

## The mediating role of positive and negative religious coping strategies in the relationship between psychological capital and the ability to forgive on family strength

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The family is the most basic and durable social-emotional unit that plays an important role in the entire development of a person and establishes her personality. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the mediating role of religious coping strategies in the relationship between psychological capital and the ability to forgive with family strength.

**Method:** The research method is descriptive and correlation type, which was done using structural equation modeling. The statistical population of the research was all married employees with children in the executive bodies of Rasht; 400 people (200 men and 200 women) were randomly selected. To collect data, Pargament et al.'s religious coping strategies, Luthans' psychological capital, Ray's forgiveness, colleagues' questionnaires, and Sham et al.'s family strength scale were used. SPSS26 and AMOS24 software were used for data analysis and model fitting, and the bootstrap method in the MACRO program was used by Preacher and Hayes to investigate the role of mediating variables.

**Results:** The research results showed that the proposed research model has a favorable fit. Psychological capital ( $P=0.001$ ,  $\beta=0.155$ ) and the ability to forgive ( $P=0.003$ ,  $\beta=0.139$ ) have a direct effect on family strength, and Psychological capital ( $P=0.001$ ,  $\beta=0.0745$ ) and the ability to forgive ( $P=0.006$ ,  $\beta=0.0655$ ) have an indirect effect on family empowerment through positive religious coping strategy. Also, a negative religious coping strategy does not mediate the relationship between psychological capital ( $P=0.210$ ,  $\beta=0.0169$ ) and the ability to forgive ( $P=0.0144$ ,  $\beta=0.396$ ) with family empowerment.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, this conceptual model can be used in the process of family counseling interventions and couple therapy to improve the quality of life as well as the strength of the family

**Keywords:** Psychological Capital, Forgiveness ability, Family Strength, Positive religious coping strategies, Negative religious coping strategies.



## Introduction

The institution of the family, as the smallest, main, and most important social institution from the beginning of history until now, is the foundation of societies and the origin of human cultures and civilizations, and its preservation and consolidation in society is an undeniable fact. One of the structures that guide the family toward care, resilience, and problem-solving is the structure of family strength (Zhang, 2018). The main goal is to empower the family system in order to improve the level of health. Implementing a family-centered empowerment program to increase awareness, knowledge, motivation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy leads to self-control and preventive behaviors, which is necessary and important for improving the health and quality of family life (Kahe et al., 2022). A strong family has the ability to solve problems and make decisions, as well as the ability to communicate to meet the needs of family members. Preservation and continuity of the family are considered one of the most important and common human values (Altgelt et al., 2018). The conducted research has shown that the compatibility and intimacy of family members can have a significant impact on family strength, so family strength gives family members the necessary knowledge, skills, and ability to solve problems, the family has stability, and parents should be able to raise their children (Yousfi et al., 2022). Also, family strength can cause the healthy growth of family members, increase their ability to grow, change, and adapt, and help healthy interaction with relatives and social systems (Jin & Ahan, 2019). The research of Moghadam and Esmailpour (2016) showed that family strength has an effect on the ability to solve problems, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to control the support resources needed by the family. One of the factors that can play a role in family strength is psychological capital. Psychological capital is the positive aspect of human life and is based on the four structures of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy (Liran & Miller, 2019). Psychological capital is defined by characteristics such as a person's belief in her abilities to achieve success, being persistent in pursuing goals, creating positive documents about herself, and enduring problems (Saadat et al., 2020). Research shows a significant relationship between psychological capital and family strength (Khoshro Rudbarki et al., 2023). The research results of Zheng et al. (2022) show the impact of psychological capital on the relationships of family members. Also, the research findings of Carmona Halti et al. (2020) indicated that psychological capital has an effect on parent-child performance and thus affects family performance. People whose psychological capital is at a high level have more positive resources to deal with anxiety, tensions, and conflicts (Lutans et al., 2007). The review of previous research shows that having hope in people leads to better adaptation to different life conditions, reducing depression, increasing life satisfaction, and self-efficacy is an important source in adapting and changing people. Also, resilience and optimism can predict better and more valuable social relationships in people and cause a significant increase in the lives of couples. Therefore, psychological capital is one of the most important features that can make people adapt to difficult life situations. Also, having psychological capital enables people to cope better with stressful situations, to be less stressed, to have high strength

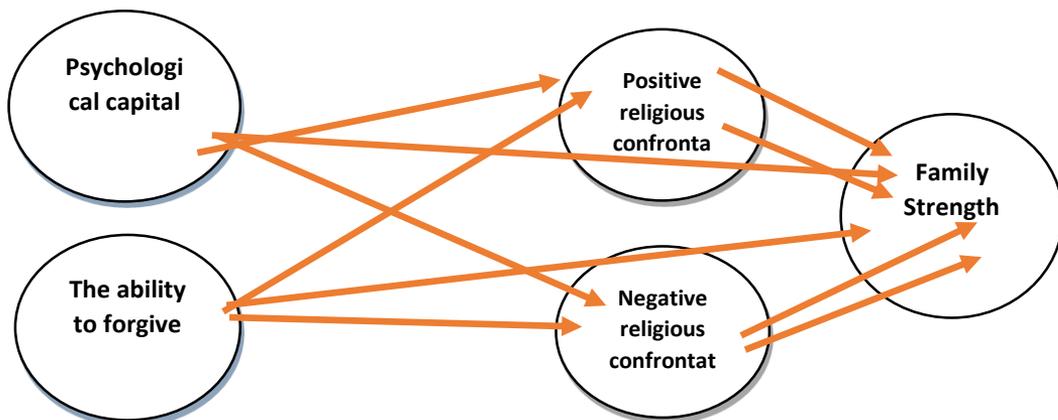
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against problems, to have a clear view of themselves, and to be less affected by daily events. Therefore, such people have higher psychological health and a better quality of life (Dodasava et al., 2021). Examining the theories and patterns of the field of family strength shows that the variable of ability to forgive is effective on family strength. The primary function of the family unit is to create an environment for the growth and survival of family members at the biological, social, and psychological levels; therefore, with a detailed understanding of the effects of human values such as satisfaction, forgiveness, and recognition of the intra-personal factors that are effective on interpersonal behaviors, it is possible to It helped to maintain the foundation of the family (Kamri et al., 2015). The results of studies indicate that forgiveness leads to the adjustment of close relationships between people and interpersonal forgiveness (Lee et al., 2021). The ability to forgive is a strong and powerful way to end a damaged relationship, which can provide the conditions for peace and reconciliation and thus increase satisfaction among family members (Sephevand & Alaei Moghadam, 2021). Piri and Shirazi's research (2018) showed that the ability to forgive as a psychological construct can play an effective role in improving the performance of family members and marital satisfaction. Fincham et al. (2016) also concluded in research that there is a significant relationship between the quality of marital relationships and forgiveness; empathy predicts men's forgiveness and a sense of responsibility predicts women's forgiveness. A brief review of the theories and patterns of the empowerment field clarifies the importance of different factors affecting the empowerment of the family. Therefore, based on the review of the literature related to the field of family strength, a conceptual model is deduced which assumes that the relationship between psychological capital and forgiveness with family strength is most likely mediated by other variables such as religious coping strategies. Studies have considered the role of religion in the mental well-being of people as important. People who consider religion very important and use religious strategies are at a higher level of psychological well-being (King et al., 2021). Religious coping strategies can influence the relationship between psychological capital and forgiveness, as well as family strength, religious beliefs, and spirituality, which guide a person to search for meaning and purpose and connect to values. Religious coping strategies include using cognitive and behavioral strategies based on religious beliefs or practices and helping a person manage emotional and psychological tensions (Kes & Yildirim, 2020). According to Islamic teachings, religious confrontation leaders can play a role in fighting the problems, hardships, and adversities of life as ways of reducing the negative effects of unpleasant events in life and also in increasing the psychological well-being of people (Mohammedzadeh et al., 2015). Studies have shown that people's religiosity makes them adapt in life, and people with more religious spirituality apply more adaptability in their lives. (Genia and Ednel, 2021). Mominian et al. (2020) showed that religious coping styles have a significant relationship with the quality of life of couples. The more religious coping styles people have, the better their quality of life will be. Therefore, religious coping strategies affect the psychological capital and forgiveness of individuals and improve the family's empowerment level. Moreover, if a multivariate model of the interaction of variables is developed, it can be useful and practical for family consolidation. According to the studies, family strength improves couples' performance levels, reduces incompatibility, conflicts, and challenges

within the family, and improves the quality, compatibility, and efficiency of the lives of couples and families (Jung Yong et al., 2019). Positive and negative religious coping are not inherently compatible or incompatible. However, when they are affected by the actions and inactions of the person, the situation, and sociocultural factors, they are seen as harmful or beneficial (Thomas & Barbato, 2020). As Motahari Moyed (2023) showed in his research, the results showed that the direct effect of religious orientation components on family functioning is significant. Therefore, given the importance of family empowerment and its impact on couples' mental and physical health, identifying factors that affect family functioning is of particular importance. Numerous studies have examined the mediating effect and role of religious attitudes on cognitive, psychological, and social aspects of individuals' lives (Mojad et al. (1402); Barzegar-Fafroei (1400); Khairy et al. (1400); Nemati (1400)). In this regard, a person who believes in God observes ethics in dealing with family members. In the meantime, the ability to forgive while eliminating negative interactions between couples unites them and brings them closer together. The result of such a union increases satisfaction with life together and forces couples to make a rational effort to resolve the inevitable conflicts of life together, which, as a result, can continue this pattern in addition to ensuring mental health in future generations (Mottaqi Family et al., 2021). Given the important role and impact of family strength on various life structures, it is possible to improve the performance, quality, and adaptability of family members and, on the other hand, develop the level of performance of couples and family members. It can prevent harm such as divorce or, emotional divorce, etc. (Ehsani et al., 2023). Therefore, improving the level of family strength is considered important, but considering the review of previous studies and the lack of research in this field, by conducting more and more detailed studies, we can achieve solutions and results that can improve the level of family strength. Empowering families and improving the interpersonal performance of family members and couples can play an important role in reducing the divorce rate and intra-family conflicts. Therefore, considering what has been said and despite numerous studies in the field of family, no study has been reported so far that examines and presents a model of the structural relationships between psychological capital and the ability to forgive on family empowerment with the mediation of religious coping strategies. Accordingly, the present study seeks to answer whether this model is a good fit and whether positive and negative religious coping strategies mediate the structural relationship between psychological capital and the ability to forgive with family empowerment.





**Figure 1:** The model presented in this study

## Methods

The present study is basic in terms of the purpose of applied research. Since it examines the current situation of the studied society in the form of several attributes or variables, it is of a descriptive-analytical type. The correlational research design is of the path analysis type because it examines the structural relationship of direct and indirect causality of the variables, which is carried out using a correlational research design. The statistical population of this study included all married employees with children of the executive agencies of Rasht City (Welfare Organization, Education Organization, Islamic Azad University, Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (RA), and Gilan Province Central Broadcasting Corporation), from which in order to compensate for possible attrition, 400 married employees with children (200 men and 200 women) were selected using the available sampling method and participated in the research. It should be noted that to determine the sample size from the Cochran table and to prepare the structural model, the Mueller method (1996) was used, considering the average expected effect size, the power of the test of 0.80, and the confidence level of 95%. This research has been registered with the ethics code IR.IAU.TON.REC.1401.075 at Tonekabon Azad University.

## Included Instruments

**Family Strength scale:** The family strength scale (Sham et al., 2001) is a 20-item tool that measures family strength in its 6 subscales (value, commitment to growth, commitment to stability, conflict resolution/communication, positive interaction/appreciation, and spending time together) measures. Most of the items are

written from the spouse's point of view about the family's capabilities and their relationship with each other (Wheeler, 2008). Answering the questions is based on the Likert scale at 5 levels (completely agree) to (completely disagree). The minimum score is 20, and the maximum score is 100, which is obtained from the sum of the scores.

A higher score means more ability. Wheeler (2008) also reported that the FSS subscales had a positive correlation with the measurement indicators of the spiritual/religious system and were significantly predictive of marital satisfaction, with the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction being the communication/conflict resolution subscale. In this study, the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.71$ ) between FSS and the revised DAS-R couple compatibility scale of Busby et al. (1995) indicated its favorable convergent validity. Taravat Rudbarki et al. (2022) research also reported the Cronbach's alpha of this questionnaire as 0.92 in Iran. In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire was obtained based on Cronbach's alpha of 0.87.

**Psychological Capital Questionnaire:** Luthans (2007) Psychological Capital Questionnaire was used to measure psychological capital. This questionnaire has 24 questions and includes four subscales of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, in which each subscale contains 6 items. The subject answers each item on a 6-point Likert scale (completely disagree to completely agree). A high score on this questionnaire means a higher level of psychological capital in a person. Using factor analysis and structural equations, Luthans (2007) reported that the chi-square ratio of this test was 24.6, and the CFI and RMSEA statistics of this model were 0.97 and 0.08, which confirmed the factorial validity of the test. The reliability of the questionnaire in Iran was reported by Bahadri Khosrowshahi et al. (2013) based on Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. Also, the reliability of the questionnaire in this research was 0.86.

**The scale of forgiveness:** The forgiveness questionnaire was created by Ray et al. in 2001. This questionnaire consists of 15 items and 2 subscales of lack of negative feelings (10 questions) and presence of positive feelings (5 questions), which measure forgiveness in people. The absence of the negative feeling factor shows the absence of negative thoughts, feelings, and behavior toward the guilty person, and the other factor (the presence of positive feelings) expresses the presence of positive thoughts, feelings, and positive behavior toward the guilty person. The questionnaire was scored on a 5-point Likert scale, from completely disagree to completely agree. High scores indicate forgiveness, and low scores indicate unforgiveness. Both subscales obtained acceptable internal consistency and retest reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient and retest 0.85 and 0.76 respectively for the presence of positive feeling subscale and Cronbach's alpha coefficient and retest 0.86 and 0.76 respectively for the lack of negative emotion subscale). Rezaei (2018) has standardized this tool in Iran, and the retest validity of RFS and the subscales of the presence of positive component and absence of negative component of forgiveness were calculated as 0.78, 0.73, and 0.75, respectively. Also,

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Cronbach's alpha coefficient of RFS and PP and AN subscales were estimated as 0.74, 0.71, and 0.75, respectively. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.78 for the positive component subscale and 0.74 for the lack of negative feeling.

**Questionnaire of religious coping strategies:** The religious coping strategies questionnaire was created by Pargament and his colleagues (2000). The short form of this questionnaire contains 14 questions, and it is taken from the original, and the long-form specifies positive and negative coping styles. Each positive and negative scale includes 7 items of the confrontation test. Positive scales include 1 to 7, and negative scales include questions 8 to 14. In general, it measures how people use religion in a practical way in the process of dealing with the stresses of life. The test has two positive and negative coping patterns in dealing with stress. The internal consistency of the test is based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80. In order to check the validity and reliability of the test, Bahrami and Hosni (2004) used the scale of religious orientation as a reference to check the concurrent validity of the mental coping scale. The correlation of the scores obtained from the simultaneous application of two scales was 0.6, and to evaluate the validity of the test, Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated for positive and negative coping strategies was reported as 0.87 and 0.70, respectively. (Mousavi et al., 2018). Also, in this study, Cronbach's alpha for positive and negative coping strategies was 0.79 and 0.81, respectively.

### Data analysis

**The data analysis of this study was conducted in two parts:** descriptive and inferential statistics. In the descriptive part, the characteristics of the statistical sample were described as central tendency and dispersion indices such as mean and standard deviation. In the inferential statistics part, considering the nature of the study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was analyzed with SPSS-26 software in order to test the hypotheses. Subsequently, the structural equation modeling (SEM) technique was used with the AMOS-24 software program to evaluate the fit of the proposed research model, and the maximum likelihood (ML) method was used to estimate the model parameters. To evaluate the significance of the indirect effects of the paths and the existence of a mediating role for the mediating variables in the relationship between psychological capital and the ability to forgive with family capabilities, bootstrap analysis was used in the macro program of Preacher and Hayes (2008). It should be noted that the path analysis method was used to examine the fit of the relationship. Given that the range of skewness and kurtosis of the variables was within  $\pm 2$ , univariate normality was confirmed. To examine the normality of multivariate data, the standardized Merdia coefficient and critical ratio were used. In this study, the Merdia coefficient was 121.4, and the critical ratio was 175.2, which is less than 5. Therefore, the assumption of multivariate normality is valid. In order to examine the absence of multivariate outliers, the Mahalanobis distance index was examined, and significant levels of less than 0.05 indicate that the outliers are distant. Based on this index, no outliers were identified. Also, the multiple nonlinearity hypothesis was evaluated with tolerance indices and variance inflation factor. In this

analysis, no deviation from the multiple collinearity assumption was observed in any of the tolerance statistics and variance inflation factor values calculated for the research variables.

Therefore, examining the statistical assumptions showed that the path analysis method is appropriate for evaluating the model fit, and the maximum likelihood method was used to estimate the parameters.

## Results

In this research, 400 married employees with children of five executive bodies of Rasht with an average age of 42.61 years and a standard deviation of 6.11 in the age range of 59-26 years (the average age of women is  $41.14 \pm 5.74$  years and the average age of men is  $6.13 \pm 44.8$  years) was investigated. Also, the average duration of marriage was 15.85 years, and the standard deviation was 6.98, which is in the range of 39-2 years. The descriptive indices of the variables of the present study, including the mean and standard deviation, are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive indices of research variables in married employees (number: 400)

Variable	mean	SD	Min-max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological capital	98.75	14.84	44-133	0.81	0.94
The ability to forgive	64.35	7.18	33-70	0.29	0.49
Family ability	73.83	8.16	38-100	1.10	2.44
Positive religious coping	15.76	3.44	3-21	0.60	0.60
Negative religious confrontation	3.20	3.07	0-21	1.32	2.90

Table 2 shows the information related to the Pearson correlation between research variables.

**Table 2.** Correlation matrix between research variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Psychological capital	1				
2. The ability to forgive	0.01	1			
3. Positive coping strategy	0.25**	0.33**	1		
4. Negative coping strategy	-0.24**	-0.28**	-0.15**	1	
5. Ability of the family	0.25**	0.31**	0.36**	-0.16**	1

Based on the results of the correlation matrix, there is a negative and significant relationship between psychological capital, forgiveness ability, and positive coping strategy with family strength and between negative coping strategy and family strength ( $P < 0.05$ ). Also, a positive and significant relationship was observed between

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psychological capital and forgiveness ability with a positive coping strategy, and a negative and significant relationship was observed between psychological capital and forgiveness ability with a negative coping strategy ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Before examining the structural coefficients, the appropriateness of the proposed model was examined. The results related to the fit indices of the proposed research model are shown in Table 3.

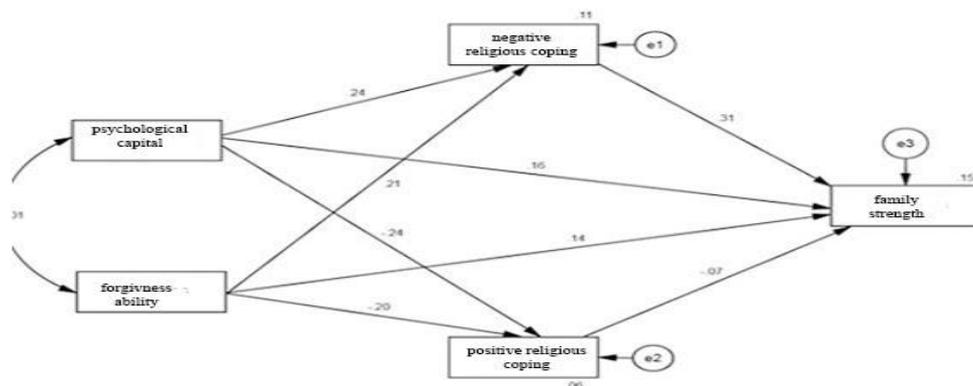
**Table 3.** The suitability indices of the proposed model of the current research

Goodness index	$\chi^2$	df	p	Cmin/df	RMSEA	PNFI	CFI	PCFI	IFI	GFI
	2.326	1	<0.001	2.326	0.057 (0/04- 0/07)	0.597	0.976	0.598	0.978	0.996

\*Acceptable level of indices, PCFI, PNFI ( $> .5$ ), IFI, GFI, CFI, ( $> .9$ ), RMSEA ( $< 0.08$ ), CMIN/DF (good  $< 3$ , acceptable  $< 5$ ) (Klein, 2016).

The  $R^2$  index shows the amount of explained variance of endogenous latent variables. Chin (1998) describes the values of  $R^2$ , 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 in structural equations as strong, medium, and weak, respectively. The coefficient of determination of the family strength variable is 0.230, which shows that all exogenous and mediating variables, i.e., positive coping strategy, negative coping strategy, psychological capital, and the ability to forgive, predict 23% of the changes in family strength, which is within It is strong.

Table 4 also shows the standard coefficients of the routes, and Figure 1 shows the proposed model.



**Figure 1.** The standard coefficients of the proposed model of the structural relationship between coping strategies.

Therefore, according to the estimated indicators, the results show that the structural relationship between psychological capital and forgiveness ability on family strength is mediated by coping strategies.

Referring to Table 4, you can see the standard coefficients of all paths and critical values in the proposed model.

**Table 4.** Standard coefficients of the paths of the proposed model

	Standard coefficient	Criteria error	critical ratio	P
Psychological capital ---> family strength	0.155	0.027	3.184	<0.001
Psychological capital ---> positive coping strategy	0.245	0.011	5.040	<0.001
Psychological capital ---> negative coping strategy	-0.236	0.010	-4.872	<0.001
The ability to forgive ---> the ability of the family	0.139	0.019	2.874	0.003
Ability to forgive ---> positive coping strategy	0.211	0.032	3.696	<0.001
ability to forgive ---> negative coping strategy	-0.201	0.030	-3.311	<0.001
Positive coping strategy ---> family strength	0.306	0.111	6.443	<0.001
Negative coping strategy ---> family strength	-0.069	0.126	-1.456	0.145

Psychological capital has a positive and significant effect on family strength ( $P=0.001$ ,  $\beta=0.155$ ) and positive coping strategy ( $P<0.001$ ,  $\beta=0.245$ ), and on negative coping strategy ( $P=0.001$ ,  $\beta=-0.236$ ) had a negative and significant effect. The ability to forgive has a positive and significant effect on family strength ( $P=0.003$ ,  $\beta=0.139$ ), positive coping strategy ( $P<0.001$ ,  $\beta=-0.211$ ), and negative coping strategy ( $P<0.001$ ,  $\beta=0.201$ ) had a negative and significant effect.

In the following, the results of mediating relationships using the bootstrap test in the MACRO program of Preacher and Hayes (2008) to test the mediating path are shown in Table 5.

In the final model of the current research, there are four indirect or intermediate paths. The bootstrap method was used to determine the significance of the mediation relationship and the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through mediation.

In Table 5, data refers to the indirect effect in the main sample, and boot is the average estimate of the indirect effect in the bootstrap samples. In this table, bias indicates the difference between data and bootstrap, and standard error indicates the standard deviation of indirect estimates in bootstrap samples.

**Table 5.** Bootstrap results for the indirect path of the proposed model

	Data	boot	bias	error	Low	upper	p
Psychological capital To family strength Through positive coping strategy	0.744	0.745	0.0001	0.0139	0.0426	0.1197	<0.001
Psychological capital to family strength through negative coping strategy	0.168	0.0169	0.0001	0.0097	-0.0122	0.0421	0.210
The ability to forgive and family strength through positive coping strategies	0.651	0.0655	0.0004	0.0102	0.0177	0.1009	0.006
The ability to forgive family strength through negative coping strategies	0.014	0.0144	0.0004	0.0010	-0.0090	0.00324	0.3960

The results of the bootstrap test showed that psychological capital ( $P=0.001$ ,  $\beta=0.0745$ ) and the ability to forgive ( $P=0.006$ ,  $\beta=0.0655$ ) have an indirect effect on family strength through positive coping strategies. Also, the results showed that negative coping strategies do not mediate the relationship between psychological capital ( $P=0.210$ ,  $\beta=0.0169$ ) and, forgiveness ability ( $P=0.396$ ,  $\beta=0.0144$ ) and family strength.

## Discussion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the mediating role of religious coping strategies in the relationship between psychological capital and the ability to forgive with family strength. The results showed that the structural relationship between psychological capital and the ability to forgive on the family's empowerment is suitable through the mediation of religious coping strategies.

## Conclusion

One of the findings of the present study is that there is a positive and significant relationship between psychological capital and family empowerment. In other words, psychological capital has a direct effect on family empowerment. This finding is consistent with the results of Sarboland (2019), Parandeh et al. (2018), Nosrati Mehr et al. (2018), Vahidi and Jafari Harandi (2017), Ehsani et al. (2013), Khoshroo Roudbaraki et al. (2013), Shin et al. (2021), and Jung Yong et al. (2019) in terms of the importance of psychological capital and its relationship to family empowerment. As researchers have shown in these studies, one of the factors that can play a role in family empowerment is psychological capital, and living together, adapting, and creating intimacy between family members has a significant effect on family empowerment. The lower the level of psychological capital in couples, the higher the level of family problems and marital incompatibility (Alijani et al., 1401). People with high resilience and optimism and higher life expectancy have high mental health, and these two can definitely have a positive impact on individuals' empowerment (Bartlow et al., 2009). Self-efficacy is also related to high goal setting, openness to challenging tasks, high spontaneity, using the necessary effort to achieve the goal, and perseverance in the face of adversity (Lutaz et al., 2007). In general, the four dimensions of psychological capital (resilience, hope, self-efficacy, and optimism) reinforce each other, which can be managed for individuals' success in life (Mousavi-Moghaddam et al., 1400). In explaining this finding, it can be said that by increasing and strengthening psychological capital, psychological empowerment also increases, and this, in addition to increasing confidence and a sense of competence in doing things, causes people to show more patience in dealing with issues and problems, to proceed with planning, to choose the best solutions to solve the problem, and also to reflect on useful and constructive interactions (Alessandra et al., 2018). Another finding of the study is that the ability to forgive has a direct relationship and impact on family empowerment. This finding is consistent with the results of studies by Hojjatkahh et al. (1400), Mohabalizadeh Gashti and Adel (1400), Zarei et al. (1399), Robertzter et al. (2021) in that forgiveness, which means forgiving another person's



mistake and refraining from punishing the offender, is considered one of the effective strategies in strengthening family strengths. Forgiveness can be used as a powerful way to end a troubled or painful relationship and provide conditions for reconciliation with the offender, which increases marital satisfaction and reduces conflicts by excluding one of the parties from the circle of negative interactions (Elmand et al., 2017). The ability to forgive is related to the mental health of individuals and reducing psychological distress, as this leads to improved functioning of individuals in the family (Long et al., 2020). The result obtained in this field can be explained in such a way that the awareness and evaluation of the wrongdoer or the suffering person of the painful event and their ability to manage emotions resulting from past resentments and annoyances lead to the formation of forgiveness, which, due to the role of sympathy as an intrapersonal factor related to cognition, strengthens the foundation of the family, enhances social support, and satisfaction with married life. From another perspective, people who have the ability to tolerate and work on the inevitable mistakes of their loved ones, due to their emotional-behavioral ability to forgive, can continue the relationship despite mistakes, failures, and betrayals and create a communication space based on closeness, intimacy, and understanding, which ensures the mental health of the family and its efficiency (Kamri et al., 2015). In other words, the ability to forgive can create changes in the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of couples and families, and these positive attitudes and feelings, in addition to increasing the satisfaction and quality of family life (Saffarian-Toosi, Sawabi, and Khoynejad 2018), can also establish a favorable relationship between family members (Sawabi et al., 2019).

Another finding of the research results indicates that the religious coping strategy has an indirect effect and a mediating role in the relationship between psychological capital and the ability to forgive. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Zarei et al. (2020)-Kafashpour Marandi and Khodabakhshi Kolayi (2018)- and Lee et al. (2021). Vitriño (2018) investigated the relationship between religious and spiritual coping strategies and depression among families. The findings showed that in families where religious coping strategies are at a higher level and are used, depression is at a lower level; in other words, there was a significant negative relationship. In their research, Tarakeshwar et al. (2016) showed that more use of positive religious coping strategies was associated with positive outcomes such as improving the quality of life and satisfaction. In explaining this finding, it can be said that religious coping strategies give people a specific lifestyle, provide solutions for life problems, or provide specific mechanisms to solve problems in front of people, which leads to life satisfaction (Aburia et al., 2019). Positive religious coping strategies reflect beliefs about the meaning of life and trust in a secure relationship with a merciful God (Thomas & Barbato, 2020). The ability to forgive through positive religious strategies among family members causes interpersonal interaction to be established, and this action improves behavioral tendencies. Religious beliefs and spirituality lead people to search for meaning and purpose and to connect with values (Kaviani et al., 2022). according to the results of the research, psychological capital and positive religious coping strategies improve the family's empowerment. By using positive religious coping strategies, people find a positive view of the universe, sacred affairs, and God and rely on actions and beliefs. Religious people make a positive evaluation of life

events and suffer less damage when faced with stressful events (Mam Sharifi et al., 2021). the findings of the study also showed that negative religious coping strategies have a negative and significant effect on family strength; in other words, they do not play a mediating role in family strength. Shamsalinia et al. (2016) and Nosrati Mehr and Nabi (2018) also reached this conclusion. The results of Tarakeshwar et al.'s study (2016) are also in the same direction. They showed that the use of negative religious coping strategies is associated with a decrease in quality of life. Pierce et al. (2016) also showed in a study that the use of negative religious coping approaches was associated with low quality of life and less satisfaction, as well as with an increase in the likelihood of depression and anxiety. In explaining these results, it can be said that people who have negative religious strategies have low mental health and are more anxious in their married life. Such people experience more negative consequences when faced with life problems, which may cause incompatibility in marital relationships. When faced with negative life events, these people feel that God has forgotten them and that the current events are a punishment from God; they doubt God's power and think God is unkind (Rukhshan et al., 2015). the empowerment of families makes them the first screening center in the society, which can be referred to as a small society; therefore, investing in empowering and improving the knowledge and attitude of this group in order to maintain, improve, and improve the health of the family is very important. Among the limitations of this study was the lack of cooperation of some employees in conducting the research. Also, considering that the statistical population of the present study was employees of Rasht city, it cannot be generalized to other geographical and cultural areas. It is suggested that in future studies, this issue be carried out in other statistical populations and areas of Rasht city and other cities. Also, the role of other mediating variables in the relationship between the main variables of the study should be examined. Finally, it is suggested that counselors, therapists, and health psychologists pay attention to the key role of family empowerment in increasing their awareness of the impact of religious coping strategies, psychological capital, and the ability to forgive by holding educational programs to improve the quality of life of couples.

## Disclosure Statements

The authors of this study declared no conflicts of interest

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