ISSN: 2717-3216 Volume 12, Issue 1 (2025) https://www.ijfpjournal.ir/

Iranian Journal of Family Psychology

Research Paper

https://doi.org/10.22034/ijfp.2025.2070682.1433

The Effect of Social-Emotional Competency Training on Worry and Academic Resilience in Students with Military Parents

Mohammad Abbasi[1*], Samira Siahmansour[2], Mohammad Hojati[3]

1. Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Lorestan University, Khorramabad, Iran
2. MA student in Educational Psychology, Lorestan University, Khorramabad, Iran.
3. Ph. D in Educational Psychology., Lorestan University, Khorramabad, Iran

Article Info.

Received: 27 March 2025

Revised: 16 May 2025

Accepted: 10 June 2025

Keywords:

Academic resilience, military parent, social-emotional competence student, worry

Abstract

Abstract

Military families, due to the occupational nature of their parents, face unique conditions such as frequent relocations, long-term deployments, and specific demands of military life. These conditions can provide opportunities for the development of discipline, responsibility, and resilience in children, while also potentially giving rise to certain psychological and academic challenges. The present study aimed to investigate the effect of social-emotional competency training on worry and academic resilience among students with military parents. This research was conducted using a quasi-experimental design with a pretest–posttest and control group. The statistical population consisted of all seventh- to ninth-grade students with mimitary parents in Harsin during the 2024–2025 academic year. From among them, 30 students were selected via convenience sampling method and were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (15 students each). Data were collected using the Penn State Worry Questionnaire (PSWQ) and the Academic Resilience Inventory (ARI). The experimental group received eight sessions of social-emotional competency training. Data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) in SPSS. The results indicated that social-emotional competency training significantly increased academic resilience ($F = 142.46$, $p< 0.001$) and decreased worry ($F = 53/02$, $p< 0.001$) in the experimental group compared to the control group. These findings highlight the effectiveness of educational interventions based on social-emotional competencies in promoting mental health and academic performance among students with unique life circumstances.

***Corresponding author**
Email: abasi.mo@lu.ac.ir

How to Cite:
Abbasi, M., Siahmansour, S., Hojati, M. (2025). The Effect of Social-Emotional Competency Training on Worry and Academic Resilience in Students with Military Parents. *Journal of Family Psychology. 12*(1), 135-148. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijfp.2025.2070682.1433

©The Author(s). Published by Family Psychology Association of Iran.
This article is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Introduction

A military family is a family in which at least one member is officially serving in a military institution and whose primary occupation is military service (Nasibi et al., 2023). Meanwhile, unstable conditions such as military deployments can lead military families to vulnerability or create the conditions for strengthening stability and building resilience (Reed, 2025). However, despite the growing global evidence on resilience-building programs, there is still insufficient information available on the impact of these programs on the level of resilience of military families (Hébert et al., 2024).

Resilience in psychology refers to how individuals respond to difficult situations (Shengyao et al., 2024). It is worth noting that this characteristic is also used in education, and academic resilience refers to the ability of students to effectively cope with problems, pressures, and educational challenges, so that they can maintain their performance and mental health despite adverse conditions (Srem-Sai et al., 2025). Thus, identifying resilience factors among adolescents from military families plays an important role in designing effective interventions, especially for those adolescents who have experienced greater military stress (Tannenbaum & McMaster, 2024).

It is worth noting that psychological resilience plays an important role in students' ability to cope with future-related concerns, especially when important decisions for the future are made (Dalmış et al., 2025). Especially in recent years, military conflicts have led to increased stress and worry among military personnel and their families (Hagi Aghanjad & Zare Nistanak, 2021). Considering that worry is an avoidance cognitive response to perceived internal and external threats, which is actually used to suppress emotional distress, it can increase and perpetuate negative emotions (Gil et al., 2023).

Researchers have found that students who have developed social-emotional skills are more successful academically and socially and have a higher level of psychological resilience (Önal & Özdemir, 2025). In other words, since positive emotions and emotion regulation are important factors related to resilience, social-emotional learning competencies can increase resilience. Meantime, learning activities based on social-emotional competencies in schools and strengthening these competencies can increase students' academic resilience (Turan, 2024). In addition, programs that target the development of these competencies have been associated with improvements in a range of variables of student adjustment in school, including reduced worry and anxiety (Chen et al., 2025). Hence, given the importance of this issue, the objective of the present study is to answer whether social-emotional competence training has an effect on the anxiety and academic resilience of students with military parents.

Methods

The present study was conducted with a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design with a control group. The statistical population included all junior high school students (grades 7-9) , whose at least one parent was employed in the armed forces, in Harsin in the academic year 2024-2025. From among them, 30 students were selected by convenience sampling method. Then, they were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups, each consisting of 15 students. The experimental group participated in the social-emotional competence training program of Sadri-Demirchi and Esmaeili Ghazi-Volouei (2016) for eight sessions, and the control group did not receive any intervention during this period. The Pennsylvania Worry Questionnaire (PSWQ) (Meyer et al., 1990) and the Academic Resilience Questionnaire (ARI) (Samuels & Woo, 2009) were used to collect data. The data were analyzed using SPSS software (version 26).

Findings

In this study, the age range of the participants was between 12 and 15 years, and their mean age was 13.6 years with a standard deviation of 1.1. Descriptive data analysis showed that the mean scores of academic resilience in the experimental group increased from 122.46 in the pretest to 134.46 in the posttest, while the control group did not experience a significant change; its mean increased from 122.40 in the pretest to 122.26 in the posttest. Regarding worry, it was also observed that the mean scores of the experimental group decreased from 26.86 to 20.13, while no significant difference was observed in the control group, and the mean scores showed a slight decrease from 26.60 in the pretest to 26.06 in the

posttest. These initial results indicate that the social-emotional competence training intervention could create positive changes in both dependent variables.

In addition, as can be seen in Table 1, the findings of the univariate analysis of covariance showed that after controlling for the pretest effect, a significant difference was observed between the groups in academic resilience ($F=142.46$, $p < 0.001$). The estimated effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.84$) indicates that about 84 percent of the changes in academic resilience could be attributed to the educational intervention, which indicates the very high effectiveness of the social-emotional competence training program. Similar results were obtained in the anxiety variable, and the difference between the two groups was significant ($F = 53.02$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.67$); meaning that about 67 percent of the changes in terms of anxiety were related to the educational intervention. This significant decrease indicates that participating in educational sessions significantly reduced the anxiety level of students in the experimental group.

Table 1. *Results of the analysis of covariance*

Variable	Source of change	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig.	Eta square
Academic resilience	Pretest	2.48	1	2.84	.37	.54	.01
	Group	1089.30	1	1089.30	142.46	.001	.84
	Error	198.80	26	7.64			
Worry	Pretest	136.80	1	136.80	26.21	.001	.50
	Group	276.69	1	276.69	53.02	.001	.67
	Error	135.68	26	5.21			

Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of social-emotional competence training on the anxiety and academic resilience of students with military parents. The results showed that the social-emotional competence training program could create positive and significant changes in the two main variables of the study. This means that these trainings increased the resilience of students in military families. This finding is consistent with literature (Duan et al., 2024; Fang et al., 2024; García-Crespo et al., 2021; Negru & Paloş, 2023; Min et al., 2024; Turan, 2024). In explaining these findings, it should be stated that based on the studies conducted, there is a positive and significant relationship between social-emotional skills and resilience skills. In other words, social-emotional skills can explain externalizing problems and positive social behaviors, and resilience skills can explain internalizing and externalizing problems (Martinsone et al., 2022). In addition, it has been found that there is a positive relationship between mindfulness, which is one of the components of social-emotional competencies, and resilience. This means that mindfulness practice can help promote inner peace by increasing acceptance, recognition, and understanding of impermanence (Liao et al.; 2023).

Regarding the second hypothesis, which is that social-emotional competency training reduces anxiety in students with military parents, the findings of this study showed that this intervention could improve the level of anxiety in the participants of the experimental group. These results are consistent with the findings of Chen et al. (2025 and Önal & Özdemir (2025). In explaining this, it should be mentioned that social-emotional competence training programs can actually help students who suffer from internal mental health problems (e.g., depression, anxiety and worry, stress or social withdrawal) and lead to improved mental health outcomes (Chowkase, 2023). For instance, one of the problems of military families is their high mobility, and this can be associated with consequences such as difficulty communicating and building relationships with peers, learning problems in the classroom, anxiety and worry, sadness, anger, and social isolation. However, schools can act as supportive and responsive environments and help military children cope with pressures and challenges such as parental deployment (Frederick et al., 2022).

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank the participants in the present study.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

References

Chen, L., Chen, F., Bai, S., Xu, Z., & Ding, Y. (2025). Social-emotional competence among adolescents: A network approach to model relationships among social-emotional competence, emotion regulation, and anxiety. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *236*, 113023. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2024.113023

Chowkase, A. A. (2023). Social and emotional learning for the greater good: Expanding the circle of human concern. *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy*, *1*, 100003. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2023.100003

Dalmış, A. B., Büyükatak, E., & Sürücü, L. (2025). Psychological resilience and future anxiety among university students: the mediating role of subjective well-being. *Behavioral Sciences*, *15*(3), 244. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15030244

Frederick, J., & Siebler, P. (2022). Military children: unique risks for mental health and wellbeing and implications for school-based social work support. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, *92*(4), 219-239. https://doi.org/10.1080/00377317.2023.2189469

Gil, T. C., Obando, D., Garcia-Martin, M. B., & Sandoval-Reyes, J. (2023). Perfectionism, academic stress, rumination and worry: A predictive model for anxiety and depressive symptoms in university students from Colombia. *Emerging Adulthood,* *11*(5), 1091-1105. https://doi.org/10.1177/21676968231188759

Hagi Aghanjad, Y., & Zare Nistanak, M. (2021). The effectiveness of family resilience training on social adjustment of military families. *Military Caring Sciences,* *8*(3), 254-263. https://doi.org/10.22034/qjmst.2022.535331.1569 [In persian]

Hébert, M. L., Tippe, J. M., Aquin, C., Maximos, M., Brémault-Phillips, S., & Sevigny, P. R. (2024). Military family-centred resilience-building programming across the deployment cycle: A scoping review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *21*(10), 1378. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21101378

Liao, Y. C., Huang, T. Y., Lin, S. H., Wu, C. H., Chang, K. T., Hsieh, S., ... & Yang, C. T. (2023). Mediating role of resilience in the relationships of physical activity and mindful self-awareness with peace of mind among college students. *Scientific Reports*, *13*(1), 10386. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-023-37416-2

Martinsone, B., Stokenberga, I., Damberga, I., Supe, I., Simões, C., Lebre, P., ... & Camilleri, L. (2022). Adolescent social emotional skills, resilience and behavioral problems during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal study in three European countries. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 13*, 942692. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.942692

Meyer, T. J., Miller, M. L., Metzger, R. L., & Borkovec, T. D. (1990). Development and validation of the Penn State Worry Questionnaire. *Behaviour Research and Therapy,* *28*(6), 487–495. https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967(90)90135-6

Nasibi, M. M., Kolivand, F., & Khazaei, S. (2023). The Mediating Role of Coping Strategies in the Relationship between Work-Family Conflict and Marital Adjustment of Military Families. *Military Psychology, 14*(2), 11-24. https://doi.org/20.1001.1.25885162.1402.14.2.1.8 [In Persian]

Önal, G., & Özdemir, T. E. (2025). Resilience and social–emotional expertise as predictors of problematic internet use among university students. *Behavioral Sciences*, *15*(5), 650. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15050650

Reed, H. L*. (2025). Raised military: A phenomenological study on military upbringing and recommended military parental practices* [Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University]. Liberty University Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/6649

Sadri-Demirchi, E., & Esmaeili Ghazi-Volouei, F. (2016). The effectiveness of social-emotional skills training on cognitive emotion regulation and social skills of children with specific learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Quarterly, 5*(4), 59–86. https://journal.uma.ac.ir/article_433.html [in persian]

Samuels, W. E., & Woo, A. (2009). Creation and initial validation of an instrument to measure academic resilience. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267255462

Shengyao, Y., Salarzadeh Jenatabadi, H., Mengshi, Y., Minqin, C., Xuefen, L., & Mustafa, Z. (2024). Academic resilience, self-efficacy, and motivation: the role of parenting style. *Scientific Reports, 14*(1), 5571. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-55530-7

Srem-Sai, M., Arthur, F., Salifu, I., Amoadu, M., Obeng, P., Agormedah, E. K., Hagan, J. E., Jnr, & Schack, T. (2025). Modelling the associations between students' academic resilience, learning motivation, self-regulated learning and academic well-being in Ghana. *Acta Psychologica, 258*, 105278. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105278

Tannenbaum, K., & McMaster, H. S. (2024). The Study of Adolescent Resilience (SOAR): A research protocol. *Frontiers in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *3*, 1346726. https://doi.org/10.3389/frcha.2024.1346726

Turan, M. E. (2021). The relationship between social emotional learning competencies and life satisfaction in adolescents: mediating role of academic resilience. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences, 13*(4), 1126-1142. https://doi.org/10.15345/iojes.2021.04.012