



Qualitative Analysis of Risk and Protective Factors of Families at Risk in Croatia*

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BACKGROUND of the research

- **Family resilience** concept is **new, under-researched process** that could be of importance for complex family interventions planning
 - *Not many studies had in focus family resilience regarding high risk families with children with behavior and emotional problems*
 - *Can high risk families with child with BEP can be resilient?*
 - *Family resilience as a process (or good family outcome?)*
 - *What is good family outcome anyway?*
 - *What contributes to family resilience?*
 - ...
 - **Difficulties in conceptualization and operationalization** of the concept of family resilience
 - **... MANY CHALLENGES** in researching this topic!
 - **Qualitative approach more convenient**
- > **The research problem of this study** was „*What makes family at risk resilient?*”
- **DEFINITION OF FAMILY RESILIENCE:** Process of **effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing** significant sources of stress or trauma (**risk**). Assets and resources within the individual, family, their life and environment (**protective factors/mechanisms**) **facilitate this capacity for adaptation** in the face of adversity (good outcome). Across the life course, **the experience of resilience will vary** (adopted from Windle, 2011)

Project:

„Specific characteristics of families at risk: contribution to complex interventions planning” (FamResPlan)

Mixed method study

Time frame: 2015-2019

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Families whose member is a beneficiary of interventions in the area of: education, social welfare, mental health and/or judiciary due to specific risks/behavioral problems

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS:

FAMILY RESILIENCE
READINESS FOR CHANGE
(FAMILY) LIFE SATISFACTION

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the indicators of good outcomes from the families at risk perspective?
- What are the protective factors at the family level present in families at risk?

METHODS

- **SEMI-STRUCTURED FAMILY GROUP INTERVIEWS** conducted from 2016 to 2019
- **PARTICIPANTS:**
 - families at high risk from the City of Zagreb and the Zagreb County area included in intervention delivered by mental health institution or social services DUE TO THEIR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS
 - 8 families =27 family members (9 parents+ 1 grandmother, 17 children aged 14-18) (overall 11 families in the qualitative part of the study; however 3 low risk families= excluded from the analysis)
- **DATA ANALYSIS:** thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013) (around 300 MS Word pages)

RISKS (high risk families)

- Many risk factors on individual level of family members and child's behaviour problems
- Multiple family risks
- Social/ community risks

ACCUMULATED problems/risks

Last for long period (last 3/5/6...years)/**CHRONIC RISKS**

Many stressors in short period (death of two grandparents, parent's heart attack, divorce after family violence, moving...)

RESULTS (TOPICS/codes)

STAYING TOGETHER DESPITE EVERYTHING

- Awareness they have gone through a lot so far; Survived difficulties; Still there for each other; Maintenance of the basic unit (Mum/child)

SATISFACTION WITH POSITIVE SHIFT/"NOW IS BETTER"

- Changes in parental style; Changes in behaviour problems of the child; Sense of relief; Sense of satisfaction with changes; Now feeling stronger as a family

FAMILY IN THE FIRST PLACE

- Importance of family in members value system/life; Family as the meaning of life; Awareness that members need each other; Believing in their family

MOTHER AS THE FAMILY BACKBONE

- Constantly strives to bring the family together; Tries to solve problems; Takes care of everything; Overwhelmed

PERSISTENCE IN SOLVING PROBLEMS

- Parents trying to fulfil basic family functions; Parents interested in protection and wellbeing of the child; Parents aware they cannot deal with problems on their own anymore; Family desire to overcome problems; Parents looked for help earlier; Family readiness to intervention

OPTIMISM

- Positive life outlook; Belief that solving the problems is possible; Hope for the future

SUPPORT

- Internal (from household members); External extended (family, friends, school, professionals; religious support)

AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMMUNICATION

- Belief that cooperation and good communication are important; Awareness that giving back the trust in each other is important ; Importance of each member effort for family communication

TOGETHERNESS/COHESION IN THE FUTURE

- Unsatisfaction with family relations; Sharing of negative family skin now; Still need to (more time) recover; Togetherness as a core of family resilience; To improve family relations; Learn family solving problems strategies

CONCLUSION

- Phases of family resilience (Lietz, 2006):

(a) Survival phase a time at which these families took one day at a time just trying to figure out how to keep their family going

(b) Adaptation phase which includes the changes that the families made in order to incorporate their new situation into their lives.

It seems that family resilience is circular process (family as complex dynamic system; so is resilience)- progress up and down through the stages depending on the particular situation

- Despite **many/high/accumulated risks** on many levels, the families show **many strengths** as well (**different side of the same coin**)
- **Staying together**/the family didn't fall apart despite all negative experiences so far+**valuing family+family readiness to intervention... (using strengths/positive approach)** could move families during intervention toward **readiness to change (but more time needed due to accumulated and chronic risks under intensive/complex family treatment!)** which is the most important "trigger" for moving the families toward **better outcomes in the future (cohesion/togetherness** – as they state is)
- Changing the **family structure** (roles, power, borders...), **improving communication and family coping strategies** together with using all the coded strengths could lower the identified risk levels, facilitate their capacity to adapt and start functioning better in the future

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION! 😊



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More about the FamResPlan
project

<http://www.famres.erf.hr>