

**TRANSLATION, ADAPTATION AND VALIDATION ON ROMANIAN
POPULATION OF FRAS INSTRUMENT FOR FAMILY RESILIENCE
CONCEPT**

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Abstract: Study aim to present the process of adapting and validating the Romanian version of the 66 – item FRAS psychological instrument (Sixbey, 2005), which includes 6 dimensions that are used in order to define and understand the concept of family resilience: family communication and problem solving, utilizing social and economic resources, maintain a positive outlook, family connectedness, family spirituality, ability to make meaning of adversity. These dimensions were translated into Romanian and verified through the „back and forward” translation technique. The adaptation process conducted tested the factorial structure for the six dimensions solution proposed.

Exploratory Factor Analysis and Internal Consistence Analysis supported the six factor solution and the internal consistence coefficients were greater than .70 for four of the dimensions. Discussions concern the specificity of the Romanian version and suggest new ways of improvements of the instrument

Keywords: family resilience, „back and forward” translation technique, exploratory factorial analysis, internal consistence analysis, Romanian population

Family resilience concept in psychology and its difficulties encountered

Family resilience as a psychological concept is facing a great deal of challenges because of its development and also because it faces technical difficulties when it comes to measuring common realities (e.g. couples, families or organizational groups). The literature offers a big perspective over the description of this concept. One point of view considers that the concept was developed for combining family stress and family strengths literature (Hawley, DeHaan, 1996) and its only difference is that it gives meaning for every people when crossing adversities and when it comes to families, the meaning is similar for the family members, giving them strength to resist. In other words, this perspective tries to delimitate between the existing literature about stress, emotions and regulations strategies dynamics, meaning that when people face instability in their life or adversities they have limited options – they suddenly grow stronger, they use different strategies to become stable again or they give up (Steinhardt, 2012). Furthermore, other authors consider that this concept could rather be approached from a symbolic perspective because members of a family engage in a learning process for sharing and expressing the same set of values and attitudes (Bowen, Martin, Mancini, 2013) meaning that their actions are the product of certain common basis or principles that shape them as a unique family and people from around can see clearly this similarity in their attitude and behavior.

In order to understand it from a psychological perspective and also to use it in practice, authors suggest practitioners to understand first of all that family resilience is approached either as a protective factor or as a process (Walsh, 2012; Saltzman, Lester, Beardslee, Layne, Woodward, Nash, 2011). These perspectives are both possible but it is important to direct it to the right kind of service. For example, social workers could easily categorize types of resilient families through their family characteristics but psychotherapists have to use relevant instrument to determine family resilience and to engage with family members in the therapeutic change process. When clarifying this difference, the literature also gives consistent help. On one hand family resilience as a factor consist of managing stress, to efficiently manage emotions, to collaborate in establishing goal and to solve problems (Simon, Murphy, Smith, 2005) and on the other hand, family resilience as a process means to understand the direction of change or impact and how people adapt in time as a family, how they come to similar points of view.

Another difficulty encountered was the general opinion that this is a transferred concept and not one that practitioners could actually use in daily psychological assistance. Family resilience as a psychological concept has its limits but one of the most important aspects is that it focused on positive outcomes, growth and because it tries to bring back the prior level of stability for family members by integrating the meaning of traumatic event (Walsh, 2012; Marin, 2012; Lee, Lee, Kim, Park, Song, Park, 2004). In describing the basic definitions and recent research, Hooper (2009) also argues that family resilience has many active dimensions that can impact in the positive adaptation process when adversities are faced. For example, parental roles (e.g. warmth, affection, emotional support and structure) could impact when family crosses traumas and family members try to get back on stable grounds, acting as an infinite resource.

Benzies and Mychasiuk (2008) describe ten protective factors from an ecological model, meaning that there are certain characteristics that offer a better chance of recovery and regaining stability. These factors are more directed to children functional development than for all the family members and much of them are basically social information that could impact growth in time.

- Smaller families experience less financial strain, lower stress levels and children from this families have a greater chance to complete high school that those coming from larger families. Also, it seems that older and more mature mothers are able to offer more resources to their children. This kind of *family structure* characteristics foster strength and stability over time in the face of adversities.
- *Intimate-partner relationship stability* – this characteristic had an impact over the environment of the children especially and their development. Few of the characteristics consist in secure and loving interactions. Moreover, when this is missing, meaning that there is a lower level of security and a high level of conflict, children have fewer friends and they experience more moments of instability
- *Family cohesion* refers to a warm, cohesive family interaction pattern, meaning that in order to achieve their goal, family members need to collaborate with each other and to cross adversity together.

- *Supportive parent-child interaction* could impact the children interactions in society and performance at school but also to ensure a quicker recovery or adaptation when they encounter difficulties
- *Stimulating environments* – the amount of resources and time spent in learning processes predicts school performance. Another way of looking at this is the time amount that parents invest in children when it comes in helping them acquire diverse and efficient ways of solving problems
- *Social support* refers to interpersonal interactions and the recommendations are that this could be of many kinds – instrumental, emotional or practical and promotes connectedness by accepting help from others.
- *Family of origin influences* refers to behavioral patterns, attitudes and values that ensures generational transfer of protective factors that parents use daily through normal interactions but without any other effort.
- *Stable and adequate income and adequate housing* give family members a chance to explore without any stress different and new opportunities but also to get back on stability mode if there are any chaotic events. If not, recovery is even harder even if every family member has individual protective factors specific to resilience.

Walsh (2012) analyses family resilience from a systemic view and considers that resilience involves some characteristics that are seen clearly as pieces of a system: it is dynamic, it involves the capacity to adapt positively and to push people to growth. The most important aspect of this theory is held by the meaning of the key processes that the author considers to be vital for resilience and therefore family functionality:

- *Family belief systems* – refers to making meaning of adversity, to keep a positive outlook and transcendence and spirituality (meaning that people have values, purposes, faith and will to transform themselves).
- *Organizational patterns* – refers to have flexibility, a sense of connectedness and stable social and economic resources (therefore fostering security and opportunities when facing adversity).
- *Communication processes* - refers to specific characteristics of the communication between each other: clear and consistent messages, emotional expressivity and collaborative problem solving style.

This three system are considered to practical units especially for practitioners in psychological services, to create relevant assessment instruments and to explore grounded hypotheses in family functionality research domain (Lane, 2011). More important, the systems are different for families and what is functional for some members, is not relevant for positive adaptation for other families.

Short review concerning ways of measuring family resilience

When it comes to measurement options, the scientific literature lacks relevant ways of assessing the common reality of family members (Hawley, DeHaan, 1996) and this is a real

problem also for the family resilience concept. VanBreda (2001) describe the most common ways of clinically assessing family resilience:

- Aggregation model - by computing the average mean of the total scores of each members. This method is known as sensitive to errors and also ignores „the system theory notion of the whole being more than the sum of its parts” (p. 59)
- Pathogenic model – although rare, this approach diagnoses the entire family through the member of the family that got the lowest score, meaning that the practitioner can identify more easily the
- Salutogenic model - also rare, this approach identifies the most resourceful individual from the family – the one that has the highest score defines the level of the family on resilience.
- Consensus model – considering that the agreement between family members enhances coping and resistance abilities for each members and therefore for the entire family system.

Scientists have identified measuring family resilience as a problem also because many of the research studies use stress, dyadic adjustment, strengths and coping assessment tools (Benson, 1997). Recently scientist started to focus on age and development characteristics when understanding family resilience, meaning that in the process of fostering resilience, psychological measurement should take in account the predominant key dimensions. For example, Gillian (1997) suggests that internal sense of worth and competence and 3) a sense of mastery and control by understanding his capacities, abilities, limitations and its own potential.

Fraser (1997) encourages an ecological and multisystemic perspective, describing risk and protective factors mostly for childhood disorders. Other studies are concentrating efforts to identify risk factors (Fraser, Richman, Galinski, 1999) because those are weak spots where social and psychological support can interfere for people, especially when the situations (e.g. domestic violence, family abuse) are so terrible that people do not know even how to ask for help.

The systemic view that Walsh (1998) developed brought to surface the positive aspect of adapting to stressful events and studies are now concentrating efforts to study family empowerment and resilience when people have to recover or they are under treatment for pathological problems (Subandi, 2006).

Because spirituality and personal growth are part of the most important factors in family resilience, Kass and Kass, (2000) developed a package of spirituality and resilience assessment for all ages and types families in order to identify: a) resilient and self-defeating aspects of their worldview; b) whether their spirituality contributes to their resilience; c) the potential value of spiritual and psychological growth.

Addressing the general problem of operationalizing family resilience, DeHaan, Hawley and Deal (2002) proposed a quantitative methodological strategy to analyze family trajectory over time – the configural frequency analysis by recording data from several points in time either by observation or instruments. In order to identify pathways, configuration that are not similar to all the data are identified and named „antitypes” - giving possible explanation for certain abnormal cases and to understand the process of adaptation of the members to the new reality.

Henderson, Benard and Sharp-Light encourage strengths perspective, meaning that parental styles and educational practices that parents use in raising their children could enhance positive adaptation, giving meaning to adversities and also asset development.

Although stress adaptation, coping styles and family dynamics adaptation were predominant as instruments for measuring resilience, authors (Windle, Bennett, Noyes, 2011) report now a higher number of instruments but they also raise the problem of defining resilience as a stable personality characteristic, a strategy of adaptation or as a process.

Sixbey (2005) operationalizes the systemic view of the family resilience model and manages to individualize six relevant and reliable factors as follows:

- Family communication and problem solving – referring to the ability of conveying information, feelings and facts clearly and openly while recognizing problems and carrying out solutions.
- Utilizing social and economic resources – referring to those external and internal norms allowing a family to carry out daily tasks by identifying and using resources.
- Maintaining a positive outlook – which is defined as the ability to organize around a distressing event with the belief that there is hope for the future and persevering to make the most out of their options.
- Family connectedness – the ability to organize and bond together for support while still recognizing individual differences.
- Family spirituality – using a larger belief system to provide a guiding and help to define lives as meaningful and significant
- Ability to make meaning of adversity – defined as the ability to incorporate the adverse event into their lives while seeing their reactions as understandable in relation to the event.

Method

Research problem

Based on psychological practice needs of using a good, reliable instrument for assessing family resilience, the author of the FRAS (Sixbey, 2005) was contacted and asked for permission to adapt and to verify the psychometric qualities of this scale for Romanian population. Family and couples therapy could use this instrument in order to identify positive resources that partners could use to strengthen their relationship or to formulate objectives that concern weak spots and to work on them. The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the accuracy of the scale and to compare the factorial structure of this scale with the original one.

Research main hypotheses

1. To determine the number of psychological dimensions of the family resilience scale and to compare it with the original version created
2. To determine and describe the common variability of the factors
3. To examine the internal consistency of the scale and its existing constructs

Participants

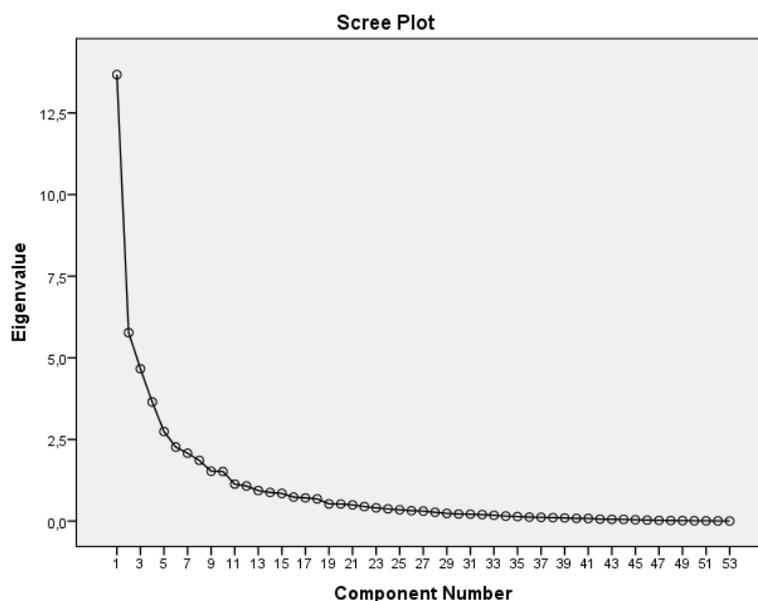
The participants were volunteers students and their family members (N = 118). Factor analysis was conducted using the 118 cases from which 26 were men and 91 of feminine. In

what concerns the age, the people ranged from 18 to 50 years old. This study used a convenience sampling procedure because it was easy to access and they all face family realities and they could give an authentic vision about the relationship and communication patterns from their families.

Results and discussion

First, Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted to verify the factor structure. The analysis assumed that are six dimensions, as presented in the latest model of the instrument proposed (FRAS psychological instrument – Sixbey, 2005). The analysis revealed six main factor that explain more than 60% of the total variance of the entire model matrix and each have loadings with an Eigenvalue greater than 1. The analysis also revealed another six factors with an Eigenvalue greater than 1. The Kaiser-Meyer value is less than 0.6 (.46), meaning that this model needs revision because the factors do not group very well in the model.

Graph 1. Cattell's Criterium



We proceeded to a content analysis to see if the content of these factors corresponded to those extracted from the suggested model and for each of the factors the alpha Cronbach coefficients were calculated. Only one of the factors had a very low internal consistency.

Table 1.

Reliability analysis – Alpha Cronbach Coefficients for each dimension

| Dimension | Alpha Cronbach | Number of items |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| Family communication and problem solving | .907 | 27 |
| Utilizing social and economic resources | .767 | 8 |
| Maintaining a positive outlook | .591 | 6 |

| | | |
|---|------|---|
| Family connectedness | .028 | 6 |
| Family spirituality | .728 | 4 |
| Ability to make meaning of adversity | .633 | 3 |

As one can see, family connectedness revealed a very low internal consistency (.028) and even if items were deleted, this did not proved to be efficient. Considering the instrument as a unitary matrix model, it could be possible that the translation and the meaning of the items needs revision. Family connectedness refers to the ones ability of taking in considerations the individual differences, meaning that family members are able to face adversity and be together but they are making an individually effort in crossing this event. The items in this dimensions are more likely to consider the ability of communicating instead of recognizing every effort that family members are making. Another way of revising this dimension is to recognize the effort of every member by taking in consideration more levels: affective, behavioral, communication and cognitive. Although this dimension tried to reveal the bond created in the family, the author has taken in consideration also the community as part of the influence – „Our friends value us and who we are” – therefor an external evaluation that some of the family member have access to it or not .

The rest of the questionnaire kept the factorial structure from the original version of it and the clinical properties are similar to that one. The aim was to verify this structure but interesting ideas and limits are now available. For example, the exploratory analysis revealed a very well know critique for the family resilience model, that the systemic view is actually a reconsideration of the traditional model for family dynamics and that this model needs revised in order to be considered as unitary matrix. This means that practitioners should take in consideration that these dimensions could be independent from each one when characterizing a family system.

In order to best reveal family resilience as individually psychological concept researchers and future analysis should concentrate the effort in operationalize the difference for this concept: resistance in face of adversity, positive outlook, transformation, meaning and also a sense of growth.

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