



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND RESILIENCY IN STUDENTS OF KERMAN UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (2014)

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ABSTRACT

Background & Aim: Students are the future of society. Therefore, recognizing factors affecting their health can be helpful in enhancing their mental health and academic achievement. Accordingly, the aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between social support and resiliency in students. **Methods & Materials:** The statistical population of study consisted of 1509 undergraduate students, were studying in the Kerman University of Medical Sciences in 2014. In this study, 500 students were selected among entire population by using simple random sampling method. They were measured using Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). To analyze data used, in addition to descriptive statistics, inferential statistical methods were used, including: Pearson correlation coefficient, t-test, ANOVA, and linear regression analysis by SPSS software. **Results:** The findings showed a significant correlation between social support and resiliency of students ($P < 0.0001$, $r = 0.51$). Among the subscales of social support, social support of family, social support of important people in life, and social support of friends had the highest correlation with resiliency ($P < 0.0001$), respectively. The regression results cleared that social support predicts 26 % of the changes in resiliency. **Conclusion:** The results of this study indicated that increased social support improves the resiliency of the students, and it helps them to cope with problems and emotions.

KEYWORDS: social support, resilience, students.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological stress is an essential factor of life in the 21st century and dealing with and coping with these factors, especially at a young age, is very important in mental health.^[1] Universities are organizations attracting large number of young population, improve scientific and practical capabilities of them in specified period, and provide trained and expertized forces for society. Academic curriculum, due to several factors, is a period of stress and the common model presented to explain this mental illness is a vulnerability-stress model.^[2] Researchers have found that high levels of stress in students can lead to learning disabilities, psychological problems such as depression and serious health problems in people.^[3] In recent years, paying attention to stress resources and a strategy to cope with them in different groups have been considered and it has been shown that using coping strategies leads to reduced stress.^[4] One of

the coping strategies that help people to cope with stressful situations and be saved from disease-causing disorders is resiliency.^[5] The term resiliency is often used as means "bouncing back" derived from Latin word of "resilio" meaning "to jump past" has taken.^[6] The concept of resiliency has been defined in different ways. Luthar & Cicchetti (2004) consider resiliency as a dynamic process in which individuals, despite with traumatic or tragic experiences, show a positive adaptability.^[7] Resiliency or the ability to adapt positively with adversity and trauma is a psychological issue investigated in associated with an individual's response to cancer, traumatic stress, and problematic situations of life. Some views consider resiliency as a response to a specific event and others consider it as sustainable coping style.^[8] "Resiliency" has been defined as an individual's confidence in his ability to overcome stress, having coping abilities, self-esteem, emotional

stability, and personal characteristics that increase social support from the other people.^[9] Generally, characteristics of resilient individuals are: social competence (such as mutual understanding, cultural flexibility, empathy, compassion, communication skills and sense of humor), problem solving (such as planning, help seeking, critical thinking and creative), autonomy (such as identity, self-efficacy, self-awareness, mastery on tasks and duties, and adaptive resignation adaptive of concepts, maladaptive or negative conditions), sense of purpose, and belief in a bright future (targeting, educational aspirations, optimism, faith, and spiritual ties).^[10] Another variable considered by specialists in stress and resiliency issues is social context affecting the resiliency of social support.^[1] Social support has been defined as degree of enjoying affection, companionship and attention of family members, friends, and others.^[11] Barrera et al described two concepts in investigating social support: 1. Received Support 2. Perceived support.

Received support is degree of an individual enjoying of obvious supports such as objective help and assistance by family and friends that can be specified by measuring number of supporters and degree of access of an individual to different types of social support. Perceived support means perception of accessibility and adequacy of different types of support, or in other words, a sense of acceptance in a group, a sustainable sense of mutual interaction occurs in a specific period.^[12] Perceived social support matter theorists acknowledge that we cannot consider all social relationships with others as social support. In other words, relationships are not source of social support, unless one perceives them as the source available or suitable to meet his needs. Scales of perceived social support focus on as cognitive assessment of an individual his environment and confidence level that help and assistance will be provided form him, if needed.^[13] Studies on relationship between social protection and resiliency, for example by Carbunel, demonstrated that resiliency has relationship with social support among youth at risk of emotional problems, and development of resiliency processes can be helpful in reducing the impact of emotional and psychological stress on adults.^[14] In an extensive review of studies conducted in the field of resilience by and Coatsworth Masten during 25 years, it was found that supportive factors are effective in resiliency on health of people (15). Rutter found that teenage good communication with at least one of the parents makes him resistant to the occurrence of certain risk behaviors.^[16] Due to the impact of social support on resiliency, this study was conducted posing the question that how much social support can predict resilience in students.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The kind of study was correlational-descriptive study. The population of study consisted of 1509 undergraduate students in Medical Sciences University of Kerman in

2013-2014. Total sample size of study was estimated 306 subjects at 95% confidence level using Cochran formula. However, in order to precision of study, 500 students were selected among whole population using simple random sampling method.

Research Tools

Three questionnaires were used in this study as follows:

Public Characteristics of respondents

In this section developed by the researcher, individual and demographic characteristics of respondents are questioned.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) is 12-item tool developed to assess perceived social support from three sources, including family, friends and other important people in life by Zimet et al. (1988). Multidimensional scale of perceived social support assesses social support perceived by the subject in each of the three areas mentioned above and involves three subscales of family, friends and other important people.^[17] Salimi et al. obtained validity and reliability of this scale in Iran, so that its reliability was obtained 0.86, 0.86, and 0.82 for each of the dimensions using Cronbach's alpha, and its validity was recognized appropriate using factor analysis.^[18] In this study, the validity of internal consistency for the total test was $r=0.85$ using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the sub-scale of family social support was obtained $r=0.82$, sub-scale of social support of friends was obtained $r=0.88$ using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and sub-scale of social support of other important people was obtained 0.084 using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. These results indicate good reliability of questionnaire. According to the mid-point of scale, higher scores from 3.5 were defined as high social support and scores lower than 3.5 were defined as low social support.^[17]

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale contains 25 questions developed by Connor & Davidson (2003) to measure the coping power against pressure and threats. For each question, whole gradation of five options was considered from zero (completely wrong to always true) to four (always true) that is scored from zero (false) to four (always right). This scale measures although various aspects of resilience, it has a total score. Therefore, the whole test scores are between 0 and 100.^[10] Higher scores indicate more resilience of subject. Score 80 or higher is considered as very resilient, 65 to 80 score is considered as better than most people, 50 to 65 is considered as low but appropriate, 40 to 50 indicates that you are struggling, and 40 or lower shows that you need help.^[19] This scale was normalized by Mohammed in Iran in 2005. He used Cronbach's alpha to calculate the reliability of Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and reported reliability coefficient of 0.89 in this regard.^[20] In

a study conducted by Samani, Jowkar, and Sahraghard (2007) entitled as resilience, mental health, and life satisfaction, reliability was found as 0.78 using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.^[21] In the present study, internal consistency reliability was found 0.91 using Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.91, indicating appropriate reliability of this questionnaire. In this study, to analyze the data and test the hypotheses based on levels of measuring variables, in addition to using descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation coefficient, t-test, ANOVA and linear regression analysis by SPSS 18 software were used.^[18]

RESULTS

In this study, 500 students of Medical Sciences Kerman University were evaluated. The mean age of these students was 20.7 ± 1.55 . Most of students were female (76%), single (86.2 %) and dormitory (70.2 %). Results showed that the mean score of resiliency was 56.8 and mean score of social support was 4.9. Thirteen percent of students did not perceive suitable social support for themselves and 32% of them did not suitable resiliency. In addition, social support of family, other important people, and friends obtained the highest values among sub-scales of social support among students, respectively. This means that the majority of the students perceive the greatest social support from family, while they perceive the lowest social support from friends.

The relationship between social support and its sub-scale and resiliency

Variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	The coefficient of determination	Significance level
Resiliency			
Total social support	0.51	0.26	< 0.0001
Social support of family	0.42	0.18	< 0.0001
Social support of friends	0.37	0.14	< 0.0001
Social support of other important people	0.4	0.16	< 0.0001

Results Tables show that there is a significant positive relationship between social support and resiliency ($p < 0.0001$ $r = 0.51$), so that by increasing the scores obtained from social support scale, scores of resiliency also increase. In fact, students who had perceived higher social support for themselves had a higher level of resiliency. In addition, among the subscales of social support, family support had the most relationship ($p < 0.0001$ $r = 0.42$). The findings also show that social support can predict 26% of resiliency changes.

To examine the significance difference of mental health and social support scores in demographic variables, t test was used. Then, linear regression was used to examine the impact of each independent variable by controlling other variables.

Gender: examining the resiliency, social support, and its sub-scales showed that there is no significant relationship between resiliency and gender of students in terms of gender ($p > 0.05$). However, significant correlation was found between social support ($p = 0.01$) and gender and sub-scale of social support of family and gender of students ($P = 0.001$) so that female students perceived more social support for themselves than male students. Entering of variables to regression indicated the relationship between social support and gender ($P = 0.01$) and subscales of social support and gender ($P = 0.001$) so that the mean score of social support was 0.27 and mean score of social support of family was 0.42 higher in female students compared to male students.

Marital status

Examining the resiliency, social support and its sub-scales showed that there is no significant relationship between resiliency and marital status of students ($p > 0.05$). However, significant correlation was found between social support and marital status and sub-scale of other social support of important people in life and marital status of students ($P < 0.0001$) so that married students perceived more social support for themselves than male students. Results of regression indicated the relationship between social support and marital status ($P = 0.009$) and subscales of social support and marital status ($P < 0.0001$) so that the mean score of social support was 0.38 and mean score of social support of other important people in life was 1.22 higher in married students compared to single students.

Parental death

Examining the mental health, resiliency, social support and its sub-scales showed that there is no significant relationship between resiliency and social support and parental death of students ($p > 0.05$). However, among sub-scales of social support, significant correlation was found between social support of family and parental death of students ($P = 0.01$) so that students who have not experienced parental death perceived more social support for themselves than other students. Results of regression indicated the relationship between sub-scale of social support and parental death experience ($P = 0.003$) so that the mean score of social support of family among students who experienced parental death was 0.67 lower than those who experienced it.

DISCUSSION

Students are the future of society and hence identifying protective factors affecting health can be effective in enhancing mental health and academic achievements of students. This study was conducted to determine the relationship between social support and resilience in students. The results showed that social support has a positive correlation with resiliency in students. It means that increase of social support leads to increased resiliency in students. This finding is consistent with findings of studies conducted by Khabaz et al.^[1], Hass & Grydon^[22], Benard^[23] and Brown^[24]. Bernard (2004) considers supportive and care relations as major source of support of resiliency. He states that people supplying this type of support are influential people that provide intimacy, care, and attention and help an individual to recognize his capabilities and resources better. In his view, an aspect of the social environment that leads to increased resiliency is to provide opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.^[23] By examining the sources of resiliency among 44 young people left by their parents showed that a combination of supportive factors include a sense of competence, having goal for the future, collaboration in social service activities are effective in their adaptation and resiliency and overcome to this inequality. In addition, presence and assistance of educators, therapists, and members of the caring institutions as well as having peers that an individual can exchange information with him are key factors in the resiliency and adaptability of people left by parents.^[22] The results of this study showed that 87% of students perceive appropriate social support think for themselves. Additionally, findings showed that perceiving value of social support from family is more than friends and other important people in life. Riahi et al.^[25], Tabrizi and Razi^[26] respectively showed in their studies that 56% and 56.6% of students have high social support and they perceive the greatest social support from family and they perceive the lowest value from friends. Due to fact that the students analyzed all were at a young age, so it is expected that at this age, a strong emotional relationships with friends and special people in their lives to be more important. It seems that the Iranian family friendly atmosphere is still considered a valuable resource for social support of children. According to the findings of the study, there was a significant relationship between gender and perceived social support, which means that female students perceive more social support for themselves than male students. In explaining this finding, it should be said that while women raise out their emotional problems mainly outside the family context, due to social perceptions according to their gender role expected of them, it may difficult for men to accept anxieties, fears and depression. Supposing disability for men coping with problems and pressures may be considered as sign of weakness, so they probably cannot use supporting network advantages, since they fear to lose their status. Women have a wider social network that includes many of the other women.^[28] The findings of the study also consistent with the results of studies

conducted by Landman et al.^[29], Peirovi et al.^[30] and Bakhshipour et al.^[31] The results showed that among types of social support, social support of family is more important for female students. In fact, this study showed that female students perceive higher social support for themselves compared to male students. The results emphasize the importance of high quality relationships between the girls and their families. If girls have no satisfactory relationships with their family, relationships with friends or a particular person will not be able to compensate for it. This finding is consistent with study of Ghaedi and Yaghubi.^[13] The findings of this study showed that there is no statistically a significant relationship between resiliency and gender of students consistent with Hartman et al.^[33], Vetter et al.^[34] and Pour Afzal et al.^[35] In explaining this finding, it can be said that students investigated in this study were undergraduate students of Medical Science University, they are at same age range, and they have similar experiences that can be reasons of this study. In comparing social support among single and married students, it was revealed that the mean scores of social support and social support of important people in life in married was more than single students that this difference was statistically significant. To explain these findings, it can be deduced that married students perceive higher social support for themselves after marriage due to formation of new family network and communication. The results of Peirovi et al. (30) and Bakhshipour et al.^[31] showed that married students perceive higher social support for themselves compared to single students, but this difference was not statistically significant. The findings of this study showed that the mean of social support of family for students who experienced parental death is lower than students who did not have the experience that this difference was statistically significant. To explain these findings, can be deduced that it is clear that lack of parent is a reason to lower social support from the family. Stroebe et al. noted that social support acts as a moderator of the bereavement experience. People who experience parental lack, when they enjoy social support, they will cope with them better and recovery from bereavement experience is done more easily. Social support also has a significant impact in reducing symptoms of depression after bereavement.^[36] Findings of this study showed that while resiliency and social support in students who experienced parental death is lower in comparison to other students, but this difference is not statistically significant. In explaining this finding, it can be concluded that small sample size of students who experienced parental death can be a reason in this regard.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that increasing social support leads to increased resiliency in students that it can help them to cope with problems and emotions.

Recommendations

It is necessary that social studies experts (especially in the area of family) to examine strategies to increase social support of family as the most important source of support. As the relationship between social support and resiliency of students is suggested, training courses is recommended to be held as solution to increase social support in students. It is recommended that a study to be conducted titled as the effects of social skills training on resiliency.

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