., 2025).

It is against this backdrop that the current research explores the relationships between marital stress, relational resilience, perceived usefulness of marital therapy, parental well-being and marital adjustment among married parents. Combining stress, resilience, therapy-related orientation, and family outcomes into one concept, the study aims at making a contribution towards a more integrated picture of how marriages can be enhanced in the state of chronic stress. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine the relationship between marital stress and parental well-being and marital adjustment among married parents.
- To assess the role of relational resilience in shaping parental well-being and marital adjustment.
- To examine whether perceived usefulness of marital therapy is associated with parental well-being and marital adjustment.
- To analyze the predictive effects of marital stress, relational resilience, and perceived usefulness of marital therapy on parental well-being and marital adjustment.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

The study conceptual framework is on the assumption that both risk and protective factors mediate the effects of stress on marital functioning. The marital stress is considered in the current study is the main risk factor and relational resilience and perceived usefulness of marital therapy are considered as the protective relational resources. It is postulated that these variables affect two important outcome variables, i.e. parental well-being and marital adjustment. The framework presupposes that increased marital stress is related to decreased parental well-being and decreased marital adjustment, and enhanced relational resilience and more favorable views of marital therapy are related to improved parental well-being and stronger marital adjustment. Consequently, the framework represents the main perspective of the study that marriages experiencing stress are not only determined by strain and burden, but also by the adaptive processes, which may enhance the functioning of the family. Figure 1 presents the proposed directional relationships between the predictor variables and the outcome variables examined in the study.

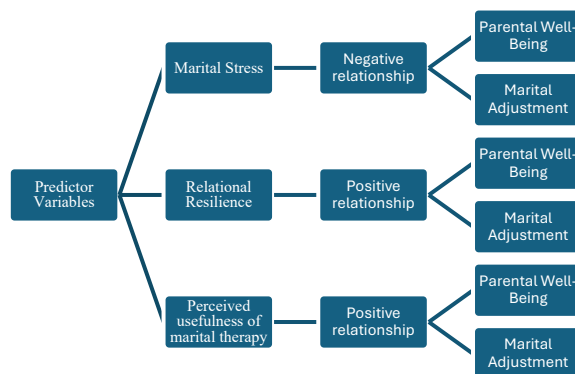


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The research design of the study was a quantitative cross-sectional survey design that was used to study relationship among marital stress, relational resilience, perceived usefulness of marital therapy, parental well-being, and marital adjustment among married parents. This design suited well to evaluate the study variables at one time and statistically analyze their associations and predictive effect on them.

2.2 Participants and Instrument

This research was carried out on 220 married parents. A structured questionnaire with demographic items and five section-construct based questions assessing marital stress, relational resilience, perceived usefulness of marital therapy, parental well-being, and marital adjustment were used to collect data. The substantive items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree. The therapy related section was used to capture perceived helpfulness of and receptiveness to marital therapy and not therapeutic results. The parental well-being construct consisted of two items that were reverse coded before analysis.

2.3 Measures and Scoring

Eight items were used to measure each construct. Marital stress was calculated as the average of items S1 to S8, relational resilience as the average of R1 to R8, perceived usefulness of marital therapy as the average of T1 to T8, parental well-being as the average of W1 to W8 after inverting W5 and W8, and marital adjustment

as the average of A1 to A8. Common metric across constructs was preserved through use of mean scores and interpretation of the results was made easy.

2.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, reliability testing, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis were employed to analyze the data. The respondent profile and the distribution of the study variables were summarized using descriptive statistics. The alpha was computed using Cronbach in order to determine internal consistency of multi-item constructs. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to analyse the relationship between marital stress, relational resilience, perceived usefulness of marital therapy, parental well-being and marital adjustment. Parental well-being and marital adjustment were then entered as dependent variables and marital stress, relational resilience and perceived usefulness of marital therapy entered as predictors in multiple regression analysis.

3. Results

3.1 Respondent Profile

Data was analyzed on 220 married parents. The mean age of respondents was 37.74 years (SD = 6.76), the mean length of marriage was 8.10 years (SD = 5.41), and the average number of children was 2.44 (SD = 1.01). According to Table 1, 53.2 percent of the respondents were women, 46.4 percent men, and 0.5 percent did not want to indicate gender. In terms of the history of therapy, 30.5% said that they have attended marital or couple therapy before, and 69.5% had not attended therapy.

Table 1. Respondent profile

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	102	46.4
	Female	117	53.2
	Prefer not to say	1	0.5
Therapy history	Yes	67	30.5
	No	153	69.5

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 gives the descriptive statistics of the main variables of the study. The mean score of marital stress was 2.89 (SD = 0.79), indicating that the respondents

perceived a moderate amount of stress. Relational resilience (M = 3.00, SD = 0.88), therapy perception (M = 2.96, SD = 0.84), and parental well-being (M = 2.95, SD = 0.86) were close to the midpoint of the scale. The

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mean of marital adjustment was the highest ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.80$). The average differences among the five constructs were low as Figure 1 reveals, yet marital

adjustment seemed to be a bit more favorable compared to the other variables.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Marital Stress	2.89	0.79	1.00	4.88
Relational Resilience	3.00	0.88	1.13	5.00
Therapy Perception	2.96	0.84	1.13	5.00
Parental Well-Being	2.95	0.86	1.13	4.88
Marital Adjustment	3.12	0.80	1.38	5.00

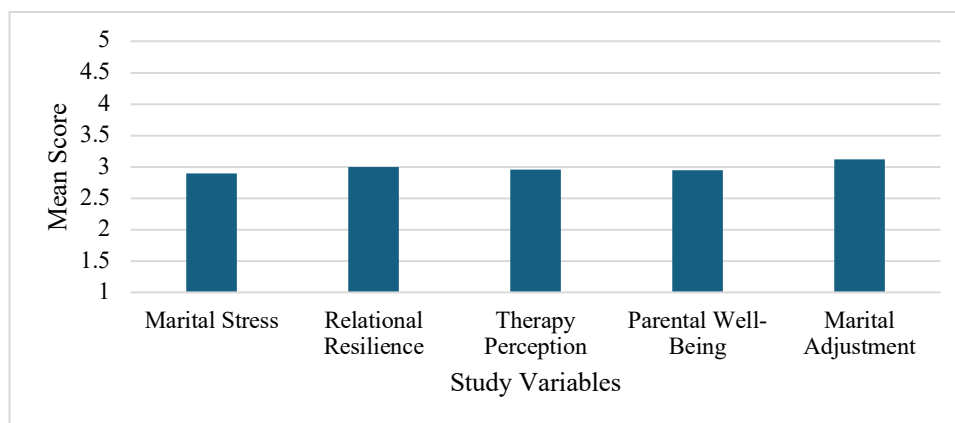


Figure 1. Mean scores of the study variables

3.3 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach alpha was applied to evaluate internal consistency of constructs and the results are tabulated in Table 3. The highest internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.85$) was found in relational resilience and parental well-being,

then, in marital adjustment ($\alpha = 0.83$), therapy perception ($\alpha = 0.82$), and marital stress ($\alpha = 0.81$). These findings suggest that the items in each construct were consistent enough to be analyzed further.

Table 3. Reliability statistics

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Marital Stress	8	0.81
Relational Resilience	8	0.85
Therapy Perception	8	0.82
Parental Well-Being	8	0.85
Marital Adjustment	8	0.83

3.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was applied to test the relationships between variables used in the study. Table 4 shows the results and Figure 2 represents it visually. Parental well-being ($r = -0.545$, $p < 0.001$) and marital adjustment showed significant negative relationships with marital stress ($r = -0.529$, $p < 0.001$) meaning that the more stress one had the poorer the individual and relationship outcomes. Relational resilience also had a negative correlation with marital stress ($r = -0.380$, $p < 0.001$), but the correlation between therapy perception

and marital stress was not significant ($r = -0.041$, $p > 0.05$).

Parental well-being ($r = 0.426$, $p < 0.001$) and marital adjustment ($r = 0.459$, $p < 0.001$) showed significant positive relationships with relational resilience. Parental well-being ($r = 0.340$, $p < 0.001$) and marital adjustment ($r = 0.326$, $p < 0.001$), on the other hand, showed a positive correlation with therapy perception, but with a weaker strength. Also well-being and marital adaptation of parents were moderately and positively associated ($r = 0.507$, $p < 0.001$), which showed a strong relationship between personal and relational functioning.

Table 4. Pearson correlation matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Marital Stress	1.000				
2. Relational Resilience	-0.380***	1.000			

3. Therapy Perception	-0.041	0.169*	1.000		
4. Parental Well-Being	-0.545***	0.426***	0.340***	1.000	
5. Marital Adjustment	-0.529***	0.459***	0.326***	0.507***	1.000

Note: $p < 0.05^*$, $p < 0.001^{***}$.

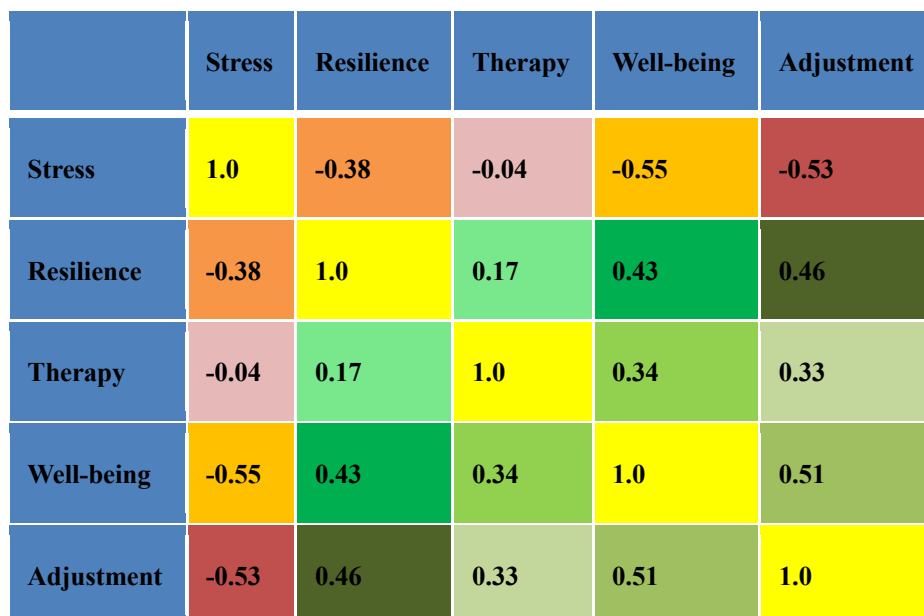


Figure 2. Correlation heatmap of the study variables

3.5 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to study predictive influence of marital stress, relational resilience and therapy perception on parental well-being and marital adjustment. For parental well-being, the model was statistically significant, $F(3, 216) = 54.95$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 43.3% of variance ($R^2 = 0.433$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.425$). Marital stress was found to have a strong negative influence ($B = -0.497$, $p < 0.001$) whereas relational resilience ($B = 0.201$, $p < 0.001$) and

therapy perception ($B = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$) had a significant positive influence as it is shown in Table 5. For marital adjustment, the model was also statistically significant, $F(3, 216) = 53.45$, $p < 0.001$, accounting for 42.6% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.426$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.418$). The Marital stress was found at a negative level of predicting marital adjustment ($B = -0.428$, $p < 0.001$), but relational resilience ($B = 0.232$, $p < 0.001$), and therapy perception ($B = 0.256$, $p < 0.001$) were significant positive predictors.

Table 5. Multiple regression results

Outcome variable	Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Parental Well-Being	Constant	2.908	0.311	9.348	<0.001
	Marital Stress	-0.497	0.060	-8.222	<0.001
	Relational Resilience	0.201	0.055	3.641	<0.001
	Therapy Perception	0.296	0.054	5.513	<0.001
	Model summary	$R^2 = 0.433$		$F = 54.95$	<0.001
Marital Adjustment	Constant	2.908	0.291	9.980	<0.001
	Marital Stress	-0.428	0.057	-7.567	<0.001
	Relational Resilience	0.232	0.052	4.484	<0.001
	Therapy Perception	0.256	0.050	5.085	<0.001
	Model summary	$R^2 = 0.426$		$F = 53.45$	<0.001

The findings give a constant reinforcement on the suggested relationships between the study variables. Table 4 indicates that marital stress had a negative relationship with both parental well-being and marital adjustment, whereas relational resilience and therapy perception had positive relationships with the same. Moreover, all the three predictors were significant

contributors of the variation in both outcome variables as indicated in Table 5. These results indicate that marital stress is a major risk factor whereas relational resilience and positive orientation towards marital therapy are important protective factors in the marital context and parenting under stress.

4. Discussion

The present research examined the correlations between marital stress, relationship resiliency, perceived usefulness of marital therapy, parental well-being and marital adjustment in married parents. The results exhibited a common trend in the analyses. Parental well-being and marital adjustment were negatively correlated with marital stress and positively correlated with relational resilience and perception of therapy. The outcomes of regression analysis revealed that the three predictors significantly contributed to the explanation of differences in parental well-being and marital adjustment. Combined, the results indicate that stress is a relational risk factor, and resilience and positive therapeutic orientation are the protective resources in family life.

One of the main conclusions of the research is that marital stress has a detrimental impact on the development of both relationship and individual outcomes. Increased stress was also correlated with poorer parental well-being and poorer marital accommodation, suggesting that chronic strain does not only impact the marital relationship but also the functioning of parents in terms of emotions. This tendency is compatible with previous findings that perceived stress negatively affects marital satisfaction and relationship quality (Işık & Kaya, 2022). Research on stress and the quality of life and marital satisfaction in adulthood also supports it (Rakhshani et al., 2024). The current results hence confirm the opinion that stress does not exist in a single sphere of family life, but instead it bleeds over into marital and parental roles, rendering couples more challenged to maintain emotional equilibrium and collaborative operations.

The beneficial connection of relational resilience with parental well-being and marital adaptation is yet another valuable impact of the study. Those couples that indicated greater shared coping, mutual support, flexibility and positive communication indicated healthier parental functioning and improved marital adjustment. This shows that resilience is a process that occurs at couple level and not just an individual characteristic. The result is consistent with previous research that demonstrates that dyadic coping is a significant factor in mitigating parenting stress and relational resilience (Aydoğan & Ozbay, 2018). It also concurs with the findings that resilience is a positive factor in marital well-being and satisfaction during adulthood (Bhandare & Simon, 2024). In the current study, the concept of resilience seems to be a stabilizing factor that enables couples to cope with stress and not to cause it to undermine their marital relationship and the well-being of their children.

Another aspect that can be noted is the therapy perception results. The positive attitudes towards marital therapy were related to increased parental well-being, marital adjustment, and the variable was significant even when the effects of marital stress and relational resilience were considered. It implies that the

willingness to be open to therapy could indicate a positive help-seeking approach and readiness to discuss relationship problems with the help of a counselor. Despite the fact that the research has not evaluated the outcomes of the therapy directly, the results suggest that positive attitudes towards therapeutic support could be accompanied by healthier attitudes towards communication, problem-solving, and emotional regulation. This meaning can be supported by the fact that marital support mediates the connection between psychological resources of couples and marital satisfaction (Michael & Ben-Zur, 2024). It is further backed by studies that show that subjective well-being of parents is positively linked with spousal support and marital satisfaction (Iwasa et al., 2024). In these regards, the perception of therapy can be considered as a subset of a more inclusive relational orientation of support, adaptation, and improvements.

The other significant finding of the research is parent-child well-being and marital adjustment are closely related. The high positive correlation between these two variables implies that healthy marriages are correlated with healthy parenting, and emotionally stable parents can create more stable marital situations. This finding reinforces the family systems perspective, which presumes that the processes of marriage and parenting are interrelated and not independent. Parental stress can lead to seriousness and lack of emotional availability, patience and care in their care giving roles when stress is heightened in marriage. In comparison, parents can be more confident and competent in coping with family needs because the marital relationship is healthy and supportive. The same view is echoed in the earlier research that has attributed parenting stress to dyadic coping and relational resilience (Aydoğan & Ozbay, 2018). There has also been evidence that has indicated that support in marriage has a contribution to subjective well-being of mothers and fathers (Iwasa et al., 2024). The current research builds upon these conclusions by showing how this relationship can be found in one empirical paradigm where parental well-being and marital adjustment are the outcomes under discussion.

The results have significant theoretical implications too. To begin with, they offer a stress-buffering viewpoint where the negative impact of stress can be alleviated by coping processes of relationship. Second, they enhance the applicability of resilience-based strategies to the study of marital functioning in times of stress. Third, they propose that positive orientation towards therapeutic support can be used as another relational resource in addition to resilience. Instead of considering marital stress, resilience, and therapy perception as independent variables, the current results show that they interact in determining family outcomes. This combined view is significant since marriages that are under stress can hardly be affected by a single factor; rather, the quality of the marriage is a product of the balance of risk and protection in a relationship.

The implications of the study in practice are also important. Findings suggest that, in addition to conflict management techniques, couples in constant stress can be helped by an intervention that should be aimed at enhancing resilience, supporting, and allowing openness to professional assistance. Interventions that promote mutual coping, emotional support, effective communication, and prompt help-seeking can be particularly beneficial to parents who have to deal with numerous demands simultaneously. This is generally congruent to the studies that emphasize the importance of emotional processes on couple burnout and marital functioning (Kocyigit & Uzun, 2025). It also echoes the results that indicate that resilience and coping resources are positively correlated with marital satisfaction in parents with increased family demands (Gagat-Matuła, 2022). Therefore, interventions should not be aimed at distress alone but also the enhancement of adaptive mechanisms that enable couples to be stable in times of stress.

On the whole, the current study is valuable to the literature as it combines marital stress, relational resilience, therapy perception, parental well-being, and marital adjustment in a single empirical model. These results indicate that stress negatively affects both relational and personal functioning, and resilience and optimism about marital therapy are helpful in healthier functioning in those areas, respectively. More to the point, the research emphasizes the fact that not only vulnerability characterizes marriages under stress, but also the availability of adaptive assets that can be used to maintain well-being and quality of relationships. By doing so, the results present a balanced view of family functioning since it revealed that stress is an important challenge, but resilience and support-related attitudes leave significant ways to a healthier marital and parental adjustment.

5. Conclusion

This study has investigated the correlation between marital stress, relational resilience, perceived usefulness of marital therapy, parental well-being, and marital adjustment in married parents. The results are a clear indication that marital stress is a serious risk factor that has negative impact on well-being of individuals and marital relationships. Contrastingly, relational resilience and positive views of marital therapy were also seen as influential protective factors which lead to the healthier marital adjustment and better parental well-being. The findings indicate that relationship resilience expressed by stronger coping, emotional support, and adaptive communication is more likely to help couples to handle stress without letting it interfere with their relationship stability and personal functioning. In the same way, positive disposition towards marital therapy seems to indicate a positive help-seeking disposition, which is linked with more positive marital and parental outcomes. Collectively, these results support the role of integrating risk and protective processes into family functioning in

response to stress. In practice, the paper highlights the necessity of interventions that are not only aimed at conflict and distress but also enhance resilience and encourage awareness of helpful interventions like marital therapy. The development of communication, common coping mechanisms, and early help-seeking can be especially helpful programs to couples who have to overcome the dual burden of marriage and raising children. Although it has its contributions, the study suffers the limitations of its cross-sectional study design that limits interpreting causally, and its use of self-reported data. The future studies are to use longitudinal studies and more sophisticated methods of analysis to further investigate these relationships. Overall, the research is a valuable contribution as it shows that marriages under stress could be helped by resilience-building and positive therapeutic orientation.

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