



Children's Perspectives in Promoting-resilience Factors in Family: A Case Study

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Abstract. Resilience is particularly important for children's physical, mental, and academic development, but little research has explored what specific factors families or caregivers should provide to children. This case study attempts to fill that gap. To explore family factors conducive to resilience from the perspective of children. The participants of this case study are a mother and her son, and the data was recorded by hand through interviews. After the researchers sorted out the data, the data was thematically analyzed. Finally, to conclude, other relatives in the family can provide support and help in addition to the parents. Parents should show their affection and love to their children more often so that children believe that their parents are the ones they can turn to when they are frightened; children need to be needed and respected in family life, not just taken care of by their parents.

Keywords: Resilience, Protective factors, Family, Mental health

1 Introduction

Young people, whether at risk or not, need the necessary competence and support to achieve their goals, solve problems, and remain mentally healthy and socially connected [1]. Definitions of resilience are diverse, but a common theme in most definitions is the ability to develop competence and succeed despite severe and prolonged adversity and disadvantage [1]. Resilience has two key components: adversity and adaptation [2]. After reviewing several scholars' definitions of resilience, Johnson concludes that resilience refers to the process and outcome of coping with risk or adversity, which involves the interaction between an individual's internal strengths and external support factors in the social environment [3]. In the past, earlier approaches to the success and failure of children and adolescents' education focused on identifying risk factors and their adverse effects on development and taking measures to counteract these effects [1]. As time goes on, a number of important studies have found that protective factors have a greater impact on children's development than risk factors [1]. Subsequent literature has identified three main factors that protect vulnerable children and facilitate their development into capable and autonomous young people: individual character attributes (social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy and responsibility); family, especially in the early years; and external support systems, such as school [1]. It is

the interaction of these three protective systems in a child's life that ultimately leads to success in the face of adversity [1]. Clearly, among these factors, the strong bond between the child and adult, especially the primary caregiver, is important as they are a source of love and nurturing [3]. However, few studies have explored the specific factors that families and caregivers should provide to enhance a child's resilience from the child's perspective. This study attempts to fill this gap by exploring, in the context of the family, what children perceive they want from their caregivers to provide them with support to increase their psychological resilience. This presentation will describe in turn the researcher's analysis of the previous literature, the methodology of the study, the findings and the analysis of the findings. Finally, the researcher will summarise the study and acknowledge the contributors and supporters of the study.

2 Literature Review

As mentioned above, resilience is promoted by protective factors and inhibited by risk factors [4]. In previous studies, researchers have mainly summarised four frequently mentioned protective factors in families, which are: family structure; warm family atmosphere; positive parenting; and family's sense of belief and expectations for children.

Certain family structure characteristics are associated with protective factors of psychological resilience [4]. Smaller families are more likely to provide an environment conducive to the development of children's psychological resilience [4]. Families with smaller families are less financially stressed, resulting in lower perceptions of stress among family members, which in turn is conducive to children's psychological resilience [4]. Children in families with fewer children are more likely to complete high school than those in families that include four or more children. Older mothers provide more protective resources for their children, thus facilitating the construction of psychological resilience [4]. Older mothers are more likely to have stable incomes and rich life experiences than young mothers in adolescence or early adulthood, thus helping their children to become mentally healthy and highly mentally resilient [4]. Children raised by adolescent or teenage mothers are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural difficulties due to a lack of resources and parenting skills, which can be detrimental to the construction and development of psychological resilience [4].

Factors related to the positive impact of a warm family atmosphere on children's psychological resilience have been repeatedly mentioned, specifically, stable intimate partner relationships, family cohesion, and emotional connections between family members [5][4]. In two-parent families, stable relationships and effective communication between couples provide a positive environment for the development of children's psychological resilience [4]. Children learn to love and be loved from warm and loving two-parent interactions, whereas children from families with higher levels of two-parent conflict have a lower sense of worth and fewer friends [4]. Cohesive patterns of family interaction are one of the most important protective factors [4]. Family members who face adversity together are more likely to reach their goals [4]. They will strengthen and protect resilience by working together, encouraging and supporting each other to cope with crises [4]. When low-income families have high levels of cohesion, children

are more likely to pursue higher education and have access to opportunities that change their lives [4]. Positive emotional connections between family members are also an essential protective factor for children's psychological resilience. Amatea identified four key points for maintaining good family emotional connections: emotional warmth, including appropriate care, providing support for each other and giving adequate respect to family members; positive emotional sharing, meaning avoiding suppression of negative emotions, showing empathy and understanding for clear communication, including keeping promises and expressing intentions clearly; and maintaining positive cooperative relationships, including sharing responsibilities and maintaining fairness and reciprocity [5]. Children are more likely to develop positive attachments and a sense of belonging to the family when there is a strong and positive emotional connection between family members. Alvord & Grados suggest that a sense of belonging and secure attachments with family members are basic human emotional needs, and those positive connections with loved ones are strongly associated with children's adjustment to stress and adversity [6].

Alvord & Grados claim that children who have at least one warm caregiver (e.g., parent or grandparent) who provides positive parent-child interactions are more likely to have psychological resilience [6]. Warm caregivers provide children with timely responsiveness and support, while they also exercise rational and firm control over the child so that the child does not go astray [6]. Parents who regularly participate in activities with their children have been shown to protect their children from externalising behaviour problems [4]. Warm mother-child interactions have been identified to promote cognitive development in preschool children [4]. In addition, studies have shown that parenting styles predict school performance, peer relationships, self-confidence, and mental toughness [4]. Such studies can show that positive parenting styles contribute to positive outcomes for at-risk children [4].

The family resilience perspective suggests that families of psychologically resilient students at different socio-economic levels exhibit unique patterns of beliefs and expectations that are characterised by two things: a strong sense of purpose and a positive and optimistic orientation [5]. Researchers report that caregivers of highly resilient children have a strong sense of purpose and set goals in their lives. At the same time, they expect their children to set goals for themselves and to work hard to achieve those goals [5]. This expectation of purposeful action is achieved by, among other things, talking frequently with their children about future goals in life and the steps necessary to achieve them [5]. Families of mentally resilient children are optimistic about life, and they teach their children to be optimistic about life [5]. Families of mentally resilient children foster an optimistic outlook on life and the confidence and courage to overcome obstacles by focusing on the child's strengths and potential, having pep talks, and providing clear advice [5]. They will encourage the child to take advantage of opportunities and possibilities, but also help the child to accept the impossibility of change [5]. Alvord & Grados (2005) similarly argue that a proactive orientation, i.e., taking a proactive approach in one's own life and believing in one's own effectiveness, has been identified in the literature as a key feature in defining resilience [6].

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Question & Research Aim

The research aim of this case study is to make participants' families more conducive to the development of children's mental resilience. There is a research question: what should children's caregivers do to make the family conducive to children's resilience development.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This case study will be a qualitative study that uses qualitative methods to collect and analyse data.

A paradigm is a worldview or general perspective that guides the research process, specifically positivism, interpretivism, etc [7]. This study is based on an interpretivist worldview. Interpretivism emerged in opposition to positivism in an attempt to understand and explain social reality [8]. Positivism follows the natural science approach of seeking universal features of humans, society, and history, providing explanations that control and predict [8]. Positivism assumes that the world and the conceptual categories we use to describe it are real and capable of objective description [9]. Interpretivism is the opposite, and it is worth noting that Hammond & Wellington assert that there is no single source or view of definitional interpretivism, but there are different sources of reference [9]. Scholars often define interpretivism with reference to both phenomenological and constructivist perspectives [9]. The referenced phenomenological view is that consciousness always points to something [9]. We never see the real world; the world before us is always conditioned by our thoughts and ideas [9]. We need to understand human intentions, and no description is completely objective [9]. The referenced constructivist view argues that we need to actively search for meaning, rather than defaulting to a fixed meaning of the world [9]. The goal of interpretivist research is to understand the meaning of culture and practice for participants [9].

Ontology is the study of existence or a philosophical belief system about the nature of social reality, concerned with the nature of existence and the structure of reality, including what we can learn from this reality and how we can do so [7][8]. Qualitative researchers view the construction of knowledge as generative, where truth is not absolute or seen to be readily and objectively discoverable, but rather contingent and multiple [7]. Subjectivity is acknowledged and valued [7]. Epistemology is a philosophical belief system that deals with how research is conducted, including how the role of the researcher and the relationship between the researcher and participants are represented [7]. Qualitative researchers are not considered neutral or objective in the traditional sense; rather they acknowledge that their personal experiences, careers, beliefs, etc. influence aspects of their research. At the same time, both qualitative researchers and research participants are considered to be constructors of knowledge.

3.3 Research Design

This study is a case study. Gillham asserts that a case can be a person; a group, such as a family; an institution, such as a school; and a community, such as a town [10]. The researcher may also choose to study multiple cases, such as several schools. The case for this study was a family from which both participants were drawn. A case study is an investigation conducted to answer a specific research question, and it involves seeking different kinds of evidence to obtain the best answer to the research question [10]. A key feature of case studies is the use of multiple types of evidence [10]. Gillham argues that generalisations about different groups of people and different institutions in human behaviour are often suspect because there are too many elements that are specific to the group or institution [10]. In conjunction with the research purpose of this study, this is at the same time the reason why the researcher designed this study as a case study. By fully considering the characteristics of the family chosen as a case study for this research, the resulting findings will also be more appropriate for this family than common or generic factors.

3.4 Research Practice

Participants. The participants in this study were two people: the researcher's mother and brother. In later sections, the paper will refer to both participants by their pseudonyms: Maria and Jack. Obviously, the sampling method this paper chose was Convenience sampling, which refers to the selection of close and easily accessible people as participants [11]. Since it does not represent any group other than the participants, it does not seek to generalise to a broader population [11]. Convenience sampling is simple and inexpensive to set up in cases where the researcher does not intend to generalise their findings beyond the sample of interest [11]. This corresponds to the research aim of this study: to make participants' families more conducive to the development of children's mental resilience. Although the results of the study using convenience sampling are not suitable for widespread generalisation, there is an obvious benefit: I can easily identify whether the participants' responses or answers are true.

Research method. The research method used in this study is an interview, in which the researcher and two participants will each conduct a fifteen-minute online interview.

Data analysis. The data analysis method used in this study is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying and summarising themes that minimally organises and describes the details of the data set and explains aspects of the research topic [12]. A theme means some important information or data captured that is relevant to the research question [12]. In thematic analysis, themes in the data are identified in two main ways: inductive or deductive [12]. An inductive approach is a bottom-up approach, meaning that the themes identified are closely linked to the data itself from the participants [12]. Inductive analysis is a process of coding the data without attempting

to fit it into a pre-existing coding framework or the researcher's analytical preconceptions [12]. In other words, inductive analysis is data-driven [12]. This study used an inductive approach to thematic analysis, so the researcher will not guide the participants in any way before or after conducting the interviews. Only the themes were identified and summarised in the participants' responses.

This study follows the six steps summarised by Braun & Clarke when analysing the data: first, familiarise with the data, transcribe the verbal data into text, and read it repeatedly; second, generate an initial code based on the features in the data; third, summarise the initial themes based on the features of the initial code; fourth, revisit and revise the initial themes obtained in the third step; and fifth, further refine the obtained themes and define and order them; sixth, write the results section [12].

4 Results & Findings

The interview with Jack was divided into two broad questions: 1. What factors in your family are effective in helping you to overcome difficulties positively and reduce bad outcomes when you encounter them? 2. How would you like your family to support you when you encounter difficulties in the future? In the interview with Maria, the researcher discussed with her the question: What efforts have you made to help your son overcome difficulties positively and become stronger? Because the core of this study is to explore factors related to mental resilience from the children's perspectives, the overlap or opposition between Maria's response and Jack's response to the first question was only generalised. A thematic analysis of both participants' responses led to three themes being summarized: 1. There are other relatives in the family who can provide support and help besides parents; 2. Parents should express their feelings and love to their children more frequently so that children are confident that their parents are the ones they can turn to in times of shock; 3. Children need to be needed and respected in family life, not just taken care of by their parents;

In addition to the parents, there are other relatives in the family who can provide support and help. In the interview, Jack mentioned that sometimes his parents were not able to provide help in a timely manner when he was in trouble. Sometimes it was because his parents were busy; sometimes it was because the reason for the adversity he was experiencing was his own fault and he was afraid to talk to his parents about it for fear of attracting criticism from them. At this time, he still felt that his family was an important factor in helping him to face adversity positively because he could tell his grandparents and his sister about his experiences and seek their support and help. Similarly, Maria mentioned in her interview that she often asked her parents to stay at home for short periods of time in order to take better care of her children, and Foster et al mentioned in their study that encouraging siblings to help each other and strengthening ties with intergenerational relatives can be effective in protecting the psychological resilience of children whose parents are experiencing psychological problems [13]. The reason for this may be that siblings, as peers, are better able to understand the child's situation and psychological state during difficult times and thus provide at least moral support to them. Intergenerational relatives, such as grandparents, are usually free from

the pressures of survival and therefore have more time and patience. They are able to support the child when the child's primary caregiver, such as the parents, lacks time or energy.

Parents should use more verbal or physical contact to express their emotions and love to their children, so that they can be confident that their parents are the ones they can turn to in times of shock. In the interview, Jack mentioned that his parents could be considered "strict and traditional" parents. They rarely spoke out loud about their love for each other and Jack has had little physical contact with his parents, such as holding hands or hugging, since the age of 6 or 8. Jack claimed that his parents were fixated on the idea that meeting the material needs of their children was loving them and that it was shameful to have too much physical contact with their 'grown-up' children, especially in front of people. Jack says that his parents were obsessed with the idea that meeting the material needs of their children was loving and that it was shameful to have too much physical contact with their 'grown-up' children, especially in front of people. In addition, Jack mentioned that he especially wanted to be touched or comforted by his parents when he was ill or in trouble. He could gain the courage and confidence to solve problems. Maria mentioned in the interview that in order to make the child 'stronger', Jack was encouraged to think of his own solutions to problems and implement them alone. From Jack's answers, it is clear that verbal expressions of love and physical contact from his parents can give him a lot of mental energy. Parents can choose not to support their children with actions when they have difficulties in order to develop their abilities, but it is important for them to encourage them mentally. In his book, Goldman also mentions the importance of parents expressing their emotions in a safe manner to enhance the child's mental resilience and highlights the importance of giving hugs or verbal reassurance to the child to become more resilient [14].

In the interview, Jack mentioned that Maria would often make decisions for him and that this made him feel disrespected. Jack said that he understood that when Maria made decisions for him, it was mostly to make the best decisions for him and to make him happier. However, often, Jack prefers to organise his life as he sees fit, and Jack talks about how he understands that his life experiences and knowledge are not enough to make the best decisions every time, but he is still willing to take responsibility for his own wrong or inappropriate decisions. This strength is conducive to encouraging the courage to overcome difficulties in one's chosen path. In addition, Jack believes that sometimes he is not needed in his own home. In other words, if he disappeared now, everything would be fine with the family, and Jack's beliefs are mainly reflected in the fact that his parents rarely give him the opportunity to contribute to the family, and always take care of him in everyday life. Jack believes that he should also work for the betterment of the family, as this will make him feel useful and thus have the courage and confidence to tackle difficult situations in his life. Cooking together or sharing household chores can enhance the child's sense of belonging to the family and contribute to the development of mental resilience.

5 Conclusion

In summary, this case study explores protective family factors that enhance the child's psychological resilience from the child's perspective. Through interviews with two researchers in a mutual mother-child relationship, three factors were summarised: 1. There are other relatives in the family who can provide support and help in addition to the parents; 2. Parents should show their affection and love to their children more often so that children believe that their parents are the ones they can turn to when they are frightened; 3. Children need to be needed and respected in family life, not just taken care of by their parents. The limitations of this case study are obvious: the findings only apply to the families of the participants. However, it's still a good direction of research. Future research could consider increasing the applicability of the results to a wide range of families.

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