

*FAMILY ECONOMIC PRESSURE,
MARITAL DISCORD, AND PHYSICAL
HEALTH OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES
FROM MIDDLE TO LATER
ADULTHOOD*

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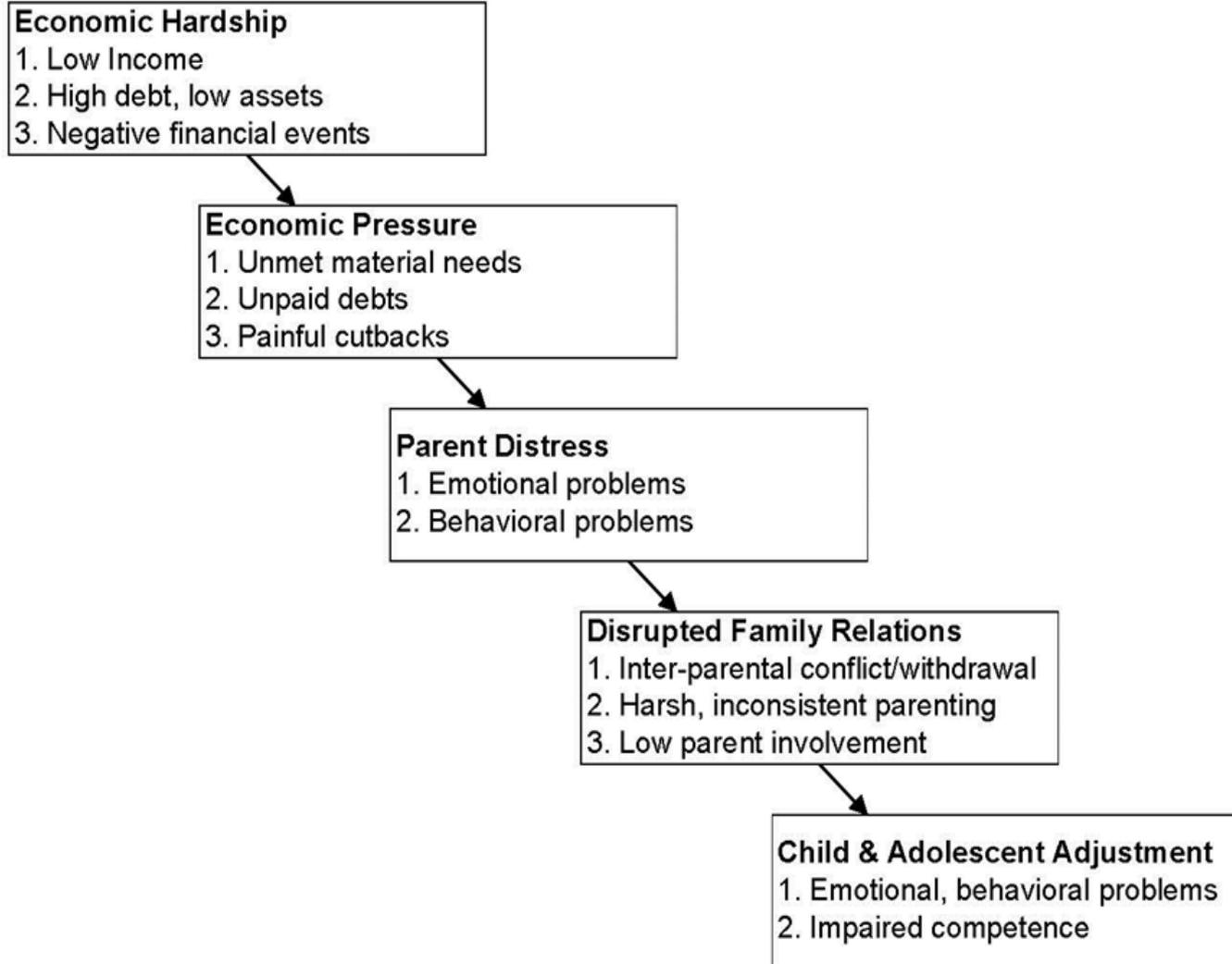
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Economic Hardship

- Economic hardship places families at risk for multiple disadvantages.
- Economic adversity has been associated with a range of negative behavioral, mental, and physical health outcomes (Conger et al., 2010).

Family Stress Model



Family Stress Model

- Empirical support was first demonstrated with generation 1 (G1) and generation 2 (G2) as adolescents from the present rural sample.
- Findings have been replicated with several different types of study populations.

Family Stress Model

- Primary use of cross sectional data
 - Thus, important to test the model using data collected over time.
- Much of the research has involved adolescent outcomes
 - What are the consequences of experiencing economic adversity in middle adulthood on outcomes in later adulthood?

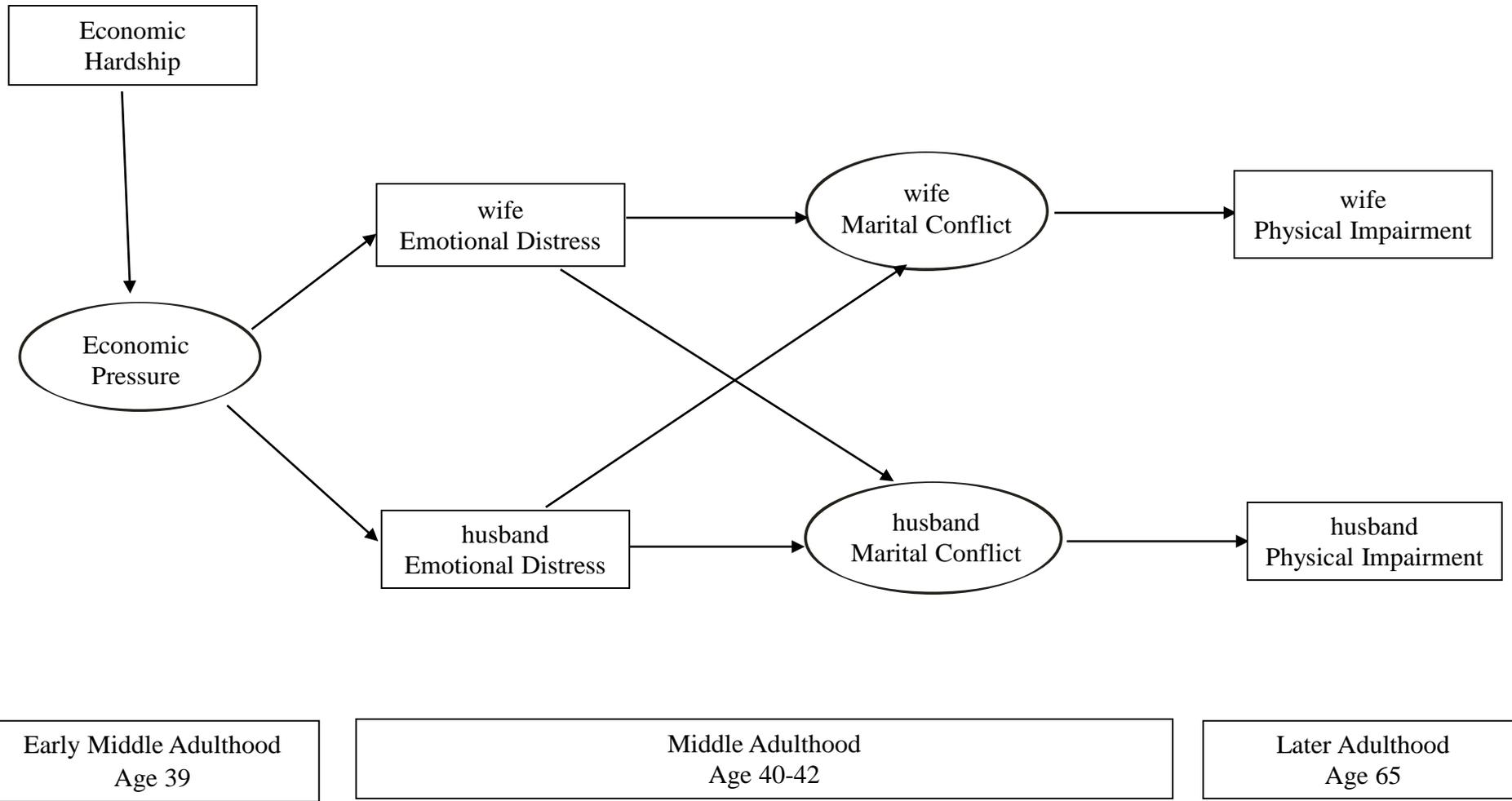
Family Stress Model

- Examined influence of stability and change in economic hardship during the early years (age 44) on health problems of husbands and wives at age 51 (Wickrama et al., 2010)
- Found that economic hardship contributes to onset of health problems of middle-aged husbands and wives

Present Investigation

- Using the Family Stress Model, the present investigation examined G1 economic pressure in middle adulthood on physical health outcomes in later adulthood.
- 3 developmental time points
 - Economic adversity in early middle years (age 39)
 - Family processes in middle years (age 40-42)
 - Physical impairment in later years (age 65)

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Method

Middle Adulthood

- Data are from the **Iowa Youth and Families Project (IYFP)**, a longitudinal study of 451 G1 biological parents, G2 adolescents, and a sibling within 4 years of the adolescent.
- Study began in 1989 - 1992

Method

Later Adulthood

- G1s continued in the **Later Adulthood Study (LAS)**
- Two waves of data collection: 2015, 2017

Method

- **IYFP and LAS**
 - In-home interviews
 - G1 Wife
 - G1 Husband
 - Survey Questionnaires
 - Observations (Videotaped Family Interaction Tasks)
 - Partner Discussion Task

The Present Report

- The present report includes 243 G1 husbands and wives who were married to the same person from 1989 - 2015

Time 1 Measures

- **Economic Pressure ($\alpha = .79$)**
 - Material Needs – Includes items such as “I have enough money to afford the kind of place to live in that I should, I have enough money to afford the kind of car I need”
 - 6 items ($\alpha = .93$)
 - Make Ends Meet – “How much difficulty have you had paying bills, At the end of each month, do you have enough money left over?”
 - 2 items ($\alpha = .84$)
 - Financial Cutbacks – Includes items such as “Stopped paying bills, borrowed money, reduced medical insurance”
 - 29 items ($\alpha = .88$)

Time 2 Measures

- **Emotional Distress**

- SCL-90-R (Derogatis, 1983)

- Hostility subscale – Includes items experienced in the past week such as “Feeling easily annoyed or irritated, Experiencing temper outbursts you could not control, and Getting into frequent arguments”

- 6 items ($\alpha = .80$ wife, $\alpha = .74$ husband)

Time 2 Measures

- **Marital Conflict**

- Observed behavior of one spouse toward the other spouse during a discussion task ($\alpha = .91$ wife, $\alpha = .86$ husband)
- Hostility = Angry, critical, disapproving behavior
- Angry Coercion = The attempt to control or change the behavior of another in a hostile manner
- Antisocial = Resistance, defiance, and insensitivity

Time 3 Measures

- **Physical Impairment**

- 11 items – Includes items regarding how much your physical health now limits you in these activities
“Vigorous activities, Climbing several flights of stairs, Walking one block, Bathing or dressing yourself, and Driving”
- ($\alpha = .67$ wife, $\alpha = .71$ husband)

Figure 2. Economic Pressure and Physical Impairment

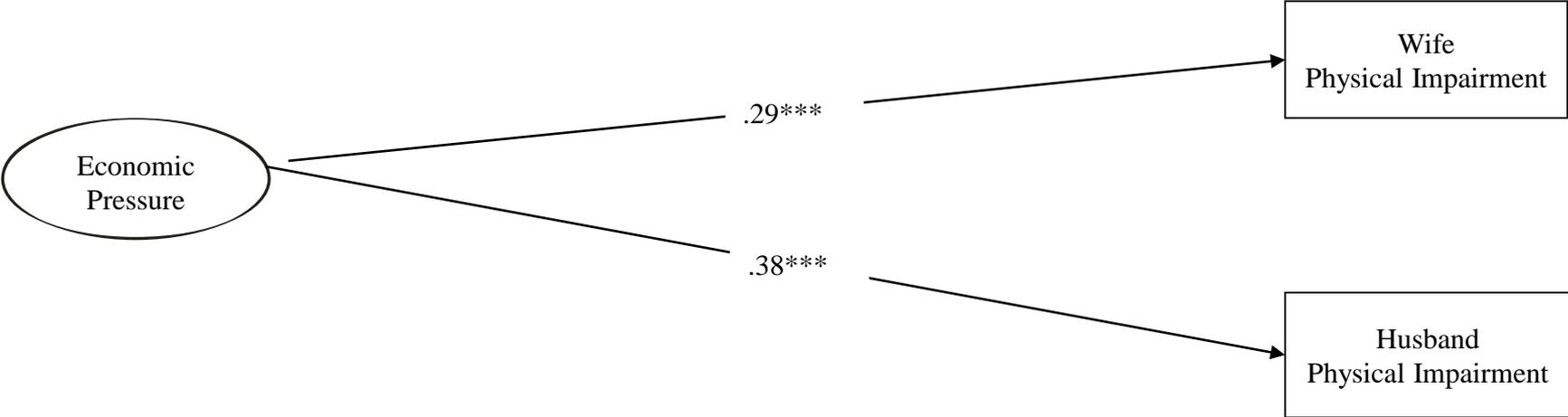
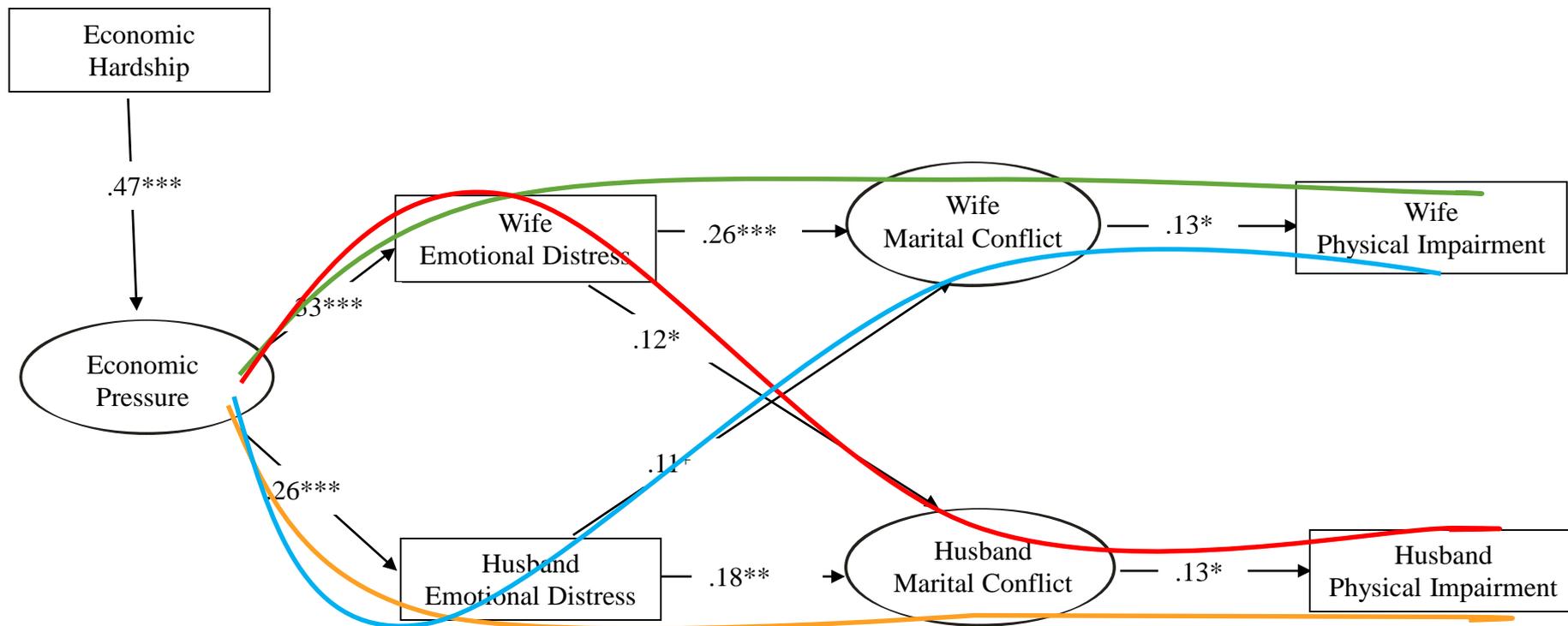


Figure 3. Statistical Model



+p .10, *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001 Model fit: $\chi^2 (71) = 148.73, p < .05, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .07$

Summary of Findings

- Consistent with the Family Stress Model, economic pressure was associated with emotional distress which, in turn, was associated with marital conflict.
- High levels of marital conflict during middle adulthood was associated with physical impairment in the later years.
- Wife emotional distress was associated with husband marital conflict, which was associated with husband physical impairment.

Future Directions

- Control for physical impairment in the early middle years
- Examine genetic or other biological influences
- Replicate with more diverse sample

Conclusions

- Replicated findings from G1 to G2 as an adolescent to consequences for G1 across adulthood.
- Economic pressure as experienced in the early middle adult years has long-term health consequences into later adulthood, through emotional distress and marital conflict.