

## Investigating the Relationship Between Hardiness and Resilience with the Mediating Role of Hope in Women-Headed Households

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### Article Info

#### Article type:

Original Research

#### How to cite this article:

Roghani, R., Rahmati Nezhad, L., Saberi, N., Bozorgi Saran, Sh., Menat Ali, Sh. (2024). Investigating the Relationship Between Hardiness and Resilience with the Mediating Role of Hope in Women-headed Households. *Iranian Journal of Educational Sociology*, 7(3), 1-8.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.ijes.7.3.16>



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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Woman-headed households experience more psychological issues and a lower level of psychological well-being compared to other women. The goal of this research is to investigate the relationship between hardiness and resilience in Woman-headed households, with hope serving as a mediator.

**Methodology:** The present study is a part of descriptive-correlational research utilizing the cross-sectional research method and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The statistical population for the study consists of all woman-headed households assisted by the welfare organization in Tehran from July to December 2023. A total of 192 woman-headed households were selected using multi-stage cluster sampling as the statistical sample. Research instruments utilized were the Adult Hope Scale (AHS), Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and Kobasa's Hardiness Scale (KHS). Descriptive statistics were performed using SPSS version 27 software, while path coefficients between constructs were analyzed using Amos version 24 software. The CB-SEM method was employed to develop the structural equation model. A significance level of 0.05 was used in the analysis.

**Findings:** Based on the current research findings, it was found that hardiness positively and significantly impacted the variable of Hope ( $\beta=0.801$ ,  $P=0.001$ ). Similarly, the variable of hardiness also had a positive and significant effect on Resilience ( $\beta=0.953$ ,  $P=0.001$ ). There was no notable effect of the Hope factor on Resilience ( $P=0.868$ ). The study revealed that hardiness did not indirectly and significantly influence Resilience through Hope ( $\beta=0.008$  and  $P=0.864$ ).

**Conclusion:** The findings of the current research indicated that hardiness leads to higher levels of hope and resilience. However, the study found that hope does not have a notable impact on resilience, and as a mediator, it did not show any effectiveness in the research.

**Keywords:** Psychological hardiness, Resilience, Hope, Woman-headed household.

## 1. Introduction

The head of the family is typically the individual who holds significant power and economic responsibilities within the family, usually the eldest member (Talati et al., 2021). In some cases, women may also assume the role of the head of the family for various reasons, taking responsibility for the family in the absence of adult male support (Shariati et al., 2023). Official records indicate that there are over three million women-headed households in Iran (Talati et al., 2021). According to information from the United Nations, the proportion of woman-headed households is approximately 34% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 27% in Africa, and 19% in Asia (Bose-Duker et al., 2021). Family composition and leadership play a role in shaping health outcomes by impacting factors such as economic status, familial relationships, and the overall stability of the family unit. woman-head households tend to face more vulnerability and disadvantages due to their typically lower incomes and limited access to necessary services (Wendt et al., 2021). Studies have indicated that woman-headed households, particularly in single-parent families, are among the most at-risk households in terms of both poverty and food insecurity (Dunga, 2020).

In this scenario, when women who are heads of households face significant stress and pressure, having psychological hardiness can serve as a protective factor during traumatic experiences. This resilience is shaped by three key personality traits: commitment, control, and challenge, which help to safeguard their well-being in the face of stressful events and enhance their overall quality of life and life expectancy (Rahmati et al., 2024a). Individuals with high levels of hardiness have a unique perspective of themselves and the world around them, leading to positive cognitive evaluation, motivation, attitude, and behavior when encountering difficulties in life. As a result, they experience lower levels of physical symptoms, anxiety, neuroticism, and rumination, while also exhibiting higher levels of mindfulness, coping skills, and overall health (Vaziri et al., 2021). A study found that psychological hardiness, psychological capital, and psychological empowerment are positively and significantly related to the quality of life of women-headed households (Mansory Jalilian et al., 2023). Another research indicated that there is a positive and significant correlation between personality traits such as hardiness, including commitment, control, challenge, and hope (Hamid, 2020). Women-headed households face significant stress due to their multiple roles

and lack of support in various aspects, such as economic, emotional, and social. This lack of support and high levels of stress can diminish their ability to cope with challenging situations, making them more vulnerable to psychological, physical, and social harm (Beyene et al., 2023). Resilience is commonly defined as the capacity to manage stress and negative emotions, and to bounce back to normal functioning after a crisis, leading to improved mental health outcomes including decreased anxiety, depression, behavioral issues, and psychological distress (Jia Yun et al., 2023). A study indicated that there is a significant difference between male and woman-headed households in terms of resilience levels on average (Fuller & Lain, 2020). Other research has demonstrated that resilience status, as a dynamic factor, can enhance the connection between resilience and well-being indicators (Dezhban et al., 2020). Women-headed households often experience poverty, gender discrimination, lack of support, cultural barriers, and difficulties in the economic market. Despite these challenges, maintaining hope can help hardiness guardians in overcoming obstacles (Habib, 2020). Hope involves two components - pathways and agency. Pathways refer to a person's ability to envision a better future, regardless of current circumstances, while agency relates to a person's belief in their ability and motivation to achieve their goals. Individuals must have hope in facing adversities (Dixon, 2023). Hope plays a crucial role in determining one's mental well-being, and it can be affected by various environmental factors such as family support, education, and opportunities arising from shifting social conditions (Graham, 2024). Research has found a significant connection between hope, resilience, depressive symptoms, life quality, and social support (Pione et al., 2023). Another study has suggested that hope acts as a protective factor for resilience, fostering overall health across different aspects such as cultural background, physical health, and occupation (Senger, 2023).

It is important to consider the significance of woman-headed households in all stages of life, especially with the increasing number and vulnerability in society. Due to this, it is necessary to examine the psychological factors that impact their lives (Mansory Jalilian et al., 2023). Previous studies have not directly investigated the connection between hardiness, resilience, and the mediating role of hope in woman-headed households, creating a research gap in this area. This study aims to explore the relationship between hardiness and resilience with hope as a mediator in woman-headed households, specifically examining the influence of these factors on their well-being.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study is a combination of descriptive-correlational research and cross-sectional research methodology, incorporating the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The statistical population for this research comprises all women-headed households receiving assistance from the welfare organization in Tehran from July to December 2023. The sample size for the study consisted of 192 women-headed households, chosen through multi-stage cluster sampling. The researcher initially went to the welfare organization located in District 12 in Tehran to begin the sampling process. The first step involved creating a list of women-headed households in Tehran. Next, 22 regions in Tehran were identified, and 7 of these regions were randomly chosen. Following this, a random selection of women from each region was made by the authors using a random table method. The sample size adequacy was determined using Cohen's formula in to calculate the number of participants needed in SEM methods, considering the observed and latent variables in the model, the expected effect size, and the desired probability and statistical power levels. The sample size was determined as follows:

Anticipated effect size: 0.3

Desired statistical power level: 0.8

Number of latent variables: 3

Number of observed variables: 57

Probability level: 0.01

The researcher determined the initial sample size to be 200 people based on the values provided. In anticipation of potential high attrition rates, the researcher decided to increase the sample size to 250 individuals to mitigate any loss of participants. The research study included participants who had a history with the welfare organization, were recipients of its services, were hardiness participants who gave consent, and had the necessary literacy and understanding to complete survey questions. Exclusion criteria for the study consisted of individuals under the age of 20, those with physical or mental impairments that hindered participation, respondents who left more than 10 items unanswered in the questionnaires, and participants who were unresponsive at the time of sampling. The researcher had to discontinue data collection due to an issue with the online survey form. The research was conducted by first obtaining the necessary permits from the researcher's university. Next, the researchers were introduced to a welfare organization with the help of a university professor.

The organization then referred the researchers to the sample women. A message detailing the research was sent to the women, inviting them to participate in the study through collaboration with the welfare organization. Initially, there were over 460 women in the sample. However, some did not respond to the messages or were unhappy. Once enough samples were collected, the researcher provided more comprehensive information about the research through social media platforms. The information included the objectives of the research, the necessary permits, and provisions regarding ethical compliance. Participants were guaranteed that their personal information would not be included in the research forms and that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. The research process, including online questionnaire completion, took five months and ten days due to limited participation from all women. Ultimately, out of 250 filled questionnaires, 192 were utilized for the study. The study assessed the variables of hardiness, resilience, and hope among online participants through self-reporting using HTML forms. Participants received measurement forms via social network links. The study consistently adhered to ethical considerations, allowing participants the choice to withdraw from the study whenever they wished.

### 2.2. Measures

**Adult Hope Scale (AHS):** Snyder and Feldman developed a questionnaire in 1991 to assess life expectancy (Feldman & Snyder, 2005). The life expectancy questionnaire by Schneider et al. consists of 12 questions, each rated on a five-point Likert scale from completely disagree to agree. Participants' scores on the questions are totaled to calculate an overall score within the range of 12 to 60. Higher scores reflect greater hope in the individual, while lower scores indicate less hope. In Iran, the reliability of this questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a score of 0.711 (Pooreyed, 2023). In this current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.79.

**Connor-Davidson resilience scale (CD-RISC):** Researchers have established the reliability and validity of the Resilience questionnaire developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) to evaluate individuals' resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Hosseini, 2024; Karimi Dastaki & Mahmudi, 2024). This questionnaire consists of 25 items, each rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from zero (completely false) to four (always true). The overall score is

determined by summing all the individual scores, which could fall anywhere between 0 and 100. Higher scores indicate greater resilience in the individual. The reliability of this questionnaire in Iran, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha and Spearman-Brown coefficient, was found to be 0.669 and 0.665, respectively (Keyhani et al., 2015). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was 0.71.

Kobasa's Hardiness Scale (KHS): Kobasa (1982) developed a questionnaire to assess hardiness in individuals, and the researcher confirmed its validity and reliability (Kobasa et al., 1982). The questionnaire consists of 20 items, each rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from zero (never) to three (often). Scores on the scale are totaled to calculate a person's overall score, with a possible range between 0 and 60. Higher scores indicate higher levels of hardiness. Kobasa et al. found a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 for the scale. In Iran, the reliability was determined to be 0.73 using Cronbach's alpha (Rahmati et al., 2024a, 2024b; Vaziri et al., 2021). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was 0.87.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The research used SPSS version 27 software for descriptive statistics and Amos version 24 software for analyzing path coefficients between constructs. The

distribution of research variables was assessed for normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which indicated a normal distribution due to the lack of significance for the research variables. The model was then implemented using the covariance-based method. The sample size for the study, consisting of 192 participants, was deemed sufficient for implementing the structural equation model using the CB-SEM method. A significance level of 0.05 was established for the analysis.

### 3. Findings and Results

Initially, the researcher examined the descriptive statistics related to the research variables. The woman-headed households were categorized into four different age groups: 20-30 years old (24.0%), 31-40 years old (16.1%), 41-50 years old (20.3%), and over 51 years old (39.6%). Similarly, the participants were segmented based on their education level into four distinct categories: no formal education, high school, diploma, and post-diploma qualifications. The woman-headed households were also classified into three groups based on the number of children they had: 1 to 2 children (27.6%), 3 to 4 children (49.0%), and more than 5 children (23.4%).

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the research variables.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics of the variables*

Variables	N	Mean ± SD	Min	Max
Resilience	192	44.84± 14.53	20	71
Hardiness	192	43.62± 10.59	20	56
Hope	192	34.45± 10.42	20	52

Table 2 shows the correlation between research variables based on Pearson's correlation coefficient.

**Table 2**

*Pearson's Correlations*

Variable		1	2	3
Resilience	Pearson's r	—		
Hardiness	Pearson's r	• .738	—	
Hope	Pearson's r	• .301	• .522	—

Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of terms with themes related to dimensions of emotional intelligence in stories of Farsi textbooks at the elementary school in terms

of educational grades. The distribution of terms containing the concepts of emotional intelligence indicated that the dimensions and components of emotional intelligence were

not well present in stories of Farsi textbooks, and it was more obvious at the lower grades of education, especially the first elementary course. Given the special work of the first elementary school in teaching calligraphy and familiarity with letters, it faced limitations in presenting words. Another important point in the results of the table was related to the sixth grade of elementary school, which did not follow a dominant pattern, and attention to dimensions of emotional intelligence was less in this grade.

The standardized beta in regression, known as the path coefficient, is considered weak if it is less than 0.3, moderate if it falls between 0.3 and 0.6, and good if it is above 0.6. In this study, the researcher chose a bootstrap value of 1000.

Table 3 reports the data analysis output based on Shannon's entropy formula. According to Shannon's three steps, the information load of each dimension of emotional intelligence was calculated after calculating the normal matrix of the data, and finally, the importance coefficients of the dimensions were determined. The calculation of the coefficient of importance was performed in several steps, and this formula was calculated and reported separately for the six elementary grades in addition to determining the coefficient of importance for the emotional intelligence dimensions.

**Table 3**

*Model path coefficients and model significance*

Paths	Total effects		Direct effects		Indirect effects			Result
	Estimate	p-value	Estimate	p-value	Estimate	p-value	z-value	
Hardiness→ Hope	0.801	0.001	0.801	0.001	-	-	-	Confirmed
Hardiness→ Resilience	0.953	0.001	0.944	0.001	-	-	-	Confirmed
Hope → Resilience	0.011	0.868	0.011	0.868	-	-	-	Rejected
Hardiness→ Hope→ Resilience	-	-	-	-	0.008	0.864	0.229	Rejected

**Figure 1**

*Path coefficients between variables and significance level*

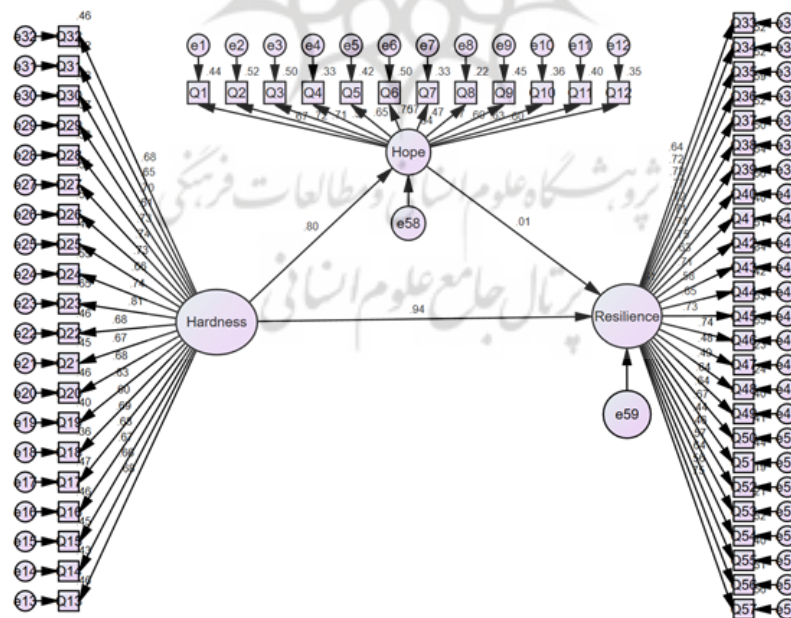
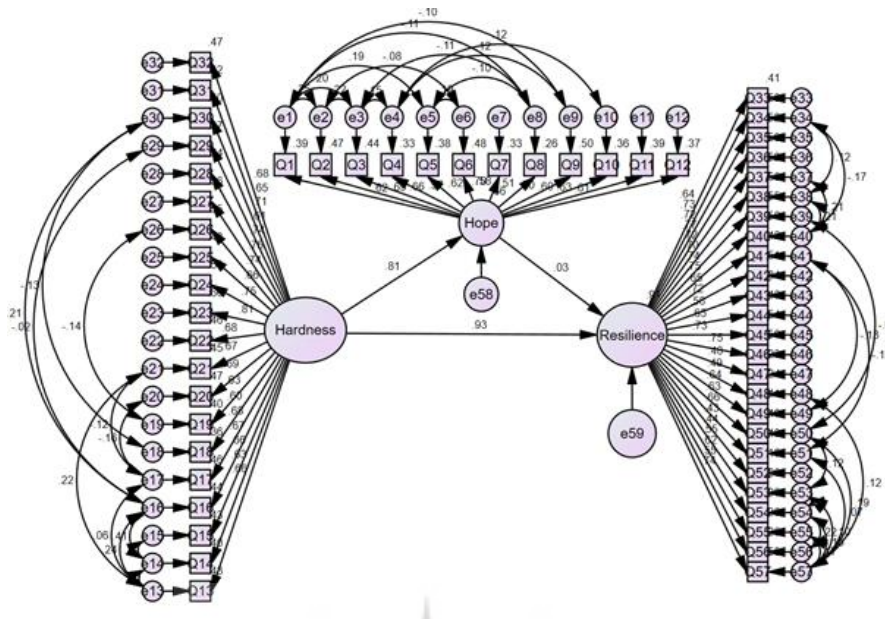


Figure 2

Modified research model



According to Table 3 and Figure 1, it is evident that the level of Hardiness has a meaningful positive impact on Hope ( $\beta=0.801$ ,  $P=0.001$ ). Similarly, the level of Hardiness also positively affects Resilience ( $\beta=0.953$ ,  $P=0.001$ ). "Nevertheless, the study found that Hope did not have a noticeable influence on Resilience ( $P=0.868$ )."

To examine the potential mediating role of Hardiness on Resilience, a bootstrap method with 1000 samples was utilized. The findings revealed that Hardiness does not exert an indirect significant influence on Resilience through Hope ( $\beta=0.008$  and  $P=0.864$ ). Additionally, the researcher employed the Sobel Test to determine the significance of the mediating

variable in the study, which was calculated using a specific formula.

$$z\text{-value} = a*b/\text{SQRT}(b^2*sa^2 + a^2*sb^2)$$

The Sobel test determines the significance of a mediating effect at a 95% confidence level by checking if the Z value exceeds 1.96. The Z value for the relationship between Hardiness and Resilience through Hope was 0.229. Based on the results of the Sobel test, it can be inferred that the mediating variable in the study is not statistically significant.

Table 4

The suitability indices of the research model

Fit indices	X <sup>2</sup>	df	χ <sup>2</sup> /df	GFI	AGFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Research model	4720.9	1494	3.160	0.991	0.924	0.986	0.973	0.920	0.945	0.049

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that the fit indices of the research model demonstrate the outstanding fit of the adjusted model, suggesting that the final model has a satisfactory fit.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary goal of this research was to investigate the relationship between hardiness and resilience in woman-

headed households, with hope potentially playing a moderating role. The findings indicate that hardiness has a positive and significant impact on hope and resilience. However, hope itself does not significantly influence resilience, and the mediating variable in the study also did not show significance. The results suggest that hardiness enhances hope and resilience among woman-headed households, which is consistent with previous research

(Dezhban et al., 2020; Hamid, 2020; Shirmohammadi et al., 2023). Prior studies have demonstrated a direct and meaningful relationship between psychological hardiness and hope (Shirmohammadi et al., 2023). Similarly, research has shown a positive and significant correlation between personality traits associated with hardiness such as commitment, control, and challenge – and hope (Hamid, 2020). Moreover, research has discovered that resilience acts as a dynamic mechanism that enhances the relationship between hardiness and measures of well-being (Dezhban et al., 2020).

Psychological hardiness is defined as a personality trait, a set of attitudes, or a style with three related characteristics - commitment, control, and challenge - that help individuals better manage stress. Commitment involves feeling deeply engaged in life activities, control refers to the desire to influence outcomes, decisions, situations, and people, and the challenge is about viewing potentially stressful situations as opportunities for personal growth rather than threats. Psychological hardiness is associated with reduced concerns such as lack of self-confidence, aimless future, financial difficulties, and incompetence at work. Individuals with higher psychological hardiness tend to use coping strategies like active problem-solving, seeking social support, being flexible, and maintaining hope and resilience (Vaziri et al., 2021). "Psychological resilience is determined by an individual's self-beliefs and perceptions of their surroundings. In difficult situations, woman-headed households with higher levels of psychological resilience believe they can influence and improve the situation. These individuals exhibit greater hope and adaptability when facing challenges, viewing life's adversities as foreseeable. Psychological resilience serves as a shield against life's stresses, fostering hope and the ability to bounce back from setbacks (Shirmohammadi et al., 2023)."

Another research discovery indicated that hope does not impact resilience and is not considered significant as a mediating factor in the current study. This conclusion contradicts previous studies (Pione et al., 2023; Senger, 2023; Shariati et al., 2023). One study found a direct and meaningful connection between hope and resilience (Shariati et al., 2023). Additionally, research results demonstrated a strong association between hope, resilience, depressive symptoms, life quality, and social support (Pione et al., 2023). Another study proposed that hope is a protective factor for resilience that enhances overall health in terms of cultural, physical, or occupational aspects (Senger, 2023). The discrepancy between the findings of the

current study and these previous studies could be attributed to variations in the study population, timing, and location of the research, or the sample size.

This discovery can be clarified by stating that resilience is more than just resistance to challenging circumstances, it is also a dynamic, proactive, and beneficial contributor to an individual's surroundings. It involves the capacity of a person to sustain psychological and spiritual equilibrium in the face of adversity, leading to positive outcomes. Resilience encompasses emotional and cognitive aspects. However, not all individuals possess the same level of resilience, as the environmental factors that either strengthen or diminish one's ability to cope with stress vary among people. Additionally, individuals differ in their innate resilience, internal capacity, and tolerance levels. Consequently, hope may impact resilience differently for each individual (Noroozi et al., 2020). Hope is not simply the belief or feeling that one's circumstances will get better, but it is also about being optimistic and believing that there is something one can do to improve the situation. Hope, similar to happiness and other components of overall well-being, is affected by genetic and environmental elements, including familial support, societal surroundings, access to education, and available opportunities (Graham, 2024). It is also described as an emotional process that gives individuals psychological strength to be resilient and deal with challenges. Individuals with high levels of hope tend to be more creative and determined in pursuing their goals, leading to greater subjective well-being and reduced mental health issues like depression and anxiety (Yildirim & Arslan, 2022). Although hope by itself may not be sufficient to boost resilience, woman-headed households face various challenges such as lack of economic, emotional, and social support, high levels of stress, limited literacy and work experience, as well as caring for their children. These factors may diminish the impact of hope on their resilience (Beyene et al., 2023).

Every research design has specific constraints, and it is essential to consider these limitations when interpreting the results. One of the constraints in the present study was the inability to control intervening factors like cultural background, social and economic status, etc., during participant selection, which could impact the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the data was gathered using self-report scales, which are prone to distortion due to unconscious biases, response tendencies, personal biases, and social desirability, especially in an online format. "Errors were introduced into the

questionnaires as a result. Nevertheless, by combining different data collection methods, it is possible to reduce response bias."

The significant decrease in the sample size and the failure of women to provide accurate responses to the research scales posed a major challenge in the current study. Additionally, numerous factors influence the hope index, making it impossible to investigate all aspects in this research; Some of these factors include the delivery of healthcare and treatment services, the level of health education in mainstream media, common lifestyle choices, the quantity and quality of individual and social stress, the permissible level of public happiness, environmental health, and the economic conditions of the country. Future research should take into account these influential factors.

Another limitation of the study is that while participants were guaranteed complete confidentiality and participation was voluntary with no means of identification from the questionnaires, some husbands of woman-headed households who were not the primary income earners for reasons like unemployment or illness, prevented their wives from taking part in the study due to concerns about reputation and other issues. Conducting research in a single city on a single genus limited the ability to generalize to a larger population such as the province and country, a drawback of the study. Additionally, some woman-headed households were too busy with various responsibilities to participate in the research. Future studies should address factors like economic, social, and cultural status to minimize limitations and allow for broader conclusions. It is recommended to include other marginalized groups in future studies, along with unmarried men. Another research suggestion includes examining the life quality, mental well-being, and hardiness among woman-headed households.

The results of the current research indicate that hardiness can increase hope and resilience, although the study found that hope does not have a significant impact on resilience and was ineffective as a mediator in the study. Based on the results, it is recommended that organizations and charities working with women-headed households should incorporate programs to enhance the psychological hardiness of these women and provide substantial support to these programs. Evaluating the hope and resilience of women-headed households can offer valuable insights to policymakers and planners in the social and support sectors for more cohesive and effective planning to improve the circumstances of these women. It can also benefit researchers studying the situation of women-headed households and pave the way for their

betterment. The results of this study can also have practical applications in various settings such as clinics, social work facilities, welfare centers, counseling centers, and family health clinics.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

### Acknowledgments

We hereby thank all participants for agreeing to record the interview and participate in the research.

### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

### Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

### Ethics Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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