

Final Project 1

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The Impact of Economic Stress on Family Satisfaction

Abdulmajeed Saad Alshammari

222001544

Graduation Project – 1

Faculty of Management - Midocean University

Supervisor

Dr. Abdul Rahim Nader

Faculty member- Faculty of management- Midocean University

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

In today's world, families face growing financial challenges due to rising living costs, unstable job markets, and unexpected economic downturns. These pressures often extend beyond bank accounts, shaping the daily lives and emotional atmosphere at home. When families struggle financially, it can affect how members communicate, solve problems, and support one another (Conger et al., 2010). Although researchers have explored the connection between money troubles and family life, we still don't fully understand how financial stress changes the way families function; especially in cultures outside the West (Masarik & Conger, 2017). This study aims to explore how economic hardship shapes the overall satisfaction families feel in their relationships.

1.1. Research Background

Money and family life are closely connected, often in ways that aren't immediately obvious. In recent years, many families have found themselves struggling to keep up with rising costs of living, unexpected job losses, and the economic ups and downs that seem to come out of nowhere. These financial pressures don't just affect bank accounts—they can also create stress at home, change the way family members interact, and even shape how satisfied people feel with their family life as a whole. Understanding the impact of economic stress on family satisfaction has never been more important, especially as these challenges have become a daily reality for so many.

Researchers have spent decades trying to figure out how financial hardship affects families. One well-known framework, the Family Stress Model, explains that when families are under economic stress, it often leads to more arguments, poorer communication, and less emotional support at home (Conger et al., 2010). Imagine a family where parents are constantly worried about bills or job security; it's easy to see how this ongoing stress could lead to tension or make it harder for everyone to get along. Studies in countries like the United States and Canada show that families experiencing financial problems are more likely to report lower levels of happiness and satisfaction in their relationships (Masarik & Conger, 2017).

But it's important to remember that not every family responds to economic stress in the same way. Cultural background, community support, and family values can make a big difference. For example, in many Middle Eastern societies, it's common for extended families to live together or help each other out, which can provide a buffer against financial hardship. These strong support networks sometimes help families maintain a sense of stability and satisfaction, even when money is tight. Despite this, most of the existing research on economic stress and family

satisfaction has focused on Western countries, and we still know far too little about how families in other parts of the world experience these challenges.

Another limitation of past research is that it often looks at individuals—such as parents or children—rather than the family as a whole. This approach can miss the bigger picture, ignoring how financial stress affects daily life, family routines, and the emotional atmosphere at home. Some families seem to find ways to stay connected and satisfied even in tough times, while others struggle more. We don't fully understand what helps families stay resilient when facing economic hardship, and identifying these factors is crucial for providing better support.

This study aims to fill some of those gaps by exploring how economic stress impacts family satisfaction, particularly in Middle Eastern societies where family structures, traditions, and support systems might look different from those in Western countries. By focusing on the unique strengths and challenges faced by these families, this research hopes to shed light on what helps some families remain satisfied and resilient, even when facing serious financial stress. The insights from this work could be useful for social workers, counselors, and policymakers who want to develop programs or policies that truly support families during difficult economic times.

In short, as families everywhere continue to navigate financial uncertainty, it's critical to understand the real effects of economic stress on family life. By looking at the family as a whole and paying attention to cultural differences, we can better identify what families need to not just survive, but to thrive—even when money is tight. This research hopes to contribute to that broader understanding and, ultimately, to help families build stronger, more satisfying relationships, no matter what economic challenges they face.

1.2. Research Problem

While it's clear that financial stress is a growing issue, we don't have enough detailed research on how exactly it impacts family satisfaction; particularly in Middle Eastern contexts (Conger et al., 2010). Most studies focus on individual experiences or are limited to Western settings, leaving a gap in our understanding of how economic pressure influences day-to-day family life in other cultures (Masarik & Conger, 2017).

1.2.1. Theoretical Gaps

Most theories about how economic stress affects families are based on Western families and don't always consider different cultures. We still don't know enough about how family relationships and stress work in places like the Middle East, where traditions and family roles can be quite different.

1.2.2. Practical Gaps

Most programs that help families with financial stress are designed for Western societies. There isn't enough guidance on how to support families in other regions, where things like extended family and community support may be more important. As a result, families in places like the Middle East may not get the help they really need.

How does economic stress affect family satisfaction in Middle Eastern societies?

1.3. Research Significance

Studying the relationship between economic stress and family satisfaction matters not only for academic reasons but also for making a real difference in people's lives. If we can better understand what puts families at risk, and what helps them stay strong, social workers, counselors, and policymakers will be better equipped to support families during tough times (Taylor et al., 2017). Ultimately, this research could guide community programs and policies that help families stay resilient, even when money is tight.

1.3.1. At the theoretical level

On a theoretical level, this research can help deepen our understanding of how economic stress influences family satisfaction, especially in cultural contexts that haven't been studied as much. By looking at families outside of the typical Western focus, the study can add new perspectives to existing theories, or even challenge them. This could lead to a more complete and realistic view of how families cope with financial difficulties in different parts of the world.

1.3.2. At the practical level

On a practical level, the findings from this research have the potential to make a real difference for families and the professionals who support them. If we know more about what helps families stay satisfied and resilient during tough economic times, social workers, counselors, and policymakers can design better programs and policies. This could translate into more effective support and resources for families, helping them stay strong and connected even when money is tight.

1.4. Research Questions

- How does economic stress affect overall family satisfaction in Middle Eastern societies?
- What are the main factors that help families remain resilient under economic stress?
- How do family roles and cultural traditions influence the relationship between economic stress and family satisfaction?
- What forms of social or community support are most effective for families experiencing financial hardship?

1.5. Research Objectives

1. To examine the impact of economic stress on family satisfaction in Middle Eastern contexts.
2. To identify the main factors contributing to family resilience during financial hardship.
3. To analyze the role of cultural traditions and family roles in moderating the effect of economic stress.
4. To assess the effectiveness of different types of social and community support for families under economic stress.

1.6. Research Hypotheses

- H1: Economic stress negatively affects family satisfaction in Middle Eastern societies.
- H2: Families with strong social or community support report higher satisfaction levels despite economic stress.
- H3: Traditional family roles and cultural values moderate the relationship between economic stress and family satisfaction.
- H4: Family resilience is higher among families that utilize extended family or community support networks.

1.7. Research Model



1.8. Suggested Industry/Organization for Empirical Study

The empirical study will focus on families in urban and semi-urban areas of Saudi Arabia, with potential collaboration with local community centers or family counseling organizations. These organizations, such as the Saudi Family Counseling Association, provide support to families experiencing economic hardship and can facilitate access to participants for surveys or interviews. This setting allows for exploring the research questions within a relevant cultural and social context, reflecting real challenges faced by families in the region.

1.9. Research Methodology

This study will adopt a mixed-methods approach:

- **Quantitative:** A structured questionnaire will be distributed to a representative sample of families in Saudi Arabia to measure levels of economic stress, family satisfaction, and perceived support.
- **Qualitative:** In-depth interviews will be conducted with selected families and counselors to gain deeper insights into coping mechanisms and cultural influences.
- **Sampling:** Purposive sampling will be used for interviews, while stratified random sampling will be adopted for the questionnaire to ensure diversity in socioeconomic status.
- **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS) for correlations and regressions, while qualitative data will be subjected to thematic analysis.

1.10. The Suggested Project Structure

1. Chapter 1: Introduction
 - Background, Problem Statement, Gaps, Significance, Questions, Objectives, Hypotheses, Model, Methodology, Scope, Structure
2. Chapter 2: Literature Review
 - Overview of relevant theories and prior research on economic stress and family satisfaction
3. Chapter 3: Research Methodology
 - Detailed methodology, sampling, data collection tools, ethical considerations
4. Chapter 4: Statistical Analysis
 - Presentation and analysis of quantitative and qualitative results
5. Chapter 5: Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion
 - Discussion of results, implications, recommendations, limitations, future research
6. References
 - Full reference list
7. Appendices
 - Survey, interview guide, supplementary materials

2.Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Brief introduction for the chapter

2.2. The independent variable

2.3. The dependent variable

2.4. The relationship between the independent and the dependent variables

2.5. Conclusion

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