

Culturally sensitive social-ecological family resilience model:

A Co-produced mixed-methods study

Long Proposal

Thesis/aims/goals. The ongoing deterioration of economy in Turkey placed families in a context of extreme challenges driven by economic hardship. According to recent national statistics of Turkey, the inequalities gap between rich and poor has been extremely widened, disproportionately impacting families in economic hardship. These families face multiple disadvantages, which makes them vulnerable in life and susceptible to negative impacts of other risks (as seen in Covid-19 period and after 2023 earthquake in Turkey). Within this context, in this study we aimed to explore a family resilience model explaining experiences of these families facing multiple challenges due to social-economic austerity in Turkey. Our goal was to identify key elements of family resilience that is culturally sensitive, social justice oriented and addressing risk and protective mechanisms at different levels of ecology.

Methods. We had an inclusive and diverse dataset collected and analyzed through a mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). We employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies utilizing an integration of inductive and deductive data analyses. In quantitative method, the present sample consisted of 1061 low-income and married individuals residing on the west coast of Turkey ($M_{age} = 43.40$, $SD_{age} = 9.81$, 48.2% male). The inclusion criteria for this part were being married, having at least one child, and having low monthly income (<40,000 Turkish Liras).

Designed as a family resilience research, exposure to multiple challenges indicated risk factors and was assessed using the Economic Measures Index (Conger & Conger, 2002), and Negative Life Events Form (Aydoğan and Ozbay 2015). The outcome was defined by family wellbeing and assessed using the Family Harmony Scale (Kavikondala et al., 2016) and the Family Satisfaction Scale developed by current researchers. The protective mechanisms were categorized into three groups: individual, family, and community factors. Individual factors were measured with the Resilience in Midlife Scale (Ryan & Caltabiano, 2009), the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Diener, 2009), and the Life Satisfaction Scale (Diener et al., 1985). Family factors were measured with the Systemic Family Functionality Scale (Usta et al., 2020); and the Family Coping Index (McCubbin et al., 1995). Community factors were measured using the Perceived Community Support Questionnaire (Herrero & Gracia, 2007). We conducted path analyses in Mplus 8.4 investigating the mediational role of protective mechanisms in the relationship between exposure to multiple economy related challenges and family wellbeing.

In the in-depth aspect of this study, we used a qualitative approach employed interviews and focus groups with a total of 55 family members (11 individual interview, 5 dyadic of parent-adolescents interview, and 3 focus group interviews with 11 participant), and 22 practitioners (mental health practitioners, sociologists, social workers, NGOs and municipal officials; social policy professionals; five focus group). Content analyses were carried out using MAXQDA. Then, we synthesized qualitative and quantitative data by identifying common themes and looking for areas of convergence and divergence patterns across both datasets paying attention to contextual insights and being transparent in the synthesis process.

Preliminary results. The analyses of data confirmed that economic hardship was the most common and important risk factor families faced in the current sample confirming our goal with identifying target population of families facing multiple challenges due to economic hardship. The emerging results confirmed the multi-level spread of protective mechanisms within families as well as more widely in their ecologies (see Figure 1 for a summary). Here we list some of the key factors: a) **Individual characteristics of family members** including self-esteem, self-efficacy, well-being, life satisfaction, coping, and perseverance.) **Positive outlook among family members:** the role of taking an optimistic approach in the relationship between couples

leads to higher family wellbeing; therefore higher family resilience. c) **Spirituality and religiosity of family members.** In this sample, spiritual and/or religious resources offered important protective roles. Within this set of variables, family spirituality had the highest impact. d) **Family problem solving strategies:** Taking actions, sharing and owning strategies they developed as a family, being flexible were found to be the key protective mechanisms. e) **Family connectedness:** bonding between family members. Support mechanisms within family members was key for family connectedness; and therefore family resilience. f) **Family communication:** The ability of family to openly talk about economic hardship, being able to listen, and being patient. g) **Family routines and rituals** were found to be essential protective mechanism for building family resilience. h) **Family roles and boundaries:** The clarity of roles and boundaries within a family was the least protective mechanism within the family system. i) **Social support:** Support received in multiple ways from families of origin, extended family, friends, colleagues, people they know in their communities indicated the need for diversity in receiving social support. Consistent with overall culture, receiving support from family of origin and extended family was most common strategy j) **Community belonging and identification:** Informed mainly by qualitative data, contributing to communities by taking active role and providing support to their communities had a critical role on family resilience. k) **Service support:** receiving and accepting support from third sector and/or government organizations. l) **Regulations for social policy makers:** participants emphasized the important role of equality, diversity and inclusion in their decision-making procedures at local and national levels.

Implications. There is a global need for understanding family resilience in-depth in order to ensure opportunities for best practice in intervention and policy arenas. This study fulfils this information gap in multiple ways. First, the majority of family resilience models have been developed in the West and developed countries and these models do not always operate in the same successful way in non-Western countries. With its place-based approach, this study offers a non-Western approach to family resilience. Second, the co-productive nature of this study emphasized the importance of representing academic, professional and lived experience voices throughout the research project taking a social justice approach to understanding family resilience. With a shared ownership of the project, the intensive involvement of families, practitioners and local decision-makers at all stages of this research was the first in Turkey and one of the few research globally; thus, offers important strategies for future research.

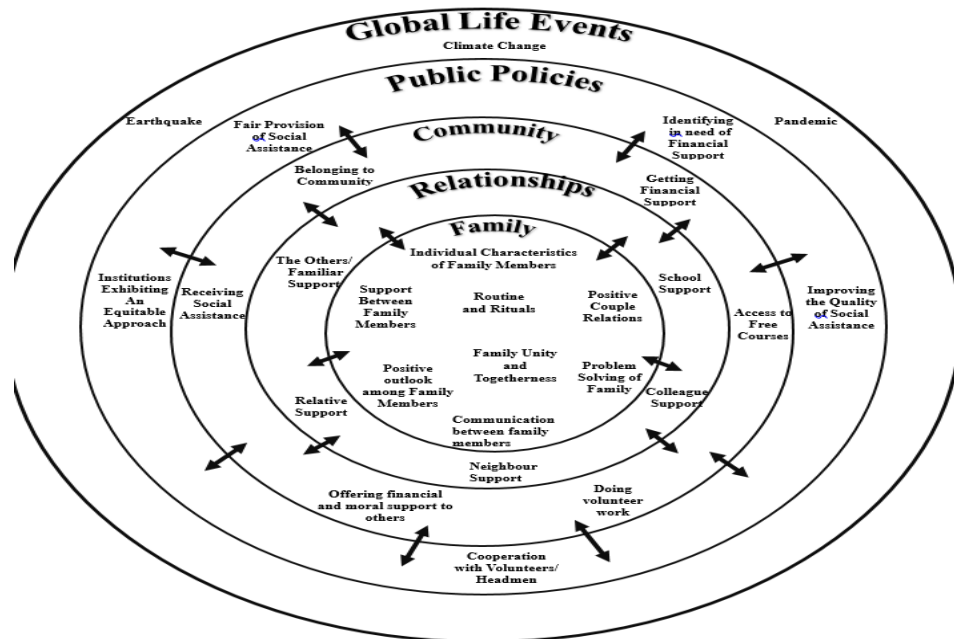


Figure 1: culturally sensitive, social-justice oriented, social ecological family resilience model

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