

Structural Modeling of Factors Affecting Women's Psychological Empowerment After Divorce Using ISM and MICMAC

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Abstract

Women's psychological empowerment after divorce is a complex and dynamic process shaped by multiple interrelated psychological, social, and structural factors, yet existing research has largely examined these influences in isolation. This study aims to identify the key factors influencing women's psychological empowerment after divorce and to examine how these factors are structurally interrelated within a hierarchical system using an integrated Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) and MICMAC approach. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the hierarchical relationships among empowerment-related factors and to classify these factors as primary drivers, linkage mechanisms, or dependent outcomes based on their driving and dependence power. A qualitative structural modeling design was employed, in which fifteen factors were identified through a systematic literature review and subsequently validated by an expert panel comprising professionals in counseling, social work, and family-related disciplines. Expert judgments were elicited using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) to construct the Structural Self-Interaction Matrix, followed by reachability analysis, level partitioning, and the development of an ISM-based hierarchical digraph. The findings reveal a multi-layered empowerment system in which coping strategies, social support, self-compassion, passage of time, financial empowerment, and education and employment emerge as dominant driving factors that initiate and sustain empowerment processes. Several psychosocial and contextual variables function as linkage mechanisms, mediating reciprocal influences across the system, while outcome-oriented factors such as attachment-related adjustment, assertiveness, and social isolation are largely dependent on upstream conditions. Overall, this study advances a systems-based understanding of women's psychological empowerment after divorce and offers critical insights for designing integrated counseling interventions, social support programs, and policy initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable empowerment outcomes.

Keyword: Women's Psychological, Divorce, Family, Empowerments, MIMAC

Introduction

Divorce represents a profound life transition that often disrupts women's psychological, social, and economic stability, particularly within sociocultural contexts where marital status remains closely tied to identity, security, and social acceptance (Maimun, 2022). Beyond the legal dissolution of marriage, divorce frequently triggers emotional distress, diminished self-worth, financial vulnerability, and role strain, especially for women who must renegotiate caregiving responsibilities, economic independence, and social belonging simultaneously (Castles & Flood, 1991). While divorce can also serve as a pathway to autonomy and personal growth, the extent to which women are able to experience psychological empowerment following divorce is neither automatic nor uniform (Fine & Harvey, 2013; Mortelmans et al., 2025). Instead, empowerment emerges through complex interactions between personal capacities, social structures, institutional support, and cultural norms. Understanding these dynamics is essential, as psychological empowerment is closely linked to women's mental well-being, adaptive coping, decision-making autonomy, and long-term life satisfaction after marital dissolution.

Women's psychological empowerment after divorce is shaped by a constellation of interrelated factors that operate across individual, relational, and systemic levels (Alghazali et al., 2022; Baqutayan, 2024). Internally, factors such as self-efficacy, emotional regulation, resilience, and meaning-making play a critical role in determining whether women perceive divorce as a debilitating loss or a transformative turning point. However, individual strengths alone are insufficient when structural constraints persist (Jalil, 2025; Zekolli Shaqiri & Zuberi, 2019). Limited access to economic resources, legal knowledge, social support, and professional counseling can significantly undermine women's sense of control and agency during the post-divorce period (Vannoy, 2000; Zekolli Shaqiri & Zuberi, 2019). Cultural expectations that stigmatize divorced women further intensify feelings of shame, isolation, and powerlessness, particularly in collectivist societies where family reputation and marital permanence are highly valued. These challenges are often compounded when institutional systems operate in silos, offering fragmented or inconsistent support that fails to address women's psychological needs holistically. As a result, empowerment becomes contingent not only on personal coping but also on the availability, quality, and coordination of external support systems.

Critically, existing discourse on women and divorce tends to emphasize outcomes rather than processes, often treating psychological empowerment as an end state rather than a dynamic, evolving construct (Saidi et al., 2025). This limits a deeper understanding of how different factors interact to either facilitate or hinder empowerment over time. A more nuanced examination is required to uncover the underlying structural relationships among these factors, particularly in contexts where legal frameworks, social services, and cultural values intersect in complex ways. By focusing on the factors affecting women's psychological empowerment after divorce, this study foregrounds the need to move beyond individualistic explanations and toward a systemic perspective that acknowledges power relations, institutional readiness, and social conditioning. Such an approach is crucial for informing more responsive counseling interventions, policy frameworks, and support mechanisms that do not

merely mitigate distress but actively enhance women's agency, voice, and psychological strength in the aftermath of divorce.

Given these complexities, this study is both timely and necessary, particularly in addressing the growing need for evidence-based, contextually grounded interventions that can effectively support divorced women in rebuilding their psychological well-being. By systematically examining the factors that influence women's psychological empowerment after divorce, this study aims to generate practical insights that are directly applicable to counseling practice, social service provision, and policy development. The findings are expected to benefit multiple stakeholders, including counselors, mental health practitioners, family institutions, and policymakers, by offering a clearer understanding of how to design more holistic, culturally sensitive, and integrated support systems. Moreover, this study contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of post-divorce interventions by identifying not only what factors matter, but how they interact to facilitate sustainable empowerment. Ultimately, this research underscores the utility of adopting a multidimensional approach in empowering divorced women, ensuring that support mechanisms move beyond short-term relief toward fostering long-term resilience, autonomy, and psychological growth.

Literature Review

The psychological empowerment of women following divorce is shaped by a complex interplay of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and temporal factors, most notably coping strategies, social support, self-compassion, and the passage of time (Prasanthi et al., 2023; Rajak & Yeasmin, 2025; X & Venus Joseph, 2013). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that women who have experienced domestic violence during marriage and in the post-divorce period often develop stronger coping strategies and a heightened sense of empowerment throughout the divorce process (Nassoba & Samanik, 2022; Suhariyati & Rahmawati, 2025). This empowerment frequently emerges from the necessity to seek external assistance, navigate legal and social systems, and articulate their experiences, which collectively foster resilience, self-efficacy, and psychological agency (Barad & Upadhiya, 2020; Lee-Rife, 2010). Nevertheless, the persistence of partner violence after divorce remains a critical risk factor, continuing to undermine psychological well-being and complicating recovery trajectories. These findings highlight the dual nature of adversity, whereby exposure to prolonged stress may catalyze empowerment for some women while simultaneously posing ongoing threats to mental health.

The passage of time plays a pivotal role in shaping post-divorce psychological adjustment. Longitudinal evidence indicates that divorced women generally experience improvements in mental health as time progresses, reflecting gradual emotional stabilization and adaptation to post-divorce realities (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2014). Younger women tend to report lower levels of emotional and psychological strain compared to older women, potentially due to greater flexibility in role transitions and access to broader social opportunities (S et al., 2020). Over time, the acute distress commonly observed immediately after divorce diminishes as women reconstruct daily routines, expand social networks, and regain a sense of normalcy and control. However, while psychological distress may decline, some studies suggest that long-term physical health challenges can emerge, particularly among midlife women, as a result of cumulative stressors associated with divorce, caregiving responsibilities, and socioeconomic pressures (Ariplackal & George, 2015; Mandemakers et

al., 2010; Storksen et al., 2007). This underscores the importance of viewing time not merely as a healing factor, but as a dynamic process with both protective and risk-related implications.

Social support consistently emerges as a critical determinant of psychological empowerment among divorced women (Avvyat Anantya & Mirna Nur Alia Abdullah, 2024; Hughes, 1988). Strong support networks comprising family members, friends, and community resources serve as protective buffers against emotional distress by providing validation, instrumental assistance, and a sense of belonging (Gray et al., 2011; Lestari, 2024). Women who report higher levels of social support tend to experience reduced guilt, greater optimism, and improved self-esteem following divorce (Fachrina & Maihasni, 2025). In contrast, inadequate social support is associated with heightened loneliness, emotional unhappiness, and diminished self-worth, which may hinder empowerment and prolong adjustment difficulties. Complementing this, self-compassion has been identified as a key internal resource that facilitates adaptive coping during divorce (Handajani & Gunadi, 2020). Higher levels of self-compassion are linked to better divorce adjustment, particularly among women with insecure attachment styles, as it reduces self-criticism, grief, and self-directed anger while enhancing emotional regulation and self-acceptance (Ardehshirzadeh et al., 2021; Çaksen, 2022). Together, these findings suggest that psychological empowerment after divorce is best understood as a multifaceted process, requiring both external social resources and internal psychological capacities. Consequently, interventions aimed at supporting divorced women should adopt a holistic approach that strengthens coping skills, fosters self-compassion, and promotes sustainable social support systems.

Based on this study, two research questions are proposed to guide a systematic and in-depth examination of women's psychological empowerment after divorce.

- i. What are the key factors influencing women's psychological empowerment after divorce, and how are these factors structurally interrelated within a hierarchical system?
- ii. Which factors function as primary drivers, linkage mechanisms, and dependent outcomes in shaping women's psychological empowerment after divorce based on ISM and MICMAC analyses?

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative structural modeling approach using Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) integrated with MICMAC analysis to examine the interrelationships among factors influencing women's psychological empowerment after divorce. Given the multidimensional and interdependent nature of psychological empowerment in the post-divorce context, ISM is employed to systematically structure complex relationships that cannot be adequately captured through linear analytical methods. Expert judgment is incorporated to ensure contextual relevance and theoretical coherence in modeling the empowerment process. Factors influencing women's psychological empowerment after divorce are identified through a structured literature synthesis and validated via a five expert panel comprising professionals in counseling, psychology, family studies, and women's support services. The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is used to facilitate structured discussion and consensus-building (Thakkar, 2021). A Structural Self-Interaction Matrix (SSIM) is then developed through pairwise comparisons of factors, with

experts determining the direction and nature of relationships using standardized symbols (Shalamzari & Dodangeh, 2023). The SSIM is subsequently transformed into a Reachability Matrix (RM) through established binary conversion rules, enabling the identification of direct and transitive relationships (Attri et al., 2013; Shalamzari & Dodangeh, 2023). The RM is subjected to a level partitioning process to establish a hierarchical structure of influencing factors. Based on the final RM, a directed graph is constructed and converted into an ISM-based hierarchical model representing the multilevel interdependencies among factors. To further enhance interpretability, MICMAC analysis is applied to classify factors according to their driving and dependence power, identifying key drivers, linkage factors, and dependent outcomes (Dube & Gawande, 2016). The combined ISM and MICMAC approach provides a rigorous and systematic framework for understanding the structural dynamics of women's psychological empowerment after divorce and offers actionable insights for counseling practice, institutional support, and policy development.

Sample

The expert sample comprised five professionals with diverse yet complementary academic qualifications and areas of specialization, ensuring both theoretical rigor and practical relevance to the study. The panel included two Ph.D. holders in Counseling with extensive experience in marriage and family counseling as well as psychological counseling, contributing advanced clinical and theoretical perspectives on post-divorce adjustment and empowerment. In addition, three experts with Master's qualifications in Syariah and Social Work brought critical insights into Islamic family law, family empowerment, women's and gender issues, and community-based support, thereby strengthening the cultural and contextual validity of the analysis. With professional experience ranging from five to twelve years, the experts collectively provided well-informed judgments grounded in sustained practice, policy exposure, and direct engagement with women affected by divorce, making the sample appropriate and methodologically robust for ISM and MICMAC analysis.

Table 1

Expert Qualification

No.	Qualification	Field	Area of Expertise
1.	Ph.D.	Counseling	Marriage and Family Counseling
2.	Ph.D.	Counseling	Psychology Counseling
3.	Master	Syariah	Islamic Law and Family Empowerment
4.	Master	Social Work	Women and Gender
5.	Master	Social Work	Women and Community

Data Analysis

For the first step, the researcher interviewed experts and reviewed some literature to determine the elements or steps that can be taken to implement factors affecting women's psychological empowerment after divorce. Based on table 2, explain about the element and key action for these studies.

Table 2

Elements Factors Affecting Women's Psychological Empowerment After Divorce

No.	Element	Key Action
1.	Coping Strategies	Effective coping strategies enable women to cognitively reframe divorce-related stressors, regulate emotional responses, and regain a sense of control over life circumstances. Adaptive coping (e.g., problem-solving, emotional regulation) strengthens psychological agency, while maladaptive coping may hinder empowerment (Kelebek-Küçükarslan & Cankurtaran, 2022).
2.	Passage of Time	Time functions as a natural moderator that allows emotional distress to stabilize and self-concept to reorganize. As acute stress diminishes, women often gain clarity, acceptance, and psychological distance from the marital breakdown, facilitating empowerment through recovery and adaptation (Sharma, 2011).
3.	Social Support	Social networks provide emotional validation, instrumental assistance, and social belonging, which buffer psychological distress. Supportive relationships reinforce self-worth and reduce isolation, creating external conditions that foster empowerment rather than dependency (Yarinasab & Shams, 2021).
4.	Self-Compassion	Self-compassion promotes emotional resilience by reducing self-criticism and shame often associated with divorce. It enables women to view their experiences with kindness and balance, supporting psychological healing and strengthening internal empowerment resources (Davarinejad et al., 2022, Karthika & Joseph, 2022).
5.	Attachment Styles	Secure attachment facilitates emotional regulation and adaptive help-seeking behaviors, while lower attachment anxiety and avoidance reduce maladaptive dependency or withdrawal. Secure attachment supports healthier post-divorce adjustment and autonomy (Davarinejad et al., 2022).
6.	Personality Traits	Traits such as emotional stability enhance stress tolerance, extraversion supports social reintegration, and conscientiousness promotes goal-directed behavior. Together, these traits shape women's capacity to adapt, plan, and rebuild empowered post-divorce lives (Ghasemi et al., 2023).
7.	Financial Empowerment	Economic independence enhances decision-making autonomy and reduces vulnerability to prolonged psychological distress. Financial literacy and stable income increase perceived control, directly strengthening empowerment and long-term well-being (Davarinejad et al., 2022, Maiti, 2024)
8.	Legal Support	Access to responsive legal systems and rights-based reforms reduces power imbalances during divorce proceedings. Legal empowerment ensures women's voices are heard, reinforcing autonomy and protecting psychological integrity throughout the process (Hanan Rizq, 2025)
9.	Cultural Context	Cultural norms shape stigma, role expectations, and acceptable coping behaviors. Supportive cultural environments facilitate empowerment, while restrictive norms may reinforce shame, silence, and psychological disempowerment (Davarinejad et al., 2022, Ghasemi et al., 2023, Hanan Rizq, 2025)
10.	Family Support	Emotional and instrumental support from family members mitigates stress and reinforces security. Positive family involvement strengthens resilience and empowers women by providing stability during post-divorce transitions (Mishra et al., 2021, Malik et al., 2024)
11.	Education and Employment	Education enhances problem-solving capacity and self-efficacy, while employment provides financial security and social identity. Together, they form structural foundations that enable sustained psychological empowerment (Lamela & Figueiredo, 2023)
12.	Personality Development	Growth in autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance reflects post-divorce psychological transformation. These dimensions support empowerment by fostering purpose, competence, and life satisfaction beyond marital identity (Lamela & Figueiredo, 2023)

13.	Mental Health Interventions	Counseling and therapeutic interventions address trauma, anxiety, and depression, facilitating emotional regulation and adaptive meaning-making. Professional support accelerates empowerment by strengthening coping capacity and psychological insight (Hajiheydari et al., 2025)
14.	Assertiveness	Assertive behavior enables women to establish boundaries, communicate needs, and resist coercive dynamics. This is particularly critical for women with histories of spousal violence, where empowerment involves reclaiming personal agency (Mataji Amirroud et al., 2024)
15.	Social Isolation	Reduced isolation through community engagement enhances emotional support and social integration. Lower loneliness levels contribute to psychological stability, reinforcing empowerment through connectedness and social participation (Odis, 2021)

Finding from step 2

The Structural Self-Interaction Matrix (SSIM) presents expert-based judgments on the directional relationships among fifteen factors influencing women’s psychological empowerment after divorce, where “V” indicates that the row variable influences the column variable, “A” indicates the reverse influence, and “O” denotes no direct relationship. The matrix shows that psychosocial and capability-related factors such as coping strategies, social support, self-compassion, personality traits, financial empowerment, and education and employment predominantly function as driving factors, exerting influence across multiple empowerment dimensions. In contrast, attachment styles and legal support appear more frequently as influenced variables, suggesting that improvements in these areas tend to emerge from strengthened psychological resources, social networks, and structural supports, while the presence of “O” values further indicates that empowerment develops through interconnected pathways rather than isolated factor relationships.

Table 3
Structural Self-Interaction Matrix (SSIM)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Coping Strategies	–	V	V	V	V	V	V	O	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Passage of Time		–	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	O	O	O
Social Support			–	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Self-Compassion				–	V	A	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Attachment Styles					–	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Personality Traits						–	V	V	V	V	V	V	A	A	A
Financial Empowerment							–	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Legal Support								–	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Cultural Context									–	V	V	V	V	V	V
Family Support										–	V	V	V	A	A
Education and Employment											–	V	V	A	A
Personality Development												–	A	V	V
Mental Health Interventions													–	V	V
Assertiveness														–	A
Social Isolation															–

Finding from step 3 (Reachability matrix)

The Reachability Matrix (RM) provides a systematic representation of the direct and transitive relationships among the fifteen factors influencing women’s psychological empowerment after divorce by quantifying each factor’s driving and dependence power. Factors such as coping strategies, social support, passage of time, and self-compassion demonstrate the highest driving power, indicating that they function as foundational elements that influence a wide range of other psychological, social, and structural outcomes. These factors shape women’s ability to regulate emotions, rebuild self-efficacy, and navigate post-divorce challenges, thereby initiating empowerment processes across multiple dimensions. Variables including financial empowerment, personality traits, cultural context, and mental health interventions display moderate driving and dependence power, positioning them as linkage factors that both influence and are influenced by other elements within the system. This suggests that their effectiveness is contingent upon the strength of core psychosocial resources while simultaneously contributing to longer-term empowerment outcomes. In contrast, attachment styles and legal support exhibit low driving power but relatively higher dependence power, indicating that improvements in these areas tend to emerge as consequences of strengthened psychological resilience, social networks, and institutional access rather than acting as primary catalysts. Collectively, the RM reveals a structured hierarchy in which psychological empowerment after divorce is driven primarily by internal coping capacities and social resources, supported by enabling structural conditions, and reflected in adaptive behavioral and relational outcomes.

Table 4

Reachability Matrix (RM)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Driving Power
Coping Strategies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	14
Passage of Time	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	12
Social Support	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
Self-Compassion	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Attachment Styles	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Personality Traits	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	9
Financial Empowerment	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Legal Support	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cultural Context	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Family Support	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	6
Education and Employment	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	5
Personality Development	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	5
Mental Health Interventions	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	7
Assertiveness	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	6
Social Isolation	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	7
Dependence Power	1	2	3	5	15	7	6	14	7	9	11	11	9	9	8	

Finding from step 4 and 5

The level partitioning (LP) results provide a critical hierarchical interpretation of how the fifteen factors interact to shape women’s psychological empowerment after divorce. The analysis identifies Element 5 as occupying Level 1, positioning it as a fundamental driving factor with minimal dependence on other elements, thereby serving as the primary catalyst within the empowerment system. Element 8 emerges at Level 2, indicating an early-stage enabling role that bridges core drivers and subsequent psychosocial processes. The majority of elements specifically Elements 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 are clustered at Level 3, reflecting their function as linkage variables that simultaneously influence and are influenced by other factors, highlighting the dynamic and reciprocal nature of psychological empowerment. Element 3, positioned at Level 4, demonstrates higher dependence while retaining some influencing capacity, suggesting that its effectiveness is contingent upon the strength of lower-level drivers. Element 2 appears at Level 5, indicating that its role is largely shaped by cumulative influences from preceding levels, while Element 1, located at the highest level (Level 6), represents an outcome-oriented factor that emerges only after multiple psychological, social, and structural conditions have been established. Collectively, the LP structure underscores that women’s psychological empowerment after divorce is not a linear process but a layered and systemic progression, where foundational drivers initiate change, linkage factors mediate development, and higher-level outcomes reflect the integrated impact of the entire empowerment system.

Table 5
Level Partitioning

Element (Mi)	Reachability Set R(Mi)	Antecedent Set A(Ni)	Intersection Set R(Mi) ∩ A(Ni)	Level
1	1	1	1	6
2	2	1, 2	2	5
3	3	1, 2, 3	3	4
4	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	3
5	5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	5	1
6	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	3
7	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	3
8	8	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	8	2
9	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	3
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11	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	3
12	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	3
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15	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	3

Building upon the level partitioning and reachability analyses, the digraph further clarifies the structural logic underlying women's psychological empowerment after divorce by visually integrating the hierarchical positions and directional influences among the factors. The prominent placement of Element 5 at the top of the structure reinforces its role as a dominant driving factor that exerts widespread influence across the system, while Element 8 functions as a critical intermediary that channels this influence toward a cluster of closely interconnected psychosocial and structural elements at the intermediate level. The dense horizontal interconnections among Elements 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 highlight the reciprocal and reinforcing nature of empowerment processes, indicating that changes in one area are likely to trigger cascading effects across others. At the lower levels, Elements 3, 2, and 1 emerge as increasingly dependent outcomes, shaped by cumulative influences from higher-level drivers and linkage factors. Overall, the digraph confirms that women's psychological empowerment after divorce unfolds through a layered and interactive system in which foundational drivers initiate change, intermediary mechanisms sustain development, and outcome-oriented factors reflect the integrated impact of psychological, social, and structural conditions.

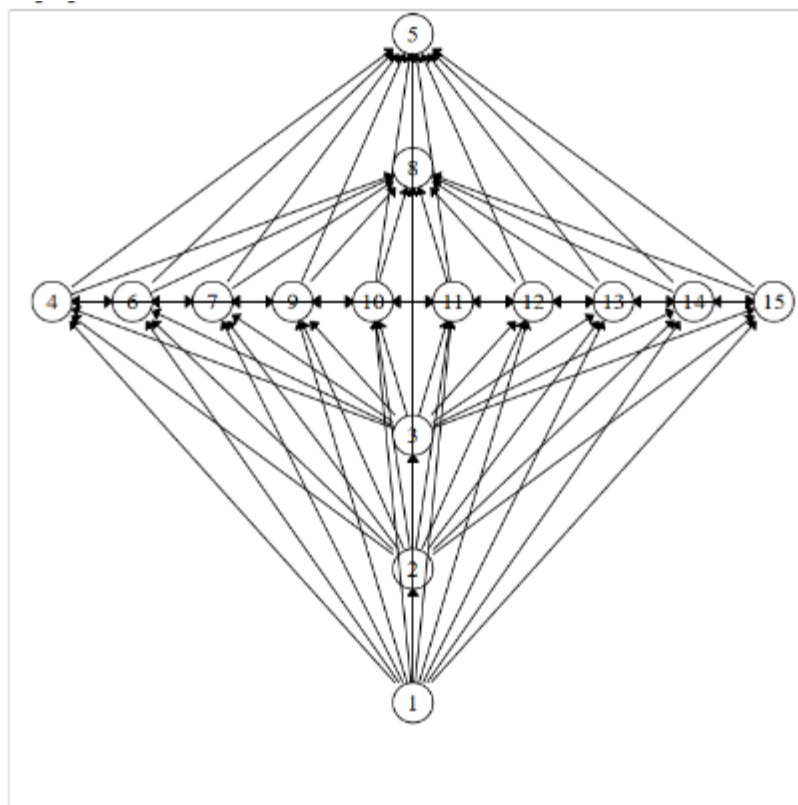


Figure 1. Digraph Model

Finding from step 6 (MICMAC analysis)

The MICMAC analysis further validates the ISM results by classifying the factors influencing women's psychological empowerment after divorce into four clusters based on their driving and dependence power. The independent variables (Quadrant IV), including Elements 1, 2, and 3, exhibit high driving power with low dependence, identifying them as key strategic drivers that strongly shape the empowerment system. The linkage variables (Quadrant III)

comprising Elements 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 demonstrate both high driving and high dependence power, indicating their dynamic and unstable nature, where changes in these factors can generate feedback effects throughout the system. In contrast, dependent variables (Quadrant II), represented by Elements 5 and 8, show high dependence but low driving power, suggesting that these outcomes emerge primarily as a result of strengthened upstream psychological, social, and structural conditions. Notably, the absence of variables in the autonomous cluster (Quadrant I) indicates that all identified factors are meaningfully embedded within the empowerment system, reinforcing the interconnected and systemic nature of women's psychological empowerment after divorce.

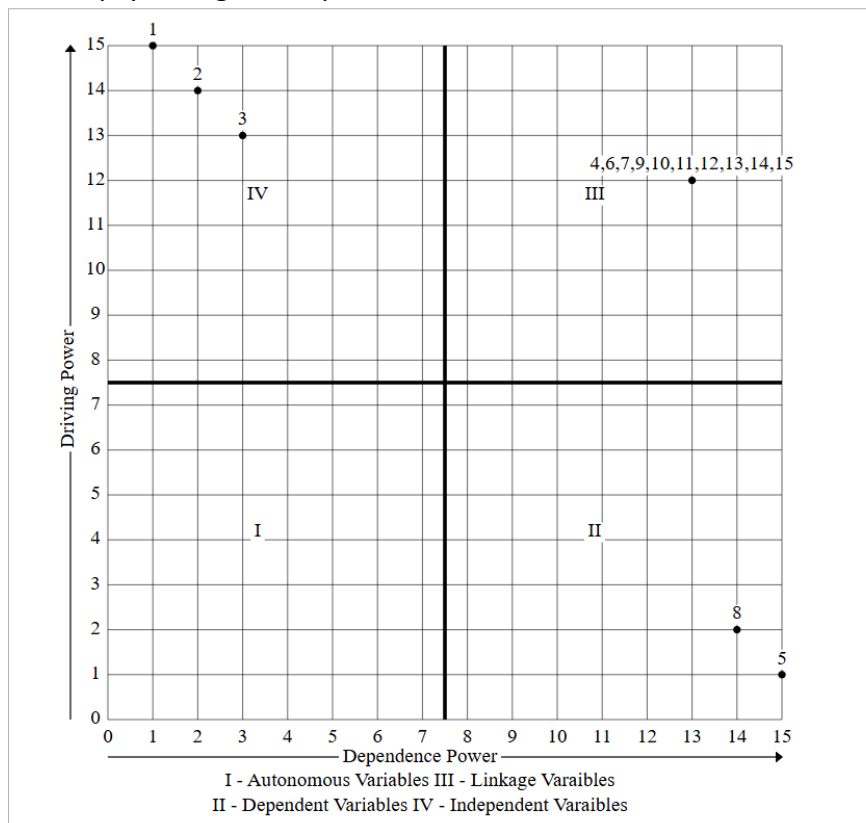


Figure 2. MIMAC Analysis

Finding

The integrated findings from the SSIM, Reachability Matrix (RM), Level Partitioning (LP), ISM digraph, and MICMAC analysis collectively reveal that women's psychological empowerment after divorce is shaped by a highly structured, hierarchical, and interdependent system of factors rather than isolated influences. The SSIM and RM results demonstrate that several psychosocial and structural elements particularly coping strategies, social support, passage of time, self-compassion, personality traits, financial empowerment, and education and employment exhibit strong directional influence over other factors. These elements function as primary drivers, initiating empowerment processes by enhancing emotional regulation, self-efficacy, autonomy, and adaptive adjustment. In contrast, factors such as attachment styles, legal support, assertiveness, and social isolation show comparatively lower driving power and higher dependence, indicating that they are largely shaped by upstream psychological resources and enabling conditions. This pattern underscores that empowerment outcomes tend to emerge as cumulative effects rather than direct interventions.

The level partitioning analysis further clarifies the hierarchical progression of empowerment. Element 5, positioned at the lowest level, represents a foundational driver that exerts extensive influence while remaining minimally dependent on other elements, highlighting its catalytic role in initiating change. Element 8 occupies the next level, acting as an early-stage enabler that connects foundational drivers to broader psychosocial processes. A substantial cluster of elements namely Elements 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 are grouped at the intermediate level, reflecting their role as linkage factors that both influence and are influenced by other variables. These elements mediate the flow of influence across the system and reflect the dynamic, reciprocal nature of psychological empowerment. Higher-level elements, including Elements 3, 2, and ultimately Element 1 at the top of the hierarchy, represent outcome-oriented factors that materialize only after sustained interaction among lower-level psychological, social, and structural conditions. This layered structure highlights that empowerment unfolds through sequential yet interconnected stages rather than a linear pathway.

The ISM digraph and MICMAC analysis provide strong visual and analytical confirmation of these relationships. The digraph illustrates dense interconnections at the intermediate levels, emphasizing feedback loops and reinforcing mechanisms among psychosocial and contextual factors. MICMAC classification further strengthens this interpretation by identifying independent variables as strategic drivers, linkage variables as system-sensitive and interactive, and dependent variables as reflective outcomes of empowerment processes. Notably, the absence of autonomous variables indicates that all identified factors are meaningfully embedded within the system, reinforcing the systemic nature of women's psychological empowerment after divorce. Overall, these findings advance a systems-based understanding of empowerment, demonstrating that sustainable psychological empowerment requires strengthening core drivers, supporting intermediary mechanisms, and addressing outcome-oriented needs in an integrated and coordinated manner.

Conclusion

This study provides a systematic and integrated understanding of women's psychological empowerment after divorce by applying ISM and MICMAC analyses to unravel the complex structure of influencing factors. The findings demonstrate that psychological empowerment is not a singular outcome but a multi-layered, interdependent process driven primarily by core psychosocial and structural factors. Elements such as coping strategies, social support, self-compassion, passage of time, personality traits, financial empowerment, and education and employment emerge as foundational drivers that initiate and sustain empowerment trajectories (Bailey & McCarty, 2009; Hassan, 2023). These drivers shape women's capacity to regulate emotions, rebuild self-efficacy, and regain control over their lives, thereby enabling other empowerment-related outcomes to develop. In contrast, factors such as attachment styles, legal support engagement, assertiveness, and social isolation are shown to be largely dependent, indicating that improvements in these areas are more likely to occur as a result of strengthened upstream conditions rather than through isolated or short-term interventions.

The hierarchical structure revealed through level partitioning and visualized in the ISM digraph highlights that women's psychological empowerment after divorce unfolds through sequential yet interactive stages. Foundational drivers activate early enabling mechanisms,

which are then mediated by a dense network of linkage factors operating at the intermediate levels. These linkage factors play a critical role in translating psychological resources and structural support into meaningful adjustment and growth outcomes (Sakhonchik et al., 1993; Zverling, 2019). The MICMAC analysis further reinforces this systemic interpretation by confirming the absence of autonomous variables, underscoring that all identified factors are embedded within an interconnected empowerment system. Collectively, the findings suggest that effective efforts to enhance women's psychological empowerment after divorce must adopt a holistic and systems-oriented approach, prioritize the strengthening of core drivers while simultaneously support intermediary mechanisms. Such an approach has important implications for counseling practice, program design, and policy development, as it emphasizes that sustainable empowerment can only be achieved through coordinated psychological, social, and structural interventions rather than fragmented or single-focus strategy.

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