

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comparative Study of Conflict Resolution Tactics and Stress Coping Strategies between Married Housewives and Working Women: A Study in Iran

Ziba Karimi ^a, Hossein Samavatyan ^{b*} , Bahman Kord Tamini ^c^a Ph.D. Student in Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Department of Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.^b Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.^c Associate Professor in Psychology, Department of Psychology, University of Sistan and Baluchestan, Zahedan, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Conflict Resolution Tactics
Stress Coping Strategies
Married Housewives
Working Women
Iran

ABSTRACT

The present study applied a causal-comparative research method with the aim of comparing conflict resolution tactics and stress coping strategies utilized by married working women and housewives. The statistical population comprised all married housewives and working women (ages 20 to 65, with a minimum of pre-high school education level, and no children or up to 6 children) in the city of Isfahan, Iran during 2023–2024. The sample was made up of 300 participants, comprising 150 married working women and 150 housewives, which were selected through convenience sampling method. The instruments used for gathering data included the Coping Responses Inventory (CRI) and the Conflict Resolution Strategies Questionnaire (CTS). The results performing MANOVA showed a significant difference between the two groups of married working women and housewives in all components of conflict resolution tactics ($p < 0.01$). Working women had a moderately higher mean in negotiation-aggression and negotiation-victim compared to housewives ($p < 0.01$). Conversely, housewives reported significantly higher mean scores than working women in several domains, including psychological aggression (as aggressors), psychological violence (as victims), physical aggression (as aggressors), and physical assault (as victims) directed toward working women ($p < 0.01$). The findings suggested that support efforts are essential to decrease violence and enhance women's quality of life safety within the community.

Introduction

The participation of women in various areas of society and their employment opportunities in current situations in society have led to the creation of diverse roles for them in the family and society, which in addition to increasing social connections, has caused problems and challenges for them (Chauhan et al., 2022).

Compared to women who are not employed, employed women have more opportunities and conditions to choose lifestyles according to their preferences, interests, situations, and needs (McGinn & Oh, 2017). As women began to engage in different jobs, professions, and educational settings, they became more conscious of how their work and social environments influenced their lifestyles (Khan et al., 2020). Due to the gender division of labor, men are typically viewed as providers, whereas women are expected to take care of household management. The industrial revolution brought changes to women's traditional roles, leading them to engage more in activities outside home rather than being confined to domestic work; this trend is now rapidly growing, with an increasing number of women participating every day (Siminski & Yetsenga, 2022).

Some women are both financially forced to work outside the home as well as being the heads of households. Many women, motivated by the desire to receive equal rights and benefits with men, strive to pursue advanced degrees and achieve important roles in certain professions, and history has indeed witnessed such achievements in various fields (Alhassan, 2022).

Women are expected to manage both professional and family responsibilities directly. These diverse roles demand multiple factors in terms of time, attention, and focus, making the work-life balance for women significantly more challenging. Indeed, the challenges facing women today go beyond the number of women (Abdel-Rahman et al., 2023). Among the issues related to women's employment are insufficient job variety and wage disparities between men and women in identical working conditions, as well as challenges like psychological stress that can lead to negative emotions, tension, anxiety, nervousness, and discomfort in colleague relationships, along with family issues involving relationships with spouses and children (Hunt, & Samman, 2016).

Also, one of the most common issues for working women is having family responsibilities along with workplace-related problems that also weigh heavily on the shoulders of working women. Problems such as relationships with colleagues, salaries and benefits, and custody, which, along with marriage, having children, etc., are among the issues that women can be considered (Rani & Priya, 2022).

* Corresponding Author

E-mail address: h.samavatyan@edu.ui.ac.ir

Received 10 March 2025; Received in revised form 27 July 2025; Available online 30 September 2025



The employment of women should be viewed as both a supplementary role and a structural factor. Employment, serving as an additional role, may involve increased duties and responsibilities; however, women benefit from their status in the workforce, which enhances their control over financial resources and enables them to positively impact their own and their families' living standards (Agusta & Ghuzini, 2020). The personality and psychological conditions of women, making up half of the population, can significantly influence a nation's advancement and growth as a dynamic force. If they are marginalized, the outcome in society will be nothing short of stagnation; thus, it is essential to focus more on them (Kamyab & Hoseinzadeh, 2023). Since children are the future creators of society, women serve as their caregivers and indeed, it is women who shape their future. Consequently, the well-being of women is crucial for a healthy future, and this matter should receive greater attention among working women (Alhazmi, 2023).

Various professions exhibit distinct life patterns, cognitive styles, and class expectations; however, within the class structure, individuals in significant societal roles are markedly different from other societal types. They tend to act in ways that are more disconnected from other classes and often claim that their modes of thinking, acting, and behavior are superior to those of others in society. Individuals with significant careers tend to earn higher salaries and opt for lifestyles that reflect honor and prestige, viewing themselves as superior to women who do not work.

Different jobs and professions create life patterns, cognitive styles, and expectations based on diversity that separate classes of people in society. Women who hold higher levels among others, have higher salaries and choose lifestyles that reflect honor and prestige, such as employed women who see themselves as superior to women who do not work (Ishida, 2021).

Even with the significant growth in women's participation in the workforce, working outside the home remains a controversial issue, as women face higher risks of mental health problems compared to men. Furthermore, women's mental health contributes to the overall health of families and to the cohesion of society (Reshi & Sudha, 2023).

Another aspect of concern regarding women's employment is their familial surroundings and marital connections. Experts in this area think that employed women have reduced opportunities to communicate and share thoughts with their partners due to the hours they dedicate outside the household. Conversely, numerous men prefer that their wives do not possess greater self-confidence than they do. Consequently, the initial aspect affected in this situation is the bond between husband and wife as each individual believes that the other lacks understanding of their perspective. The presence of extramarital relationships and rising discontent are some of the factors that psychologists examine concerning women's employment and have escalated in contemporary society (Baruah, 2017). The workplace and its conditions significantly influence the challenges faced by married working women (Naji et al., 2022).

Working hours, the nature of the job, the relationships between supervisors and colleagues, the work environment, pay and benefits, and organizational benefits all affect women's job satisfaction. A person's job is also related to the extent to which they are burdened by household responsibilities. In addition, previous studies have shown that working women have jobs that are more stressful, feel more disengaged, and have a greater sense of disinterest in their work. This problem makes women more likely to experience mental health problems than in the past (Al Bazroun et al., 2023).

Conflict Resolution Tactics

The family is both a place of peace and tranquility where the views and points of view of the couple can conflict with each other. These differences and divergences can be beneficial in many cases and help the family develop and progress. However, sometimes, this conflicting mistake can lead to misunderstandings and disagreements between partners (Sasaki et al., 2019).

Spousal abuse encompasses aggressive, hostile, and violent actions that involve psychological, emotional, physical, and sexual aspects occurring within family settings (Zhu et al., 2021). Physical violence is a form of marital abuse perpetrated by one partner against another (Porter et al., 2021). Spousal abuse encompasses any actions that are deemed to instill fear, terror, intimidation, humiliation, blame, injury, and harm (Berniell & Facchini, 2021).

The violence faced by married women has deteriorated considerably, and the chances of fleeing from a violent environment have diminished (Kira et al., 2021). The effects of violence toward married women have resulted in heightened psychological issues, depression, and anxiety (García & Valdes, 2024). Violence towards women is a significant health issue globally, as around 1 in 3 women (33% of the global female population) encounter some type of physical or sexual violence by their partner at some point in their lives (Berniell & Facchini, 2021). Also, the rate of depressive symptoms among married women experiencing violence has risen significantly (Indu et al., 2021).

The difficulties arising from the absence of actual data on spousal violence entail the unavailability of comparable statistics across various countries and the concealed incidence of cases that victims do not report (García & Valdes, 2024). A difference needs to be recognized between domestic violence and family disagreements (Leslie & Wilson, 2020). While individuals do report spousal abuse, there are significant differences between these two groups, and it's feasible that certain forms of violence and abuse may go unnoticed (Porter et al., 2021).

Research indicates that there are strong and positive correlations between depression, anxiety, and spousal abuse (Indu et al., 2021). Prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the issue of physical violence against women, children, and adolescents was prevalent globally, with statistics from the World Health Organization in 2013 indicating rates as high as 60% in certain nations (Porter et al., 2021).

Family disagreements and conflicts can harm mental health and create a destructive cycle that weakens family relationships (Ullah et al., 2023).

Sources of conflict often include verbal or physical aggression, personal traits, and disputes over responsibilities or power, which contribute to marital dissatisfaction. While effective conflict resolution can strengthen relationships, poor handling of conflicts — marked by criticism, revenge, or power struggles — can further damage them (Barahmand & Nafs, 2013).

When dealing with issues and disputes in family dynamics, individuals often receive less conventional and face-to-face support, leading them to pursue help and look for information regarding family conflicts online, thereby increasing searches related to domestic violence. As Internet usage increases among individuals looking for information and answers regarding family relationship issues, this tendency to search online can serve as a means to address the scarcity of information on domestic violence and divorce (Zhu et al., 2021).

Women who have low educational and financial status, along with inadequate family support, are more prone to face spousal abuse (Yesilot, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, spousal abuse has affected poor and illiterate women the most severely. Certain researchers have highlighted the increased occurrence and prevalence of spousal abuse in rural and economically disadvantaged nations (Porter et al., 2021).

A review of spousal abuse reports indicated that the largest volume of incidents was recorded in the spring, potentially influenced by seasonal patterns (Leslie & Wilson, 2020). Barahmand and Nafs (2013) found that conflict resolution influences intimacy, adaptation, marital contentment, and overall quality of life for both employed and unemployed women. In both groups, there existed an inverse correlation between the use of psychological aggression strategies and intimacy, adjustment, marital satisfaction, and quality of life. There was a connection between physical assault and intimacy, adjustment, satisfaction, and quality of life among employed women. Both sets of women noted using psychological aggression, likely leading to diminished intimacy, adjustment, satisfaction, and quality of life.

The high prevalence of depressive symptoms among women has been linked to spousal abuse. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most data on such abuse were collected online. Predictors of spousal abuse included women's low educational level, unemployment or homemaking status, and a history of mental health problems in women or their families. Spousal violence has been associated with a fourfold increase in women's anxiety levels, placing them at greater risk for various mental health issues. The escalation of domestic violence and psychological distress during the pandemic has, in some cases, led to suicidal behaviors or assisted suicide among women (Indu et al., 2021).

All injuries related to domestic violence in women typically affect their head and face, including fractures to the nose, jaw, mandible, and other facial areas, which, despite intervention, can leave them physically and emotionally weak and vulnerable. One study found that radiologists reported that women who presented to emergency rooms for domestic violence were twice as likely to present with head fractures in 2020 as in previous years. Meanwhile, many women who suffer from domestic violence do not seek medical help or go to the emergency room. During the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence victims died from more serious injuries caused by quarantine. It is predicted that survivors and victims of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic will need up to ten years to achieve physical and psychological recovery (Zeyl et al., 2021).

The necessity for both immediate and long-term measures regarding work, family policies, and the essential infrastructure needed to assist women and children in mitigating these effects is in demand. There is robust and continuous evidence showing that women's physical and mental well-being is impacted by spousal violence during health emergencies, natural disasters, infectious diseases, social isolation, and additional factors (Wang et al., 2023). In literature reviews concerning spousal abuse, elements like physical violence, emotional and financial mistreatment, alongside coercive control over women result in enduring social damage (Piquero et al., 2021).

Marital conflict manifests as verbal threats and abuse, as well as physical violence, which can vary from pushing and grabbing or slapping to threats, occasionally resulting in physical injuries or even fatality. Indicators of heightened and severe marital discord encompass signs like heightened sarcasm, confrontational behavior, justifying actions, criticism, yelling, evasion of one another, and sustaining a significant silence between partners (Shariati, & Guerette, 2023).

Marital discord poses a significant danger to marriage as it endangers the stability and quality of married life (Ojeme, 2020), and leads to adverse psychological, physical, social, and economic effects. Impaired physical health, depressive disorders, and decreased work efficiency are some of the outcomes for adults (Koh et al., 2024). Furthermore, the stress resulting from marital disputes adversely impacts not just the partners, but also their connections with their offspring and relatives (El-Kassem et al., 2023).

A healthy family is attained when its members maintain mental well-being and positive relationships, as any breakdown in marital communication can pose a significant risk to the family's survival and health (Sánchez Amate & Luque de la Rosa, 2024). The increasing desire of women to participate in the social sphere and workforce has heightened their discontent with their status and roles (Chandramohan et al., 2023). The result of these discontentments can lead to emotional turmoil or depression in them.

The execution of both traditional and contemporary women's roles, along with the absence of change in these roles and the lack of collaboration from men, leads to women's dissatisfaction in family dynamics. Demonstrations against the unfair position and various roles of women manifest through domestic disputes, hostility, physical and emotional abuse, and ultimately, their separation (Hărăguș et al., 2021).

Strategies for resolving conflict can be classified into four types: positive, withdrawal, acceptance, and conflict. In a positive conflict resolution approach, partners settle their disagreements via conversation and concession. Withdrawing, remaining silent, and avoiding discussions about issues result in increased separation and apathy towards one another. Acceptance refers to agreeing to any solution to evade discussion, with neither party able to support their perspective or opinion. Conflict encompasses insults, personal assaults, and a breakdown of emotional or behavioral regulation (Guleria et al., 2024). The most significant element of conflict behavior in couples is placing one's own desires above those of the spouse. Six fundamental factors affect the emergence of conflicts and ultimately lead to divorce: one spouse's advancement while the other lags behind, poor communication skills, financial issues, infidelity, personality clashes, and inadequate interaction with friends and family (Biggiogera et al., 2021).

Focusing on differences, recognizing them, and possessing conflict resolution abilities are some of the essential skills required by couples (Todorov et al., 2023). Marital disputes have been categorized into seven primary groups, which include: reduced collaboration, diminished sexual interactions, heightened emotional responses, financial independence, relying on children for support, strengthened personal connections with relatives, and weakened family ties with relatives and friends. This method of handling conflict is learned and can be modified (Gong et al., 2023).

Coping strategies

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral techniques that people employ to handle external or internal demands in reaction to psychological stress. Typically, there are different coping methods to manage situations and difficulties (Bondarchuk et al., 2023). Approaches and techniques for handling stressful scenarios are influenced by circumstances as well as personal traits (Agbaria & Mokh, 2022). People employ various methods in tense situations, influenced by their unique circumstances and personality characteristics (Nordbäck et al., 2024).

Research studies indicate three distinct approaches to coping strategies (Winfield et al., 2024). Individual coping strategies refer to collections of approaches such as emotion-focused coping, avoidant coping, and various other forms, along with a mix of individual and group coping methods (Kim et al., 2025). Although research has utilized various assessments of coping strategies, people generally employ 3 or 4 strategies more often, including active coping to facilitate emotional support that encourages planning for acceptance and positive emotion framing, as well as certain avoidance methods like behavioral disengagement and denial (Dev et al., 2023).

There is a vast array of coping strategies, including categories like problem-solving versus emotion-focused, effective versus ineffective, engaging versus avoiding, engaged versus disengaged, and primary versus secondary strategies (Cincidda et al., 2022). People who employ greater problem-focused coping techniques when facing life events are more capable of adjusting to environmental stressors and undergo lower levels of psychological distress (Altunsoy & Aypay, 2023). Conversely, avoidance and emotion-focused strategies play significant roles in detrimental well-being and mental health (Baldacchino & Sassetti, 2024).

The socio-economic impacts, alterations in physical health, and mental well-being of individuals pose a challenge to their capacity to manage stressors (Godinić et al., 2020). Individuals' responses to stress caused by particular events and actions, like the Covid-19 pandemic, can be classified into two groups: maladaptive coping mechanisms (including self-blame, avoidance, and substance use) and adaptive mechanisms (such as following government-imposed guidelines) (Jarego et al., 2021). Additionally, a study conducted in France revealed that individuals employing avoidance strategies during the Covid-19 period experienced low psychological well-being (Kavčič et al., 2022).

Employing coping strategies can be beneficial in addressing physical and mental issues, challenges in social relationships, and interpersonal conflicts. They are subsequently regarded as significant contributors to overall health and mental well-being (Merino et al., 2024). Both sets of coping responses are categorized into two types, representing either cognitive or behavioral coping strategies. Problem-focused coping illustrates cognitive and behavioral attempts to manage or address life stressors (Anjum et al., 2023). In contrast, avoidant coping usually emphasizes emotion, indicating cognitive and behavioral attempts to steer clear of contemplating a stressor and its outcomes, or to handle the feelings related to the stressor (Zhao et al., 2022).

Individuals experience heightened anxiety when confronted with a negative and dangerous situation, marked by recurring thoughts centered on various facets of a threat, which may assist them in evaluating dangers. This type of repetitive thinking has been regarded as a cognitive coping strategy to manage intrusive thoughts during challenging circumstances (Inostroza et al., 2024). These intrusive thoughts may also lead to rumination, although factors like age and gender influence these matters, with older individuals and women experiencing higher anxiety levels (Cincidda et al., 2021).

Previous studies on coping skills have indicated that emotion-focused and problem-focused coping responses can act as either protective or risk factors for psychological well-being. Certain research has indicated that problem-focused coping offers protection (as it promotes finding solutions), whereas other studies have claimed that avoidant coping is more protective (Mayordomo et al., 2022). In a study, emotion-focused coping (meaning negative or problem-free) served as a safeguard against risk elements like suicidal thoughts. In other terms, possessing emotion-focused coping skills (evasion of issues) was negatively linked to suicidal thoughts in general (Yoon et al., 2018).

Emotion-focused coping strategies consist of techniques aimed at helping individuals manage and control their feelings and emotions while dealing with stressful life situations. Nonetheless, emotion-focused coping methods may worsen the stressful scenario after a brief time of alleviation (Angelica et al., 2022). Emotion-focused coping involves managing negative emotions triggered by stressful situations, aiming to control distress, internal agitation, and intrusive thoughts by employing active methods like discussing feelings through therapy or journaling, accepting the situation and associated feelings, practicing mindfulness, or obtaining emotional support from social networks (Theodoratou et al., 2023).

A connection exists between coping strategies, strategies focused on problem-solving, and those focused on arousal regulation. Coping strategies that focus on the problem negatively impact anxiety, while those centered on emotions can alleviate anxiety by decreasing worry (Geraci et al., 2024). Strategies for social support can positively influence emotion-focused coping methods, which help to alleviate worry and anxiety (Sandra et al., 2022). Coping strategies are numerous and have been classified in different manners, including problem-solving coping, cognitive appraisal coping, emotion-focused coping, somatization coping, and social support coping, yet no singular classification for these strategies exists (Suresh, 2019).

Emotion-oriented coping techniques may enable individuals to better accept and evade negative and unwanted occurrences compared to problem-oriented strategies (Muhiddin et al., 2024). Elements influencing coping strategies encompass intellectual and cultural perspectives. Factors such as age, gender, educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity also influence coping strategies. In research examining gender and coping methods, findings revealed that women adopt emotion-focused coping strategies more frequently than men, whereas men utilize problem-solving strategies more than women (Perzow et al., 2021).

Coping is a self-regulatory mechanism that arises in reaction to stressors, shaped by cultural context and background. Culture influences how stressors are perceived and the development of coping mechanisms (Ji et al., 2022). When individuals adopt a problem-focused coping strategy, they view themselves as confident and optimistic, believing the situation is manageable. In contrast, when they see the situation as uncontrollable and beyond their influence, they tend to employ submissive and helpless methods, utilizing emotion-focused coping strategies (Luong et al., 2020).

Coping strategies that focus on problems are linked to greater resilience and psychological health, whereas those that emphasize emotions tend to be connected with unfavorable psychological results, such as diminished resilience. Among adults, individuals rely on social support,

optimism, self-esteem, positive feelings, and resilience (Chung et al., 2023). Research indicates that employing coping strategies and resilience positively impacts psychological well-being, alleviating issues like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders (Gheshlagh et al., 2017).

Folkman (1984) identifies coping resources as physical, social, psychological, and material. These strategies often require guidance to help individuals adapt effectively to various situations (Yesilot, 2021). Billings & Moss (1984) While resource availability influences coping methods, the nature of the crisis and one's perception of it ultimately shape the chosen response (Booth & Neill, 2017).

Research indicates that individuals in stressful situations often boost their active behavioral coping mechanisms, whereas interpersonal contexts lead to heightened emotion-focused coping (Cho & Choi, 2024). In this context, the greater the presence of negative life circumstances and stressors, the fewer approach-oriented responses are employed, and the more avoidance-oriented responses are utilized. Concerning the evaluation of stressful life circumstances, it has been studied that when stressors are perceived as a challenge (Maqsood et al., 2024). Individuals often utilize coping strategies that concentrate more on addressing the challenge rather than on evasion. This indicates that the kind, severity, and evaluation conducted during crises affect the coping strategies employed, highlighting the importance of the interconnection between various coping responses and the uniqueness of the situation (López-Ramos et al., 2021).

Billings & Moss (1984) categorized coping strategies into proactive, cognitively proactive, and avoidance behaviors, which further classify into: 1) actions that entail an active response, involving efforts to diminish the risk and its impact; 2) self-defensive actions; and 3) risk-taking actions, which involve disregarding the hazardous situation the individual faces and displaying behaviors that could endanger their safety (Gan & Fu, 2022).

It is important to recognize that there are no effective or ineffective coping strategies. To put it differently, any approach can be employed to address an issue in a particular context and can be classified as either constructive or non-constructive (Alipour et al., 2010). Additionally, people select their coping mechanisms according to their personal, psychological, and cultural traits. Research has shown that when people face stress, they exhibit various coping methods to mitigate or reduce the negative impacts (Kulbe, 2001).

A woman is an entity capable of contributing to societal reform and nurturing virtuous individuals. The existence of women and their inherent qualities contribute significantly to the well-being of both family and society. Moreover, being half of the workforce, they can significantly contribute to economic and social development initiatives. Considering that women globally have a significant impact on handling family and societal matters, we must not overlook the importance of addressing women's issues across different facets. There is a scarcity of studies on conflict resolution strategies and coping mechanisms among married housewives and employed women, indicating a need for more thorough and extensive research in this area. Based on this, the inquiry emerges regarding whether there is a distinction in the two variables of conflict resolution tactics and coping strategies between employed women and housewives? In this regard, the current research examines the difference in conflict resolution tactics and coping mechanisms between working women and housewives in the city of Isfahan within the context of Iranian culture.

Method

This study employs a causal-comparative design. The statistical population comprised all married housewives and working women (ages 20 to 65, with a minimum of pre-high school education level, and no children or up to 6 children) in the city of Isfahan, Iran during 2023-2024. The sample size for this research was determined using G*Power software, having an alpha coefficient of 0.05 and a beta of 0.80 for eight dependent variables, which led to an estimated requirement of 250 individuals for two groups.

The sample size, ultimately, consisted of 300 individuals, including 150 married housewives and 150 married women who were employed, chosen through convenience sampling. Matching the two groups and the criteria for inclusion in this study were: ages of the two groups ranged from 20 to 60 years old, educational attainment varied from diploma to PhD level, and marriage duration extended to 30 years. The majority of married housewives fell within the age range of 26 to 30 years (33.3%), while most of the employed women were aged between 31 and 35 years (45.3%). In this sample, 16 (10.7%) of housewives had a diploma; conversely, 32 (21.3%) of the working women achieved a diploma.

Additionally, 72 (48%) of housewives held an associate degree, whereas 14 (9.3%) of working women had an associate degree, as well. Furthermore, 56 (37.3%) of housewives obtained a BA/BSc, compared to 48 (32%) of the working women with the same level of education. Lastly, 6 (4%) of housewives had an MA/MSc, while 52 (34.7%) of the working women achieved this qualification. Within the women's group of housewives, there were no participants with doctoral degrees, whereas 4 (2.7%) employed women held doctorate degrees. All women in the housewife group had children, whereas 32 (21.3%) of the employed women were childless. 43 (28.7%) of the housewives had one or two children, whereas 53 (35.3%) and 41 (27.3%) of the employed women had one and two children, respectively. 56 (37.3%) of the housewives had three children, while 18 (12%) of the working women also had three children.

A total of eight housewives (5.3%) had four or more children, whereas 6 (4%) of the employed women had four or more children. A number of 73 (48.7%) the housewives had a marriage duration of less than 10 years, whereas 45 (30%) of the working women had a marriage duration of less than 10 years. In the group of the housewives, 36 (24%) had been married for 11 to 20 years, whereas among the working women, 70 (46.7%) had their marriages lasting 11 to 20 years. In total, 41 (27.3%) of the housewives had a marriage duration of 21 to 30 years, whereas 35 (23.3%) of the working women experienced the same marriage duration. The instruments for data collection in this study, besides demographic inquiries, comprised the Coping Response Inventory (CRI) and the Conflict Resolution Tactics Survey (CTS).

Instruments

Coping Responses Inventory (CRI): The Coping Response Inventory (CRI), created by Billings and Moss in 1984, was developed to offer a simple and reliable way to evaluate coping strategies, featuring 32 questions. This survey comprises five subscales: problem-focused coping, cognitive evaluation coping, emotion-focused coping, somatic coping, and support-based coping. The problem-solving subscale includes 3

questions, the cognitive appraisal subscale includes 5 questions, the emotion-based subscale includes 10 questions, the somatization subscale includes 8 questions, and the social support subscale includes 6 questions. The survey is evaluated using a four-point Likert scale (never = 0, sometimes = 1, often = 2, and always = 3).

The ultimate result of the questionnaire is determined by problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The total of the scores from the two subscales of problem solving and cognitive evaluation results in the problem-oriented coping score, while the sum of the scores from the three subscales related to emotion, social support, and somatization results in the emotion-oriented coping score. The maximum score for problem-oriented coping is 24, while the minimum is zero; for emotion-oriented coping, the maximum score is 72 and the minimum is zero. The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire, as determined by the test-retest method, was found to be 0.79 by Zonoian et al. (2011). In the current research an alpha Cronbach of 0.75 was obtained.

Conflict Resolution Strategies Questionnaire: This survey was developed by Strauss (1979) and assesses both physical and psychological violence committed by partners against one another over the past year. The Conflict Tactics Questionnaire is a complex notion of violence and conflict resolution techniques encompassing five dimensions: negotiation, psychological aggression, physical assault, sexual coercion, and harm (injury).

The Negotiation Scale (6 items) measures constructive strategies used by partners to resolve disputes, including cognitive (e.g., proposing compromise) and emotional management (e.g., showing concern for the partner's feelings). The Psychological Aggression Scale (8 items) assesses verbal and nonverbal aggressive behaviors, while the Physical Assault Scale (12 items) evaluates the use of physical force in conflicts. The Sexual Coercion Scale (7 items) measures forced sexual acts, and the Injury Scale examines the severity of pain, physical harm, and need for medical care resulting from violence.

Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha values for the five sub-scales—psychological aggression, negotiation, physical assault, sexual coercion, and injury—have been found to be 0.79, 0.86, 0.86, 0.87, and 0.95, respectively (Strauss, 1979). In Iran, Mohammadkhani et al. (2010) reported that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale varied from 0.79 for the psychological aggression subscale to 0.91 for the negotiation subscale.

This questionnaire was translated by Panaghi et al. (2011) and a number of its items (13 items) were removed. Instead of Strauss' five factors, they introduced three factors of negotiation, psychological violence, and physical assault, and considered it appropriate for Iranian society. The results of exploratory factor analysis showed that in the Iranian sample of the present study, a three-factor analysis using three subscales of assault, psychological violence, and negotiation is more appropriate than other analyses. Also, this scale and its subscales have good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha between 0.66 and 0.86). In the current research, alpha Cronbach for overall questionnaire was equal to 0.85.

Results

In the current research, descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) alongside the inferential analysis, which includes multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), were conducted using SPSS, version 26.

Table 1 indicates the mean and standard deviation for the negotiation-aggressive component for married housewives and for married employed women.

Table 1. Descriptive mean and standard deviation of the participants

Variable	Group	Mean	SD
Negotiation – Aggressive	Working women	29.98	11.40
	Housewives	19.31	9.39
Negotiation–victim	Working women	29.87	11.54
	Housewives	16.52	10.77
Psychological violence – aggressive	Working women	2.25	3.50
	Housewives	9.36	7.31
Psychological violence – victim	Working women	3.29	4.20
	Housewives	13.77	11.01
Physical attack – aggressive	Working women	.47	1.07
	Housewives	.89	2.08
Physical assault – victim	Working women	1.19	2.29
	Housewives	4.02	7.42

Results reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between housewives and employed married women on the compounded dependent variables of the study, $F(6,294)=32.345$, $P=.001$; Wilks' Lambda=.60; $\eta^2=.40$.

Table 2. Results of between Groups ANOVA on conflict resolution tactics between housewives and working women

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	η^2
Group	Negation-aggression	8565.01	1	8565.01	78.58	.001	.21
	Negotiation-victim	13424.71	1	13424.71	107.75	.001	.26
	Psychological violence-aggressive aggressive	3812.11	1	3812.11	115.80	.001	.28
	Psychological violence-victim	8277.53	1	8277.53	119.00	.001	.28
	Physical attack-aggressive	13.232	1	13.232	4.86	.03	.30
	Physical assault-victim	601.19	1	601.19	19.90	.001	.21

The findings presented in [table 2](#) indicate a notable difference between housewives and employed women concerning negotiation-aggression, $F=78.58$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.21$, negotiation-victim $F=107.75$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.26$, psychological violence-aggression $F=115.80$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.28$, psychological violence-victim $F=119$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.28$, physical attack-aggressive $F=4.86$, $p=.03$, $\eta^2=.03$, and physical assault-victim $F=19.90$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.21$.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of the participants

Coping strategy	Group	Mean	SD	N
Problem-focused	Working women	15.01	5.27	150
	Housewives women	10.86	2.76	150
Emotion-focused	Working women	29.94	3.24	150
	Housewives women	32.07	7.37	150

[Table 3](#) illustrates that the average of the problem-focused style for housewife women is 10.86, while for working women participants, it is 15.01. Additionally, the average of the emotion-focused coping component for housewife participants is 32.07, whereas for working women participants, it is 24.94.

Results reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between housewives married women and employed married women on the compounded dependent variables of the study, $F(2,297)=86.546$, $P=.001$; Wilks' Lambda=.63; $\eta^2=.37$.

Table 4. Results of between Groups ANOVA on coping strategies between housewives and working women

Source	Dependent variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	η^2
Group	Problem-focused	1293.76	1	1293.76	73.19	.001	.20
	Emotion-focused	3809.20	1	3809.20	117.51	.001	.28

The results shown in [table 4](#) reveals a significant disparity between housewives and working women regarding problem-focused coping, $F=73.19$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.20$, as well as emotion-focused coping $F=117.51$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.28$. An examination of the mean scores in [table 9](#) shows that employed women exhibited a moderately higher average in problem-focused coping ($M=15.01$, $SD=5.27$) than housewives ($M=10.86$, $SD=2.76$), while housewives achieved greater scores in emotion-focused coping ($M=32.07$, $SD=7.37$) relative to working women ($M=29.94$, $SD=3.24$).

Discussion

The aim of the current research was to examine the differences in conflict resolution methods and stress management strategies between married housewives and working women in Isfahan, Iran. The study findings showed that employed women exhibited a moderately higher mean in negotiation-aggression and negotiation-victim when compared to homemakers. In contrast, housewives showed elevated average scores on psychological violence-aggressive, psychological violence-victim, physical attack-aggressive, and physical assault-victim directed at working women.

The findings of this study are consistent with the research of [Yesilot \(2021\)](#); [Porter et al. \(2021\)](#); [Wang et al. \(2023\)](#). [Yesilot \(2021\)](#) determined that women with low education and financial resources, coupled with insufficient family support, are at a higher risk of experiencing spousal abuse. [Porter et al. \(2021\)](#) discovered that women who are poor and illiterate have been the most adversely impacted by spousal abuse. Some researchers have emphasized the rising frequency and prevalence of domestic violence in rural and economically disadvantaged countries. [Wang et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that spousal violence affects women's physical and mental health during health crises, natural calamities, epidemics, social seclusion, and various other factors.

It seems that working women, by utilizing negotiation, can more effectively handle and address aggression and victimization than housewives; additionally, incidents of psychological violence, physical attacks, and assaults are lower among working women than among housewives. Some investigators concluded that the violence faced by married women has deteriorated considerably, and the chances of fleeing

from a violent environment have diminished (Kira et al., 2021). Recently, García & Valdes (2024) argued that the effects of violence toward married women have resulted in heightened psychological issues, depression, and anxiety.

Various occupations result in diverse lifestyles, mindsets, and societal expectations. Women in significant roles within society frequently distinguish themselves from others in the social hierarchy. Their actions and mindsets may differ significantly from those of other social classes, resulting in a clear divide. Numerous individuals in these positions claim that their mindset and lifestyle are superior to those of others. Individuals in high-status professions typically have higher incomes and opt to live in manners that reflect their achievements and social status.

Women in the workforce frequently pursue lifestyles that convey dignity and status, potentially enhancing their sense of superiority. This perspective also influences their perception of women who are not employed. Numerous working women view themselves as more successful than those who decide to stay at home or seek less acknowledged positions. This perspective can lead to a gap between employed women and those not engaged in the workforce. The importance assigned to well-paying jobs affects how individuals view their self-esteem and contributions to society.

In this context, employment serves as a symbol of identity, creating a hierarchy that influences relationships and social interactions. The focus on achievement and monetary profit influences perceptions of self-worth, resulting in a complicated network of social dynamics (Ishida, 2021).

The results of the study reveal clear differences between employed women and homemakers in their experiences of negotiation and conflict. Employed women showed a slightly higher average score in both negotiation-aggression and negotiation-victim categories. This suggests that women who work outside the home tend to engage more often in confrontations or aggressive discussions, perhaps driven by workplace pressures or a need to assert their opinions. They might also find themselves as victims in some negotiation scenarios, indicating a degree of vulnerability or conflict in their interactions. In contrast, homemakers scored higher on measures related to psychological and physical violence directed at working women.

Their elevated scores on psychological violence-aggressive and psychological violence-victim indicators suggest that housewives might engage in or be affected by emotional or mental abuse more often than their working counterparts. This could include insults, criticism, or manipulation, often aimed at undermining the confidence of working women. Similarly, the higher scores on physical attack-aggressive and physical assault-victim dimensions imply that physical violence or aggression may be more prevalent in interactions between homemakers and working women.

In summary, the study emphasizes that employed women are more active in negotiation, though they also experience victimization in these interactions. Meanwhile, homemakers tend to be more involved in or affected by emotional and physical violence, especially when interacting with working women. Addressing these issues requires understanding the different types of conflicts women face and working toward more respectful and safe environments for all.

The results of this study showed a significant difference in problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping between housewives and working women. Working women showed a slightly higher average in problem-focused coping than housewives, while housewives achieved greater scores in emotion-focused coping than employed women. There is limited research examining the differences in stress coping styles between working women and housewives to compare this study's findings with earlier research.

The findings of this study align with the results of previous findings. For instance, Altınsoy & Aypay (2023); Godinić, Obrenović & Khudaykulov (2020), Altınsoy & Aypay (2023) noted that individuals utilizing more problem-focused coping strategies in response to life events are better at adapting to environmental stressors and experience reduced psychological distress. Godinić, Obrenović & Khudaykulov (2020) found that the socio-economic effects, changes in physical health, and mental well-being of people create challenges for their ability to cope with stressors. On the other hand, avoidance and emotion-centered approaches significantly impact negative well-being and mental health (Baldacchino, & Sassetti, 2024).

It appears that coping serves as a self-regulatory process that emerges in response to stressors, influenced by cultural context and background. Culture affects the perception of stressors and shapes the development of coping strategies (Ji et al., 2022). Working women tend to enjoy a better socio-economic status than housewives. This higher status allows them access to resources that can help them cope with stress. As a result, working women often manage life crises more effectively. Their experience in the workforce equips them with skills that are valuable in handling various challenges.

They are likely to face problems head-on, drawing on their training and experiences. In comparison, housewives may not have the same level of exposure to stressful situations, which can impact their coping strategies. This difference in engagement with the outside world can affect how each group addresses and regulates their emotions in response to stress. Working women tend to excel at self-regulation during tough times. They have built a set of skills that help them balance their personal and professional lives. With more responsibilities, they learn to prioritize tasks and manage time efficiently. These skills enable working women to navigate stress more adeptly than housewives. While both groups have their own challenges, the training and experiences of working women often lead to better outcomes during crises. Overall, their socio-economic advantages provide them with tools needed to face life's hurdles with greater confidence and effectiveness. The findings from this study reveal clear differences in how housewives and working women cope with daily challenges.

When comparing the two groups, it is evident that their ways of managing stress and problems vary significantly. Working women tend to adopt problem-focused coping strategies more often than housewives. This means they prefer to approach issues directly and work to find solutions. For example, a working woman might address work-related stress by planning her schedule better or seeking advice from colleagues. She actively tries to solve problems instead of just reacting emotionally.

On the other hand, housewives generally score higher in emotion-focused coping. They tend to deal with stress by regulating their feelings or seeking comfort. This difference in coping styles shows how each group responds based on their unique roles and situations. The slight edge in problem-focused coping among working women suggests they often face challenges that require direct action. Their busy schedules and responsibilities push them toward active problem solving.

They are more likely to tackle issues head-on, making plans, and taking steps to fix problems rather than dwelling on feelings of frustration or sadness. Conversely, housewives, who may encounter different types of stress, often focus more on managing their emotional responses. They might use comforting routines or hobbies to soothe their feelings, especially when faced with personal or household issues. This tendency indicates that they prioritize emotional well-being over direct problem-solving in many situations.

Overall, the study underscores the need to recognize diverse coping styles. Knowing that working women are more problem-oriented, while housewives focus on emotions, can help in designing better support systems tailored to each group. It also reminds us that stress management strategies should match individual needs and circumstances. Recognizing these patterns provides valuable insight into the unique ways women navigate life's challenges.

Limitations

The research was conducted among working and housewife women in Isfahan, Iran. As a result, the findings may not easily apply to other studies or different cultures.

The sampling method for this study was based on convenience. This means that participants were not selected randomly. Instead, they were chosen from those who were readily available in the nearby area. Because of this approach, the sample may not reflect the larger population accurately. The data collected might suffer from issues of accuracy, as the study only includes participants who could be easily contacted. This limits the diversity and representativeness of the sample, making it difficult to draw broad conclusions about the entire population of women in Isfahan or beyond.

An additional limitation of this study lies in the absence of controls for key demographic variables such as age, number of children, and other potentially confounding factors that may have influenced the results. Accordingly, future research should explicitly account for these variables to strengthen the validity and generalizability of the findings.

Suggestions

Future research must expand to include multiple cities across Iran, each with different cultural backgrounds. This approach will help clarify which research findings are specific to the original study location and which are common across various regions. Examining different cities allows researchers to better understand how local customs, traditions, and beliefs shape the results.

The findings from this expanded research can be used to improve conflict resolution and coping techniques for women. Special attention should be given to housewife women who may face unique challenges. Workshops and seminars can be organized using insights from this research. These gatherings should focus on practical skills that help women manage conflicts, reduce stress, and adopt healthier coping strategies.

Training programs can teach women how to navigate social pressures or family conflicts more effectively. By using the results to design tailored programs, the support women receive will be more relevant to their specific cultural context. This creates more effective ways to address their needs. Over time, these initiatives can lead to stronger mental health and better family relationships. Overall, expanding research and applying its insights will make a meaningful difference for women across different regions of Iran.

Conclusion

Research indicates that employed women tend to score moderately higher in measures of negotiation-aggression and negotiation-victim compared to their homemaker counterparts. This suggests that women in the workforce may experience more intense negotiation situations, leading to aggressive behaviors or feelings of victimization in those contexts. Conversely, housewives exhibited higher average scores in areas related to both psychological and physical violence directed at working women. This includes greater levels of psychological violence-aggressive and psychological violence-victim, as well as increased physical attack-aggressive and physical assault-victim scores.

Furthermore, research shows that working women exhibited a slightly higher average in problem-focused coping strategies compared to housewives. This implies that employed women may be more inclined to approach challenges and conflicts directly and seek practical solutions. On the other hand, housewives reported greater success in emotion-focused coping techniques than those who are employed. This reflects a tendency among homemakers to manage their emotional responses and adjust their feelings in the face of difficulties. The differences in coping strategies highlight varied approaches to stress and conflict among these two groups of women.

Practical implications

These results are crucial for enhancing our comprehension of the various interactions and living situations of women. Although working women can acquire skills in crisis management and self-discipline, housewives tend to face a higher risk of violence and danger. These disparities must be considered to ensure that suitable policies and support initiatives are created for each group. These findings suggest that targeted educational and support efforts are essential to decrease violence and enhance women's quality of life. Moreover, comprehending these distinctions aids in more effectively developing preventive initiatives and ultimately lessening violence while enhancing women's safety within the community.

This research sets out to address this knowledge gap by focusing specifically on this issue for the first time in Iran. Its goal is to understand how married housewives and working women differently or similarly handle conflicts and stress, considering their unique social roles and responsibilities. The aim was to produce new insights that could help in designing better support systems, counseling approaches, or workplace policies tailored to the needs of these women. This endeavor marks an important step toward understanding women's mental health, social well-being, and resilience within the Iranian cultural context. Without prior studies to build upon, this research becomes innovative and valuable, offering fresh perspectives on how these women navigate their daily lives amidst social expectations and personal challenges.

Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the working women and housewives who voluntarily participated in this important study. Their involvement has been essential to the research we conducted in Isfahan, Iran. Each participant brought unique insights and perspectives that greatly enriched our findings. Their willingness to share their experiences has provided valuable data that contributes to a better understanding of the diverse roles women play at work or at home. This study would not have been possible without their active engagement and support. We are deeply grateful for their time, effort, and commitment to advancing knowledge in this area.

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