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### **STUDY ON THE CORRELATIONS AMONG ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIVE FACTOR OF RESILIENCE, SOCIAL EXCLUSION, AND HOPE OF DISADVANTAGED YOUTHS**

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# Study on the Correlations among Environmental Protective Factor of Resilience, Social Exclusion, and Hope of Disadvantaged Youths

Suh Chen HSIAO<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

A needy family is the underprivileged group in the society, in which children and youths growing in a needy family are the most underprivileged group, who have no choice and could not overcome it by themselves. Effects of poverty on children contain malnutrition or disorder, more chronic diseases, higher epidemic disease infection rate, high accident rate, low study preparation, low learning achievement, high social emotion and behavior problems, high risk of domestic violence, and bad parent-child relationship. Discussions about poverty are often related to social exclusion. Some people regard social exclusion as the division of poor people; social exclusion is not simply a result, but a dynamic process; social exclusion is not the result of inequality, but the behavior to separate people and group due to systems. Aiming at disadvantaged youths in southern Taiwan, random sampling is adopted to distribute 450 copies of questionnaire, and 348 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 77%. The retrieved questionnaire data are analyzed with statistics software. The research results show significantly negative correlations between environmental protective factor of resilience and social exclusion, remarkably negative correlations between social exclusion and hope, and notably positive correlations between environmental protective factor of resilience and hope. According to the results to propose suggestions, it is expected to provide various environmental factors in the growing process of youths for reinforcing youths' confidence and cultivate the resilience.

*Keywords:* disadvantaged youth, environmental protective factor of resilience, social exclusion, hope.

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## Introduction

Social welfare was originated from the concern about poverty. From church-led help-the-poor work, it was gradually revised into social welfare system aiming at poverty, in which the government offered economy, food, and training. Charity organization society and settlement houses were successively established by caring people to provide poor people with education and cultural instruction through community renovation so as to improve the poverty condition. Now, the society is changing rapidly and social issues become diversified and complicated, but help-the-poor work is still an important part in social work. A needy family is the underprivileged group in the society, in which children and youths growing in a needy family are the most underprivileged group who have no choice and could not overcome it on their own. Effects of poverty on children include malnutrition or disorder, more chronic diseases, higher epidemic disease infection rate, high accident rate, low study preparation, low learning achievement, high social emotion and behavior problems, high risk of domestic violence, and bad parent-child relationship. Unemployment rate resulted from industrial changes results in many students in needy families not concentrating on academic work, but thinking of taking part-time job to maintain the family to engage in gangsters and piracy industry. It reveals that family economy would affect youths' education opportunity. Encountering poverty in childhood would affect the health conditions in adulthood through education and career as well as directly connect to adult social exclusion to easily results in bachelorship, unemployment, divorce, and disease in adulthood.

Discussions about poverty are often related to social exclusion. Some people regard social exclusion as the division of poor people; social exclusion is not simply a result, but a dynamic process; social exclusion is not the result of inequality, but the behavior separating people and group with systems. Social exclusion is multi-faceted exclusion, including low income, unemployment, educational opportunity, health, discrimination, and civil rights, meaning that some disadvantaged or relatively deprived groups focus on specific groups. For youths, poverty is not simply the lack of materials, but is the experience in social exclusion, the lack of life vision, the lack of friendship, not integrating into campus, lack of participation with peers, and alienated interpersonal relationship. The perceived isolation, discrimination, and unfriendly treatment would affect an individual effectively participating in economic labor, social interpersonal, politics, and basic needs for living as well as limit the development of future life. When an individual is in the environment with high social exclusion, hope and confidence are the core and prior factors in resilience. Hope would lead people to take positive coping methods with surrounding problems, find out paths to achieve goals, and realize individual ideal depending on strong motivation to reduce crisis injury due to social injustice. Besides, hope would affect individual physiological health, interpersonal relationship, achievement, and well-being, help solve the crisis of

self-identification development in adolescence, and assist adolescents in positive development. As a result, correlations among environmental protective factor of resilience, social exclusion, and hope of disadvantaged youths is studied, expecting to provide various environmental factors in the growing process to help reinforce youths' confidence and cultivate the ability to stand adversity.

## Literature review

Chang *et al.* (2018) regarded the ability of an individual, under crisis conditions, gradually reducing negative results through the interaction with the environment and developing positive coping attitude, cognition, and action to bounce back in adversity as resilience, which was considered as the result of an individual being able to present positive development in a high-crisis group. Shahid (2018) considered that resilience was used for describing certain trait and was the process of individual successful adaptation to convert crisis and adversity. McFadden (2018) pointed out resilience as an individual, in the threatening context, being able to perform functions or behaviors beyond expectation for success adaptation and development. Hathout *et al.* (2018) regarded resilience as an individual standing up from dilemmas, being stronger, and having resource application ability that was the positive process for patience, self-correction, and growth when facing crises and challenges. Korte & Simonsen (2018) referred environmental protective factor to community participation opportunity in the environment, positive attachment to family members and peers, and informal support network to provide youths, who were in the poverty adversity, with supportive protection so that youths could have resilience and present positive development. Zhang *et al.* (2018) pointed out social exclusion as the limitation in participation opportunity, i.e. short of basic necessity for living, obstacle to school activity participation, limited family interaction, barrier to making friends, restriction on youths interacting and contacting with external environment, and increase in youths' vulnerability. Avoine-Blondin *et al.* (2018) explained that poverty was the factor in social exclusion of children and youths; poverty was the risk factor in resilience, and social exclusion covered the function of institutional inequality on youths; and, environmental protective factor of and risk factor in resilience would mutually add or cancel on youths' resilience performance. Yang *et al.* (2018) regarded environmental protective factor and social exclusion as two sides of a body; environmental protective factor referred to community participation opportunity in the environment, positive attachment to family members and peers, and informal support network, while social exclusion referred to limit of participation opportunity, i.e. inadequate basic necessity for living, obstacle to school activity participation, limited family interaction, and barrier to making friends; environmental protective factor could protect an individual from the effect of social exclusion on hope. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed in this study.

*H1: Environmental protective factor of resilience shows significantly negative correlations with social exclusion.*

Lee & Yen (2017) mentioned that there were several definitions of social exclusion in past studies; basically, it indicated that labor market periphery position, poverty, and social isolation would affect each other to form multiple disadvantaged situations, e.g. care about poor people as well as the material resources and the labor market, social participation, and interpersonal relationship maintenance. Sedivy *et al.* (2019) mentioned that the essence of social exclusion process was dynamic and multi-faceted, which was not simply related to unemployment/low income, but was relevant to housing conditions, education and opportunity level, health, discrimination, civil rights, and local community integration. Preventing and fighting social exclusion should mobilize all efforts as well as combine economy and society. Bringsvor *et al.* (2018) considered that understanding poverty was not restricted on the problem of needs for living, but should include the problem of people not being able to participate in social custom and life; individual, family, or group being in poverty was defined as the resources being far lower than the resources of average individual or family in the society; such a result would cause them being excluded from normal life, custom, and activity. Jackson *et al.* (2018) stated that hope and confidence were the core and prior factors in resilience when an individual was in the environment with high social exclusion. Ren *et al.* (2018) proposed that hope could enhance individual motivation to pursue personal life goal, encourage citizens engaging in goal-oriented positive activity, reduce the occurrence of frustration, reduce individual mistrust, attack behaviors, and crisis injury caused by social injustice, as well as enhance social justice. In this case, there are possible correlations between hope and social exclusion. The following hypothesis is then proposed in this study.

*H2: Social exclusion reveals remarkably negative correlations with hope.*

Guo *et al.* (2017) defined hope as the desire and feeling about the occurrence of specific events. A person with hope could present positive opinions on affairs or problems and considered that hope allowed people building valuable goals, finding out methods to realize such goals, and driving to realize such goals. Yao *et al.* (2018) pointed out the contents of affective level, cognitive process, and behavioral level to help individuals taking positive methods for problems. Runhaar, Bouwmans, & Vermeulen (2019) regarded hope as an individual being able to establish valuable goal, find out methods to realize goals, and drive such goals being realized. Two important concepts of goal-oriented energy and path to achieve goal were covered in the definition. They further indicated that, energy and path were complementary to each other in the goal pursuing process. In this case, ones with high hope showed higher motivation to pursue goals and were willing to follow plans and methods to achieve goals. O'Leary, McKee, & Faro (2019)

considered that good interpersonal relationship and close friendship could enhance hope; the data of hope, friendship, and close relatives were not proven, but the effects of such factors were affirmative. In the cultivation of resilience, Brouskeli, Kaltsi, & Loumakou (2018) considered that the promotion of individual hope could promote the persistence and self-efficacy, based on the cultivation of individual advantages, and find out the goal with future development. Shin, Kim, & Ji (2018) revealed that the provision of environmental protective factor and continuous health attachment presented obvious function on individual protective factor to promote individual confidence, problem-solving capability, and self-efficacy; besides, it was important to seek for future goals in the process to assist youths' resilience; finding out the core meaning of life through positively developing goals and life wants was the process to create opportunities. Apparently, environmental protective factor of resilience could promote hope. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study.

*H3: Environmental protective factor of resilience appears notably positive correlations with hope.*

## Methodology

### *Operational definition*

*Environmental protective factor of resilience.* Referring to Chen *et al.* (2019), resilience is a result as well as a process that environmental protective factor of resilience contains individual and environment.

- 1) *Individual:* stress resistance, strategic thinking and planning ability, ability to acquire resources.
- 2) *Environment:* intimacy, trust, belongingness, respectable role model.

*Social exclusion.* Referring to Yu *et al.* (2019), among the dimensions of social exclusion, economy and social isolation are proposed in all studies.

- 1) *Economic dimension:* Exclusion refers to poverty, economy, or income; in children's points of view, it refers to petty cash and material exclusion.
- 2) *Social isolation:* Referring to limited social relationship. In addition to being excluded from household and neighborhood, i.e. lack of social participation, it contains limits of social group participation, social network, and interpersonal relationship; in children's viewpoints, it refers to limits of school life, family life, leisure life, and friendship connection.

*Hope.* Referring to Huang *et al.* (2018), hope includes three dimensions of goal, path, and will.

- 1) *Goal:* Goal is the basis of psychological activity. An individual with definite, important, and practicable goal would present higher hope.

2) *Path*: or method, action. In the process of pursuing goals, hope would achieve the expected goal; more importantly, clear path planning for goals could lead an individual advancing from the position to the set goal.

3) *Will*: or energy, willpower. It is the important power to drive an individual emerging hope to appear the positive ideas of “I can make it” and “I would like to make an attempt”, as the promise made by an individual in the process to achieve goals. Such positive will could enhance an individual move from the position to the destination.

### *Method and model*

Goodness-of-fit in LISREL model is generally tested from overall model fit (i.e. extrinsic quality of model) and intrinsic quality of model. In terms of overall model fit test, common indices contain: (1) “ $\chi^2$  ratio” (Chi-Square ratio), standing for the difference between real theoretical model and expected value, which is better smaller than 3; (2) goodness of fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), showing better fit when close to 1; (3) root mean square residual (RMR), reflecting the square root of “residual variance of fit/covariance mean”, which is better smaller than 0.05, and (4) incremental fit index (IFI), revealing good model when higher than 0.9 .

Common indices in LISREL for intrinsic quality of model include: (1) square multiple correlation (SMC) of individual manifest variable, as  $R^2$  of manifest variable and latent variable, which should be higher than 0.5; (2) composite reliability ( $\rho$ ) of latent variable, as Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of observation indices of latent variable, which should be higher than 0.6, and (3) average variance extracted of latent variable, which is calculated by dividing the  $R^2$  sum of manifest variables of a latent variable by the number of manifest variables to show the percentage of latent variable being measured through manifest variable, which is better higher than 0.5.

### *Research sample and object*

Aiming at disadvantaged youths in southern Taiwan, total 450 copies of questionnaire are distributed with random sampling, and 348 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 77%. The retrieved questionnaire data are analyzed with statistics software.

### *Reliability and validity test*

Validity refers to a measurement being able to actually measure the degree of what a researcher intends to measure. General validity contains “content validity”, which tends to qualitative test, “criterion validity”, which evaluates with known external criteria and correlation coefficient of the test, and “construct validity”

for evaluating the theoretical consistence of measurement with other observable variables. The questionnaire content is based on past theories and refers to the actual situations of research objects to design the tool which could authentically present the essence of affairs with complete representativeness to ensure the questionnaire conforms to content validity. Besides, the final communality estimate of the factor analysis results is used for testing the construct validity of items; the acquired validity appears in 0.8~0.9, showing good validity test of this questionnaire.

## Results

### *Model fit test*

The estimation of “maximum likelihood method” is applied in this study, and the analysis results reach the convergence. Overall speaking, the indices of overall model fit pass the test, Table 1, fully reflecting good extrinsic quality of this model.

Table 1. Model analysis result

	index	judgment standard	result
Overall fit	$p$ -value	$p$ -value >0.05	0.000
	$\chi^2$ /d.f.	< 3	1.675
	GFI	> 0.9	0.983
	AGFI	> 0.9	0.911
	CFI	> 0.9	0.969
	RMR	<0.05, <0.025 excellent	0.015
	RMSEA	0.05~0.08 good <0.05 excellent	0.027
	NFI	> 0.9	0.946
	IFI	> 0.9	0.931

### *Path relationship test*

In regard to the test of intrinsic quality of model, SMC of manifest variables are higher than 0.5 (Tables 2 & 3), revealing good indices of latent variables. Furthermore, latent variables of environmental protective factor of resilience, social exclusion, and hope appear the composite reliability higher than 0.6 and the average variance extracted of dimensions is higher than 0.5 (Table 4), apparently conforming to the requirement for intrinsic quality of model.



Table 2. SMC of variable to dimension

environmental protective factor of resilience	
individual	environment
0.78	0.82

Table 3. SMC of variable to dimension

social exclusion		hope		
Economic dimension	Social isolation	goal	path	will
0.74	0.79	0.72	0.77	0.84

Table 4. Composite reliability and average variance extracted of variable

item	environmental protective factor of resilience	social exclusion	hope
composite reliability	0.862	0.843	0.896
average variance extracted	0.85	0.83	0.88

The model analysis results, *Table 5*, reveal negative and significant correlations between environmental protective factor of resilience and social exclusion (-0.836), negative and remarkable correlations between social exclusion and hope (-0.851), and positive and notable correlations between environmental protective factor of resilience and hope (0.883) that H1, H2, and H3 are supported. The research hypothesis test results are shown in *Table 6*.

Table 5. Linear structural model analysis result

item	parameter/evaluation standard	result	t
Internal fit	environmental protective factor of resilience→ social exclusion	-0.836	-24.73**
	social exclusion→ hope	-0.851	-29.16**
	environmental protective factor of resilience→ hope	0.883	35.49**

Table 6. Hypothesis test

Research hypothesis	correlation	Empirical result	P	result
H1	-	-0.836	0.00	supported
H2	-	-0.851	0.00	supported
H3	+	0.883	0.00	supported

## **Discussion**

Under the situation of social exclusion, disadvantaged youths, without the intervention of other resources, would gradually learn and understand the unfriendliness of the environment and, when not being able to get rid of the situation by themselves, would gradually lose self-expectation and even appear self-exclusion to reduce the disappointment with systems and environment. Environmental protective factor of resilience could help reduce the condition of disadvantaged youths' social exclusion and vulnerability caused by social exclusion. Disadvantaged youths could increase multiple life experiences and expand vision through good attachment to family members, teachers, and peers and diverse community participation to cope with social exclusion resulted from poverty with sufficient support and ability. The more community activity participation would help disadvantaged youths expand vision, increase life experience, and enhance self-expectation of education. Disadvantaged youths building good attachment to teachers and peers at schools could establish self-trust and enhance the self-efficacy through the interaction with teachers and peers. It is necessary to prevent disadvantaged youths from experiencing social exclusion and provide fair educational opportunity in order to give better education expectation and work to disadvantaged youths so that disadvantaged youths could choose and plan the future career goals according to personal will. To have disadvantaged youths present higher self-efficacy, the environmental protective factor of resilience should be enhanced and building good attachment to family members, teachers, and peers could enhance disadvantaged youths' self-efficacy through model learning and others' positive language.

## **Conclusion**

The research results reveal significantly negative correlations between environmental protective factor of resilience and social exclusion, but remarkably positive correlations with hope, and notably negative correlations between social exclusion and hope of disadvantaged youths. Disadvantaged youths with higher community participation and better positive attachment to family members, teachers, and peers would show lower inadequate necessity for life, lower feeling of bad economic conditions, and lower limit on family interaction; besides, youths with better positive attachment to family members, teachers, and peers and higher community participation reveal less limits on school activity. Ecological point of view regards the environment and social situations of disadvantaged youths are the habitat, where disadvantaged youths have unique positions, which might be beneficial or adverse to the development of disadvantaged youths. Disadvantaged youths with good positions in the habitat might help the resource acquisition. In this case, disadvantaged youths with good interaction with others in the

environment would acquire higher environmental resources. In other words, when disadvantaged youths appear better relationship with family members, family members could understand the shortage of disadvantaged youths and give more resources. At schools, when disadvantaged youths with better positive attachment to peers, classmates would share resources with them to reduce social exclusion. In the compensation model of resilience, the intervention of environmental resources could help individuals resist the negative effect of pressure. Disadvantaged youth receiving social exclusion would easily increase the vulnerability; environmental protective factor of resilience could help disadvantaged youths cope with the effect caused by social exclusion.

### **Recommendations**

According to the research results and findings, the following practical suggestions are proposed in this study.

- 1) Family members are suggested to give more care about disadvantaged youths, concern about disadvantaged youths' school and daily life, understand the emotion and life feelings, and co-discuss, share opinions, and give advice when encountering difficulties, and stimulate youths' independent thinking. When disadvantaged youths experience frustration, they should actively give comfort, discuss solutions together, face it together, and regularly arrange family activity to help family members establish relationship and share family relationship.
- 2) It is suggested to teach disadvantaged youths of self-care ability and stress on the diet needs. In addition to the preparation of sufficient and balanced diet, parents should have disadvantaged youths pay attention to the balanced food taking for better health promotion.
- 3) Schools are suggested to help disadvantaged youths understand more about personal traits, value, ability, and interests, support them participating in clubs and art-related courses to find out the ability and interests, develop individualized and diversified courses, provide courses for selection and community participation to enrich the life experience, and help them understand suitable schools through aptitude exploration and career exploration so as to present ideal education expectation.
- 4) Schools are suggested to cultivate disadvantaged youths' creative thinking and assist disadvantaged youths in integrating into community life to induce the creative imagination and thought of application techniques to improve life through life experience in communities. By combining with technical practice and community participation, it could help disadvantaged youths get into workplace and understand occupational environment and vocational skills for the constant learning and development as well as the expansion of self-expectation.

- 5) Schools are suggested to stress on the development of disadvantaged youths' multiple capabilities, encourage disadvantaged youths participating in school clubs, and establish courses of art, music, drama, and physical education for providing opportunities for disadvantaged youths exploring interests and talent. They could achieve the goal of self-actualization from the experiences in contest practice, interpersonal interaction, holding activity, and learning interpersonal interaction to appear diverse successful experiences and actively continue the involvement.

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