

Family Cohesion, Self-Esteem, and Resilience: A Correlational Analysis among Selected Junior High School Students

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Abstract. Family cohesion is defined as the emotional connectedness between family members, which plays a crucial role in the psychological development and well-being of adolescents. Past research has shown that emotional bonding among family members is associated with better self-esteem and resilience among individuals. This study examined the relationship among 94 junior high school students at a private school in Valenzuela City, using a descriptive-correlational design. It assessed the participants' perceived levels of family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience through standardized instruments. Descriptive findings revealed that the participants generally experienced disengaged family cohesion, low self-esteem, and moderate resilience. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between family cohesion & resilience ($r = .491, p < .001$), and self-esteem & resilience ($r = .479, p < .001$), and a modest, but significant positive relationship between family cohesion and self-esteem ($r = .242, p < .05$). The results suggest the need for school-based and family-centered interventions that promote emotional bonding, self-worth, and resilience-building strategies to support students' psychological well-being.

Keywords: Adolescents; Family cohesion; Self-esteem; Junior high school students; Resilience.

1.0 Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by significant physical, emotional, and social changes; as such, during this time, individuals are particularly vulnerable to various psychosocial risks, including mental health issues, maladaptive behaviors, and family conflicts (Nilsson et al., 2022; Ashmitha & Annalakshmi, 2022; Martinez-Casanova et al., 2024). Moreover, factors such as family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience play pivotal roles in shaping adolescents' overall well-being, as well as the ability to cope with challenges (Compas et al., 2017).

Family cohesion is defined as the emotional bonding and support among family members (Olson et al., 1983). It involves a balance between togetherness and individuality, where both extremes — such as disengagement (very low cohesion) and enmeshment (very high cohesion) — can be detrimental. Disengaged families may leave members feeling isolated and unsupported, while enmeshed families may inhibit autonomy and privacy (Kouneski, 2000; Porto, 2016). This balance becomes particularly relevant in diverse cultural contexts, for instance, in Filipino-American families, both connected and separated forms of cohesion have been found to serve as protective factors (Javier et al., 2018), and among Filipino children, strong family bonds have helped buffer the psychological impact of parental migration (Graham & Jordan, 2011).

Family cohesion has been consistently identified as a protective factor that contributes to the positive development of adolescents as it has been consistently linked to better mental health outcomes, as research indicates that higher levels of family cohesion are associated with lower levels of anxiety, depression, and externalizing behaviors (Xu et al., 2017; Richmond & Stocker, 2006; Farmakopoulou et al., 2024), in addition to this, adolescents who perceive strong family support and emotional bonding tend to exhibit higher resilience and better psychosocial adjustment (Sitnik-Warchulska et al., 2025; Zahra & Saleem, 2021). Furthermore, family cohesion has been shown to mediate the relationship between parental stress and adolescent well-being, underscoring its role in buffering against adverse psychological outcomes (Mitchell et al., 2016; Daniels & Bryan, 2021).

Self-esteem, defined as the subjective evaluation of one's worth and the ability to maintain confidence and view oneself realistically, is a well-established construct in adolescent psychology. Often confused with self-concept, self-esteem is distinct in its focus on personal value and emotional self-regard (Cherry, 2023; Perez, 2016). It plays a critical role in adolescent development and is consistently linked to mental health and overall well-being. High self-esteem has been associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, and serves as a protective factor against various psychological challenges (Chen et al., 2025; In-Albon et al., 2017; Naderi-Lordejani, 2019).

Research has shown that self-esteem mediates the relationship between family cohesion and a range of psychological outcomes. For instance, it partially mediates the link between parental cohesion and internalizing problems, suggesting that adolescents from cohesive families tend to develop higher self-esteem, which in turn reduces emotional distress (Dong et al., 2023). Similarly, self-esteem has also been found to mediate the relationship between family cohesion and resilience, indicating that adolescents with strong family bonds and high self-esteem are better equipped to handle adversity (Tian et al., 2018; Arokiaraj et al., 2011). Furthermore, self-esteem moderates the effect of family economic hardships on mental health, highlighting its buffering role in the face of socioeconomic stressors (Liao et al., 2024).

Resilience is broadly defined as the ability to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity, trauma, or significant stress (Masten, 2001). It reflects a dynamic and multifaceted process shaped by the interactions of individual characteristics and environmental factors that enable individuals to maintain or regain psychological well-being in the face of challenges (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). More recent perspectives have expanded this view to incorporate the complex interplay between individuals and their environments. Ungar (2011), through the work of the Resilience Research Centre (2021), introduced a socio-ecological model defining resilience as the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to psychological, social, and physical resources that sustain well-being and to negotiate these resources to be provided in ways that are meaningful within their cultural context. Recent advancements in the field further emphasize resilience as a multidimensional and systemically driven concept, emphasizing how both personal resources and environmental support, such as family, peers, schools, and communities, work together to produce healthy adaptations in youth (Ungar & Theron, 2020; Ungar et al., 2023).

With this multisystemic framework, both personal and contextual factors play crucial roles in fostering resilience. Individual factors, such as self-confidence, optimism, and self-esteem, have been consistently linked to higher levels of resilience (Cheung et al., 2015; Mampane, 2014). External supports, such as family relationships, peer connections, and community trust, serve as protective factors that help buffer adolescents from the adverse effects of stress and adversity (Kelly et al., 2017; del Carmen Perez-Fuentes et al., 2020). Adolescents with higher levels of resilience tend to exhibit better academic outcomes, stronger interpersonal relationships, and lower incidences of behavioral problems.

Among the various external factors, family cohesion has been identified as a particularly significant contributor to adolescent resilience as supportive family environments provide emotional security and social resources that facilitate the development of adaptive coping strategies (Govender et al., 2017; Namy et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2025). This is consistent with the concept of relational resilience, which posits that resilience is not solely an individual attribute but is cultivated through caring, responsive relationships and embedded networks of support (Afifi, 2018; Cohen, 2022). Furthermore, the interaction between family cohesion and self-esteem has been found to significantly strengthen resilience, even among vulnerable adolescent populations such as juvenile delinquents (Arokiaraj et al., 2011; Hu & Cai, 2023). These emphasize the importance of understanding resilience as a dynamic, contextually embedded process that integrates both internal competencies and external protective factors, particularly during the critical developmental stages of adolescence.

Collectively, the reviewed studies demonstrate that family cohesion is not only foundational to emotional connectedness but also plays a significant role in promoting resilience, self-esteem, and overall psychological health during adolescence. Likewise, self-esteem serves a crucial role in fostering resilience and mental well-being, particularly when nurtured within supportive family environments. Furthermore, resilience emerges as a dynamic, contextually embedded process that integrates both personal competencies and environmental protective factors, especially during critical developmental stages of adolescence. These interrelated constructs highlight the importance of considering both individual and systemic factors in understanding adolescent psychological adjustment and adaptation.

Despite the growing body of evidence on family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience, several research gaps remain. First, most existing studies have focused on Western populations, with limited research exploring these constructs among Filipino adolescents. Second, while previous studies have examined these variables individually or in pairs, there is still limited empirical research investigating the simultaneous and correlational relationship among family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience in a unified model, particularly among junior high school students. Third, few studies have applied socio-ecological frameworks such as Ungar's multisystemic model of resilience to understand how these variables interact within their immediate and broader ecological context.

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience among junior high school students in Valenzuela City. The findings of this study may inform the development of school-based, family-centered, and community-level interventions aimed at strengthening protective factors and promoting resilience among adolescents. Moreover, understanding how family cohesion and self-esteem contribute to resilience can provide valuable insight for counselors, educators, parents, and policymakers in designing culturally sensitive programs that support adolescent well-being during this developmental period.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational design, which aims to describe the variables of the study and establish relationships between them, specifically (1) family cohesion, (2) self-esteem, and (3) resilience. This research design addresses the research questions posed in the present study.

2.2 Research Locale and Participants

The study was conducted in a private, non-sectarian, co-educational institution in Valenzuela City's second district. Convenience sampling was employed, with a total of 94 respondents aged 12–15 from grades 7–9 included in the study. The sample consisted of 49 (52.1%) males and 45 (47.9%) females.

2.3 Instrumentation

Adapted Family Cohesion Scale

Which consists of 10 items adapted from the original 20-item Family Adaptability, Cohesion Evaluation Scales III (FACES III) by Olson et al. (1986, as cited in Fischer & Corocan, 2007). Which only measures the perceived closeness of the family. The scale categorizes scores into four distinct categories, namely: disengaged (very low), separated (low), connected (high), and very connected (very high). Higher scores are associated with balanced family functioning, and low scores represent extreme family functioning (Kouneski, 2000). To identify the categories, the following score cutoffs were considered: 10–34 (disengaged), 35–40 (separated), 41–45 (connected), and 46–50 (very connected) (Diakon, 2003).

The internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the family cohesion subscale were found to be $\alpha=.77$ and $r=.80$, respectively. In terms of validity, the measure employed a concurrent form of validity, which correlated the instrument with the Self-Report Family Inventory, yielding a correlation coefficient of $r = .84$ for the cohesion subscale (Olson et al., 1985, as cited in Kouneski, 2000).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Which consists of 10 items, as developed by Rosenberg in 1979 (as cited in Ciarrochi & Bilich, 2006). The scale measures global self-worth by assessing both positive and negative self-perceptions. According to the manual (Rosenberg, 1979, as cited in Ciarrochi & Bilich, 2006), higher scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem, and vice

versa. Although no cutoff score was initially provided, literature has indicated that scores between 0 and 15 can be categorized as low self-esteem, 16 and 25 as average, and 26 and 30 as high (Gupta, 2024).

The instrument was established to be reliable and valid for Filipino respondents by Schmitt, & Allik (2005), wherein its internal consistency was found to be at $\alpha = .80$ for Filipino respondents using the original English version of the test, furthermore, the convergent validity of the instrument was found to be at .29, -.52, & .32 for extraversion, neuroticism, & model of self, which was tested at $p < .001$.

Child & Youth Resilience Measure-Revised (Youth Version-Simplified)

Which consists of 17 items that assesses for both individual and caregiver/relational resilience among respondents. The instrument emphasizes the individual's capacity to find and use their resources in meaningful ways to experience wellbeing, wherein higher scores indicate higher levels of resilience. According to the technical administration manual (Resilience Research Centre, 2019), scores are categorized as follows: low (<63), moderate (63–70), high (71–76), and exceptional (≥ 77).

Personal resilience by the technical administration manual (Resilience Research Centre, 2019), includes items that are both interpersonal and intrapersonal, which are linked to the individual's capacity to tap into his/ her social ecologies to reinforce their capacity to move forward despite adversity, caregiver/ relational resilience on the other hand refer to important relationships shared with either primary caregiver, & family which contribute to developing resilience.

The simplified version of the scale was used, as recommended in the technical administration manual, to avoid misinterpretation for non-fluent English speakers. It is worth noting that only the overall score (a combination of personal and relational scores) was considered, given the scoring method outlined in the technical administration manual. The internal consistency of the scale was established by Jefferies et al. (2018) to be at $\alpha = .82$ for both the personal and caregiver resilience subscales, and $\alpha = .87$ for the overall resilience measure. Construct validity was established through the use of the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), wherein RMSEA = .059, considered to be within acceptable ranges.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering was conducted face-to-face, through paper-pencil testing, in which respondents were given the Adapted Family Cohesion Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Child Youth Resiliency Measure Revised to answer, with no imposed time limit during the administration of the instruments. Prior to data collection, participants were informed of their rights and allowed to seek clarification regarding the data collection procedure.

2.5 Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, the arithmetic mean was utilized to determine the levels of family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience. In addition, Spearman's rank correlation was utilized to describe the relationship between family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience, as the assumption of data normality was violated by family cohesion and resilience, necessitating the use of its non-parametric alternative.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted by ethical standards. Formal approval was obtained from the participating institution prior to conducting the study. The participants were informed of the study's objectives, as well as its potential risks and benefits. They were also informed of their right to opt out and withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The study presents the findings on the descriptive data regarding the levels of family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience among junior high school students, as well as the correlational analyses conducted in the study. The results are interpreted in light of the existing literature to provide a deeper understanding of the results. Key statistical outcomes are discussed alongside theoretical and cultural frameworks.

Table 1. *Levels of Family Cohesion, Self-Esteem, and Resilience*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Family Cohesion	36.2	6.09	Disengaged Family Cohesion
Self-Esteem	15.9	3.26	Low Self-Esteem
Resilience	64.9	11.0	Moderate Resilience

Table 1 reveals that, on average, the participants reported disengaged levels of family cohesion ($M = 36.2$, $SD = 6.09$), low self-esteem ($M = 15.9$, $SD = 3.26$), and moderate resilience ($M = 64.9$, $SD = 11.0$). These results would suggest that, on average, adolescents in the sample perceive their families as lacking emotional bonding and support, which may indicate limited communication, emotional distance, or weakened family functioning. Additionally, participants may also have lower levels of confidence, self-worth, and positive self-regard. Moreover, lastly, there is an observed degree of capacity to cope and function adaptively.

The low levels of family cohesion observed in this study are particularly concerning as adolescence is a stage in which family emotional support plays a critical role in psychological adjustment (Olson et al., 1983; Kouneski, 2000). The presence of disengaged family cohesion may reflect potential communication gaps, conflict, or limited parental involvement, which are often linked to poorer mental health outcomes (Mitchel et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2017). Consistent with these dynamics, the findings of low self-esteem aligns with prior studies indicating that family dynamics heavily influence adolescents' self-regard (Chen et al., 2025; In-Albon et al., 2017) as adolescents from disengaged families may struggle with developing positive self-concept, leading to increased vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and other emotional difficulties (Naderi-Lordejani, 2019; Dong et al., 2023). Interestingly, despite lower levels of family cohesion and self-esteem, the participants reported a moderate level of resilience. This suggests the possible presence of compensatory protective factors such as peer support, school connectedness, or individual coping strategies, which may partially buffer the adverse effects of family and self-esteem deficits (Masten, 2001; Ungar et al., 2023). The moderate resilience levels reflect the adolescents' capacity to adapt to adversity, but also signal opportunities for further strengthening through targeted interventions.

Table 2. *Correlation between Family Cohesion, Self-Esteem, and Resilience*

Variable	1	2	3
Family Cohesion	-		
Self-Esteem	0.242*	-	
Resilience	0.491***	0.479***	-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 2 depicts the correlational analysis between family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience. The results revealed a significant correlation between family cohesion and self-esteem ($r = 0.242$, $p < 0.05$), family cohesion and resilience ($r = 0.491$, $p < 0.001$), and self-esteem and resilience ($r = 0.479$, $p < 0.001$). This would suggest that higher levels of perceived family support are associated with greater self-worth among adolescents. Moreover, stronger emotional bonding with families tends to exhibit higher levels of resilience, and similarly, higher levels of self-esteem are associated with being better equipped to adapt to adversities and challenges.

The significant association between family cohesion and self-esteem supports the widely acknowledged notion that supportive and cohesive family environments contribute positively to the development of adolescents' self-worth and confidence (Tian et al., 2018; Dong et al., 2023). Adolescents who experience emotional warmth and connectedness from their families are more likely to internalize positive self-appraisals and develop a secure sense of identity (Cherry, 2023; Perez, 2016). The moderate correlation between family cohesion and resilience aligns with the socio-ecological framework of Ungar and Theron (2022), which emphasizes that resilience is not solely an individual trait but is cultivated through nurturing family relationships and systemic support. This finding also reinforces earlier studies, which demonstrate that supportive family dynamics act as a critical protective factor in fostering adolescents' ability to cope with stress and adapt to adversity (Govender et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2025). Likewise, the positive relationship between self-esteem and resilience substantiates existing evidence that self-esteem functions as a crucial personal resource, enabling adolescents who perceive themselves as competent, capable, and valuable to navigate challenges better and recover from adverse experiences (Cheung et al., 2015; Arokiaaraj et al., 2011 (Hu & Cai, 2023).

4.0 Conclusion

The present study explored the relationships among family cohesion, self-esteem, and resilience among selected junior high school students in Valenzuela City. The findings revealed that the participants generally experienced disengaged family cohesion, low self-esteem, and moderate resilience. Furthermore, significant positive correlations emerged between family cohesion and resilience, self-esteem, and a modest but significant correlation between family cohesion and self-esteem. These results highlight the crucial role of family dynamics and self-perception in shaping adolescents' ability to cope with adversity. The findings underscore the importance of developing and implementing both school-based and family-centered interventions that aim to strengthen emotional bonds, enhance self-esteem, and promote overall psychological well-being.

Future research is encouraged to examine additional variables that may influence or moderate these relationships, such as peer relationships, academic stress, digital media use, and mental health literacy. Moreover, expanding the sample to include participants from more diverse cultural, socio-economic, and geographic backgrounds would allow for a broader and more nuanced understanding of these variables. Lastly, intervention-based research that tests the effectiveness of school and family programs in enhancing these constructs would offer practical insights for educators, counselors, psychologists, and policymakers.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

This is a single-author research.

6.0 Funding

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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