

# An Examination of Psychological Resilience and Remembered Parental Care among University Students

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## Abstract

In this study, the aim was to examine the relationship between the psychological resilience and remembered parental care of college students in young adulthood and whether this relationship varies according to gender and perceived socio-economic level. A correlational model was used as a research model. For data collection purposes, “a personal information form,” the “Psychological Resilience Scale for Adults” and the “Parental Bonding Instrument” were used by the researchers. The age range of individuals involved in the study ranged from 18 to 26. The research results were tested with SPSS 21. A strong positive relationship was found between remembered mother and remembered father care, while a moderately positive relationship was found between psychological resilience and remembered mother and father care. One of the findings is that there was a significant difference between the care of mothers and of fathers as remembered by male and by female participants. In addition, the study found that there was a statistically significant difference in the level of remembered maternal care, remembered paternal care, and psychological resilience in terms of perceived socioeconomic level. Based on these results, it can be argued that perceived socioeconomic status, which refers to the perception of the presence of means one possesses, had an impact on the individual’s psychological resilience in a direct proportion. In line with the findings, the significant correlation between remembered mother’s care and remembered father’s care can be shown as a long-term contribution to the positive effect on children of the rapport between mother and father. Alongside the fact that

the remembered mother's and father's care was an important variable in predicting the factors that affected the psychological resilience of undergraduates, it is noted that democratic, caring and warm paternal attitudes are important, rather than the traditional sex-oriented attitudes. Hence, one can argue that it is of importance that fathers and fathers-to-be have increased awareness of their roles in the long-term development of psychologically resilient youngsters, by means of taking on more responsibilities in childrearing.

**Keywords:** Psychological resilience, Remembered mother care, Remembered father care, Attachment, University students

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Introducing the Problem*

Psychological resilience is a skill that supports an individual in being able to adjust and cope, heal, and thus be competent and self-confident in the face of a difficult situation (Aktu, 2019). Psychological resilience, of which the importance is emphasised as a factor that protects psychological immunity (Hase, 2004; Gürsu & Ay, 2019), is a developmental and dynamic process (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). There are risks and protective factors for psychological resilience. Difficulties can create stress in the individual. What facilitates an individual's psychological adaptation to this situation, despite these stressors, is his/her psychological resilience (Şahin, 2014). Individuals who have psychological resilience have a number of characteristics, such as recreation, experiencing positive emotions, participating in physical activities, optimism and reliable social support (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2014). Psychological resilience is also nurtured by family support and resources, individual structure and characteristics, and environmental structure (Haase, 2004; Gizir, 2007; Öz & Yılmaz-Bahadır, 2009). Psychological resilience shows that the individual can go back to the state of equilibrium before the negative experiences by using positive emotions, and this shows that positive emotions play an important role in developing sources for coping in the face of negative events (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

The first effort an individual makes to improve their own well-being on earth is the first cry they utter. The human being whose will begins to develop, on the one hand, and who adapts to an existence on earth on the other, begins shaping their development through interaction with their environment and becoming an individual. The experiences and impressions in the first years of life have a key determinant role on the individual and their life (Atwool, 2006). This concept, which is called bonding, constitutes the main frame of their communication and relationship with themselves, with others and with the world (Erözkan, 2004). The basic framework shaped in this way can always be felt in the judgments and reactions of the individual. The relationships of the human being with others are critical elements in their growth and development as a unique bio-psychosocial person (A. E. Ivey, M. B. Ivey, Myers, & Sweeney, 2013). Therefore, this developmental task, which is also expressed as the basic sense of trust in human development and bonding, and accordingly the source of psychological resilience, is of clear importance (Benard, 1991).

Basic confidence, self-esteem, life skills and the effort to make room for one's existence in

the world can be expressed in a variety of ways. The architects of the basic sense of trust and self are the caregivers (A. E. Ivey, M. B. Ivey, Myers, & Sweeney, 2013). Therefore, it can be said that every new place and experience can be affected by the individual's view of the parents, who are main caregivers (Bindal, 2018). This effect will accompany the individual throughout their life and it may affect their perceptions of themselves, of others and of the world, while the individual demonstrates their existence in every environment they enter. Universities are one of the most important social institutions where the individual is tested with many new roles and responsibilities and spends a significant part of their years between adolescence and adulthood. Although many factors affect the psychological resilience of individuals in the university environment, one of the most important of these are the bonding patterns they bring with them when leaving their root families. With adolescence, the bond between the young and their families is no less important; only their dependence on their parents decreases. In this struggle for independence against the parents, the feeling of trust shaped by the parental relationship is transferred to their relationships with their peers (Kesebir, Kavzoğlu, & Üstündağ, 2011). This struggle for independence is one of the steps taken to find the personality and identity of the adolescent. A healthy adjustment to university life supports the satisfaction of the psychological needs of the individual and thus affects the psychological resilience of the individual (Kardaş, 2017). Accordingly, styles of bonding to parents are felt in this new, expanding social environment, and in the relationship styles and life skills of the young person. In this respect, it is important to examine the relationship between university students' psychological resilience and remembered parenting care.

There are studies concerning the relationship between bonding and psychological resilience (Benard, 1991; Kesebir, Kavzoğlu, & Üstündağ, 2011; Vergili, 2018; Bindal, 2018). There are also studies stating that individuals who bond securely are more willing to seek social support in solving their problems than those who bond insecurely (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). Willingness to accept this social support is one of the important aspects that support the psychological resilience of the individual (Friborg, Hjemdal, Rosenvinge, & Martinussen, 2003).

Individuals' levels of well-being are closely related to the parental attitudes they perceived in their childhood (Kermen, 2013). It can be said that individuals who assert that they received enough care from their families in all stages of their life, including their childhood, have more positive future perceptions, have more social resources and have higher psychological resilience (Vergili, 2018). The university years, when the skills related to the roles of adulthood and responsibilities are tested separately from the family's safe environment, are full of many new experiences affecting students' psychological resilience. High psychological resilience in university life is important, due to the fact that it can be an important factor in adaptation to university (Kaba & Keklik, 2016) because, while psychological resilience has an influence on the psychological and social adaptation of the young person, it increases their commitment to the educational life with regard to their future and goals (Bernard, 1991).

University life can bring various difficulties along with many opportunities for young people. This new, different and unknown environment requires university students to take on many responsibilities alone, having left the family. Some problems experienced by the young

person during their preparation for university, and the many difficulties they bring from the family environment, can also fall on the shoulders of the young person starting university life (Kacur & Atak, 2011).

It is important to determine the relationship between the state of psychological resilience in university students and the remembered parenting care in order to be able to take measures to increase the psychological resilience of university students and, in this sense, to plan effective psychological counselling interventions in psychological counselling services which aim to ensure and protect the well-being of the individual. For this reason, in this study the relationship between the psychological resilience of university students and remembered parenting care, and the relationship between resilience and their perceived socio-economic status, were both investigated.

## **2. Method**

This research adopts a correlational model, which examines the relationship between the psychological resilience of university students and the remembered parenting care in terms of various variables are studies which try to reveal the existence of co-change between two or more variables and the extent of this change (Creswell, 2019).

### *2.1 Participants*

A random sample of 201 students were studied. The students, who attend various faculties of a state university which is within the scope of the research, were all aged between 18 and 26. According to the descriptive statistical results of the study group, 49.8% of the participants were female and 50.2% were male. In addition, 37.3% of the participants were in the 18-20 age range, 44.8% in the 21-23 age range and 17.9% of them were in the 24-26 age range. According to the grade level they were studying, 29.9% of the participants were 'freshmen', 33.8% were sophomore, 24.4% were junior and 11.9% were senior students. With regard to perceived socioeconomic level, 26.9% of the participants were low, 33.8% of them were moderate and 11.9% of them were high.

### *2.2 Data Collection Tools*

**Personal Information Form:** The questions on gender and perceived socio-economic level were included in the Personal Information Form in order to identify the individuals who answered the scales.

**Parental Bonding Instrument:** This is a 25-item, 4-point Likert-type scale consisting of care and overprotection dimensions, which also expresses the child bonding relationship (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979). This scale was developed based on Bowlby's attachment theory. Bowlby associated inadequate parenting with care and control/protection dimensions. care baby not providing adequate care, not meeting their psychological and physical needs, It includes the meanings of insulting, criticizing or rejecting. The concept of control also refers to overprotecting, controlling, and not supporting the child's specificity or contains the meaning of blocking. This scale is based on the individual's retrospective evaluation of their relationship with their parents for the first 16 years of life (Parker et al., 1979). It was adapted

into Turkish by Kapçı and Küçükler (2006). The care dimension of the scale includes 12 items, while the overprotection dimension includes 13 items. This two-factor structure can be evaluated as two separate scales and the total score for the two subscales can be calculated separately. In contrast to the increase of the score in the care dimension, the decrease of the score in the overprotection dimension indicates a positive parental attitude and healthy bonding (Kapçı & Küçükler, 2006).

**Resilience Scale for Adults:** This scale, which was developed by Friborg, Hjemdal, Rosenvinge, and Martinussen (2003), consists of 37 items and 5 subscales: personal power, structural style, social competence, family cohesion and social resources. The items in the personal power sub-dimension of the scale, which were revised by Friborg, Barlaug, Martinussen, Rosenvinge, and Hjemdal (2005) afterwards, were divided into two separate sub-factors, namely self-perception and future perception. In this way, it was concluded by the researchers that the Resilience Scale for Adults expressed resilience better with six sub-factors. It was adapted to Turkish by Basım and Çetin (2011). The theoretical structure on which the scale was based involves orientation and harmonisation.

### *2.3 Procedure*

The implementation was carried out with the participation of volunteers by providing the necessary explanations about the purpose and content of the study in the free time of the students (outside class hours) in various faculties in a state university. Distributing the scale forms, reading the instructions and filling in the scales by participants took approximately 15 minutes.

### *2.4 Data Analysis*

First of all, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used for the distribution of the data. As the analysis indicated that the data were not distributed normally, the skewness and kurtosis values were also examined. It was seen that these values were not between -2.00 and +2.00 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012), therefore it was decided that the data did not show normal distribution and non-parametric tests were used in the analysis. For this reason, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine whether the difference between two independent averages was significant. The significance of the difference between the means of more than two samples was analysed using the Kruskal-Wallis test analysis. The existence of a linear relationship between the data was evaluated by Spearman Rank Correlation analysis. In all tests, the significance level was accepted as  $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$  in a confidence interval of 95%.

## **3. Results**

Below, the relationship between the view of the mother, the view of the father and the psychological resilience was calculated by the Spearman Rank Correlation coefficient. The findings obtained after this analysis are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Spearman Rank Correlation Analysis performed to determine the relationship between the remembered mother's care, the remembered father's care and the psychological resilience level

	1	2	3
The remembered mother's care (1)	-	0.867*	0.617*
The remembered father's care (2)	0.867*	-	0.608*
Psychological resilience (3)	0.617*	0.608*	-

Note. \*  $p < .01$ .

A correlation coefficient between 0.30 and 0.69 refers to a moderate correlation, while a correlation of 0.70 and above refers to a high correlation (Çokluk, Şekercioğlu, & Büyüköztürk, 2012). According to the findings of the Spearman Rank Correlation Analysis, there is a strong correlation in the same direction between the remembered care of the participants' mothers and that of the fathers ( $r_s = .867$ ). There is also a moderately positive relationship between the remembered care of the mother and psychological resilience ( $r_s = .617$ ). In addition, there is also a moderately positive relationship between the care of the father that the participants remember and their psychological resilience ( $r_s = .608$ ).

The results of the Mann Whitney U test, which was used to determine whether the participants' remembered mother's care, remembered father's care and psychological resilience differed according to gender, are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. U-test results of the remembered mother's care, the remembered father's care, and psychological resilience by gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
The remembered mother's care	W	100	108.47	10846.50	4303.500	.070
	M	101	93.61	9454.50		
The remembered father's care	W	100	110.84	11084.00	4066.000	.017*
	M	101	91.26	9217.00		
Psychological resilience	W	100	95.64	9564.00	4514.000	.194
	M	101	106.31	10737.00		

Table 2 shows whether the remembered mother's care, remembered father's care and psychological resilience changed according to gender. According to the results of the Mann Whitney U test, it was found that gender showed a significant difference between female and male participants in favour of female participants in relation to the remembered father's

interest ( $U = 4066.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ). According to this finding, it can be said that the gender of the participant affects the level of remembered father's care.

The Kruskal Wallis test was conducted in order to test whether the participants' remembered mother's care, remembered father's care and psychological resilience differed according to the perceived socio-economic level. Afterwards, the Mann Whitney U test was conducted to determine among which groups the difference detected between groups was significant. The findings are presented below, in Table 3.

Table 3. Kruskal Wallis test results

	Perceived Socio-economic Level	N	Mean Rank	sd	$\chi^2$	p	Significant Difference
The remembered mother's care	Low	54	66.38	2	27.225	.000*	Low-Medium Low-High
	Medium	72	108.76				
	High	75	118.48				
The remembered father's care	Low	54	67.57		24.629	.000*	Low-Medium Low-High
	Medium	72	111.03				
	High	75	115.44				
Psychological resilience	Low	54	82.57		9.316	.009*	Low-High
	Medium	72	101.01				
	High	75	114.25				

Note. \*  $p < .05$ .

When Table 3 is analysed, it is found that remembered mother's care [ $\chi^2(2) = 27.225$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ], remembered father's care [ $\chi^2(2) = 24.629$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ] and psychological resilience [ $\chi^2(2) = 9.316$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ] differ according to the perceived socioeconomic level.

In terms of remembered mother's care and remembered father's care, the differences between the participants who stated their perceived socioeconomic status as low and the participants who stated their perceived socioeconomic level as medium, and also the participants who stated this as high, were significant.

In the psychological resilience variable, a significant difference was only found between the participants who stated their perceived socioeconomic level as low and those who stated their perceived socioeconomic level as high.

#### 4. Discussion

It was concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between remembered mother's care and remembered father's care and the psychological resilience of the university



students who participated in the study. It can be said that the positive parental attitudes and behaviours that the university students who participated in the study perceived about the first sixteen years of their lives and the thoughts about the parents formed accordingly, significantly and positively affected the psychological resilience of the participants in the study. The positive acceptance, close and warm care, and support that individuals perceive from their parents can instil self-confidence and self-esteem, increase their tolerance of uncertainties and support them in their attempts to develop problem-solving skills. In addition, these qualities provide experiences that give confidence to the individual in seeking support from outside. All these positive experiences are closely related to the strength of the basic bonding experience with parents (Kılıç, 2014; Demir, 2016; Vergili, 2018). The presence of sensitive and supportive bonding figures in the first years of life supports the social and emotional competence of the individual, by providing a positive representation of the self and others (Trak, 2016; Vergili, 2018). In other words, the bonding figures internalised by secure bonding are individual characteristics that determine the psychological adjustment and coping skills of the individual in every new environment and task throughout their life. In the literature, there are studies stating that there is a significant relationship between bonding and psychological resilience (Atik, 2013; Çakmak, 2018; Vergili, 2018). Similarly, Robbins, Kayee, and Catling (2018) state that the relationship with parents is among the determinants of psychological resilience during the university years. There are also studies stating that there is no relationship between bonding and psychological resilience (Haleplioğlu, 2017). A sound atmosphere in which a child is raised and a healthy relationship between parents and the child can only be developed and maintained through a healthy communication between those individuals (Mercan & Tezel Şahin, 2017). According to the research results, the correlations between remembered mother's care, remembered father's care and psychological resilience were arguably significant at almost the same level. Hence, the fact that those participants are from warmer, more caring and accepting family environments might have positively affected their psychological resilience levels. In their study on the psychological effects of parental attitudes and behaviours, in line with the studies from the West, Sümer, Gündoğdu Aktürk, and Helvacı (2010) stated that the participants who evaluated their family environment as warm and accepting had higher scores of self-worth compared to those who evaluated it as authoritarian and oppressive. The former described themselves as being more autonomous and had higher overall rapport. Taken together, one can argue that raising parents' awareness on how their attitudes and behaviours affect the long-term development and psychological resilience of their children can serve to raise young people with higher psychological resilience. These results can also be tested through studies to be performed with participants who have been raised in one-parent families or extended families.

In addition, it was found in the study that there was a positive and significant relationship between the remembered mother's care and remembered father's care of university students. Again, according to the results of the research, there was a significant and positive relationship between the thoughts on the mother and the thoughts on the father about the first 16 years of the participants' lives. The harmony between parents and the style of conflict resolution strategies affected the emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses of their



children and the level of harmony between parents was reflected in the relationship between mother, father and child (Sağkal & Türnüklü, 2017). Because of this atmosphere, shaped by the relationship between the spouses, it can be said that there is a significant and positive relationship between remembered mother's and remembered father's care (Erel & Burman, 1995).

According to the findings, it was found that while remembered father's care differed significantly according to gender, remembered mother's care and psychological resilience did not differ according to gender. The fact that female participants had higher meanings for remembered father's care compared to male participants in the study can be interpreted as the female participants perceiving their fathers as more caring, supportive and accepting. Similarly, Tuncer and Aksoy (2017) stated in their study on adolescents that male participants found their fathers less accepting and less supportive. Abacı (2018) also concluded in a study with undergraduates that the male participants had significantly higher paternal rejection levels compared to the female participants. A definition of the paternal role and what men make of the paternal role can be substantially decisive in determining the role they will assume in childrearing within the family (Mercan & Tezel Şahin, 2017). It can be concluded from these findings that a paternal role which is harsher, more distant and more authoritarian towards boys compared to girls is more common within society. This might be due to the fact that traditional sex-oriented judgments are reflected in parental attitudes during childrearing (Aytekin, Artan, Kangal, Çalışandemir, & Özkızıklı, 2016).

Elder, Van Nguyen and Caspi (1985) found in their study that the well-being of teenage girls was negatively affected by the rejecting parental attitudes of their fathers. In a study on the emotional accessibility of parents, which is closely associated with the perceived maternal and parental care, Eroğlu (2019) concluded that a father's emotional accessibility positively predicted psychological resilience. Differently, in this study, the correlation between father's care and psychological resilience differed statistically significantly only among the female participants. Accordingly, in this study, while the psychological resilience in terms of gender was expected to be significant in favour of women who remembered their fathers as more accepting and caring, the results showed that there was no difference between men and women. In addition, in the literature there are findings indicating that psychological resilience differs according to gender (Oktan, Odacı, & Çelik, 2014; Aktaş, 2016), as well as others indicating that it does not (Tümlü, 2012; Kırırnoğlu, Çokluk, & Yıldırım, 2012; Özcan, 2005; Terzi, 2008; Kardaş, 2017; Işık & Çelik, 2020). Similarly, in this study it was found that psychological resilience did not differ according to gender.

The results for the remembered mother's care and remembered father's care of the participants, which is another finding of the study, were found to be significantly different between the participants who stated that they had low and medium, and the ones who stated that they had low and high, socio-economic status. Dinçer (2008) found in his study on adolescents that, as the socio-economic level increases, the perceived parental attitudes of adolescents differ. Again, in support of the findings of the study, Subaşı and İlkir-Özçelik (2019) found in their study on high school students that the participants who found the economic situation provided to them sufficient perceived their parents more loving and

accepting.

In terms of the level of psychological resilience, the difference between the participants who stated that they had low and medium socioeconomic status was found to be significant. There are studies stating that socio-economic level is one of the risk factors for psychological resilience and it has a significant relationship with psychological resilience (Gizir, 2007; Cavga, 2019). There are also studies stating that the perceived socio-economic status does not affect the psychological resilience of the individual (Bahadır, 2009). It is also seen that psychological resilience is expressed as the individual's ability to cope with a difficult situation by adapting effectively to that situation (Karairmak, 2006). In this sense, while it was anticipated that even undergraduates with low socioeconomic status would cope, the findings did not support this anticipation. In summary, the results of the study can be said that the perceived low socioeconomic level negatively affects the remembered parental attitudes of university students. Since a great many of those parents might have been concentrating on the financial efforts required to meet the basic vital needs or on the hardships arising from insufficient socioeconomic means, they might not have spared adequate time, strength and means for the emotional needs of their children in their first sixteen years. Consequently, this may explain how the psychological resilience levels of the undergraduate participants differed according to their perceived socioeconomic status.

The study results indicate that there are correlations between undergraduates' psychological resilience and their remembered mother's and a father's care and perceived socioeconomic status. The results also show that family therapists, the presence of healthy relationships between parents, warm and supportive behaviours on the part of both parents, and how the father avoids the traditional sex-oriented role and takes more responsibility, sparing more of his time for the paternal role in childrearing, could all be critical investments in children's psychological resilience in the long run. It might be useful to conduct more experimental studies and psychological programmes, so that the need for the father's accepting, warm and supportive approach to his child, consistent with the mother's warm, understanding and supportive attitudes in raising individuals with high psychological resilience can be recognised by society and this important point in the communication of the paternal role could be supported by individuals from every walk of life.

Therefore, while individuals can be expected to cope with their low socio-economic status, the significant difference can be interpreted as because the socio-economic status has an influence on the care of the family in which the individual was born and raised, and on the parents. These results from the study can be interpreted, as they may affect the psychological resilience of the individual negatively by affecting the parents' attitudes, which are among the protective environmental factors in coping with low risk factors.

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