

The Role of Attachment, Family Cohesion, and Adaptability in the Prediction of Resilience

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Submitted: 21 March 2021

Accepted: 23 April 2021

Int J Behav Sci. 2021; 15(1): 48-53

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Abstract

Introduction: This study investigated the role of attachment, family cohesion, and adaptability in the formation of resilience in students.

Method: In this study, 200 students (132 women) and (66 men) were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. Research instruments included questionnaires of Attachment Styles (AAS), Resilience and Family Adaptability and Cohesion-Evaluating Scales (FACES-II). Data analysis was performed using Pearson correlation coefficients and simultaneous regression.

Results: The results of the correlation matrix were demonstrative of a noteworthy positive relationship between the secure attachment style and resilience ($p < 0.001$). There was a significant negative relationship between the ambivalent attachment style and resilience and there was a significant negative relationship between family union and resilience ($p < 0.01$). The consequences of multiple regressions uncovered that perfect family union; family union and secure attachment style anticipated 22% of resilience difference. Secure connection and perfect family attachment were significant positive indicators ($p < 0.01$), while family union was a noteworthy negative indicator ($p < 0.01$) for resilience.

Conclusion: Due to the importance of family cohesion and adaptability of family resilience, it is necessary to take steps to improve the quality of family relationships. On the other hand, given that resilience is very effective in improving mental health, so resiliency can be increased by holding training courses.

Keywords: Attachment Style, Family Cohesion and Adaptability, Resilience

Introduction

Students are one of the main pillars of every country's human resources and play an important role in the evolution and progress of their country. So, their physical and mental health is extremely important. Entrance to university is accompanied by various challenges, therefore, adaptation success in these new situations requires necessary abilities and skills [1].

Positive psychology approach, with paying attention to human talents and abilities instead of abnormalities and disorders, has been considered by psychologists in the last decade. One of the construct and concepts in this field is resilience [2]. Resilience is considered as adaptation and successful coping when facing or after being exposed to stressful events that enable individuals to return to the initial base level [3]. It is willfulness in facing stress, ability to recover normal situations, and the ability to survive and strive under horrible conditions. Resilience plays an important mediating role in preventing or causing many psychiatric disorders [4]. Moreover, it can promote and guarantee an

individual's mental health and may be increased by the presence of protective factors in the individual or environment including skills such as communication, leadership, problem solving, resource management, and planning to eliminate obstacles to succeed [5, 6]. It is believed that the types of relationships and interactions in family form resilience [7].

Family is the first system into which a child opens his/her eyes. They are influenced and trained by the family. Studying this system provides not only a better understanding of this system, but also gives us an understanding of the people who are trained in it. As individuals are affected by families, even in adulthood, family interactions and the type and style of family education affect the capabilities and behavior of individuals [8].

Olson [9] introduced the family system as three dimensions of adaptability, family cohesion, and communication in its combinational circular pattern [9]. In healthy families, there is a balance among family cohesion, adaptability, and communication, but this does not mean that families are always balanced. Families always face such a challenge. If the borders are too flexible or no border exists or if family members depend on each other completely or are separated from each other, families may not be able to persevere through change or pressure. In such instances, there may be no communication, or the communication might be so flawed that it becomes a destructive agent [10]. Family cohesion refers to the emotional bonds between family members and the independence of individuals in the family system. If family members are completely interdependent or separate from each other, families may not be able to adapt to change or pressure. There may not be a connection at all, or the connection may be so distorted that it acts as an anti-constructive agent. Healthy families reach a balance between extreme and weak closeness in family cohesion. This dimension has four levels (disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed) [11].

Family adaptability is defined as changes in the roles and rules of control and family discipline [12]. In an adaptable family, leadership is democratic and less authoritarian; youngsters participate in decision-making, and familial roles are not established based on age or gender. This dimension has four levels (rigid, structured, flexible, and chaotic) [3]. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between adaptability and family cohesion [13].

Types of relationships and interactions in the family forms resilience [7]. Resilience is considered as positive adaptation and successful coping when facing or after being exposed to stressful events that enable individuals to return to the initial base level [3]. Resilience is an innate trait, considered to be psychological characteristics possessed by individuals [14]. It is willfulness in facing stress, ability to recover the normal situation, and ability to survive and strive under horrible conditions. Resilience plays a very important mediating role in preventing or causing many psychiatric disorders [4]. Moreover, it can promote and

guarantee an individual's mental health and may be increased by the presence of protective factors in the individual or environment including such skills as communication, leadership, problem solving, resource management, and planning to eliminate obstacles to in order to succeed [5, 6].

Family cohesion and good parents-children relationships are considered as the most important factors in determining resilience, and a family's cohesion and adaptability predict resilience in adolescents. Family cohesion and adaptability are associated with and predict resilience [15, 16].

Researchers believe that the style and history of an individual's attachment style affects resilience [17, 18, 19]. Attachment theory attempts to explain the close emotional bonds that people develop with others [20]. Attachment is a lasting emotional bond between two people, so that one of the parties tries to maintain proximity to the attachment figure and act in such a way to ensure that the relationship continues [21]. Attachment behavior activates when a person feels fear, sadness, or disease and makes the person search for or stay close to a familiar person [22]. The attachment theory emphasizes that early childhood relationships form attachment styles that influence an individual's views about himself/herself and others and organizes one's interpersonal relationships [23]. Attachment styles can be defined as patterns of thinking, feeling, and personal behavior in close relationships with caregivers and other intimate partners [24]. The three described types include secure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachment developed in childhood [25], which may continue in adulthood. Individuals with a secure attachment style are agreeable in intimate connections, have a tendency to be subject to others for support, have a positive picture of themselves, and have positive desires from others.

Individuals with an avoidant attachment style view themselves as candidly cold and suspicious; they think that it is hard to depend on others and feel stressed when others turn out to be excessively personal with them. Individuals with an ambivalent attachment style see themselves as not comprehended by others, have an absence of certainty, and feel stressed over the way that others forsake them or don't generally like them [26]. A review on the relationship between attachment styles and flexibility affirmed the relationship between these two factors and found that individuals with a secure attachment style have higher resilience than individuals with an insecure connection style [19]. Another review uncovered a positive relationship amongst resilience and the secure connection style and a negative relationship amongst it and the insecure attachment style [27].

Today, resilience has attained a special role among developmental psychopathologists. It has brought about a positive compatibility or adaptation in horrible conditions. Because of its important mediatory role in the prevention or development of many psychiatric disorders, assessing the factors that play a role in shaping people's resilience seems useful. Thus, this study investigated the roles of attachment, family cohesion and adaptability in

the development of resilience in students.

Method

By using the available sampling method, students among Shahid Beheshti University of Tehran were chosen for this study. The sample size was obtained from Green [28] sample size formula for regression ($8 + 50m$). According to the number of predictor variables ($m = 7$), a sample size of 106 people was obtained. The probability of falling sample size increased to 200 people. The students completed the Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)[29], the Hazan and Shaver Attachment Style Questionnaire for Adults [30], and Olson et al.'s scale of Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation (FACES-III)[31].

This study included 200 university students (134 females and 66 males). Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents based on gender, marital status, housing situation and attachment styles. The criterion for entering the sample was satisfaction for completing the questionnaires and the criterion for leaving was dissatisfaction to participate in the study.

Adult Attachment Questionnaires (AAQ): This questionnaires measured secure and unreliable connection styles. It comprised of two sections. In the initial segment (AAQ1), members addressed three segments depicting the venture on a seven-point scale. In the second part (AAQ2), the depicted were re-surveyed, yet this time the respondents communicated their comparability just by checking one of them. The second part of the questionnaire depended on the size of the issue and utilized the results of the respondents to group connection styles. Retest stability method is 70% and in the continuous scales which description ratings happens there (AAQ), retest stability is estimated 60% during first week to eighth for triple variables rating [32]. Cronbach's alpha and test-retest reliability coefficients were accounted for as 0.79 and 0.73, separately. The legitimacy of adult attachment style questionnaire was satisfactory and noteworthy [33]. *Its reliability was reported* with a retest of 0.92 in an Iranian sample [34].

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation (FACES-III): FACES-III, which measures the two primary measurements of family union and flexibility, comprises of 20 Likert-sort questions [31]. Answers are given on a 5-stage Likert scale, where 1 signifies "almost never" and 5 signifies "quite often". Family attachment is characterized as the emotional association that individuals from the family have with each other. Adaptability mirrors the direct measurement of adaptability, which is the capacity

of the framework to change its structure (parts and relations) after some time. The scale is intended to portray the apparent and perfect status of conjugal and family status. The surveys were run twice: once for how the individual fundamentally observes his family and once for how the individual needs his family. At that point, the perfect score was subtracted from the genuine score; the bigger the distinction was, the lower the family fulfillment was [24, 35]. The psychometric properties of this correlation were accounted for as zero between family union and adaptability ($r=0.003$), implying that the two are totally free. The reliability of the scale by Cronbach's alpha for family adaptability and union were evaluated to be 0.77 and 0.62, individually [36]. The Iranian sample detailed the Cronbach's alpha estimations of 0.74 for family union and 0.75 for family adaptability [13]. Convergent and divergent validity was satisfying through the calculation of the FACES-III scale correlation coefficient with the DASS, YSR, SF - PSI and LE [37].

Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC): CD-RISC [29] {Connor, 2003 #24} is a 25-thing instrument that measures the structure of resilience on a Likert scale from zero to four. The lowest participant score for resilience was zero, and the maximum was 100. The results of the preliminary study regarding psychometric properties of this scale confirmed its reliability and validity (Cronbach's alpha of 0.892 revealed that the CD-RISC had high reliability [35] [29].Interior consistency, test-retest dependability, and united and different legitimacy of the scale have been beforehand detailed In Iran by HaghRanjbar [38].

Results

Table 1 shows frequency and percentage distribution of respondents based on gender, marriage status, house situation and attachment style. Most participants in this study were female (67%), single (79%), lived out of dormitory (64%), and had a secure attachment (62%). The results of one-way ANOVA revealed that resiliency did not differ in terms of gender; marital status, housing situation and attachment styles.

Surveying the attachment between the factors of the review demonstrated that among the attachment styles, the secure attachment style had a significant positive association with resilience ($P<0.05$), ambivalent attachment style had a noteworthy negative association with resilience ($P<0.01$) and family attachment had a significant negative association with flexibility ($P<0.01$) (Table 2).

Table 1. Comparison of Resilience by Gender, Marital Status, Residence Status and Attachment Styles

	Variable	Frequency	Mean	SD	t/f	P
Gender	Female	134(67)	84.05	12.94	0.9	0.37
	Male	66(33)	82.23	14.45		
Marriage Status	Married	27(13.5)	84.72	10.82	0.14	0.87
	Single	158(79)	83.24	13.03		
	Engaged	15 (7.5)	83.35	21.14		
House Situation	Dormitory	72(36)	84.79	13.67	1.05	0.29
	Non dormitory	128(64)	82.69	13.32		
Attachment	Avoidant	39(19.5)	82.38	16.03	1.46	0.23
	Ambivalence	37(18.5)	80.57	13.93		
	Secure	124(62)	84.64	12.33		

The results revealed that multiple correlation between independent and predictive variables was $R = 0.47$ and $R^2 = 0.22$ indicated that attachment styles, family cohesion, and adaptability explain generally 22% of the variance of the criterion variable of resilience (Table 3).

An assessment of the portion of each predictor variable in the criterion variable showed that the secure attachment style was a significant predictor of resilience, as the amount of $Beta = -0.24$, and $t = 2.58$ was significant ($p < 0.01$). This means that for each one unit change in the standard deviation of the secure style, a 0.24 unit change

occurred in the standard deviation of resilience. Family cohesion with the amount of $Beta = -0.41$ and $t = -2.76$ was significant ($p < 0.007$). This means that for each one unit change in the standard deviation of the family cohesion variable, a 0.41 unit change occurred in the standard deviation of resilience. Ideal family cohesion with the amount of $Beta = 0.36$ and $t = -2.14$ was significant ($p < 0.03$). This means that for every one unit change in the standard deviation of the ideal family cohesion variable, a 0.36 unit change occurred in the standard deviation of resilience (Table 4).

Table 2. The Correlation matrices between Scores of Attachment Styles and Family Cohesion and Adaptability with Resilience

Variables	Resilience
Avoidant attachment style	-0.05
Ambivalent attachment style	-0.24**
Secure Attachment style	0.2*
Family Cohesion	-0.28**
Ideal Cohesion	-0.01
Family Adaptability	-0.15
Ideal Family Adaptability	-0.006

* $P < 0.05$ ** $P < 0.01$

Table 3. Summary of Analysis of Variance and regression model of Predicting Resilience based on Attachment Styles, Family Cohesion and Adaptability

Index	SS	DF	MS	F	P Value	R ²	R	SE
Regression	5924.49	7	846.35	3.63	0.002	0.22	0.47	15.26
Residual	20745.48	89	233.09					

Legend: **SS**: Sum of Squares; **DF**: Degrees of Freedom; **MS**: Mean Square; **FF**: statistic is the Mean Square (Regression) divided by the Mean Square (Residual); **R²**: R-Square; **R**: square root of R-Squared; **SEE**: Std. Error of the Estimate.

Table 4. Summary of Regression Statistical Characteristic to Predict Resilience based on Attachment Styles, Family Cohesion and Adaptability

Variable	B	SE	β	t	P
Avoidant	0.73	0.9	0.07	0.81	0.41
Ambivalent	-1.61	0.85	-0.18	-1.88	0.06
Secure	2.39	0.92	0.24	2.58	0.01
Cohesion	-0.82	0.29	-0.41	-2.76	0.007
Ideal Cohesion	0.77	0.36	0.36	2.14	0.03
Family Adaptability	0.04	0.34	0.34	0.125	0.9
Ideal Family Adaptability	-0.28	0.36	0.36	-0.78	0.43

Discussion

This study investigated the role of attachment styles, family cohesion and adaptability in the prediction of resilience in students. The correlation results showed that family cohesion had a significant, negative relationship with resilience. The results of regression showed that family cohesion is a significant negative predictor and ideal cohesion is a significant positive predictor of resilience. The results of previous studies that are consistent with those of the present study [15, 16].

One explanation of these results can be that the desirable cohesion between family members creates a secure environment in the family which becomes an internal feeling in the individual and creates a part of his worldview. Consequently, this security will spread to the world outside the family; a high cohesion, however, causes malfunction as it facilitates mental and emotional turbulence. Combined families neglect the borders between individuals and do not distinguish between the existence and wishes of themselves and others; this

confusion causes chaos in a person's internal world, resulting in a lack of independence and individuality in family members. This cohesion is associated with a fear of separation. As a result, the family introduces the outside world as insecure and dangerous for the persistence of cohesion [39]. This fear and insecurity regarding the outside world may weaken social networks, because social support is one of the determinants of resilience in the individual [7]. A higher level of cohesion can be expected to reduce resilience. Obviously, the ideal cohesion, which refers to the ideal level of cohesion among family members rather than the reality that the family actually perceives, can be a positive predictor of resilience.

The results showed that among attachment styles, the secure attachment style had a significant positive relationship with resilience and the ambivalent attachment style had a significant negative correlation with it. The regression results showed that the secure attachment style predicts resilience, which was statistically

significant. Previous studies confirm these results [27,19]. A possible explanation for this finding could be the differences in attachment styles. Secure people develop mental models of themselves as if they are competent individuals, worthy of attracting sentiment, attention, and concern from others; in their opinion, others are accessible, well-intentioned, and reliable people. Secure people easily communicate with others and rarely worry about rejection [40]. People with the secure attachment style also have fewer interpersonal problems than insecure people [41], consider stressful conditions less threatening, and are more likely to seek help from others for solving their problems [18]. Conversely, the main features of people with an ambivalent attachment style include doubt, conflict, struggle, frustration, confusion, and impulsivity that makes them highly prone to fight, conflict, frustration, and abnormal behavior in stressful situations and social relations [42].

Conclusion

In today's stressful world, it is important for students to develop resilience skills. This study had some limitations; given that the sample group consisted of students, generalizing the results to all sectors should be done with caution. More research is required for a decisive position on the relationship between attachment styles and family cohesion and adaptability and resilience in the Iranian society.

The present research examined the role of attachment styles, cohesion and adaptability of family in resiliency, so future research about other variables that improve resilience is very useful. The theoretical implications of the discoveries of the present study incorporate giving new thoughts and speculations about the determinants of resilience. These components, can enhance hypothetical models of adaptability. Practically, the results of the present study can be an empirical basis for the development of health programs in mother-child relationship, intervention and treatment programs, and emotional management based on increasing resilience in students.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval

Participants in the study were emphasized to refrain from writing their names on the questionnaires and were assured that all questionnaires maintained confidentiality, and would be gathered for statistical analysis only. The present study is the result of a research project with the ethical code IR.IAU.SRB.REC.1399.175.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to appreciate all the students who took part in this study.

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