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Role of Social Hope and Religious Gratitude in the Resilience of Veterans' Wives

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ABSTRACT

Aims The effects of psychological trauma and stress resulting from war continue to impact the families of veterans long after the conflict has ended. These effects can lead to a decrease in resilience among veterans and their spouses. The present study aimed to predict the resilience of veterans' spouses based on social hope and religious gratitude, and it was conducted in the city of Kerman.

Instrument & Methods This correlational study involved the spouses of veterans in Kerman, with a sample size of 260 individuals selected using a convenience sampling method based on structural equation modeling. To collect data, the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, Snyder's Hope Scale, and Goodarzi et al.'s Iranian-Islamic Gratitude Questionnaire were utilized.

Findings There was a positive and direct relationship between social hope (p=0.001) and religious gratitude (p=0.015) with resilience. Additionally, there was a positive and direct relationship between social hope and religious gratitude (p=0.001). Social hope and religious gratitude, as positive emotions, could significantly influence resilience.

Conclusion Social hope and religious gratitude, as positive emotions, affect resilience.

Keywords Resilience; Hope; Spouses; Veterans

CITATION LINKS

[1] Psychological explanation of the psychological impact of war on military personnel and their families (a study on the psychological phenomenon ... [2] Prediction of emotional empathy in the wives of veterans by cognitive emotion regulation ... [3] Marital quality and relationship satisfaction in war veterans and their wives in ... [4] The relationship of religiousness and resilience with psychological well-being ... [5] The relationship between self-perception and self-esteem with the resilience of ... [6] Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory for modelling community resilience ... [7] Role of nine strategies of cognitive emotion regulation in the ... [8] Psychometric properties of the Creole Haitian version of the resilience scale amongst child and adolescent survivors ... [9] Measuring the effectiveness of resilience training on the mental health and quality of life of ... [10] Assessing the hope for the future and its effective factors among ... [11] The effectiveness of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on resilince, emotion regulation and life expectancy among ... [12] Hope and media: Research on foundations, dimensions, and strategies for social hope creation ... [13] The effect of optimism and trait gratitude on student's resilience: The mediating role ... [14] Cascading effects of gratitude: A sequential mediation analysis of gratitude, interpersonal relationships ... [15] Development and validation of the Islamic-Iranian gratitude questionnaire ... [16] Prediction of post traumatic growth based on gratitude and perceived social support ... [17] The relationship between daily spiritual experiences and perceived stress in spouses of veterans with ... [18] Religiosity and resilience: The mediating role ... [19] Lower bounds on sample size in structural ... [20] Investigating factors affecting resilience in individuals at risk ... [21] Psychometric features of Snyder's ... [22] Gratitude-based hope training package based on Islamic sources and evaluating its feasibility ... [23] Predicting resilience based on hope through the mediation of gratitude in female heads of households during ... [24] Effectiveness of communication skills training on increasing self-efficacy and hopefulness of veterans' wives ... [25] The effectiveness of positive psychotherapy (PPT) on subjective well-being in women ... [26] The relationship between spiritual well-being and hope with life satisfaction ... [27] Gratitude predicts hope and happiness: A two-study assessment ... [28] Social support and hope mediate the relationship between gratitude and depression among front-line medical staff during the ...

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Introduction

Throughout human history, there has always been war, and the conditions for enmity and conflict between individuals and societies have consistently existed. War inevitably disrupts the normal lives of people and affects the social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances of the community [1]. As a severe psychological stressor, war has various effects. With the end of the war and the return of combatants to their families, the stress caused by war and its detrimental impact on individuals' mental health continues to negatively affect families, especially their spouses [2]. These effects can lead to a decrease in marital adjustment among veterans and their spouses [3]. Spouses of veterans face stressful situations, such as living with a veteran, taking on different roles, and dealing with various life challenges, including economic difficulties, which also affect their personalities. Additionally, interacting with a veteran can create significant pressure and stress, leading to various psychological issues such as high levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety problems, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, and physical pain symptoms [4]. One significant factor in how spouses of veterans cope with life challenges is resilience [5]. Resilience is a dynamic process that develops in individuals who can adapt to changing circumstances and respond effectively over time [6]. This process empowers them to remain steadfast and maintain their overall well-being. Resilience is defined as the human capacity to cope with and adapt to challenges, suffering, adversity, and other stressors encountered in daily life [7].

Resilience involves more than just managing and adapting to traumatic experiences; it encompasses the ability to recover and grow positively in the face of adversity [8]. Resilience can mitigate stress, anxiety, and depression while reducing psychological and emotional issues, ultimately enhancing mental health and life satisfaction among the spouses of veterans [9]. One psychological concept that is likely to predict individual resilience is hope. Hope is considered a driving force for human well-being and a vital factor in both material and spiritual well-being, serving as an important indicator of quality of life and social well-being [10]. Hope is described as a positive, motivating state of mind for planning a better future that, through its powerful impact, energizes an individual's life and can lead to new experiences [11]. Social hope refers to the expectation of a bright future that the general public strives to achieve through sustained and meaningful effort, accompanied by realism [12].

One of the ways individuals can increase their endurance in the face of hardships and strengthen their resilience is through gratitude [13]. Gratitude, like other positive emotions, plays a significant role in helping individuals develop psychological and social resources, thereby enhancing resilience and happiness [14]. The perception of benefiting from a blessing, along with the understanding that another person contributed to that benefit, generates feelings of gratitude [15]. Gratitude expands an individual's capacity for immediate action and fosters resilience, ultimately promoting growth and development in their lives [16]. Participating in daily spiritual activities, such as prayer, remembrance, and gratitude can significantly reduce stress and enhance the resilience of spouses of veterans. These spiritual experiences encompass concepts, such as connection with a higher power, feelings of peace, and a sense of closeness to God, which help individuals feel God's presence throughout their daily lives [17]. This awareness enables them to cope better with challenges and effectively manage life's stresses. Moreover, individuals who practice these activities often experience greater hope. Hope fosters emotional connections with God, family, and friends, allowing hopeful individuals to draw upon their spirituality and gratitude, thereby increasing their resilience in the face of anxiety-inducing difficulties [18].

The study aimed to predict resilience based on social hope and religious gratitude among spouses of veterans in Kerman.

Instrument and Methods

This correlational research was conducted on the spouses of veterans in Kerman City, specifically those who had sought psychological and family counseling at the Welfare and Counseling Office of the Foundation for Martyrs and Veterans Affairs in Kerman, totaling 500 individuals. Since this study employed a structural equation modeling approach, the sample size was determined to be between five to ten times the number of items on the questionnaire [19]. Consequently, this number could range from 130 to 260. Among those willing to participate in the study, 260 spouses of veterans were selected using convenience sampling.

Data collection

To gather data, the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, Snyder Hope Scale, and the Islamic-Iranian Gratitude Scale developed by Goodarzi et al. were utilized.

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC): This scale consists of 25 items across five dimensions, including personal competence, trust in instincts, tolerance of negative affect, positive acceptance of change and secure relationships, control, and spiritual influences. It uses a five-point Likert scale, where items are scored from zero (not true at all) to four (true nearly all the time). Mohammadi reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 for the scale in Iran [20]. In this study, internal consistency was assessed with a sample of 25 individuals, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81.

Snyder Hope Scale: This scale consists of 12 items, eight of which measure hope and four of which measure fragility or low hope. Snyder's Hope Scale comprises two components, namely the factorial thinking component, which determines the individual's goal orientation, and the path thinking component, which includes the planned ways to achieve goals. Each item is measured on a five-point scale, with scores ranging from one (completely false) to five (completely true). It has achieved acceptable internal consistency, ranging from 0.74 to 0.78 in the English version. In the Iranian student population, its reliability has been calculated through a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 for the total scale, 0.79 for the factorial thinking subscale, and 0.88 for the path thinking component [21]. The internal reliability of the scale in this study was 0.90, using Cronbach's alpha. Since this value was higher than 0.70, this scale demonstrated high reliability.

Islamic-Iranian Gratitude Scale by Goodarzi *et al.*: This questionnaire contains 26 items across three dimensions, including moral gratitude, internal gratitude, and active gratitude. Responses are provided on a Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). The reliability coefficients for this scale have been reported to range from 0.78 to 0.84 [15]. The internal consistency of the religious gratitude scale in this study was reported as 0.92.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 23 and AMOS 23 software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize quantitative variables through means and standard deviations, while qualitative variables were described using frequencies and percentages. For inferential statistics, structural equation modeling was employed with a confidence level of 95% and a significance level set at 0.05.

Findings

A total of 260 individuals participated in the study, with the majority being in the age range of 31-45 years (Table 1).

Agency thinking, pathway thinking, and social hope scored below the average. In contrast, moral gratitude, active gratitude, religious gratitude, trust in instincts, tolerance of negative affect, and control were rated above the average. Additionally, internal gratitude, perception of personal competence, positive acceptance of change, secure relationships, spiritual influences, and resilience were found to be below the average (Table 2).

Table 1. Frequency of demographic characteristics of the subjects

Parameter/Category	Values
Age (year)	
< 30	41(15.8)
31-45	130(50.0)
≥46	89(34.2)
Total	260(100.0)
Education	
Undergraduate	65(25.0)
Bachelor's degree	107(41.2)
Master's degree and above	88(33.8)
Total	260(100.0)

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of research parameters

Parameter	Mean
Agentic thinking	2.85±0.88
Strategic thinking	2.75±0.89
Social hope	2.80±0.85
Moral gratitude	2.02±0.77
Inner gratitude	1.85±0.75
Verbal gratitude	2.40±0.63
Religious gratitude	2.03±0.62
Self-efficacy	1.96±0.70
Trust in personal instincts/tolerance of negative affect	2.02±0.76
Positive acceptance of change and secure relationships	1.61±0.86
Control	2.14±0.86
Spiritual influences	1.91±0.93
Resilience	1.96±0.73

The software output confirmed the appropriateness of the proposed model, with a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.062, a minimum discrepancy function by degrees of freedom divided (CMIN/DF) of 2.005, and a goodness of fit index (GFI) of 0.958. The results indicated a significant relationship between social hope (p=0.001, β=0.667) and religious gratitude (p=0.015, β=0.162) with resilience. The positive path coefficients suggested that as social hope and religious gratitude increased, resilience also increased. Additionally, social hope had a significant positive effect on religious gratitude (p=0.001, β=0.758; Table 3).

Table 3. Path and impact analysis

Path	Path coefficient	T	p-value	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Social hope→Religious gratitude	0.667	6.615	0.001	0.667	-	0.667
Religious gratitude→Resilience	0.162	2.434	0.015	0.162	-	0.162
Social hope→Resilience	0.758	9.795	0.001	0.758	0.108	0.866

Discussion

The study aimed to predict resilience based on social hope and religious gratitude among spouses of veterans in Kerman. There was a significant relationship between social hope and religious gratitude with resilience. Considering the positive path coefficient, this relationship was additive and direct in nature. As social hope and religious gratitude increase and improve, the resilience and resistance of the spouses of veterans against life's hardships and crises also increase. Gratitude enables individuals to connect with the positive aspects of their social environment, while hope fosters clear and specific goals and enhances individuals' feelings

of happiness [22], which in turn increases individuals' resilience. These results align with those of Shariati Moghadam's study, demonstrating a direct and significant relationship between hope and resilience, as well as between gratitude and resilience. Furthermore, hope not only has a direct impact but also indirectly influences resilience through gratitude [23]. It is worth noting that significant research has not been conducted on the relationship between these three variables, both domestically and internationally.

Religious gratitude had a positive and direct effect on resilience. In other words, as religious gratitude increases, resilience also increases, accounting for about 3% of the variance in resilience. Gratitude helps individuals successfully cope with illness or failure. The ability to find blessings and positive aspects in life and to be thankful for them enhances individuals' resilience in response to negative life events [24]. Belief in a controlling God reduces anxiety and stress related to situations, as individuals feel they can manage uncontrollable circumstances by relying on God [18]. Therefore, spirituality and the practice of gratitude are factors that can enhance resilience. Islamic teachings and beliefs guide individuals toward perfection and growth, ultimately promoting mental health. Faith in God and gratitude increase one's strength against life's pressures and hardships. These findings align with those of Caleon *et al.* [14]. Social hope had a positive and direct effect on resilience, explaining over half (57%) of the variance in resilience. This suggests that women whose husbands have suffered significant injuries in war, such as amputations or spinal cord injuries, or who experience psychological issues, face numerous challenges while also taking on responsibilities typically assigned to their husbands. In such circumstances, enhancing hope among veterans' spouses can improve their resilience.

According to Fredrickson, positive emotions, like hope broaden the momentary thought-action repertoire and prepare the body for specific actions. Over time, this expansion fosters various personal resources, including physical, social, cognitive, and psychological resources. Positive emotions help counteract prolonged negative emotions, enabling those who experience them to cope better with life's adversities and become more resilient [25]. Social hope has a positive and direct effect on religious gratitude, meaning that as social hope increases, so does religious gratitude. Approximately 44% of the variance in religious gratitude was explained by social hope. According to Miller, hope and spirituality contribute to well-being and life satisfaction, facilitating individuals' adaptation to life stressors and enhancing their life satisfaction and resilience [26]. Our findings align with research by Witvliet *et al.* [27] and Feng & Yin [28]. Furthermore, social hope impacts resilience indirectly through religious gratitude.

Every research project faces limitations during implementation; some of these limitations are controllable, and the researcher attempts to eliminate or reduce their effects, while others are uncontrollable. For example, the tool used in this study was a questionnaire, and individuals may not accurately reflect their realities for various reasons. Another significant challenge faced by the researcher was gaining the cooperation and trust of the spouses of veterans. Given that veterans hold a special status in society, the necessary cooperation from their spouses to answer questions was sometimes not forthcoming. Additionally, the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which arose during data collection and required adherence to social distancing rules, prolonged the process of completing the questionnaires. Based on the findings of the research, family counselors, especially those working at the Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation, can increase the resilience of women by enhancing hope and strengthening their sense of gratitude.

Conclusion

There is a positive relationship between resilience, social hope, and gratitude among the spouses of veterans.

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Ethical Permissions: This study was conducted in accordance with research ethics guidelines.

Conflicts of Interests: The authors reported no conflicts of interest.

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