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Introduction

Family resilience is a dynamic process that includes positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity. Although most authors agree that risk, protective mechanisms and a positive outcome are three components inherent to the process of family resilience, there is still no consensus on how to define and measure these components. Many questionnaires exist that measure the protective mechanisms yet there are very few questionnaires that measure both family risk and positive outcomes.

Aim

The aim of this paper is to present a novel approach on measuring risk and positive outcomes in the context of family resilience.

Approach

In this conceptualization of family resilience family risk is defined as a sum of disruptive life changes that have an effect on the family. A positive family outcome is defined as a satisfactory adaptation to a disruptive family change.

Methods

A new measure has been constructed based on the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Two separate forms of the questionnaire have been created: one for adults and one for adolescents. The adolescent form contained 40 events and the adult one 42.

Family members reported events they have experienced in the past year, level of disturbance (disruptive effect) for the family and the level of their satisfaction with the family's adjustment to this event. The disruptive effect was assessed on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 meaning „It had no effect at all.” and 5 meaning „It had a very strong effect.” The level of satisfaction with the adjustment was assessed on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 meaning „very unsatisfied” and 5 meaning „very satisfied”.

Translated excerpt from the scale:

Family event	a) Have you experienced this event in the past year?		b) Does this event still have a disruptive effect on your family?		c) How disruptive has the event been for your family?					d) How satisfied are you with the way your family adapted to this change?				
	NO	YES	NO	YES	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1. Death of a spouse														
2. Divorce														
3. Separation of spouses/partners														

The questionnaire has been tested on a pilot study sample of 172 families from a high school in Ivanić Grad, Croatia. In every family a parent/guardian and a high school student from the first or second year of high school have filled out this questionnaire. Both parents and children signed an informed consent form prior to participation in the study.

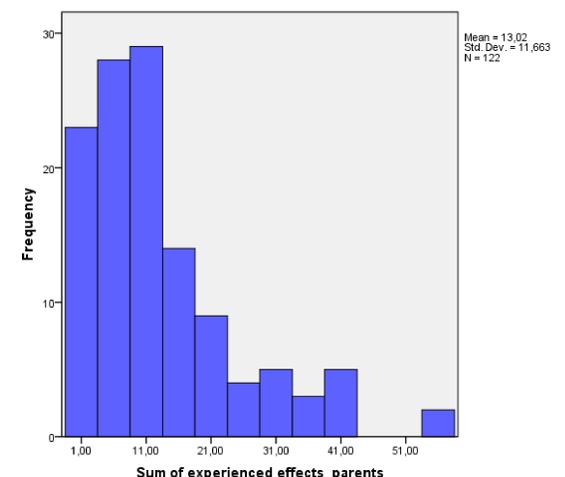
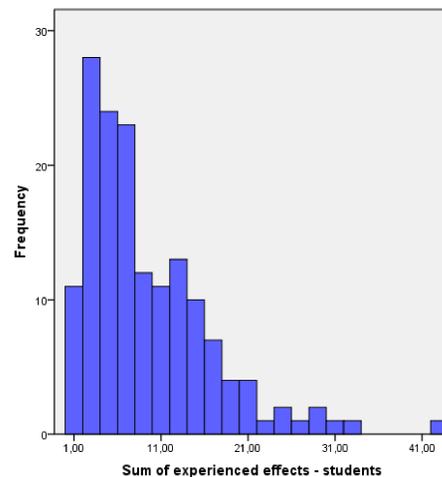
Students filled out the questionnaire during school hours in a classroom setting while adults filled out the questionnaire during parent meetings in school or at home. Forms belonging to the same family were identified on the basis of a unique code given to each family.

Sample

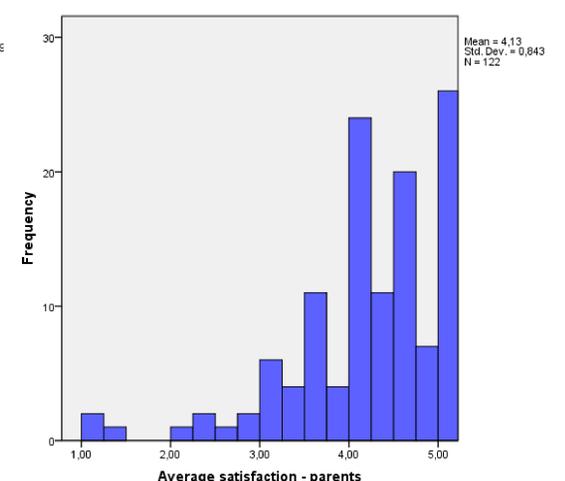
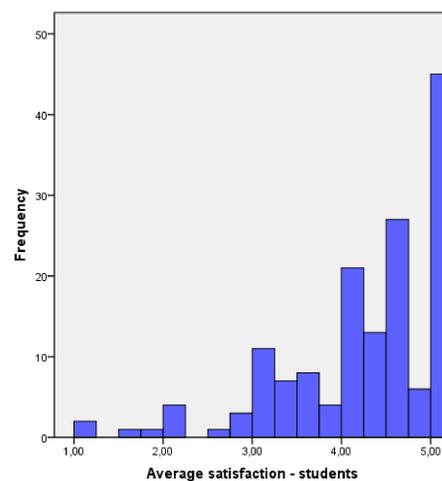
Only families where the form was filled out by both the student and the parent/guardian were included in the analysis. Among the students, 57.5% of them were female, while among parents/guardians there was a more pronounced predominance of females, 77.2%. A majority of adult responders were parents (98.2%), while foster parents (1.2%) and other guardians (0.6%) were minimally represented. The age of the students ranged from 13 to 18 with the majority of the students being between 14 and 16 years of age (97.6%). A large majority of the parents stated that they were married and living with their spouse (83.7%), 8.1% stated that they are divorced, 3.5% were in an extramarital union, 2.9% were widowed and 1.7% were married but separated from their spouse.

Results

The mean number of stressful events as described by students and parents was 4. Even though the mean number is very similar in both groups, the assessments are only weakly correlated (Spearman's rho=0,252; p=0,001) which can be explained by the somewhat different nature of the events listed in the adults and non-adults version of the scale.



Parents perceived a larger effect of the stressful events in average than the children. The correlation between the assessments of students and their parents is also weak (Spearman's rho=0,271; p=0,004).



The mean satisfaction with adaptation was 4 for both students and parents. The correlation between the two assessments was not significant (Spearman's rho=0,114; p=0,236).

To conclude

The study showed this new measure can be a quick and practical way to assess variability in family stress and adaptation yet it needs to be significantly modified. Some items have presented themselves as unclear and confusing to the participants and will have to be phrased more clearly in the future version. The adolescent and adult version of the scale will have to be modified so as to include the same events in the next step to better check for incongruities between children and parents in events perceived.

In further steps, a confirmatory factor analysis will be performed on a subset of events present in both forms to extract family measures of both stress and satisfaction with adaptation.

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