

## Predicting Emotion Regulation and Coping Strategies Based on Psychological Toughness in Women heads of Households

Mozahab SH., \*<sup>1</sup> Sayyadpoor Z.<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

**Introduction:** Considering the special conditions of female heads of households and the need for research in this regard, the purpose of this study was to predict emotional regulation and coping strategies based on psychological toughness in female heads of households.

**Research method:** The research is descriptive and analytical. The research samples were selected among the women heads of households under the support of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in Varamin city in the number of 180 people using the available sampling method, and they used the questionnaires of psychological toughness of Kobasa (1989), cognitive regulation of emotion by Garnevsy, Kraij, and Spinhaven (2002) and coping strategies of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) answered. Pearson correlation and SPSS 24 univariate regression were used for data analysis.

**Findings:** The results showed that among the components of emotional regulation, there is a direct relationship between psychological toughness and re-attention to planning, acceptance and positive re-attention, and significant at 0.01 level, and with blaming others, catastrophic thinking, mental rumination and self-blame, the relationship is negative and significant at 0.01 level. Also, the correlation between psychological toughness with problem-oriented strategies was positive and significant at 0.01 level, and negative with emotion-oriented strategies. The results of the regression analysis showed that psychological toughness can include the components of acceptance, renewed attention to planning and positive renewed attention, mental rumination, blaming oneself, blaming others, and catastrophic thinking, as well as problem-oriented and emotion-oriented strategies. to predict

**Conclusion:** According to the findings, the more psychological toughness people have, the more emotional regulation they will have and the more effective coping strategies they will have.

**Keywords:** emotion regulation, coping strategies, psychological toughness, female-headed households

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<sup>1</sup> - Master of Family Counseling, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran, Email: [sh4mozahab@gmail.com](mailto:sh4mozahab@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0002-9638-4429

<sup>2</sup> - Department of Psychology and Counseling, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran Email: [z\\_sayadpoor@azad.ac.ir](mailto:z_sayadpoor@azad.ac.ir), ORCID: 0000-0001-9126-5394

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## Introduction:

Among most human societies, the father is the main and central member of the family and is responsible for the care and management of the family. And for this reason, in most definitions, the phenomenon of fatherlessness is defined as the absence of a father in the family, and his absence is effective in economic issues and family management. And on the other hand, in Iran's laws and regulations, women do not have the duty to provide for the economic needs of the family. And her important responsibility is in raising the human race and providing the growth and prosperity of the family (1). Nevertheless, in recent years, we have seen a growing trend of women who take responsibility for their lives alone. And they are introduced as women heads of the family in the society (2). These women have lost the head of the family for various reasons. Reasons such as accident, death, divorce, addiction, unreturned absences, etc. that inevitably the mother of the family assumes the role of breadwinner and head of the family along with the role of mother. In such cases, this imposed and unwanted role puts the responsibility of providing financial affairs related to housing, livelihood, children's educational needs, etc. to the woman as the head of the household (3).

Studies have shown that women who do not have a guardian or are the head of the household suffer from mental illnesses (4). And in terms of social and quality of life, they have serious problems (5). Therefore, unaccompanied women face many stressful factors. But the existence of individual differences and different personality traits differentiates people's reaction to the situation. Personality factors can be combined in different ways, in such a way that they create different personality patterns (6). One of these personality traits is psychological toughness. Psychological toughness is a personality trait that prevents the negative effects of stress on mental health. This feature helps a person to survive in stressful and difficult conditions to enrich her life conditions (7). Toughness is a positive personality structure that plays a role as a source of resistance when faced with stressful life events. Toughness is a combination of beliefs about oneself and the world, which consists of three components: restraint, control, and challenge. And at the same time, it is a single structure that originates from the integrated and coordinated action of these three components (8). In this regard, Eszakoudi and Steele (9) in their research emphasized the initial socialization of parents to deal with emotion regulation problems. And they stated that the socialization of their parents equips them with coping strategies for different emotion regulation problems. And as teens transition into adulthood, they experience social stressors that test their emotion regulation skills. Therefore, toughness comes from useful and different childhood experiences and can increase the quality of life. In other words, toughness is a sign of people's mental health and affects their emotional regulation strategies (10).

Since emotion regulation is a process through which people adjust their negative and positive emotions to respond to conscious and unconscious environmental expectations (11). Since emotion regulation is a process through which people adjust their negative and positive emotions to respond to conscious and unconscious environmental expectations. And in this way, it helps people to get rid of the pressure of automatic and unhealthy thoughts and increase self-regulated behaviors (12). Emotion regulation includes the process of initiating, maintaining, adjusting, and changing the intensity or duration of internal emotional and emotional states, motivations related to emotions, and physiological processes that often serve to achieve one's goals (13).

Emotion recognition strategies are self-awareness mechanisms that a person uses to cope with adverse situations (14). These strategies include compromised and uncompromised strategies.

Compromised strategies include acceptance, re-attention to planning, positive re-attention, perspective taking, and positive re-evaluation, and non-compromised strategies of emotional regulation include self-blame, blaming others, mental rumination and catastrophizing.

Research shows a strong relationship between a stubborn personality and the display of people's emotions. Studies have shown that people with high psychological toughness are more capable in how to use their emotions in different life situations. Huong (15) in his research analysis showed that hidden changes in the mediation of anxiety further showed that teachers' initial levels of anxiety correspond to coping with a lack of focus on emotion regulation, which in turn leads to a stronger intention to leave the teaching profession. Also, Skindler et al. (16) also stated in their research that dealing with negative emotions is a challenge in everyday life. Personality, specifically neuroticism, predicts how prone we are to experiencing negative emotions, and how regularly people regulate personality traits when experiencing negative emotions. and emotion predict additional or different aspects of stress coping and how grief affects self-rated personality.

Coping includes efforts to manage and regulate environmental, internal demands and conflicts between them and has two important functions: Regulating unpleasant emotions and taking action to change and improve the problem that caused discomfort. Coping with stressful events is a process to eliminate the perceived mismatch between one's expectations and resources. Coping strategies include the cognitive, emotional and behavioral efforts of a person when faced with stress to overcome, tolerate or reduce internal or external expectations and the conflict between these expectations. In fact, stubborn people use the problem-oriented method and non-stubborn people use the emotion-oriented method in dealing with stress. So, with the increase in psychological toughness, the use of problem-oriented methods in dealing with tension increases and the use of emotion-oriented methods decreases (17).

Based on what was said, psychological toughness is a variable that is related to emotional regulation and coping strategies. In addition, female heads of the household constitute a special group that faces different economic and psychological problems, and because of this, they experience many stressful situations. Women heads of households in Iran also, due to the fact that they do not have the ability to manage their economic affairs and the family, turn to organizations such as Welfare and the Imam Khomeini (RA) Relief Committee and they are satisfied with the ad hoc assistance and small pensions of these institutions and struggle with the issues of life in the framework of the house (18).

Therefore, according to the special conditions of female heads of households and the need for research in this regard, the research aims to answer the following main question. Can psychological toughness predict emotional regulation and coping strategies of women heads of households?

### **Methods:**

The statistical population of the research included all female heads of the household under the supervision of the Imam Khomeini (RA) relief committee in Varamin city in 2017. According to the report of Varamin City Relief Committee, there were 2706 homeless women under the support of Imam Khomeini's Relief Committee. In the meantime, the target population, that is, female heads of the household, had 1,440 people with an education above the fifth grade. 180 female heads of households who were willing to cooperate were selected using available sampling method. And they responded to the questionnaires of personal views of Kubasa (1985), cognitive

emotional regulation of Garnevsy, Kraij, and Spinhaven (2002) and coping strategies of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Data collection tool:

**Kubasa's questionnaire (1989)** is a questionnaire that is used to measure psychological toughness. And it is a 50-item self-report scale that assesses three components of toughness as a personality style: 1- commitment (16 items), 2- control (17 items), 3- challenge (17 items). Subject to each question, based on how much this article applies to him, he specifies her answer based on a four-point Likert scale from zero (not true at all) to three (completely true). In total, one overall score is obtained for psychological toughness and three scores for individual components (19). In total, one overall score is obtained for psychological toughness and three scores for individual components (19). And this coefficient was calculated for the whole trait of toughness at 0.75, which is an acceptable reliability coefficient. Naghipour (11) also based on his research, for the components of psychological toughness i.e. challenge, commitment and containment respectively, he obtained the reliability coefficient of 0.70, 0.52 and 0.52 based on Cronbach's alpha. And these coefficients were calculated as 0.75 for the entire questionnaire.

**Garnevsy, Kraij, and Spinhaven (2002)** emotion regulation questionnaire is designed to evaluate the cognitive strategies that each person uses after experiencing life-threatening or stressful events. This questionnaire has 36 items and 9 subscales of self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning, positive re-evaluation, perspective-taking, catastrophizing and blaming others. The grades are graded based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Each subscale contains 4 items. In this questionnaire, the strategies of self-blame, blaming others, rumination and catastrophic thinking are all negative emotion regulation strategies. And the strategies of acceptance, re-attention to planning, positive re-attention, positive marketing and adopting a perspective together show positive emotion regulation strategies. The validity of the questionnaire in Iran was investigated by Panishtegar and Heydari (2005). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.89 for positive strategies, 0.83 for negative strategies and 0.91 for the entire questionnaire. The reliability in Yeganelli's research (2014) was calculated through Cronbach's alpha of 0.79. Also, its formal validity has been confirmed by professors (20).

**Lazarus and Folkman's (1984)** Coping Strategies Questionnaire have been prepared for stress, and evaluates a wide range of thoughts and actions that people use when faced with internal and external stressful situations, and evaluates the two components of problem-oriented strategies and emotion-oriented strategies. It includes 66 items and 8 coping subscales, which are: 1- Direct confrontation (confrontation) 2- Avoidance 3- Restraint (self-control) 4- Seeking social support 5- Responsibility 6- Escape and avoidance 7- Thoughtful problem solving and 8- Positive reappraisal. Problem-oriented strategies include 4 characteristics of seeking social support, taking responsibility, thoughtful problem solving, and positive reappraisal. And emotion-oriented strategies also include 4 components, direct confrontation, distancing, self-restraint, and escape-avoidance. The score of each item is determined based on a 4-point Likert scale from zero (I did not use it) to three (I used it a lot). (17).

### **Results:**

In this study, Pearson's multivariate correlation was used to investigate the relationship between variables (Table 1).

Table 1: Multivariate correlation coefficients of toughness and emotional regulation components

	toughness	acceptance	Pay attention to planning again	Positive feedback	Positive marketing	Adopt a perspective
toughness	1					
acceptance	0.172*	1				
Pay attention to planning again	0.215*	0.218**	1			
Positive feedback	0.165*	0.272**	0.209*	1		
Positive marketing	0.139	0.220**	0.174*	0.740**	1	
Adopt a perspective	0.114	0.487**	0.489**	0.294**	0.255**	1

\*\*p&lt;0.01

\*p&lt;0.05

Examining the correlation coefficients between toughness and emotion regulation strategies showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between toughness and emotional regulation components, renewed attention to planning, acceptance and positive renewed attention. Then, in order to predict each of the positive emotional regulation strategies using psychological toughness, variance analysis related to the regression between toughness and positive emotional regulation strategies was done (Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of variance analysis related to the regression of positive emotional regulation strategies based on psychological toughness

Criterion variable	Source	sum of squares	df	mean square	F	R	R <sup>2</sup>	P
acceptance	regression	81.605	1	81.605	5.407	0.172	0.029	0.021
	residual	2686.595	178	15.093				
	Total	2768.200	179					
Pay attention to planning again	regression	119.250	1	119.250	8.616	0.215	0.046	0.004

	residual	2463.528	178	13.840				
	Total	2582.778	179					
Positive feedback	regression	63.033	1	63.033	4.933	0.164	0.027	0.028
	residual	2274.628	178	12.779				
	Total	2337.661	179					

Note: Correlation value of predictor variables with criterion variable = R

The squared correlation value of the predictor variables with the criterion variable (explanation coefficient) =  $R^2$

The results of the analysis of variance confirmed the ability to predict three positive strategies of emotional regulation, acceptance, renewed attention to planning and positive renewed attention based on psychological toughness. The results of the analysis showed that 2.9% of the acceptance strategy, 4.6% of the re attention strategy to planning and 2.7% of the positive re attention strategy can be predicted by toughness (Table 2).

The correlation between negative emotional regulation strategies and psychological toughness is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Multivariate correlation coefficients of psychological toughness and emotional regulation strategies

	Toughness	Mental rumination	Blame yourself	Blame others	Catastrophic conception of the relationship
Toughness	1				
Mental rumination	-0.157*	1			
Blame yourself	0.158*	0.393**	1		
Blame others	-0.233**	0.428**	0.400**	1	
Catastrophic conception of the relationship	-0.238**	0.398**	0.475**	0.374**	1

\*\*p<0.01

\*p<0.05

As the results of Table 3 show, there is a negative correlation between the negative strategies of rumination, self-blame, others-blame, and catastrophizing with Toughness. The results of variance analysis related to regression between these variables are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of variance associated with the regression of negative emotional regulation strategies based on psychological toughness

Criterion	Source	sum of squares	df	mean square	F	R	R <sup>2</sup>	p
Mental rumination	regression	85.978	1	85.978	4.527	0.157	0.025	0.035
	residual	3380.883	178	18.994				
	Total	3466.861	179					
Blame yourself	regression	86.768	1	86.768	4.481	0.157	0.025	0.036
	residual	3446.343	178	19.361				
	Total	3533.111	179					
Blame others	regression	151.859	1	151.859	10.187	0.233	0.054	0.002
	residual	2653.536	178	14.908				
	Total	2805.394	179					
Catastrophic conception of the relationship	regression	183.529	1	183.529	10.684	0.238	0.057	0.000
	residual	3057.782	178	17.179				
	Total	3241.311	179					

Note: Correlation value of predictor variables with criterion variable = R

The squared correlation value of the predictor variables with the criterion variable (explanation coefficient) = R<sup>2</sup>

The results of Table 4 show that 2.5% of rumination, 2.5% of self-blame, 5.4% of blaming others and 5.7% of catastrophic thinking can be predicted by psychological toughness. The results of calculating correlation coefficients between toughness and problem-oriented coping strategies are reported in Table 5.



Table 5: Correlation coefficients between toughness and problem-oriented coping strategies

	Toughness	Seeking social support	Acceptance of responsibility	Planned problem solving	re-evaluation	Problem-oriented strategies
Toughness	1					
Seeking social support	0.261**	1				
Acceptance of responsibility	0.309**	0.217**	1			
Planned problem solving	0.314**	0.321**	0.357**	1		
re-evaluation	0.324**	0.295**	0.209**	0.426**	1	
Problem-oriented strategies	0.396**	0.688**	0.565**	0.767**	0.732**	1

\*\*p&lt;0.01

\*p&lt;0.05

Calculating the results of the correlation between problem-oriented coping strategies and psychological toughness confirmed the existence of a positive relationship between seeking social support, accepting responsibility, planned problem solving, and reappraisal with psychological toughness. The summary of the regression analysis results of predicting problem-oriented strategies based on psychological toughness is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression summary of problem-oriented strategies based on psychological toughness

Source	sum of squares	Df	mean square	<u>F</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	p
regression	2296.840	1	2296.840	33.034	0.396	0.157	0.000
residual	12376.400	178	69.530				
Total	14673.240	179					

Note: Correlation value of predictor variables with criterion variable = R

The squared correlation value of the predictor variables with the criterion variable (explanation coefficient) = R<sup>2</sup>



The regression results showed that psychological toughness can predict 15.7% of problem-oriented strategies (Table 6). The calculation of the correlation between emotion-oriented coping strategies is shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Multivariate correlation coefficients of psychological toughness and emotion-oriented coping strategies

	toughness	Direct confrontation	to take some distance	Self-control	Avoidance	Emotion-oriented strategies
toughness	1					
Direct confrontation	-0.134	1				
to take some distance	0.261**	0.260*	1			
Self-control	0.087	0.188*	0.146*	1		
Avoidance	-0.188*	0.237**	0.402**	0.223**	1	
Emotion-oriented strategies	0.200**	0.617	0.670**	0.538**	0.786**	1

\*\*p<0.01

\*p<0.05

As can be seen in Table 7, the correlation analysis between emotion-oriented coping strategies and toughness showed that distance, avoidance and generally emotion-oriented strategies have a significant negative relationship with toughness.

Table 8: Summary of variance analysis related to the regression of emotion-oriented strategies based on psychological toughness

Source	sum of squares	df	mean square	<u>F</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	p
regression	943.927	1	943.927	7.454	0.200	0.040	0.007
residual	12376.400	178	69.530				
Total	14673.240	179					

Note: Correlation value of predictor variables with criterion variable = R

The squared correlation value of the predictor variables with the criterion variable (explanation coefficient) = R<sup>2</sup>

The regression results showed that among emotion-oriented coping strategies, the correlation between psychological toughness with distancing and avoidance is  $-0.261$  and  $-0.188$ , respectively, and at  $P < 0.01$  and  $0.05$ .  $>P$  is significant. Also, the correlation between psychological toughness and the overall score of emotion-oriented strategies was significant at  $P < 0.01$  (Table 8).

### **Discussion and conclusion:**

The present study investigated the relationship between psychological toughness, cognitive regulation of emotions and coping strategies on female heads of households under the support of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in Varamin city. The results indicated that among the positive strategies of emotional regulation, the strategies of refocusing on planning, acceptance and positive refocusing have a positive and significant correlation with psychological toughness, and among the negative strategies of emotional regulation, the strategies of blaming others and catastrophizing, rumination and self-blame have a negative and significant correlation with psychological toughness. Also, psychological toughness can predict the components of acceptance, reappraisal of planning and positive reappraisal, rumination, self-blame, others-blame, and catastrophizing. The results of this research were consistent with the research of other researchers. As Mazaheri, Nik Nishan, Dagaighzadeh and Afshar (21) in their research concluded that psychological toughness acts as a protective factor for emotional dysregulation.

Patients who had more psychological toughness than others were more successful in regulating their emotions. Nityananda (22) also reached the conclusion in his research that stubborn people use emotional adaptation strategies such as positive re-attention, re-attention to planning, positive re-evaluation, and adopting the right perspective, with positive interpretation with Problems will be solved.

Toughness is a positive character structure that plays a role as a source of resistance when faced with stressful life events, and it includes the set of skills that creates courage and facing stressful situations in life. Also, psychological toughness is a personality trait that can resist the effects of stress as a shield, and prevent its harmful effects on health. People's toughness has an important effect on their emotional regulation strategies (23). Feeling restrained in different situations also happens through emotional regulation. Therefore, more stubborn people should have a more positive emotional regulation. For this reason, when faced with problems, stubborn people use positive emotional regulation strategies such as refocusing on planning, acceptance, and positive refocusing. While non-stubborn people benefit from strategies such as rumination, self-blame, others' blame, and catastrophic thinking.

On the other hand, a correlation was found between psychological toughness with positive problem-oriented strategies and with negative emotion-oriented strategies. This result was consistent with the research results of many researchers (15 and 18). In other words, the more stubborn people are, the less threatening the stressful situation is, And they benefit from effective coping skills, and have better management in stressful situations, And they benefit from effective coping skills, and have better management in stressful situations. In fact, toughness components have a better ability to face the source of stress by using adapted strategies such as problem-oriented strategies and increasing perception. For this reason, the coping style of people with high toughness is more efficient in stressful situations. But non-stubborn people use emotion-oriented methods to deal with tension. So, with the reduction of psychological toughness, the use of

emotion-oriented methods in dealing with tension increases and the use of problem-oriented methods decreases (10). Direct effects between stress in life and the role of psychological toughness in choosing aspects of coping styles have been confirmed. In other words, negative life events have direct and significant effects on psychological and physical helplessness in people. And psychological toughness has a moderating effect in dealing with negative life events and psychological helplessness. Therefore, when faced with stressful life events, toughness plays a role as a source of resistance and not only can reduce stress but also helps to develop coping skills.

Due to the fact that problem-oriented coping strategies include constructive actions of the individual in relation to stressful situations. And the person tries to remove or change the source of stress. Inevitably, a person uses cognitive skills to solve a problem. While the emotion-oriented coping style is a characteristic of those cognitive strategies that delay the resolution or elimination of the stressful factor by giving it a new name and meaning. Therefore, with the increase in psychological toughness, it can be expected that the use of problem-oriented methods in dealing with stress will increase.

Considering the confirmation of the relationship between toughness and emotional regulation strategies and coping strategies, in female heads of households who are faced with many stressful factors, the increase of psychological toughness can help them face this help matters, Because this class of women is one of the socially vulnerable groups, and factors such as divorce, death, or spouse's addiction, spouse's disability, being abandoned by immigrant men or lack of care, cause this class to be vulnerable. It becomes society. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the society officials to examine the factors that can psychologically help them to better cope with issues and problems.

For this reason, taking action in the direction of training psychological toughness, the skill of how to use coping strategies and emotional regulation along with holding group and individual counseling sessions in order to manage the issues and problems ahead and forming skill courses. Education for this vulnerable group is extremely necessary, And it can be an important step towards improving the quality of their mental life, Therefore, according to the relationship between research variables, it is suggested to investigate emotional regulation training intervention in order to increase people's tenacity and resilience in future researches.

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