



# Effect of alternatives and barriers on partnership instability



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## Introduction

One of the most cited theoretical backgrounds in research on marriage and close relationship is the social exchange theory<sup>1</sup>. According to Levinger the partnership instability is increased when the parties receive few *rewards from the relationship*, there are few *barriers to ending the relationship* and good *alternatives* are enticing<sup>1</sup>.

In previous studies it was found that the most important barriers were the presence of children and religion, regardless of whether we see the objective barriers or the perceived importance of barriers<sup>2,3,4</sup>.

## Aims

The objectives of this study are to examine the role of barriers and alternatives on partnership instability and gender differences in these questions.

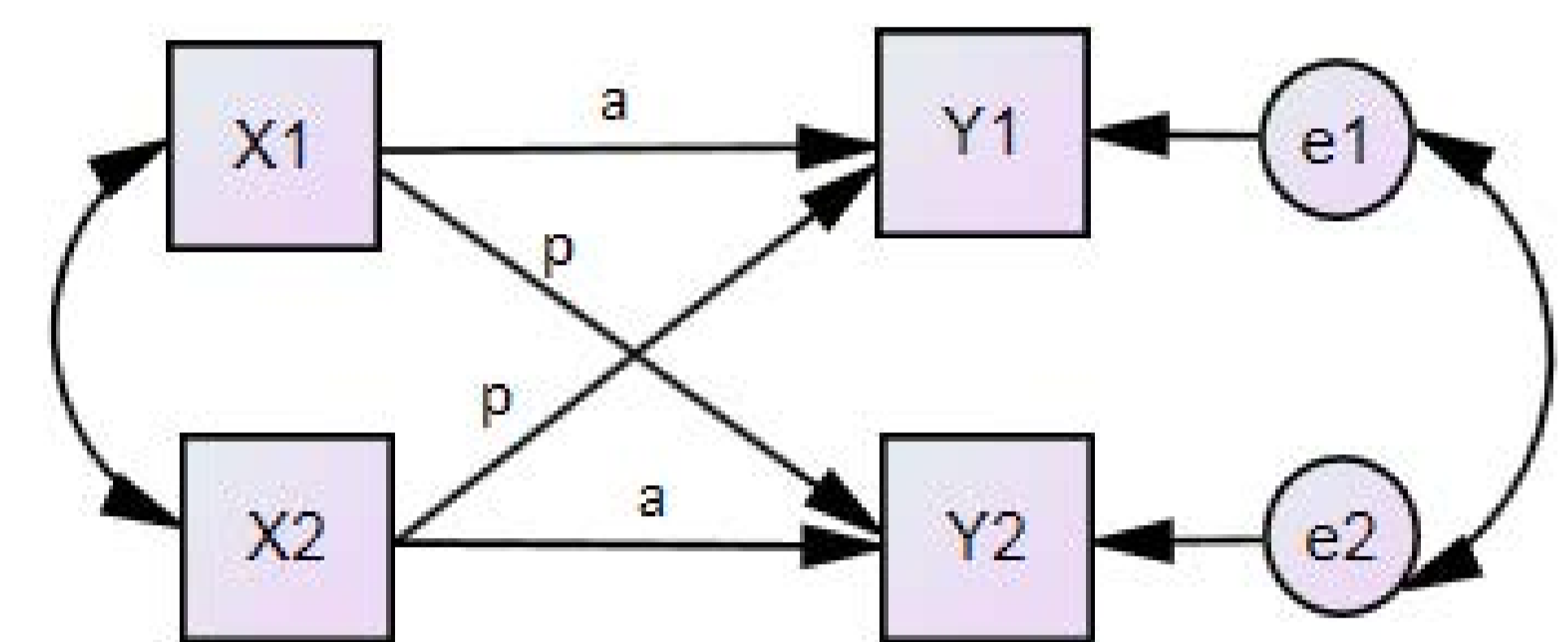
## Methods

*Sample:* service users of family support and child welfare services in Budapest and Pest county, Hungary.

*Date collection:* survey - standard dyadic design (N=175)

*Measures:* divorce propensity - complex score based on five questions; alternatives (7 items) and barriers (6 items) were asked five-scale questions.

*Analysis:* Actor-Partner Interdependence Model<sup>5</sup>.



## Results

### Importance of alternatives among...

women		men
2.1	Standard of living	2.3
2.3	Career opportunities***	2.6
2.1	Opportunities of spending***	2.5
1.9	Sexual life	2.1
2.9	Relationship with friends**	2.7
2.7	Relationship with parents	2.7
2.7	Respect of others*	2.5

(1 – It would be much worse; 5 – It would be much better) \* p<.1; \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01

### Importance of barriers among...

women		men
2.3	Marital oath	2.2
3.8	Duty to children	3.7
2.0	Religious belief**	1.8
2.0	Friend and acquaintances' opinion	1.9
3.0	Financial security***	2.6
3.1	Fear of loneliness**	2.8

(1 – Not important; 5 – Very important) \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01

### Effects of perceived alternatives on instability (SEM<sup>a</sup>, β)

	Women's instability		Men's instability	
	Actor effect	Partner effect	Actor effect	Partner effect
Standard of living	.104	.022	.247***	.002
Career opportunities	-.011	.060	.196**	.018
Opportunities of spending	.098	-.042	.210***	.000
Sexual life	.345***	-.118	.063	.222***
Relationship with friends	.168**	.181**	.291***	.132*
Relationship with parents	.284***	.008	.157*	.035
Respect for others	.263***	.013	.096	.199**

<sup>a</sup> Structural Equation Modeling \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01

### Effects of barriers on instability (SEM<sup>a</sup>, β)

	Women's instability		Men's instability	
	Actor effect	Partner effect	Actor effect	Partner effect
Marital oath	-.079	.015	.092	.003
Duty to children	.140	-.203**	.094	.024
Religious belief	.053	-.084	-.173*	.103
Friend and acquaintances' opinion	.126	.066	.015	.133
Financial security	.141*	.012	.104	.188**
Fear of loneliness	-.099	-.026	-.247***	-.095
Presence of children		.034		.023
Religion	.107	-.037	.037	.003

<sup>a</sup> Structural Equation Modeling \* p<.1; \*\* p<.05; \*\*\* p<.01

The perceived alternatives are more decisive than barriers. Moreover, the direction of effects of barriers is not unequivocal. Duty toward children is the most important barrier, but it does not have a significant actor effect on instability. Gender has a significant influence on the assessment of both alternatives and barriers and their effects on stability.

## References

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