

MASTER'S DEGREE IN CLINICAL AND HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

**Women's Beliefs as a Significant
Predictor of Negative Dyadic
Marital Adjustment in Remarried
Couples**

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**WOMEN'S BELIEFS AS A SIGNIFICANT PREDICTOR OF NEGATIVE
DYADIC MARITAL ADJUSTMENT IN REMARRIED COUPLES**

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Resumo

As famílias de recasamento têm uma representatividade cada vez maior no contexto social português. Estas famílias têm uma maior probabilidade de enfrentar desafios, pela complexidade que surge no reconstruir de relações e recomposição de famílias. Existe uma escassez de estudos voltados para estes casais e famílias, que com eles trazem crenças para estas novas construções familiares. O presente estudo procurou contribuir para uma lacuna literária com intuito de perceber a relação das crenças destes casais com o seu ajustamento diádico no contexto do recasamento. Através da utilização de um protocolo que engloba as escalas em versão portuguesa de *The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (RDAS) e *The Remarriage Belief Inventory* (RMBI), investigamos os efeitos de ator e parceiro no *Actor-Partner Interdependence Model* (APIM) e obteve-se uma amostra de 96 casais portugueses de diversas tipologias de recasamento.

Dos 192 participantes, a idade variou entre 25 e 70 anos, 91.7% das mulheres e 95.8% dos homens encontravam-se empregados, e a maioria dos participantes possuía educação superior. Foi ainda possível estabelecer duas categorias entre os casais: aqueles que conceberam descendência no contexto do recasamento e aqueles que não conceberam. Relativamente aos dados diádicos obtidos através das referidas escalas, colhidos entre fevereiro 2019 e abril 2020, deduziu-se que existe um efeito de ator ($\beta = -0.296$, $p < 0.05$) e um efeito de parceiro ($\beta = -0.270$, $p < 0.05$) das crenças das mulheres. Verificou-se ainda que o efeito de ator e de parceiro das crenças do homem não são significativos ($\beta = 0.085$, $p = 0.380$; $\beta = 0.026$, $p = 0.804$, respetivamente).

Conclui-se que as crenças das mulheres em relação ao recasamento impactam pela negativa o seu ajustamento marital. Estas mesmas crenças também têm um efeito negativo nos seus parceiros. Em contraste, as crenças dos homens em relação ao recasamento não demonstraram ter qualquer efeito no seu ajustamento ou no das suas parceiras. Esta influência poderá advir das imposições de modelos sociais afetos à mulher nestas situações e pressões que a mesma poderá sofrer por parte do seu contexto, colocando em causa o seu tempo de “luto e resolução” do relacionamento anterior; a importância que a mulher atribui à sua autonomia financeira, aos seus filhos (quando existem) e, em última análise, tendo implicações na forma como se relaciona na sua situação de recasamento e na do seu parceiro.

Palavras-chave: Recasamento, Crenças, Ajustamento, Casal, Díade

Abstract

There is epidemiologic validity to studying families within the context of remarriage in Portugal. Given their potential complexity in the relationships they entail, these families are at greater risk of facing struggles. The research involving the belief system of these couples and families within the context of remarriage is scarce. The present study aimed to fill this gap by trying to understand the relationship between the belief system of these couples regarding remarriage and the way they perceive their remarital adjustment. In our protocol we used the Portuguese versions of The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) and The Remarriage Belief Inventory (RMBI) and looked for actors' and partners' effect using an Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM). We drafted a sample of 96 Portuguese couples in total within a variety of remarriage settings.

Of all 192 participants, the age ranged from 25 to 70 years-old, 91.7% of females and 95.8% of males were employed and most participants had a higher educational degree. Two main categories were also established between couples: those who had conceived in the context of remarriage and those who hadn't. The dyadic data obtained using the beforementioned scales, collected between February 2019 and April 2020, provided the following results: women's beliefs constitute an actor effect ($\beta = -0.296, p < 0.05$) as well as a partner's effect ($\beta = -0.270, p < 0.05$). We also depicted that there is no actor nor partner effect of the male's beliefs ($\beta = 0.085, p = 0.380$; $\beta = 0.026, p = 0.804$, respectively).

We concluded that female's beliefs regarding remarriage negatively affected their dyadic adjustment within remarriage, as well as their male partners. We also found that male's beliefs did not influence how they perceive their remarital adjustment neither did it influence the remarital adjustment of their female partners. These influences may reflect the social pressure and imposition directed at women to remarry fast after a dissolved marriage, not allowing them to grieve and give proper signification to the past relationship, disregarding the importance women give to financial autonomy and children (when she has them), ultimately setting them at risk to adjust to this new configuration as well as their partners.

Keywords: Remarriage, Beliefs, Adjustment, Couple, Dyad

Résumé

Les familles recomposées sont de plus en plus représentatives de la réalité sociale Portugaise. La complexité que peut engendrer la recomposition familiale et les relations qu'y d'elle découlent rend ces familles plus susceptibles d'être confrontées par des défis divers. La recherche scientifique en ce qui concerne les croyances de ces couples et familles recomposés se maintient néanmoins peu répandue. Nous avons étudié ces couples et familles, et avons en particulier ciblés les croyances que ces couples ont dans la recomposition familiale de façon à palier à une lacune existante dans la littérature scientifique. Pour ce faire, nous avons utilisé un protocole qui englobe la version Portugaise de *The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (RDAS) et *The Remarriage Belief Inventory* (RMBI) et nous nous sommes basés sur le modèle *Actor-Partner Interdependence Model* (APIM) pour obtenir une population de 96 couples Portugais de diverses formes de recomposition familiale.

Des 192 participants, âgés de 25 à 70 ans, 91.7% des femmes étaient embauchées contre 95,8% des hommes. La plupart des participants avaient des études supérieures. Nous avons aussi réussi à regrouper nos participants en deux groupes distincts : ceux qu'y avaient des enfants avant le contexte de remariage et ceux qu'y n'en n'avaient pas. Nos données dyadiques, récoltés entre février 2019 et avril 2020, nous ont permis de déduire que les croyances des femmes ont un effet d'acteur ($\beta = -0.296$, $p < 0.05$) et un effet de partenaire ($\beta = -0.270$, $p < 0.05$). Nous avons aussi déduit qu'il n'y a pas d'effet significatif d'acteur ou de partenaire provenant des croyances de hommes ($\beta = 0.085$, $p = 0.380$; $\beta = 0.026$, $p = 0.804$, respectivement).

Nous avons conclu que les croyances des femmes concernant le remariage influencent négativement la façon dont t'elles s'ajustent à la situation de recomposition familiale. Ces croyances ont aussi un impact négatif dans la forme comme leurs partenaires, hommes, s'ajustent à la famille de recomposition. À l'opposé, nous avons conclu que les croyances des hommes, en ce qui concerne le remariage, n'impactent pas leur ajustement dans ce contexte ou celui de leurs partenaires féminines. L'influence des croyances de la femme peut être dû à la pression sociale et à l'exposition faite aux femmes dans un contexte de dissolution de liens de mariage. Cette même pression ne permet pas à ces femmes de faire le deuil des relations passées et ne leurs permettraient pas de s'ajuster à l'importance qu'elles apportent à leur autonomie financière et aux relations qu'elles développent avec leurs enfants

(quand c'est le cas). Cette situation de risque influence foncièrement leur ajustement et celui de leurs partenaires masculins dans cette nouvelle conjoncture familiale.

Mots-clefs : Remariage, Famille Recomposée, Couple, Croyance

Remarriage, an Upcoming Complex Institution

Remarriage: evolution and prevalence

Remarriage is understood as the marriage of two individuals when at least one of the two has already been married (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.; Uyeki, 2019). There is an underlying understanding that there was a dissolution of the previous bond, either through death, divorce, or separation. Some light has started to shed on this phenomenon during the seventies in the United States of America (USA) (Burks, 1988; Greeff, 2009; Halford, 1994; Hetherington, 1992; Higginbotham, 2005; Spanier, 1987; White, 1985). The scientific community had then started to realize the social implications of these changes in the family structures (Lobo, 2005). Even though most marriages still correspond to first unions for both newlyweds, remarriage is becoming increasingly rooted to our cultures and societies, including the Portuguese population (Lobo, 2003).

The motives leading to remarriage have obviously changed over the years, with early widowhood being surpassed by divorce as the driving force behind remarriage (Lobo, 1995). Divorce or the formal separation corresponds to the dissolution of the union between two people that were formerly a couple.

Between 2014 and 2019, there were considerable fluctuations in the number of total divorces in Portugal – with an actual decrease in 2017 - despite a global upward tendency (INE, 2019). In 2019, a total of 61 divorces were registered for every 100 marriages (PORDATA, 2019). Despite the decreased nuptiality in Portugal (INE, 2013), in 2012 remarriage already represented around 27% of all marriages (Delgado & Wall, 2014; INE, 2013). A study from INE's Demographic Studies Journal (Carrilho & Patrício, 2008) stated that until 2007, remarriage represented 13% of all marriages for women and 16% of marriages for men. PORDATA information registered in 2019 an uprising number of remarriages in Portugal both for men and women. In 2019, out of all the celebrated unions, only 66.3% were first unions (INE, 2019), proving the epidemiologic validity to study those who have remarried.

Gender difference towards and facing remarriage

Ganong & Coleman (2017) stated that reasons for men and women to remarry differ significantly. Men generally remarry twice as much as women. These authors state that men

have a higher tendency to remarry when compared to women as they tend to have a narrow support network and they seem to be searching for a caregiver that supports the household duties in remarriage. It seems marriage is seen by men as more beneficial than it is for women at emotional, physical, social, and financial levels. On the other hand, women seem to be burnt by previous relationships and the expectations they lived through them, making it harder to remarry. These authors also stated that women tend to be skeptical about remarriage when they have a financial stability, not being at ease to let go of that freedom and autonomy. Furthermore, when comparing women who have children and women who that do not, the group with children tend to remarry even less than the ones who do not. Finally, it is also notable that men with guardianship of children seem to be more attractive partners and remarry more often and faster.

Remarriage and psychosocial factors

Manifestly there seems to be a gargantuan expectation and pressure from society to find an equilibrium in the following marriage associated with the disruption caused by a marital dissolution. This leads to form the perfect storm to barge into a new marriage and remarrying quickly after a first marriage and subsequent divorce – leading to a rising number of divorces in second marriages (Spanier & Furtenberg, 1987). In fact, research showed that remarriage tended to occur quickly after the event of divorce – generally in less than four years (Coleman et al., 2000; Stanley, 2010; Whitton, Nicholson & Markman, 2008).

Social science has understood the need to study the factors that would put these families in the context of remarriage at risk and those that would protect them in further detail. It is now known that families in the context of remarriage are more at risk to go through a separation when compared to families in their first marriage (Garneau et al., 2015). The available evidence indicates that the unrealistic premarital expectations of remarriage seem to be the greatest factor leading to second divorces. In fact, White and Booth (1985) specified that this matter must be studied in gradients of complexity. The authors stated that there is a higher probability of rupture or dissolution of a second union between two people that have both been in a marriage prior to the current relationship when compared to couples where only one of the two parties was previously married. Settling it into a simplistic manner, the more dissolved unions, the greater the probability of divorce.

Also worth of notice, the layers of complexity in the family structure seem to generate more stress to the marital equilibrium. Tension and misunderstandings, especially

within the scope of discipline, rules, and distribution of resources between children seem to be at the apex of the controversy. One can conclude that the existence of stepchildren is associated with a decrease in the life quality and satisfaction of the family and the relationships that constitute these families. This might ultimately set the stepfamily at a higher risk for divorce (White e Booth, 1985). The higher level of complexity within these families' dynamics can be demanding and possibly risky to the adjustment of every family member (Whiting, 2007). The matrimonial quality seems poorer when both parties of the couple have children, each from a previous relationship; these are called complex stepfamilies (Brown, Manning & Stykes, 2015). The authors further define complex stepfamilies as those having children with half-siblings, stepsiblings, or other unrelated siblings within the same household. This seems to be a poorer scenario for matrimonial quality comparing to simple stepfamilies, where only one of the parties is a parent from a previous relationship (Coleman, 2000; Ganong & Coleman, 2017; Hetherington, 1992). These aggregated families have different designations in literature, being either "blended families", "stepfamilies", or "complex families" all together. Between 2001 and 2011, the representation of these families compared to total families in Portugal went from 2,7% to 6,6% (INE, 2019).

Another risk factor relates to unadjusted beliefs transferred from previous family contexts by each person to the new family structure, which can ultimately compromise the equilibrium of the new family structure when faced with reality (Visher, Visher, & Pasley, 2003).

Also, possible emotional bonds established with a previous partner may entail a significant negative impact on the current family, to the point of making it harder to establish limits (Falke & Larson, 2007; Higginbotham & Agee, 2013).

Also putting these families at risk are existing stereotypes within traditional literature and communication regarding the conceived image/idea of stepfamilies / families in the context of remarriage. These perpetuated cultural beliefs either stigmatize stepfamilies (the wicked stepmother stereotype) or foster unrealistic expectations, like the myth of instant love (Ganong & Coleman, 1997; Leon & Angst, 2005). Print media usually gives more attention to stepfamilies' problems rather than their strengths, and films are likely to portray remarriage and stepfamilies negatively (Leon & Angst, 2005).

Regarding protective factors encountered in literature, it is worth noting the importance of a social support network in a time of crisis and conflict, both emotional and functional. Also, the capacity to establish an open and clear/unbiased communication during

situations of crisis is known to positively contribute to conflict resolution (Greeff & Du Toit, 2009).

Still regarding remarriage resilience, beliefs, and spirituality – not exclusive to religion - appear to contribute positively to resolve situations of crisis when objectives and beliefs are shared and understood towards harmony and a joint positive attitude during adversity. Another positive factor is empathy, which seems to be considered a link to keep together members of a family, independent to existing conflicts and differences (DeLongis & Zwicker, 2017; Greeff & Du Toit, 2009). Altogether, McCubbin et al. (1988) described ten resiliency factors for families under stress: family problem-solving, communication, equality, spirituality, flexibility, truthfulness, hope, family hardiness, family time and routine, social support, and health.

Curiously enough, the whole notion of remarriage seems to be protective even towards some health conditions. In a study by Noda et al. (2009) in the USA, they were able to positively and significantly associate remarriage and a reduction of risk to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, even after adjusting the results to smoking habits. Two more longitudinal studies corroborate this relationship to health, suggesting the risk of global mortality in widows decreases after remarrying (Burks et al, 1988; Joung et al, 1998).

The present study aimed to discuss the relationship between an individual's set of beliefs (RBMI) and their marital adjustment, as well as their partner's (RDAS), within the context of remarriage. This is a relevant investigation due to several reasons. Firstly, remarriage is a rising phenomenon in Portugal, considering that in 2019 only 66.3% of the celebrated unions were first unions (INE, 2019). Secondly, it has been previously stated that remarried families are at greater risk to face psychosocial struggles (Garneau et al., 2015). Thirdly, and as previously mentioned, the existing research is mainly oriented towards parenting, leaving a significant gap in terms of specific factors that influence dyadic adjustment in couples in the context of remarriage. Brief research shows less than a thousand publications over the past two years when using the key words “remarital adjustment”, and most studies seem to be oriented either towards the adjustment to divorce and how it may or may not impact subsequent unions, or towards other specific populations (e.i.: LGBTQ+), rather than studying couples' beliefs within the context of remarriage and how they adjust to that same context. Regarding past literature, the emphasis of empirical research on remarriages has been on behaviors (Halford et al., 2007), on individuals (Stanley et al., 2002), or has examined couples in a separate fashion between husbands and wives

(Bouchard, 2006), while research on associations between partners' cognitions within remarriage is widely lacking (Garneau et al., 2015).

Finally, the individual endorsement of remarriage beliefs is more predictive of cohesion and consensus than is consistency of endorsement between husband and wife (Higginbotham & Agee, 2013), which stresses this study's relevance and contribution to the pertaining field of expertise using a dyadic approach. Both men's and women's beliefs towards remarriage may influence differently their own and their partner's outcomes, so this study examines the global patterns of both actor and partner effects within couples. This is truly important as there is so little research focusing on dyadic effects. In fact, there is room for discussion, and authors in literature are not all convinced on how the relationship between remarriage and beliefs work in terms of adjustment. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) suggest that compatible and consistent remarital beliefs among both partners are crucial for a thriving remarriage, in the sense that there is less difficulties in their marital adjustment. This would mainly be because both partners would share the same expectations and beliefs regarding remarriage and family functioning. However, Papernow (1987) writes on the difficulties remarried couples could face when entering a remarriage – so adjustment if we may say - tackling their beliefs by saying:

“Remarried couples are impacted by the particular wishes and yearnings generated by their unique history: the wish that members of the new family will love each other in the way that members of biological families do; the conviction that this new spouse will be a better mother or father to these children than the ex-spouse; the wish that the new family will heal the hurts of the previous divorce or death; the fantasy that the couple's caring for each other will be experienced between stepparents and their stepchildren (p. 632)”.

Coleman et al. (2000), for instance, claim that most beliefs about remarriage are related to some aspects of stepparenting, which makes complete sense since children are assumed to be the most salient potential stressor in stepfamilies, frequently highlighted by media and popular literature through specific stereotypes (i.e., wicked stepmothers). Nevertheless, the clinical literature also stresses that there are other areas within remarriage beliefs, which tend to coalesce around the interactions with past partners, characteristics of the new partner, rate of adjustment, comparisons with traditional family structures, finances, and priorities (Higginbotham & Adler-Baeder, 2005).

We drafted four hypotheses:

(a) Women's beliefs negatively influence their marital adjustment within remarriage;

- (b) Men's beliefs negatively influence their marital adjustment within the context of remarriage;
- (c) Women's beliefs will influence men's marital adjustment;
- (d) Men's beliefs will influence women's marital adjustment.

Method

Participants

Data were analyzed from 741 remarried participants who responded to all items of the online questionnaire: 615 women (82,4%) and 131 men (17,6%). Upon validating inclusion criterion: being in a heterosexual relationship over a period of at least six months with at least one of the two elements in the pair being in a situation of remarriage an initial draft of 99 couples was considered. However, three remarried couples were then excluded as they presented several missing values on the main variables being tested and could be a bias the results. Therefore, the final sample for this study comprised 192 participants, deployed in the form of 96 heterosexual remarried couples.

Procedure

The data for the present study was collected between February 2019 and April 2020 through online social platforms like Facebook (@recasamentonovasfamilias) and Instagram (@novasfamilias_novosdesafios) and through the project website (<https://www.fpce.up.pt/recasamento/>). A partnership was also established with the *Instituto de Registos e Notariado, I. P.*, which made it possible to send informative pamphlets to all Portuguese Civil Registry Offices. Promulgation of these platforms was possible through partnerships with the University of Porto resources as well as the collective word of mouth disabled by social media and the academic community in general. An e-mail of the respondent as well as the e-mail of their partners was requested to duly inform the pairs of the proceedings.

Ethical Consideration

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences University of Porto approved this study.

Instruments

Sociodemographic Questionnaire

The sociodemographic questionnaire included the following variables: gender; date of birth; academic qualifications for both the respondent and its pair, cohabitation length; previous union type prior to the current remarriage situation and time passed since its dissolution; number of relationships in which a cohabitation occurred; economic standing and satisfaction, and finally the current family typology including the presence of children from each or both parties.

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby, Christensen, Crane & Larson, 1995; Portuguese version Pereira, Moura-Ramos, Narciso & Canavarro, 2017) is composed of 14 items and three dimensions: consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. Participants report their agreement on a 6-point Likert-type scale (0 = “always agree”; 6 = “always disagree”), with higher scores representing higher marital adjustment. In the current study, we used the total scale score. The internal consistency for this scale’s total score was of .90 on its original version and .82 for the Portuguese version. The internal consistency of the present study was .78 for women and .72 for men.

The Remarriage Belief Inventory (RMBI)

The Remarriage Belief Inventory (RMBI; Higginbotham & Adler-Baeder, 2005; Portuguese version Santos, Higginbotham, Costa & Martins, 2021) is constituted of 22 items and 7 dimensions associated with remarriage (adjustment, finances, priority, partner, success, stepfamily and past). The questionnaire is to be filled using a Likert scale of 5 values (1 = “I believe it is not totally true”; 5 = “I believe it is totally true”). Higher scores indicate stronger remarital beliefs. The internal consistency of the scale in original version was .84 and in Portuguese version was .88. In the present study, we used the total score, and internal consistency indexes were .71. for women and .74 for men.

Statistical Analysis

The present study was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 27.0 for Windows and the Software AMOS (Analysis of Moments

Structure) version 28.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistical analyses (relative and absolute frequencies, means and standard deviation) were used to describe sample characteristics, and normality was tested (skewness and kurtosis). We further tested internal consistency of the used scales with Cronbach's alfa, and association between constructs with a correlation analysis (P Cohen).

To study how stepcouples' remarriage beliefs are associated with their own and their partner's marital adjustment, an Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) was performed. Several path analyses were thereafter conducted in AMOS to inquire about the data at hand and provide guidance to the better model to utilize, namely by calculating fit measures Chi-square Test (CMIN), GCI, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). All statistical tests were two-sided and a $(p) \leq .05$ was considered statistically significant. Cutoffs for our APIM model were: $CMIN/DF < 5.0$ e $(p) > .05$; GCI and CFI $> .90$; and RMSEA $< .08$.

The level of significance to reject the formulated hypotheses was set at $(p) \leq .05$.

Results

Descriptive Results of the Female and Male Dyads

Sociodemographic characteristics of the study sample are detailed on tables 1 and 2. On average, these remarried couples have been together for 5.6 years. A t-test was conducted on the sample to depict if there were significant differences between couples based on remarriage duration (up to 3 years, 3 years or more), and results indicate that there are significantly more couples together for at least three years in our sample ($p < .001$, 95% CI [0.33, 0.53]). The female participants' age in this sample varied from 25 to 70 years-old ($M = 42$), while men's age ranged from 25 to 69 years-old (average 45 years-old). Of both female and male participants, the vast majority was employed at the time of the study (91.7% and 95.8%, respectively), and most had completed a higher educational degree - 77.1% and 53.1%, respectively. Out of the all the participants, 32 couples decided to move to a new home with their respective partners, 7 couples were not living under the same roof at the time of data collection, and the remainder had one member of the couple moving to their partner's house.

Looking further into the data, we can split the couples in two main categories, the ones that have not conceived within remarriage (63.54%) and the ones who have. However, out of the 61 couples that did not conceive within remarriage, 13 did not have children prior to remarrying as well, 27 couples were simple stepfamilies with women having children prior to remarriage, 14 were simple stepfamilies with men having children prior to remarriage, and 7 were stepfamilies with both members of the couple having children from previous relationships. On the other side, a total of 35 couples (36.46%) had conceived within the context of remarriage. However, out of these 35 couples, 11 did not have children before, 11 couples were simple stepfamilies with women having children prior to remarriage, 11 were simple stepfamilies with men having children prior to remarriage, and 2 couples represented complex stepfamilies. A t-test was conducted on the sample to depict if there were significant differences between couples based on the presence of children from previous relationships, and results indicate that there are significantly more couples with children from prior relationships remarrying on our sample than couples with no children prior to remarriage ($p < .001$, 95% CI [0.39, 0.59]).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for sociodemographic characteristics of the female and male dyads

	Women	Men
Age (years) M ± SD	42.24 ± 7.90	45.33 ± 7.93
Education n (%)		
Secondary education	22 (22.9)	45 (46.9)
Higher degree	74 (77.1)	51 (53.1)
Employment n (%)		
Unemployed	5 (5.2)	0 (0)
Employed	88 (91.7)	92 (95.8)
Retired	2 (2.1)	4 (4.2)
Student	1 (1.0)	0 (0)
Economic status satisfaction (range, 1-5) n (%)		
Very satisfied or satisfied	40 (41.7)	48 (50)
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	20 (20.8)	26 (27.1)
Unsatisfied or very unsatisfied	35 (36.5)	22 (22.9)
Does not know	1 (1.0)	0 (0)

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for sociodemographic characteristics intrinsic to couples in the study

	n (%)	M ± SD	Test Statistic	p
Length of remarriage (years)		5.61 ± 4.44	t = 8.415	< 0.001
<3 years	28 (29.2)			
≥3 years	68 (70.8)			
Current housing situation				
Moved to the partner's house	57 (59.4)			
Female	26 (45.6)			
Male	31 (54.4)			
Acquired common house	32 (33.3)			
Separate houses	7 (7.3)			
Children			t = 9.546	< 0.001
Children from current relationship	35 (36.5)			
No prior children	11 (31.4)			
Prior children from female	11 (31.4)			
Prior children from male	11 (31.4)			
Prior children from both	2 (5.8)			
Not conceived since remarriage	61 (63.5)			
No prior children	13 (21.3)			
Prior children from female	27 (44.3)			
Prior children from male	14 (22.9)			
Prior children from both	7 (11.5)			

Descriptive Results for the RBMI (Remarital Beliefs) and RDAS (Marital Adjustment) Scales

Concerning marital adjustment (RDAS) and remarital beliefs (RBMI), a normal distribution was found in both scores (table 3). A compound score of the dyadic adjustment was computed for both women (RDAS Total Female) and men (RDAS Total Male). Another compound score was created for both women (RBMI Total Female) and men (RBMI Total Male) for the belief's system scales. Our results demonstrated a tendency towards higher scores within males in both remarital beliefs and marital adjustment, although these differences were not significant (table 3). A t-test was performed to compare men and women regarding their marital adjustment, only to uncover there is no significant difference between men and women in that regard ($p = 0.743$). Another t-test was performed to verify if there was a significant difference between the belief marital adjustment of men and

women, and it was found that there are statistically different. In fact, women seem to have less beliefs about remarriage than men ($p < .001$, 95% CI [1.25, 1.45]).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for marital adjustment (RDAS) and remarital beliefs (RMBI)

	Women	Men
RDAS		
M ± SD	2.85 ± 0.82	2.98 ± 0.76
Alpha	.78	.52
Asymmetry	0.62	0.21
Kurtosis	-0.41	-0.61
RMBI		
M ± SD	2.81 ± 0.45	2.90 ± 0.48
Alpha	.71	.74
Asymmetry	-0.48	0.11
Kurtosis	-0.20	0.45

As shown in table 4 there was a highly significant negative correlation ($r = -0.269$, $p < .001$) between women’s marital adjustments and their remarital beliefs. This means that a higher marital adjustment will signify a lower remarital belief score. In other words, it seems that the more beliefs females have about remarriage, the poorer their adjustment will be.

Also, based on the correlation analysis, women’s marital adjustment is significantly correlated to men’s marital adjustment ($r = .515$, $p < .001$). This positive correlation indicated that a higher marital adjustment for women will be correlated with a higher marital adjustment for men as well. We find that there is a highly significant correlation between the remarital beliefs of women and men ($r = .322$, $p < .001$), meaning high scores in women will be an indication of high scores for men. Finally, there is a statistically significant correlation between women’s marital beliefs and men’s marital adjustment ($r = -.244$, $p < .05$) prompting those higher scores in women’s remarital beliefs will indicate lower scores in men’s marital adjustment.

Table 4. Pearson correlation matrix of all variables included in the structural equation models.

	1	2	3	4
1 Marital Adjustment		-.269**	.615**	-.064
2 Remarital Beliefs	-.269**		-.244*	.322**
3 Marital Adjustment	.615**	-.244		.003
4 Remarital Beliefs	-.064	.322**	.003	

Note. The results for the female sample ($n = 96$) are shown above the diagonal and in bold. The results for male sample ($n = 96$) are shown below the diagonal.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Dyadic effects of remarital beliefs on marital adjustment

The present study was conducted using the APIM – saturated model. Restrained models were tested but the results did not refine the analysis as we could have anticipated. Retrieved values of the first model were CMIN/DF = 9.289; GFI = .957; CFI = .859 and RMSEA = .295, but the model fit is not ideal. In other words, because the presented scores were not within cutoffs, the relationships between our variables may not truly depict the phenomenon. However, it is important to establish that we have found cross partner effects to be significant.

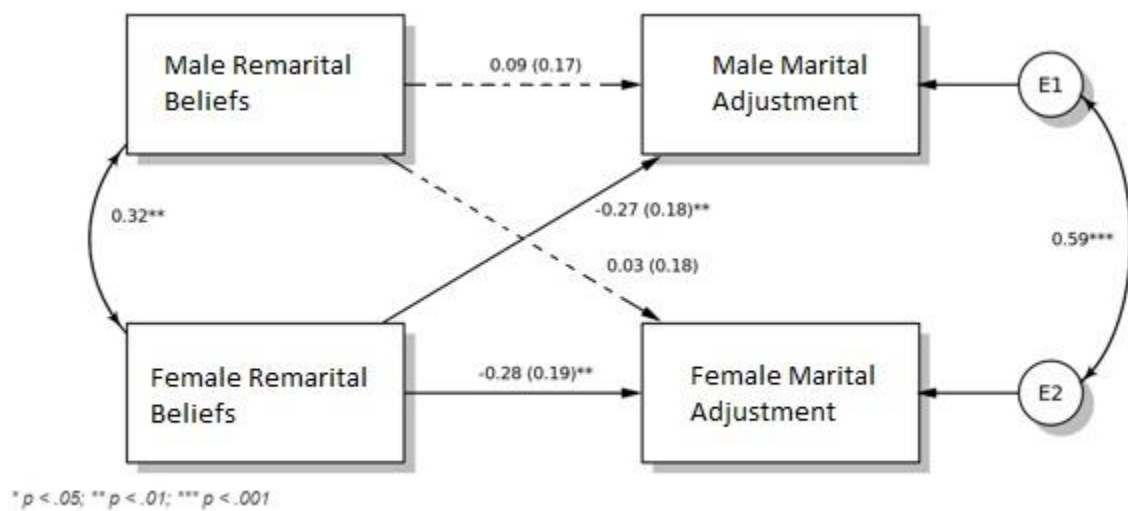


Figure 1. APIM for Remarital Beliefs (M/ F) associations with Marital Adjustment (F/ M) – standardized

First of all, we concluded that the participants of this study can be statistically distinguished based on the variable Gender (chi square 12.795, $p = .046$).

The partial intraclass correlation for total marital adjustment when corrected for other predictor variables is statistically significant (0.589, $p < .001$), meaning that when one member of the dyad scored highly, the other member also tended to report a high score.

Although the intercept (predicted marital adjustment score when the variables of remarriage beliefs equal zero) is statistically significant for both women (4.138, $p < .001$) and men (3.849, $p < .001$), the difference between these intercepts is not significant (0.290, $p = .593$), meaning there is no main effect of gender regarding marital adjustment and remarriage beliefs.

With the actor effect for women being statistically significant ($-0.507, p = .007$) and for men not being significant ($0.146, p = .380$), these effects were found to be significantly different ($.112, p = .018$). The overall actor effect is equal to -0.180 and is not statistically significant ($p = .112, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.4, 0.04]$).

While the men to women partner effect was not significant ($0.044, p = .804$), the women to men partner effect was statistically significant ($-0.461, p = .009$). Despite these results, the difference between these two partner effects was found not to be statistically significant ($-0.208, p = .065$).

Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, there were no studies applying the APIM approach to evaluate the impact of actor and partner remarital beliefs on their marital adjustment in couples who are remarried. In fact, most studies regarding remarriage focused primarily on parenting or on the remarried family as it relates to a previous partner when he or she is a parent of a child being raised by the remarried family. These studies do not tackle the couple itself and how it shall adjust to the new reality to be faced. Visher & Visher (1979) present marital adjustment as one of the two most important factors to remarriage success, and despite these findings, almost 50 years later we are still lacking studies on this regard. The purpose of this study is to examine how the belief system of a remarried couple regarding remarriage impacts their marital adjustment as well as their partners.

As anticipated, women's beliefs are at the apex of our study, as we find that their beliefs significantly affect their adjustment in marriage. The findings are congruent with literature at hand. In fact, the more beliefs women have about remarriage, and on how remarriage should be, the poorer their adjustment will be, especially if those beliefs/expectations are not part of their reality as a couple/family. One of the first studies to focus on remarriage beliefs in fact (Kurdek and Fine (1991), it is proved that women's remarriage beliefs were negatively correlated with marital, personal, family, and parental life satisfaction. In 1994, these authors further supported this finding and defended that unrealistic expectation, incompatible beliefs, and unattainable standards do lead to maladaptive assumptions, ultimately resulting in adjustment difficulties. In our study, high correlations were indeed found in table 4. Also consistent with previous studies (Baucom and Epstein's, 1990; Higginbotham and Agee, 2013), we found the partner effect of women's beliefs on men's marital adjustment to be significant. For instance, our results demonstrated that 36.5% of women are unsatisfied with their economic status/financial situation and that they strongly believe that finances should be pooled ($M = 3.20$). According to Higginbotham and Agee (2013), finances are related to the women's belief that registered higher cohesion scores in their study, contrarily to what was observed for men (lower cohesion scores). They also claim that some specific factors of the RMBI are significantly predictive of cohesion in remarriage for women, either positively or negatively affecting the couple's cohesion. Therefore, some factors of the RMBI (for example regarding that "children are a priority", that "adjustment should come quickly", and that "success is slim") are negatively related with cohesion scores. In fact, we have a more significant pool of couples at hand with

children from previous relationships. This could explain the influence in the data we collected. These could entail that these factors tend to negatively impact women's marriage cohesion, but that it could be affecting their partners as well, therefore negatively impacting men's marital adjustment. As it is pointed out by Higginbotham and Agee (2013), "individual endorsement of remarriage beliefs significantly predicted cohesion scores for women ($F = 3.189, p = .003$)" (p. 183). Combining our findings with Higginbotham and Agee's (2013), it is possible to conclude that while this factor/belief is not deeply rooted in men, it is for women, negatively affecting their marital adjustment (a), which indirectly, and negatively, affects men in their adjustment (c). This means that notoriously, women's beliefs towards remarriage play a huge part in marital adjustment in the context of remarriage

On the other hand, men's beliefs do not have an actor effect (b) nor a partner effect (d). Despite our highly significant correlation in table 4, our model in figure 1 showed no influence whatsoever. Kurdek and Fine (1991) findings were that men endorsed the myths/beliefs of remarriage more strongly when compared to women. This suggested that men's belief toward remarriage would significantly impact their marital adjustment. Again, our findings are not consistent with Kurdek and Fine. On the contrary, it seems the lack of impact may be countered by the influence women's beliefs affect, shadowing men. When this finding is pooled to the cohesion scores found by Higginbotham and Agee (2013), it clearly suggests that even though men might have strong remarital beliefs, they do not negatively impact their marital adjustment (b). This is congruent with Baucom and Epstein's (1990), in the sense that if both partners have different or incompatible standards, expectations or beliefs regarding their remarriage, marital problems may arise, ultimately leading to lower levels of marital adjustment (c, d). Our finding on men's actor effect contradicts Herzberg (2013) as the latter states men's beliefs impact their marital satisfaction and ultimately their adjustment. Herzberg focuses on the contribution of coping mechanisms, and that may be that men in our study seem to be more satisfied at large when compared to women and therefore more eager to cope with problematics that may surface within the context of remarriage.

There is insufficient research done to help us explain the lack of partner effect from men's to women's beliefs ($0.044, p = .804$). This corroborates our initial statement that there are not enough dyadic studies conducted on this field. Larger research on belief systems in remarried families (Albrecht, 1979; Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Leslie & Epstein, 1988, cited in Higginbotham & Adler-Baeder, 2008; Visher, Visher & Pasley, 2003, cited in Higginbotham & Adler-Baeder, 2008), where remarriage is so poorly represented (affecting

beliefs) would inevitably corroborate that there would find at least an actor effect for men. It may be that men are so focused on the positive (protective) factors of the new relationship; they would overcome any effect their beliefs would trigger. However, and again, we cannot corroborate this finding with data from literature as we believe we may be pioneering it.

The current study has several limitations that should be mentioned. First, the lack of similar comprehensive literature on this matter does not allow us to compare and further foster a discussion of our findings. Second, our sample lacks complex families, which are the form of remarital family with the most complicated layers and therefore the most insight on the problems facing couples that seek marital adjustment. Third, as the data collection all conducted online, we are not able to fully prove the data-entry veracity. Fourth, as the model fit is not ideal this may not be the best model to depict de phenomena.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, it is our belief that our study provides a contribution to better understanding remarried couples, and ultimate attempt to help clinicians in their daily practice (Coleman & Ganong, 1985; Higginbotham & Agee, 2013; Kurdek & Fine, 1991). It is however undeniable that more needs to be done in this field to foster a more comprehensive understanding of marital adjustment within remarriage. In fact, more longitudinal studies are to be conducted in order to fully grasp this phenomenon.

Our findings are important for both marriage and family therapists since they provide crucial insights regarding beliefs and unrealistic expectations by women, ultimately affecting their remarital adjustment, and as we saw their partners. These findings could be important to consider when developing prevention and intervention strategies for these couples and families. It is our belief that therapists should discuss these beliefs with both partners (women and men), aiming to deconstruct the existing remarital beliefs that significantly affect the couple's relationship and their remarital adjustment, as well as to establish more functional and realistic standards of thinking and expectations. Professionals can also focus on assessing women's beliefs towards remarital adjustment, which are the basis of the family dynamics, and could try to overcome some negative beliefs that might be negatively impacting the entire family, including the partners. It is known that marital satisfaction differs from men and women, which ultimately implies that during therapy sessions these discrepant perspectives should be taken into consideration.

The important conclusion in this sense is that remarried couples are a growing phenomenon which mean that clinicians must be well-equipped to try to establish a direct and honest communication between both partners, aiming for the two to deal with their differences in a constructive manner (Driver et al., 2003; Gottman, 1999).

Moreover, our findings are also a great contribution to the field, considering the fact that even though some of the existing clinical literature does provide examples of unique remarriage beliefs, this research is basically trying to fill the gap within the pertaining literature, directly related to the assumption that both the direction and the mechanism of the relationship with remarital quality are still empirical questions, with few studies being developed in order to answer to those questions.

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