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Introduction

The concept of family resilience has been established as the result of a new way of looking at family crises where they are seen as opportunities for families to grow and adapt. Family resilience is often seen as a process where a family that is faced with **significant hardship** manages to achieve **good family outcomes** due to certain **protective factors/mechanisms**. One of the most widely used models of family resilience was created by Froma Walsh. According to this model there are three key processes that encourage family resilience: family belief systems, organizational patterns and communication/problem solving (Walsh, 1996). Even though many preventive interventions around the world are already based on promoting family resilience, the theoretical basis of the model needs further empirical testing.

Many authors offer similar definitions of family resilience, yet there are many discrepancies in the definitions of the three main components of family resilience.

When it comes to defining **risk** as a part of family resilience, there are two main approaches (Patterson, 2002):

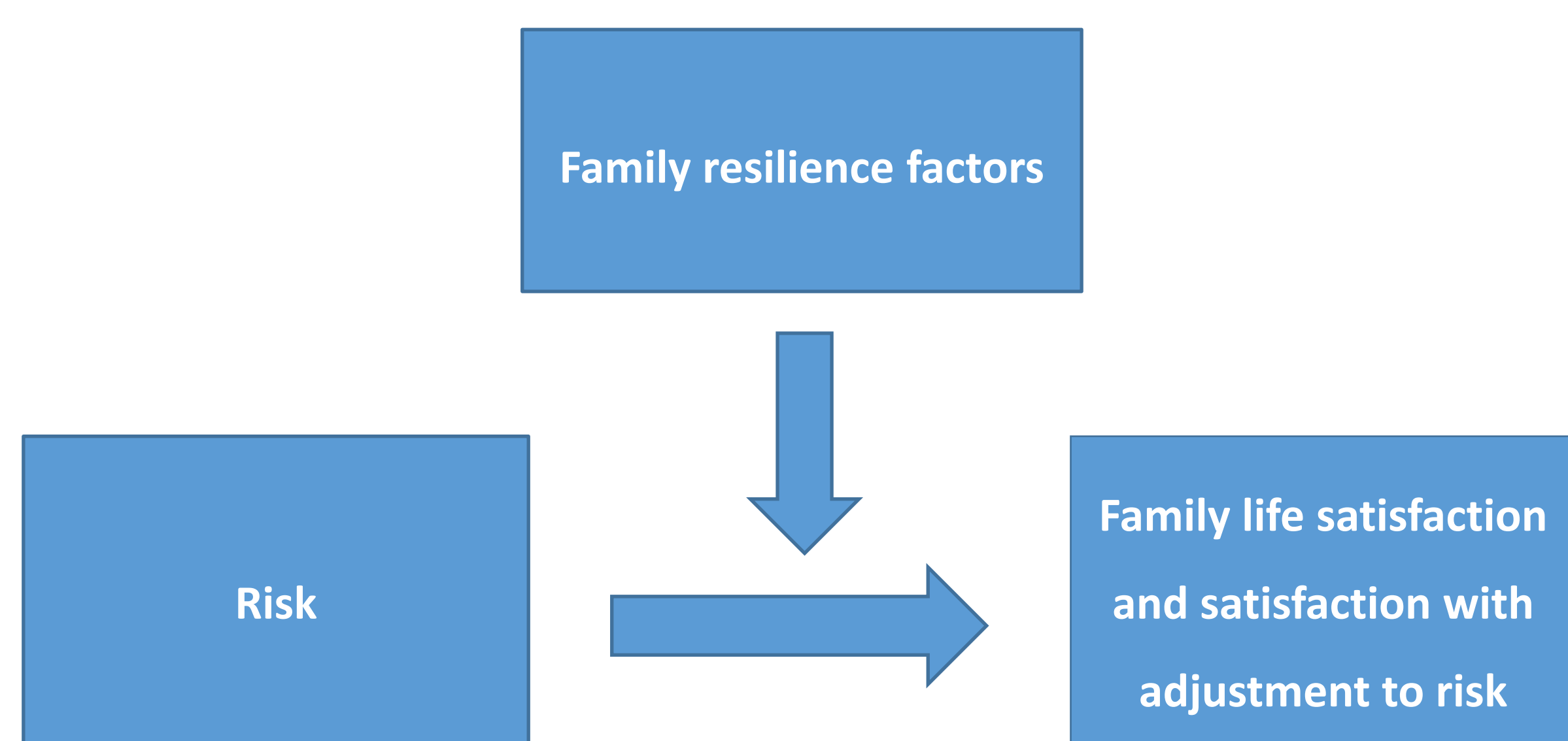
- looking at everyday life as being a risk in and of itself;
- the need for significant risk and distress.

Family resilience factors are called various similar names, such as protective mechanisms, family protective factors or family relational processes with varying definitions. Various authors also include different factors from different ecological levels.

When talking about the definition of the **good family level outcome**, two main problems arise:

- How can we define a universal good family outcome when families today are so diverse in regards to their expectations, cultural specifics, family values and life situations?
- How can we theoretically distinguish good outcomes from the protective factors/mechanisms that contribute to family resilience? (e.g. cohesion and connectedness could be seen as both.

The proposed model of family resilience



Family risk will be defined as a sum of disruptive life changes that have an effect on the family.

Family resilience factors will be defined as those factors within the family that significantly contribute to the achievement of good family outcomes despite the presence of risk and will be measured according to the model of family resilience developed by Froma Walsh.

Good family outcomes will for the purpose of this research be defined as family life satisfaction and satisfaction with adjustment to risk.

The aim of this study is to test the theoretical model of family resilience by gaining an insight into the components of family resilience (family resilience factors, risks and positive outcomes) in the families of Zagreb high school students and the relations between those components.

Research problems

Problem 1.

Determine the differences in the perception of the family resilience components between the parents and their children.

Problem 2.

Determine the relations between the perceived risk exposure, family resilience factors and the perceived family life satisfaction and satisfaction with adjustment to risk.

Problem 3.

Investigate the moderating effect of the family resilience factors on the relation between risk and family life satisfaction and satisfaction with adjustment to risk.

Methodology

In order to achieve the aim of this study an associative scientific-research approach will be used with planned usage of both comparative and correlational methods.

The study will consist of two parts: pilot study and main study.

The aim of the pilot study will be to test the metric characteristics of a scale adapted for this study – Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes and Rahe, 1967).

Sample

The pilot study will be conducted on a convenience sample of high school students and their parents living in a city close to Zagreb, so as to prevent the contamination of the sample for the main study.

The main study will be conducted on a convenience sample of 300 families of Zagreb high school students.

Procedure

- The study will be performed with entire classes in a school setting. The parents will fill out the surveys after the students do.
- The participants will not be offered a definition of the family by the researcher; they will be instructed to answer the study questions referring to what they consider to be their family.
- Each family will be represented by one student and one parent or other adult guardian.
- Some analyses will be conducted on the individual level (Problem 1) and some on the family level (Problems 2 and 3).
- The family result will be extrapolated from the individual perspectives of the family members by using confirmatory factor analysis.

Instruments

All defined constructs will be measured indirectly using measure scales on a nominal, ordinal and interval level of measurement. The battery of instruments will have two parallel forms: one for parents and one for students.

- The sociodemographic questionnaire – constructed for the purpose of this study; contains 10 items in the parent version and 2 in the student version
- Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967) – will be adapted for the purpose of this study and pilot tested; this Scale will be used to measure risk and satisfaction with adjustment to risk; questions about the subjective perception of the effect that every life event had on the family will be added; the adapted Scale will also contain questions about the recency of such events and questions about the satisfaction of family adaptation to the risk.
- Family Resilience Questionnaire (FamResPlan, 2017) – a new instrument adapted from various other instruments and tested in Croatia on a sample of families at risk; contains 43 items.
- Family Satisfaction Scale (Olson and Gorall, 2006) – 10 items; will be used to measure family life satisfaction

To conclude

The scientific contribution of this study is both gnostic and methodological. The gnostic contribution will be the empirical test of a theoretical model of family resilience that has been used in various similar versions across the world. The methodological contribution will be the development of new methods for testing family resources. The proposed method of investigating family strengths could also be used clinically, if it will be established as appropriate, and contribute to the planning and development of new interventions for families at risk.

The research design presented here will be used for a doctoral thesis at the University of Zagreb and is presented here to discuss methodology, difficulties and opportunities. It was developed under the guidance of dr.sc. Martina Ferić (doctoral adviser).

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