

# The Link Between Natural Mentoring and Resiliency, in the Face of Adverse Experiences and Insecure Attachment



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## Background

- Resilience is the ability to cope with and overcome difficulties.
- Childhood traumatic events can undermine resilience by disrupting emotion regulation, coping skills, social connectedness, and self-esteem, thereby reducing an individual's ability to cope effectively.
- One way to increase resilience is through a secure attachment to a caregiver.
- However, if an individual lacks a secure attachment to their caregiver, supportive relationships, such as natural mentors (NM; kin, non-kin, helping professionals), can also foster resilience.
- The present study examines whether having an NM is associated with higher resilience, while accounting for adverse experiences and insecure attachment to primary caregivers.

## Methods

- Approximately 300 students will be recruited to complete an online survey via TCU SONA studies or a flyer posted across the TCU campus.
- [Participant demographics to be added]
- The measures used are self-report and include the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-S, 12-item), Adverse Childhood Experiences questionnaire (ACE, 10-item), and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC, 25-item). Participants will also be asked about any prior relationship with an NM and the quality of that relationship.
- Descriptive analyses, one-way ANOVA, two-way ANOVA, and stepwise multiple regression will be conducted to test the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: What is the prevalence of natural mentors, ACEs, attachment insecurity, and resilience among college students?

Hypothesis 2: Individuals with a natural mentor will report higher resilience rates compared to those without a natural mentor.

Hypothesis 3: When accounting for experiences of adverse events, individuals with a natural mentor will exhibit greater resilience as compared to those without a natural mentor.

Hypothesis 4: Contingent on Hypothesis 2, we will explore whether individuals with a natural mentor will exhibit greater resilience than those without a natural mentor, even when accounting for rates of insecure attachment.

## Results

[RESULTS TO BE ADDED & POSTER TO BE PRINTED BY STUDENT FOR SRS]

## Conclusion/Discussion

- It is expected that an NM relationship will promote resilience even in the face of adversity.
- Individuals with ACEs and insecure attachment may report lower resilience; the presence of a natural mentor relationship can help buffer these effects, indicating that supportive relationships can lessen early relational risks.
- Differences among mentor types may highlight variations in the quality and role of the relationship, as well as its relationship to resilience. These findings may suggest that not all NM types contribute equally to resilience.
- These findings may inform preventive care that emphasizes naturally occurring, accessible, low-cost support systems.
- Findings may also support the development of programs that create more opportunities to build and strengthen NM relationships within at-risk populations, rather than formal programs that can require substantial financial resources.

## Limitations/Future Research

- The proposed study utilizes a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish causality among attachment, trauma, natural mentoring, and resilience.
- This study relies on retrospective self-reports of their NM relationship and ACEs, while attachment towards caregivers and resilience are assessed in their current situation. This may introduce recall bias and limit the ability to capture how the timing of the relationships influences the current outcomes of the main variables.
- Future research should examine these relationships utilizing a longitudinal study design across diverse populations.

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