

Family Policies in Empowering Families in Meeting Challenges of the COVID-19

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Acknowledgements:

This presentation is financially supported by Wofoo Foundation and the Research Matching Fund of the Research Grants Council

The survey on family resilience is financially supported by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (“Jockey Club Promoting Family Resilience” Project)

What Reflections should we have under COVID-19?



COVID-19 and Quality of Life: Twelve Reflections

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Received: 5 December 2020 / Accepted: 8 December 2020 / Published online: 6 January 2021

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Abstract

COVID-19 has severely affected the world since December 2020. Because of its sudden onset and highly contagious nature, the world has responded in a “crisis management” manner. With effective vaccines almost available, it is appropriate at

Editorial specifically written for CIFA Regional Symposium & MSF Asian Family Conference 2022

Editorial (In press, *Applied Research in Quality of Life*)

Social Policies and Theories on Quality of Life under COVID-19:

In Search of the Missing Links

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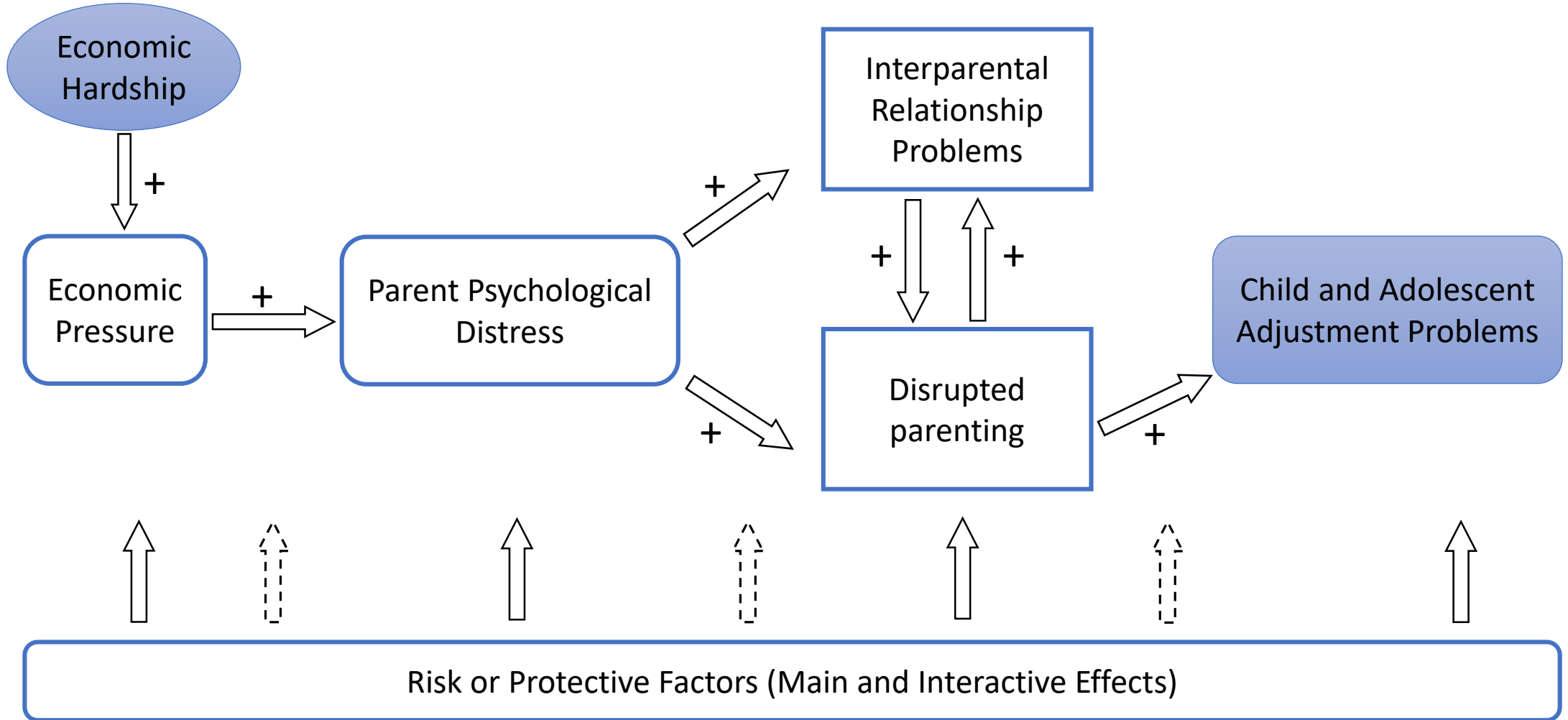
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01

Impact of COVID-19 on the Family: Theories



Family Stress Model (FSM)



(Masarik & Conger, 2017)

Family Stress Model (FSM)



Main Ideas

- Economic Hardship ...> Economic Pressure> Parent Psychological Distress ...>
- Interparental Relationship Problems and Disrupted parenting ...> Child and Adolescent Adjustment Problems

Implications

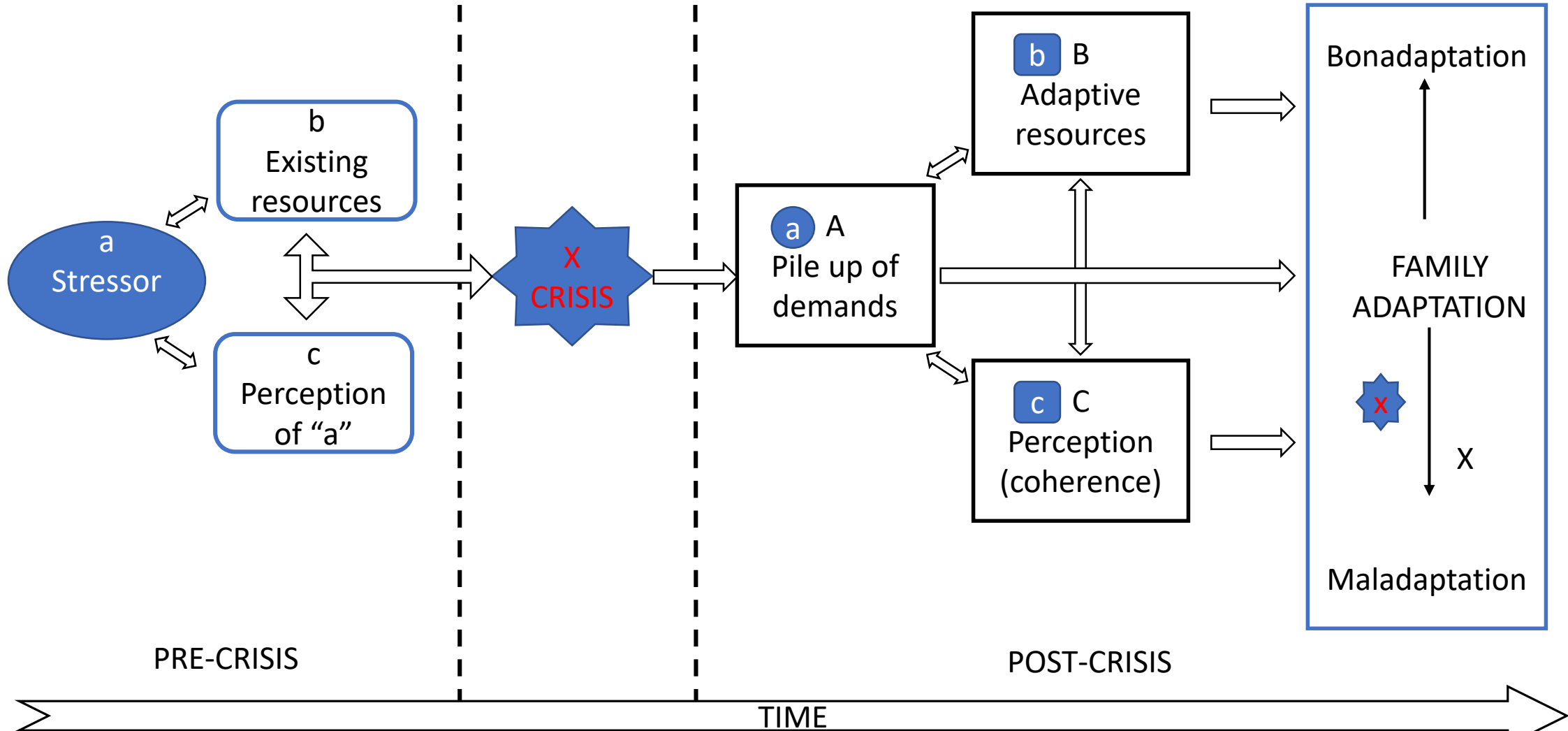


- Understand the Relationships amongst economic hardship, stress, parental distress, parenting, and child adjustment under COVID-19
- Family support measures

(Masarik & Conger, 2017)



Double ABCX Model



(McCubbin & Patterson, 1983)

Double ABCX Model

Main Ideas

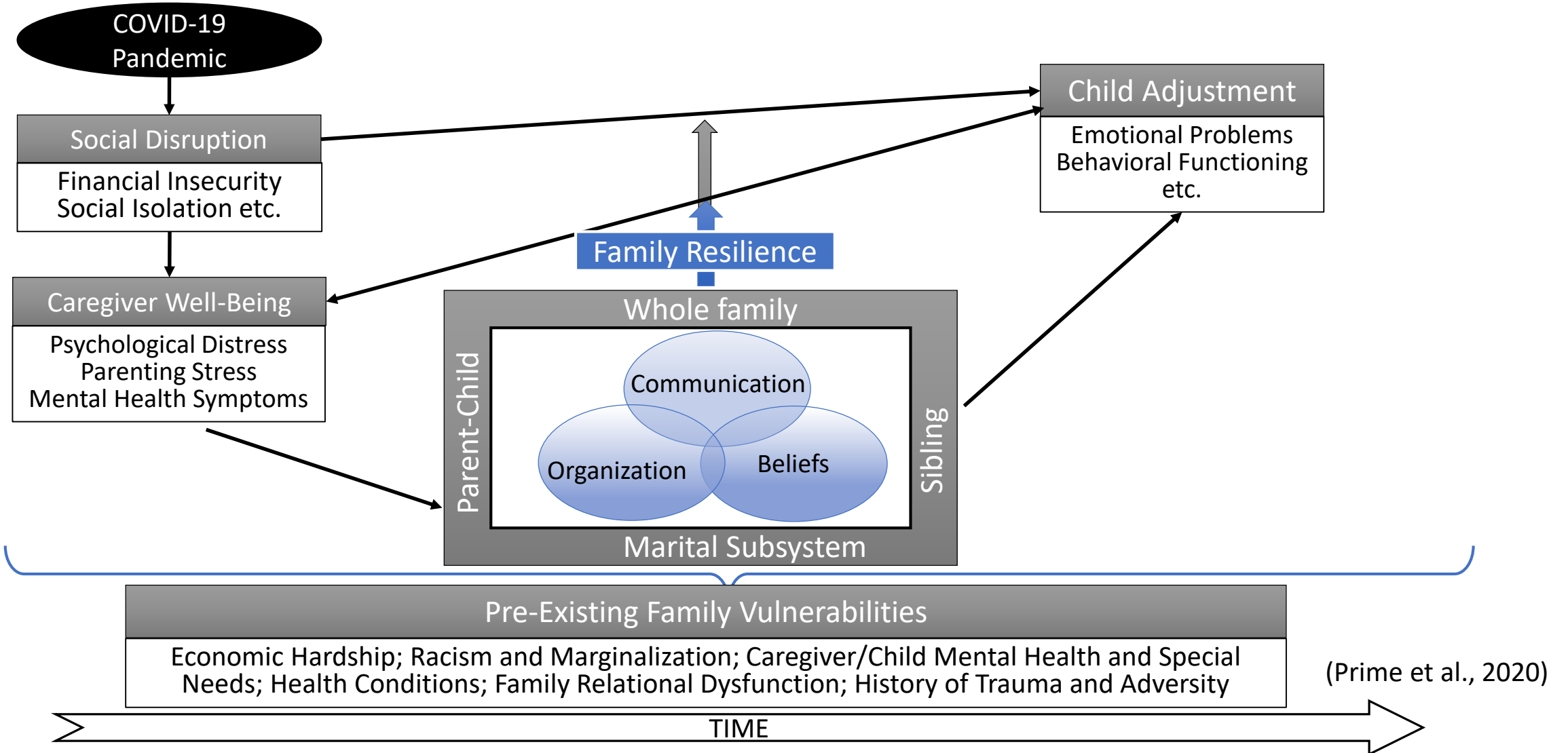
- ABCX Model: hardship of stressors + **family's definition + resources available ...>** extent to which the **stressor** transformed into a **crisis**
- **The Double ABCX model: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis and five post-crisis variables, such as “perception of the initial stressor”, “pile up”, and “existing and new resources”**

Implication

-  Understand **family definition of stress**
- **Understand family adaptation under the COVID-19 pandemic**



Prime et al.'s Model



Prime's Model



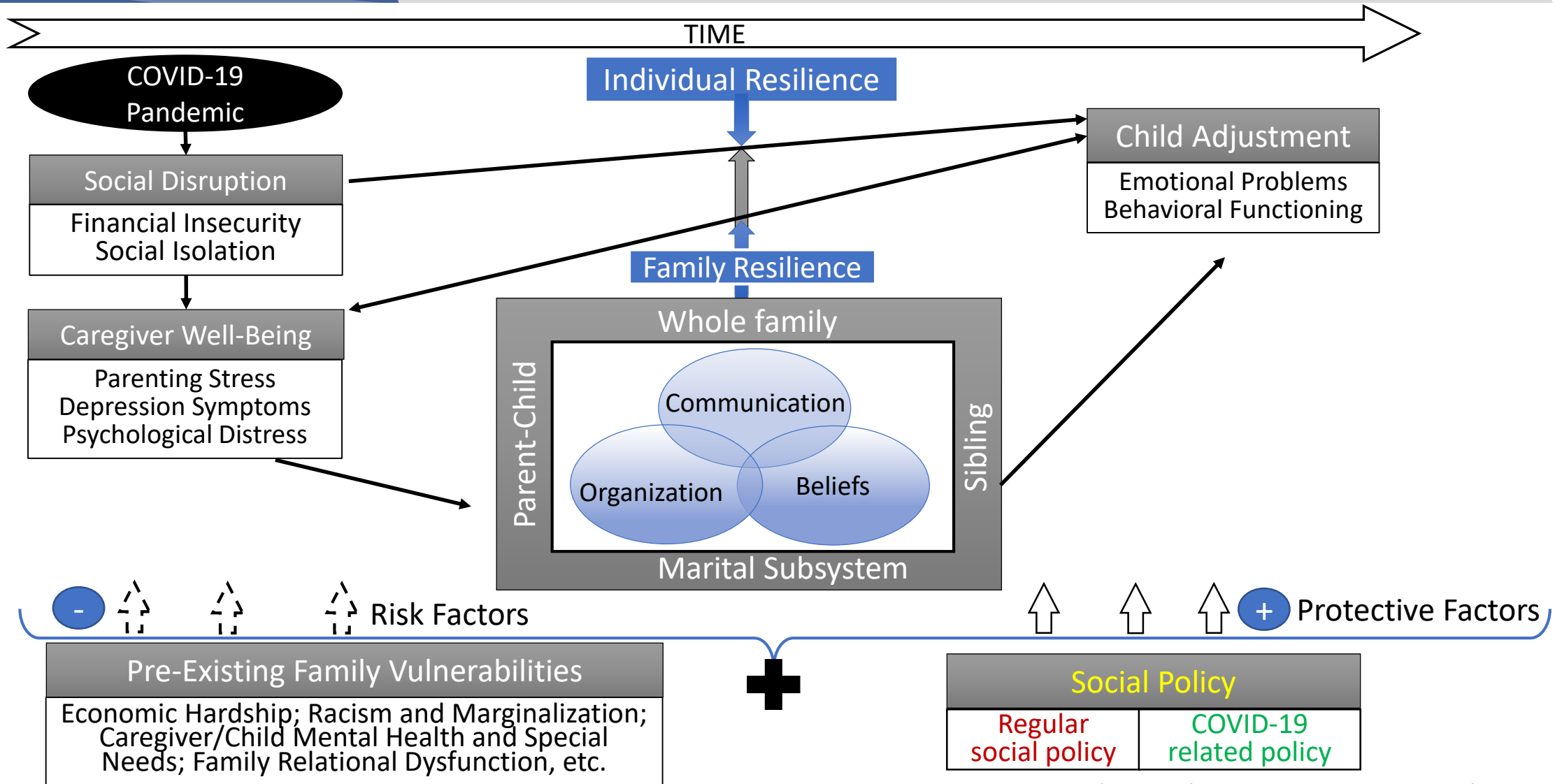
Main Ideas

- 1) **COVID-19 Social Disruption ...> Child Adjustment** not only directly but also through the mediating variable of **Caregiver Well-being**
- 2) Multilevel ecological organization: **Individuals, Dyadic System** (i.e., marital, parent-child, sibling subsystems), and the **Whole Family**
- 3) **Family Resilience moderates** both direct and indirect effects of Social Disruption on Child Adjustment
- 4) **Pre-existing Family Vulnerabilities** or **Pre-existing Strengths** would exacerbate or buffer the foregoing processes

(Bowen, 1974; Conger & Conger, 2002; Walsh, 1998; Prime et al., 2020)



Model of Family Well-being Under COVID-19



(Adapt from: Prime et al., 2020)

02

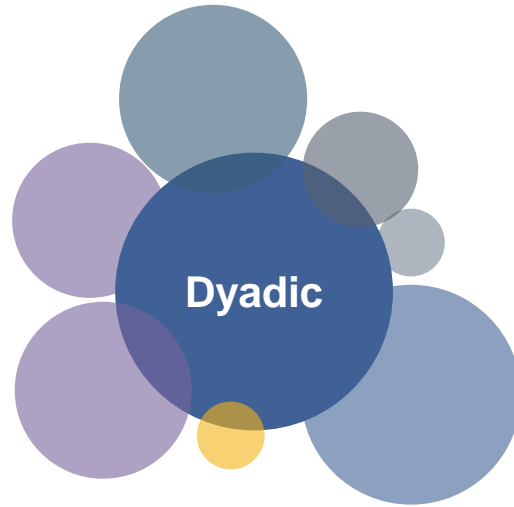
Impact of COVID-19 on the Family: Evidence



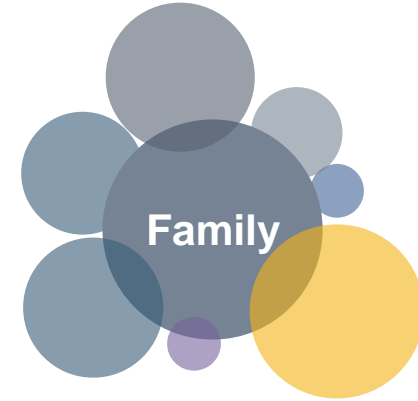
Family System



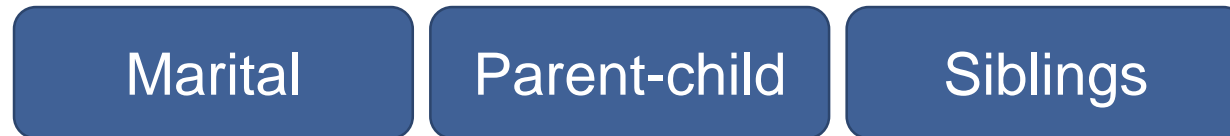
Individual subsystem



Dyadic subsystem



Systemic Family Processes



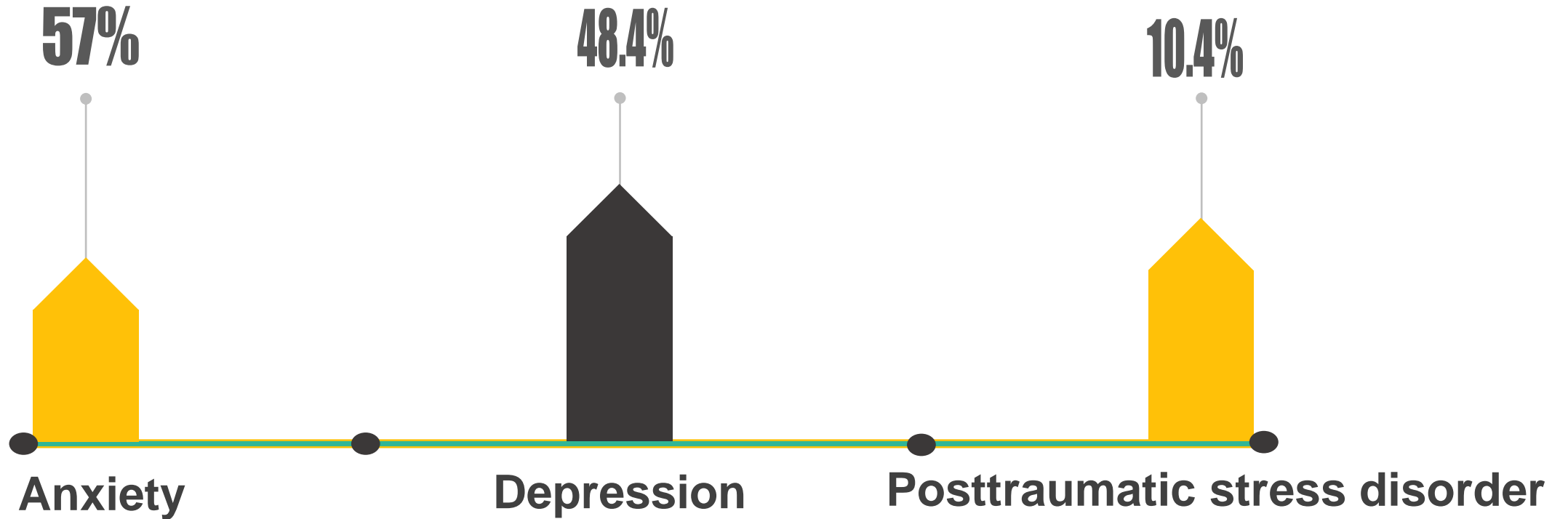
Impact of COVID-19 on **Individual: Children**

WHO (2020) warning of children exhibiting signs of mental illness under COVID-19

Precursors

- ❖ Academic stress
- ❖ Spatial resource competition
- ❖ Less peer support

Impact of COVID-19 on **Individual: Children**



57% of 1,648 Hong Kong university students

(Shek, Dou, & Zhu, 2022)

48.4% of Hong Kong university students

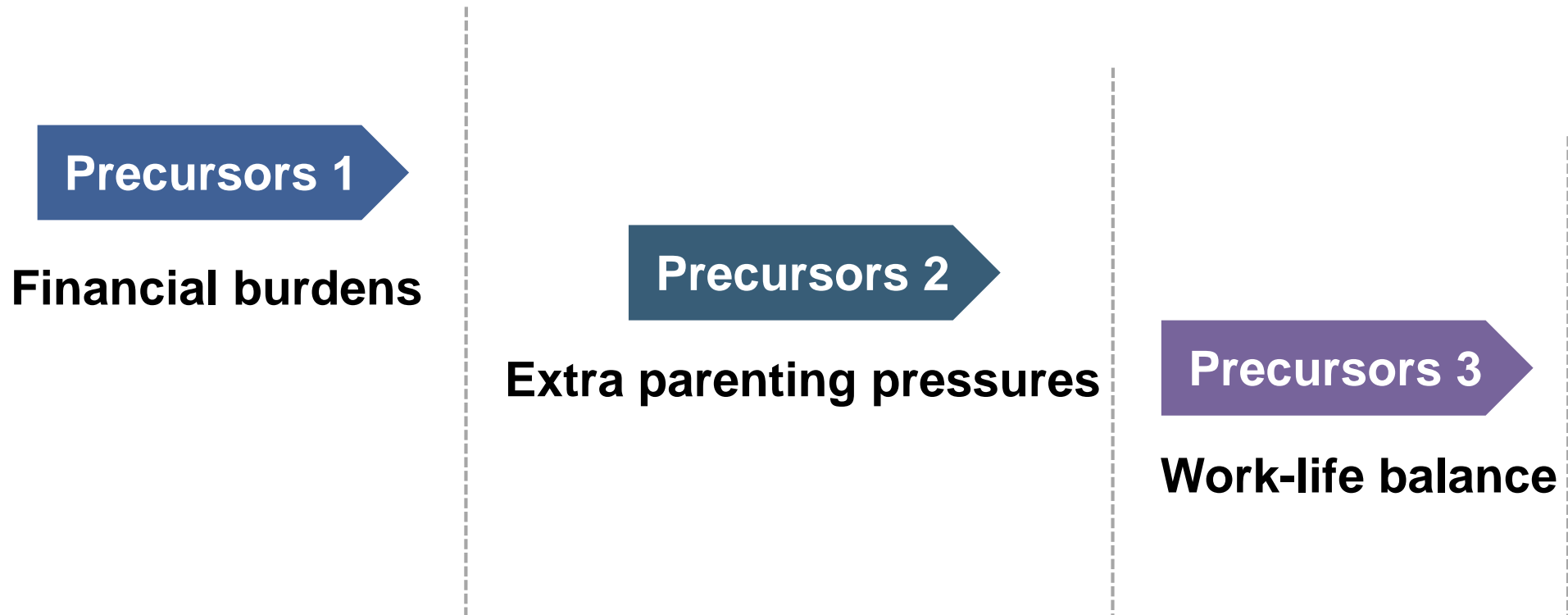
(Shek, Dou, Zhu, et al, 2022)

10.4% of 517 adolescents in mainland China

(Shek et al. , 2021)

Impact of COVID-19 on **Individual: Parents**

Parents suffered from the Psychosocial Well-Being Tsunami



(Morelli et al., 2020; C. Fong & Iarocci, 2020)

COVID-19 Pandemic, Family Resilience and Individual Wellbeing among Hong Kong Families

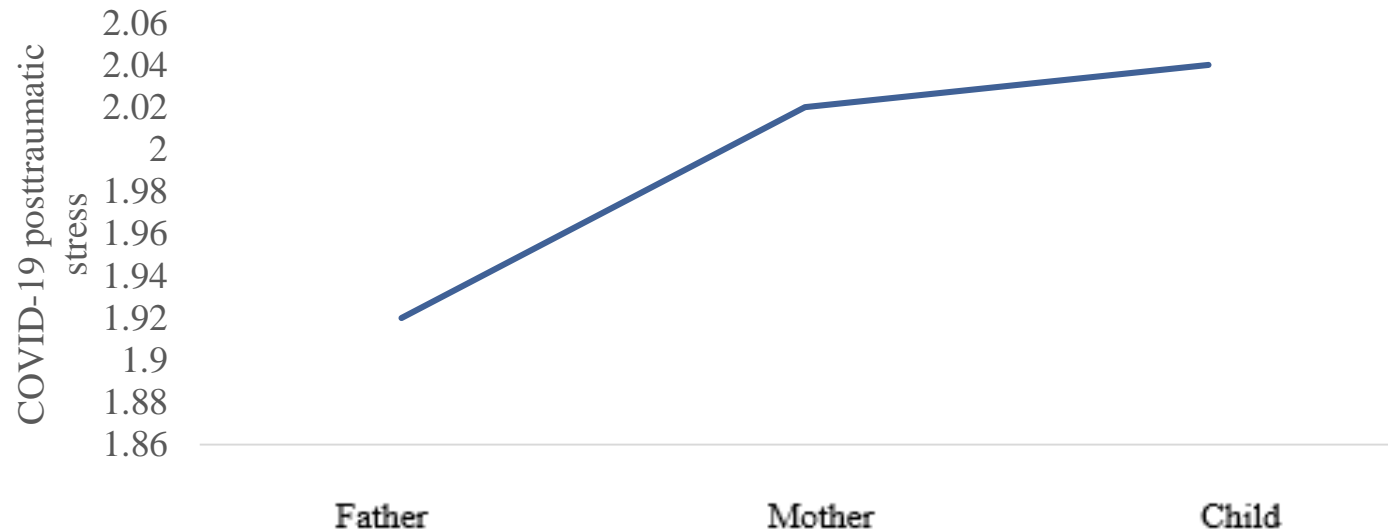
Need assessment survey of “Jockey Club Promoting Family Resilience” Project financially supported by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust



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Comparison among Family Members

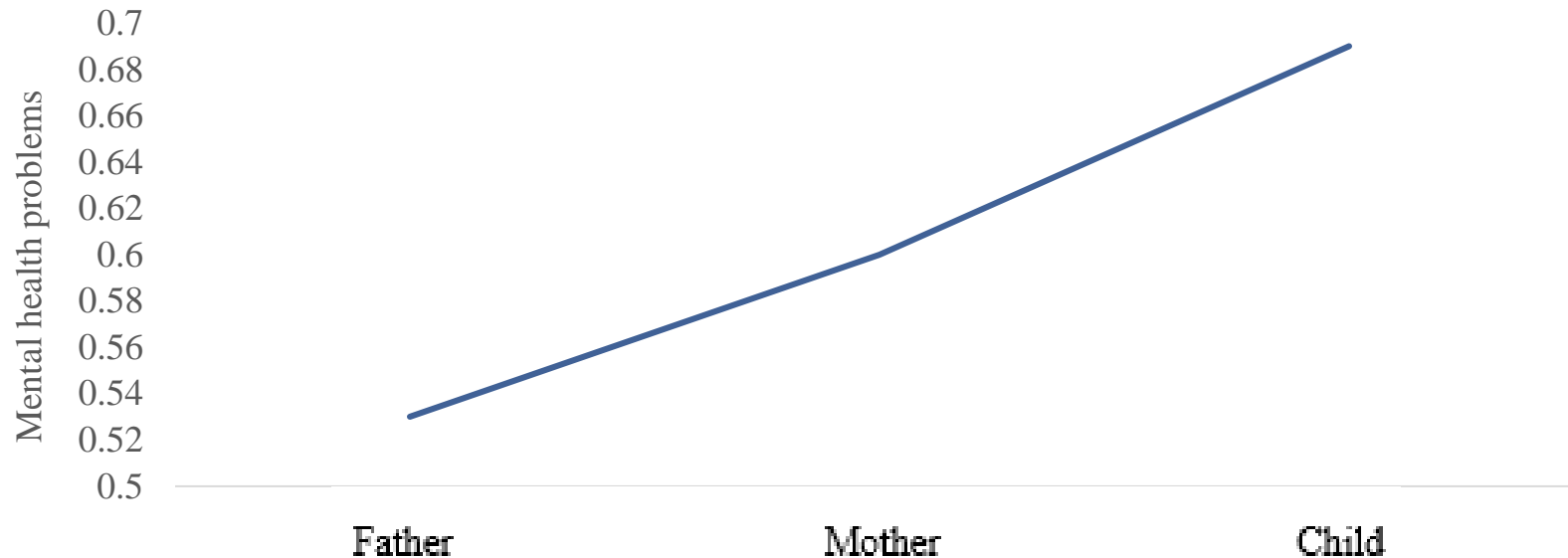


Children's posttraumatic stress due to COVID-19 stress was the greatest

One-Way ANOVA indicated significant mean differences of posttraumatic stress due to COVID-19 pandemic among family members, $F(2, 2851) = 7.52, p = .001$.

- Post Hoc tests indicated higher means for children than fathers, $p = .001$, 95% CI = [.04, .20]).

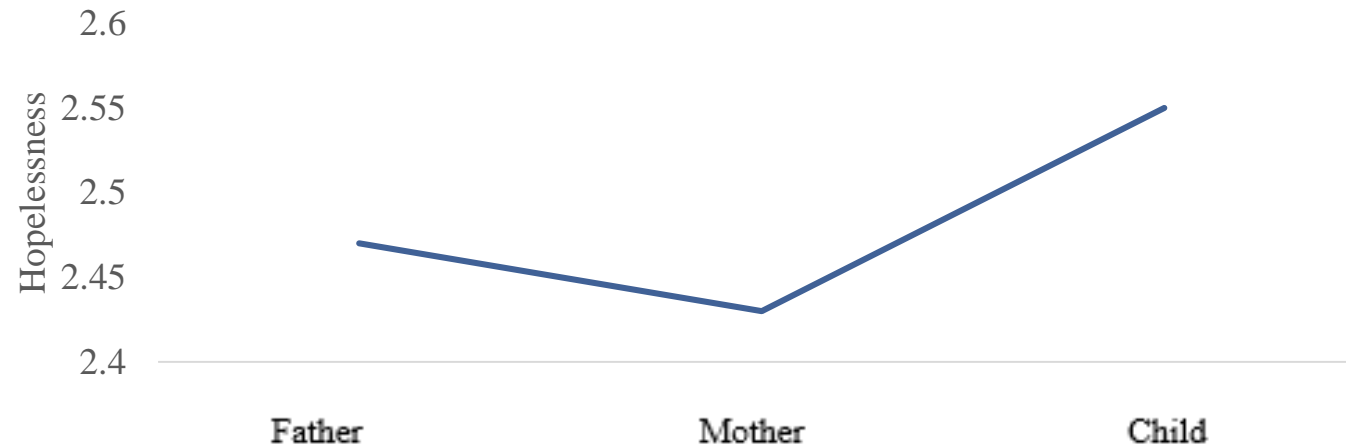
Comparison among Family Members



Children reported the poorest mental health problems

- One-Way ANOVA indicated significant mean differences of negative affect among family members, $F(2, 2849) = 17.26, p = .000$.
- Post Hoc tests indicated highest mean for children than fathers ($p = .000, 95\% \text{ CI} = [.10, .22]$) and mothers ($p = .002, 95\% \text{ CI} = [.03, .15]$).

Comparison among Family Members



Children were found to be the most hopeless

- One-Way ANOVA indicated significant mean differences of hopelessness among family members, $F(2, 2851) = 3.65, p = .026$.
- Post Hoc tests indicated highest mean for children than mothers, $p = .024, 95\% \text{ CI} = [.01, .22]$ ◦

Impact of COVID-19 on **Dyadic Relational Qualities**

Intra-family ties between **spouses, parents-children, and siblings** is impaired

External uncertainty and stress

- Reduction of intimate interactions with fear of infection risk
- Prolonged cohabitation due to working from home
- Removal of social contacts result from isolation

Impact of COVID-19 on **Dyadic: Marital Ties**

Decline in marital and births in many countries during pandemic

(Ghaznavi et al., 2022)

- Vigl et al. (2022): partnership **satisfaction declined** at the start of the epidemic compared to participants' retrospective rating of it prior to this crisis, involving 67 countries (N= 3,243).

Studies

- Hsu and Henke (2021): forced stay-at-home resulting from COVID 19 increased intimate **partner violence** by greater than 5% in roughly three months.
- Genç et al. (2021): relationship satisfaction indeed was **negatively impacted by COVID-19 distress** among Turkish Couples.

Impact of COVID-19 on **Dyadic: Parent-child Ties**

Deteriorating parent-child ties?

Studies

- Brown et al. (2020): a higher risk of **child maltreatment** was significantly correlated with greater anxiety and depressive symptom levels in parents.
- Chung et al. (2020): parents who were more affected by the financial, resource, and psychological impacts of COVID-19 experienced more **parenting stress**, which was positively correlated with **harsh parenting practices**.
- Wang et al. (2021): unemployment under the pandemic in the United States demonstrated increased **parent-child conflict**, which goes on to predict negative affection in children.

Impact of COVID-19 on **Dyadic: Parent-child Ties**

OR
Increased high-quality interactions between parents and children?

The pandemic created:

Studies

- Time opportunities for 65.4% of parents. (Thomson et al., 2021)
- Closeness opportunities for 49.7% of parents. (Gadermann et al., 2021)
- **Question: How to turn “Crisis” into “Opportunity”?**

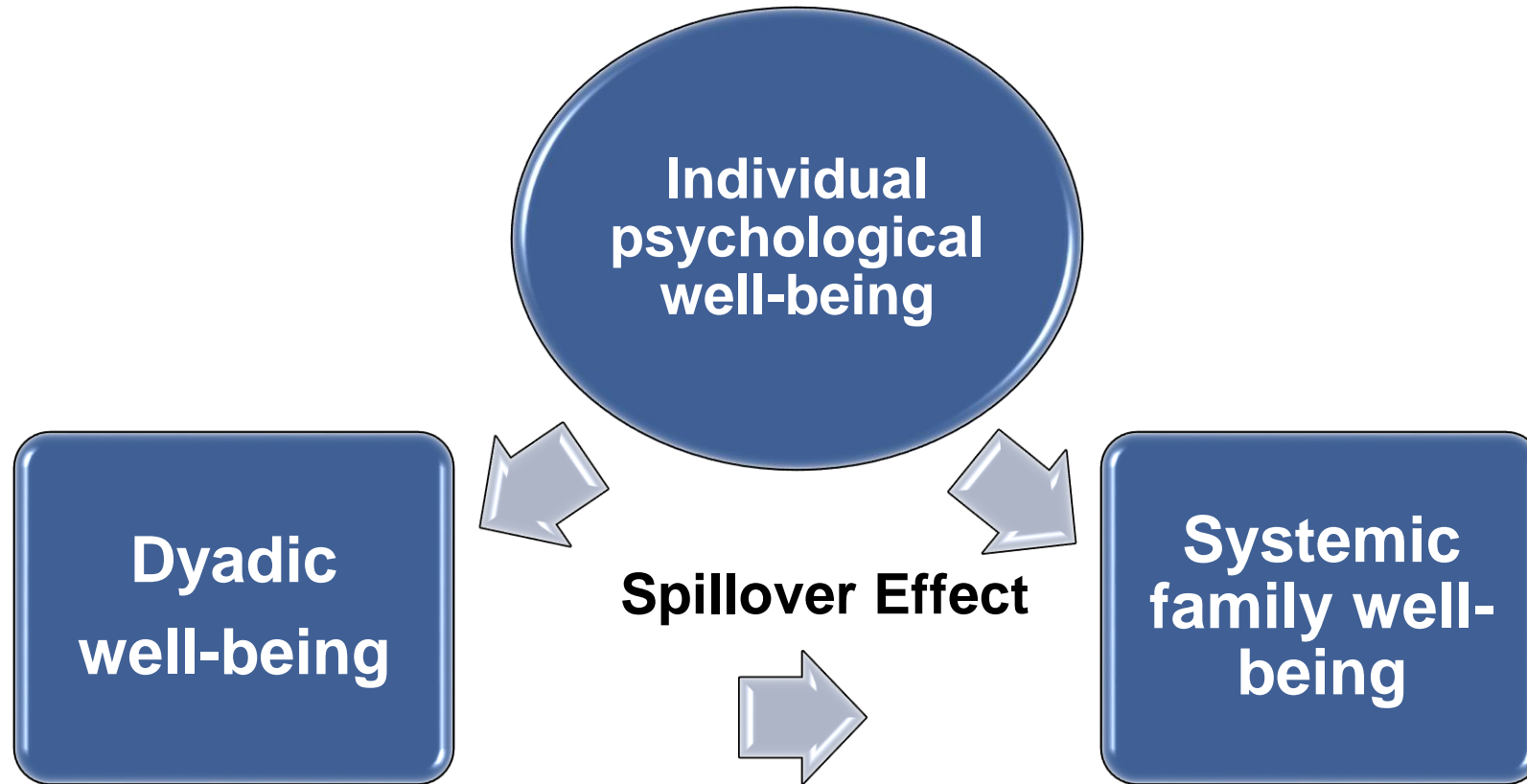
Impact of COVID-19 on **Dyadic: Siblings Ties**

Limited studies concerned with sibling disrupted by COVID-19

Studies

- Quite a few parents reported an increase in sibling squabbles and fights due to **competition for personal space** (Eales et al., 2021).
- Toseeb (2022) revealed high rates of reported **sibling conflict** during the UK confinement, with 4/5 of youth with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) having initiated the victimization towards siblings.

Impact of COVID-19 on **Systemic Family Processes**



(Ho et al., 2022; Hussong et al., 2022)

Impact of COVID-19 on **Systemic Family Processes**



Why?

Relationships **Deteriorating** for some families and **Improving** for others

- Fosco et al. (2022) reported that while **family conflict** slightly decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, **harsh discipline** increased slightly.
- Hussong et al. (2022) showed a decrease in either **parental supportiveness** for adolescents, overt **family communication**, or **family satisfaction**.
- Eales et al. (2021) demonstrated that while 10.4% of parents reported worsened family relationships, 44.5% reported **improved** relationships.

03

Social Polices in response to COVID-19





Example: Policy Responses in North America

	Canada	United States
Employment protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CEWS• Employment protection, wage subsidy• Temporary supports (varies at province level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PPP employment protection, wage subsidy to business
Unemployment protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CERB unemployment benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PEUC unemployment benefit• PUAP unemployment• PUCP unemployment• Temporary unemployment extension from disaster relief fund

(Béland et al., 2021)



Example: Policy Responses in North America

	Canada	United States
Social assistance/family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CBB one-off payment• Goods & Services tax Credit• One-off payment to low-income seniors• Assistance to individuals (varies at province level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SNAP food assistance• One-off payment per household
Health care		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced Medicaid match rates
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal funding for mortgage pools• Rental assistance payments (varies at province level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Temporary eviction moratoria (federal/state)• Rental assistance payments (varies at state level)

(Béland et al., 2021)



Financial Security: Employment and Unemployment Policies

Society	Feature	Economies	Policy
EU	Enhancing social security, which has long forged a robust tool for protecting individuals and families ; Developing new income support packages	Netherlands	“Emergency Measure for the Preservation of Jobs” (NOW); “Temporary Emergency Measure for Self-employed Persons” (Tozo)
		Germany	Suspending the wealth test for the “Hartz IV” unemployment benefits
Asia		Hong Kong	“100% Personal Loan Guarantee Scheme” (PLGS); “2022 Employment Support Scheme”
		Singapore	“COVID-19 Support Grant”; “Jobs Support Scheme”; “Jobs Growth Incentive”
North America	liberal welfare state polities with roughly the same and relatively low levels of social spending	Canada	Enhancing federal Employment Insurance (EI); Introducing “Canadian Emergency Response Benefit” and “Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy”
		United States	large stimulus bills and Federal Reserve actions, e.g., “Families First Coronavirus Response Act”

(Cantillon et al., 2021; Government of the Netherlands, 2021; Cantillon et al., 2021; HKSAR Government, 2022; Gentilini et al., 2022; Béland et al., 2021)



Health Care Policies in Different Places

Society	Policy	Feature
Germany	COVID-19 Hospital Relief Act	Mitigate the financial burdens of hospitals and other healthcare facilities
Australia	Universal health care (established in 1975) + Supplemented private health care system	Access to continuing comprehensive primary care via telehealth
Mainland China	Medical social insurance was enhanced by including drugs and medical services for the COVID-19 treatment as part of the payment arranged for the medical insurance fund	Based on a comprehensive social security system developed prior to the pandemic , which covers almost all people

(Forman & Kohler, 2020; Germany Federal Ministry of Health, 2020; Shadmi et al., 2020; Xinhua, 2020)

Health Care Policies: Concerns

Society	Policy concerns
Worldwide policymakers	Facilitate fair and equitable access to the vaccine
Low- and middle-income countries	<p>Weak and incoherent social policies</p> <p>Lack public protection responsibility awareness</p> <p>Severe deficiencies in medical equipment and services support</p>

(Shadmi et al., 2020; WHO, 2022)



Financial Security: Other Policies

Aspect	Economies	Policy
Cash transfers or voucher schemes	The United Kingdom	Raised the benefit of the Universal Credit (UC); Launching a one-off cash transfer of £500 for those working households that receive tax credits; Providing the “COVID Local Support Grant”
	Singapore	“Unity Budget”, the “Resilience Budget”, the “Solidarity Budget”, and the “Fortitude Budget” were providing one-off grant, additional cash payout, top-up, vouchers, and electronic devices
Work-family balance	Germany and Belgium	Extended the pre-existing system of insurance-based parenthood leave
	Japan	As part of the “Second Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Emergency Response Package”, self-employed parents would be entitled to get a daily subsidy

(Hick & Murphy, 2021; Gentilini et al., 2022; Singapore Economic Development Board, 2020)

04

Policy Gaps under COVID-19

OECD. (2022). *First lessons from government evaluations of COVID-19 responses: A synthesis.*

医用一次性防护服

Policy Gaps

01. “No health without mental health”

- More focus on physical well-being policies on vaccination, disease control and treatment
- Fewer policies on psychological well-being
- Studies showing that policy stringency was positively related to poor mental health



02. Financial capital alone isn't enough

- Most focus on “financial capital” (employment protection, unemployment benefit)
- Money may contribute to hedonic well-being (e.g., life satisfaction) but not eudaimonic well-being (e.g., finding life meaning)

(Prince et al., 2007; OECD, 2022; Aknin et al., 2022; Moreno et al., 2020)

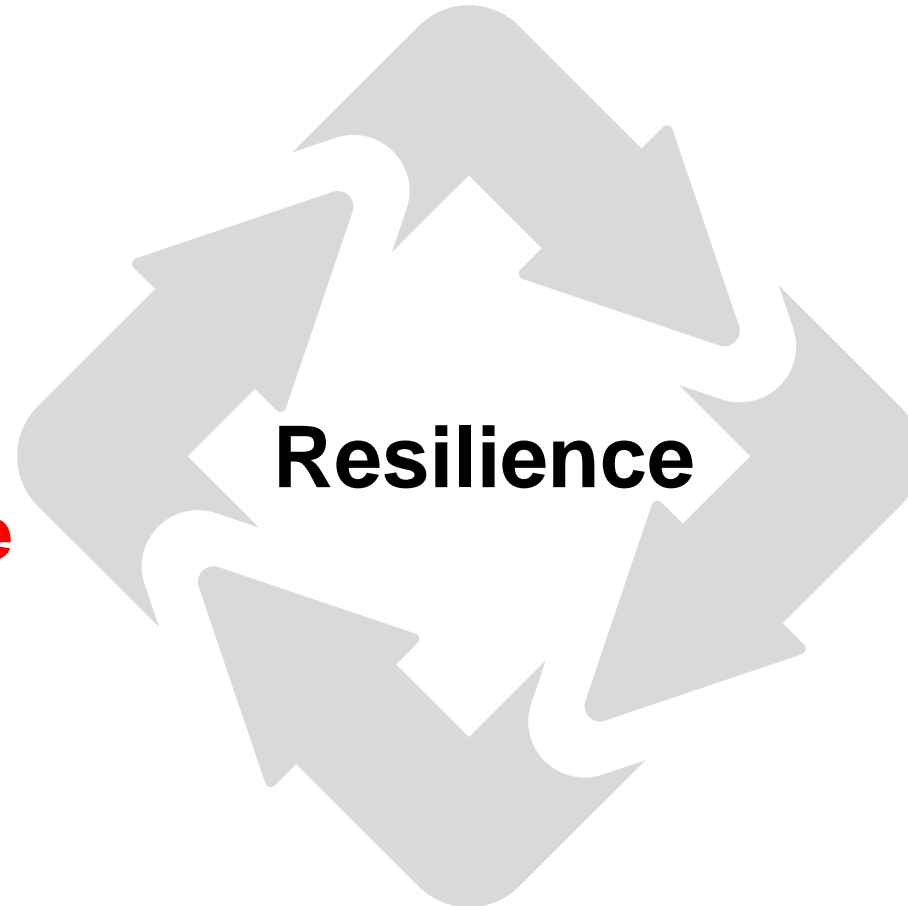
Policy Gaps

02. Financial capital alone isn't enough:

Human Capital: **Individual Resilience is IMPORTANT**

Human capital

Individual Resilience



Social capital

Family Resilience



Change in Individual Resilience Under COVID-19

30%

- One-third of 1034 Italian was **Non-resilient**
- COVID-related anxiety was significant predictors of non-resilient outcomes
- Conscientiousness could promote resilience

Panzeri et al. (2021)

Lower

- Polish individuals (N=1,547) infected with SARS-CoV-2 showed **lower rates** of resilience

Skalski et al. (2022)

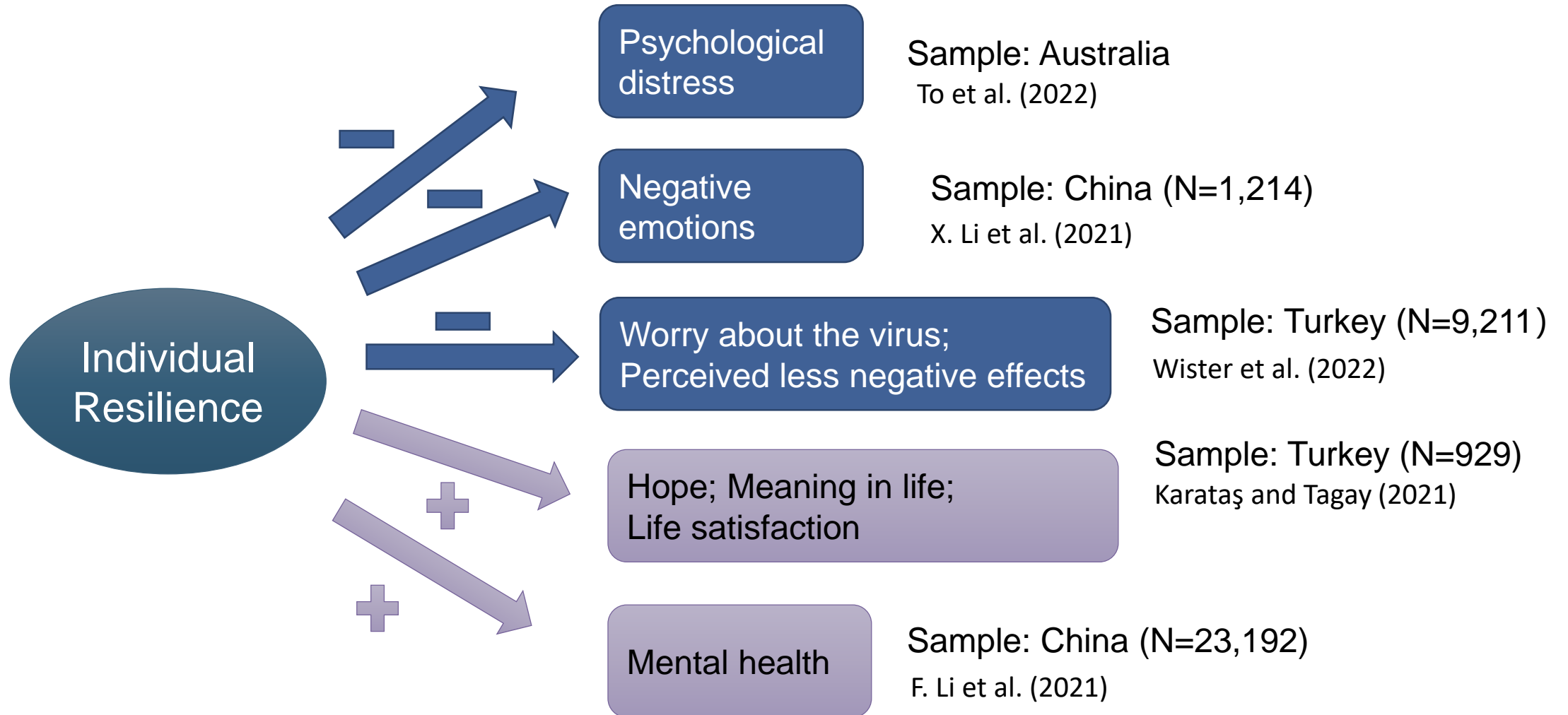
NO

- No significant change in individual resilience values over the COVID-19 in Australia

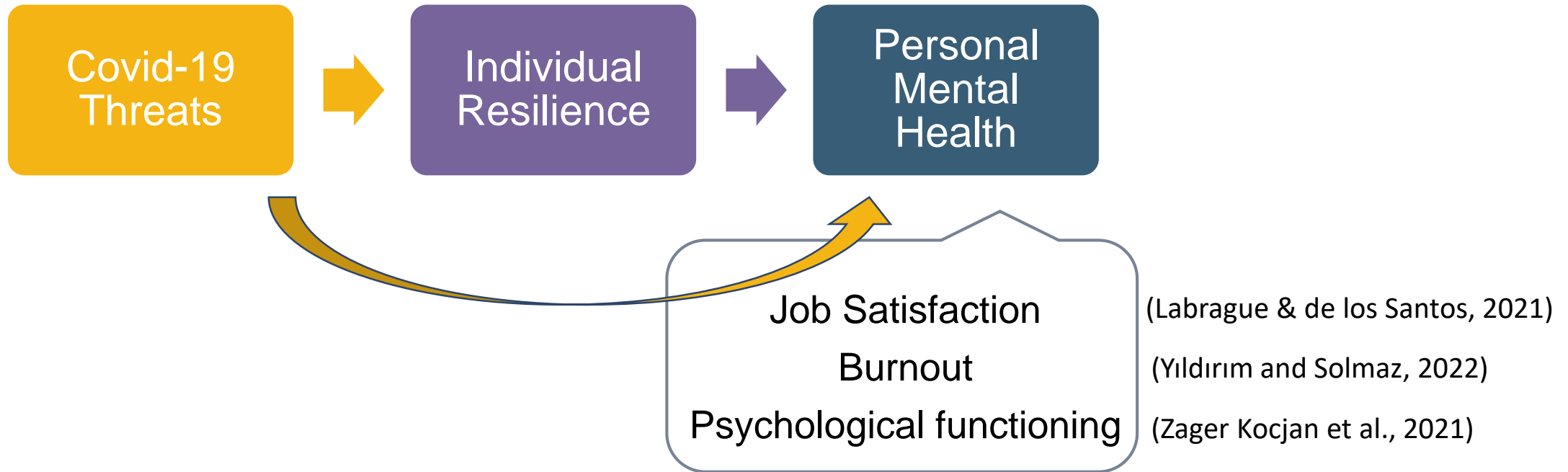
To et al. (2022)



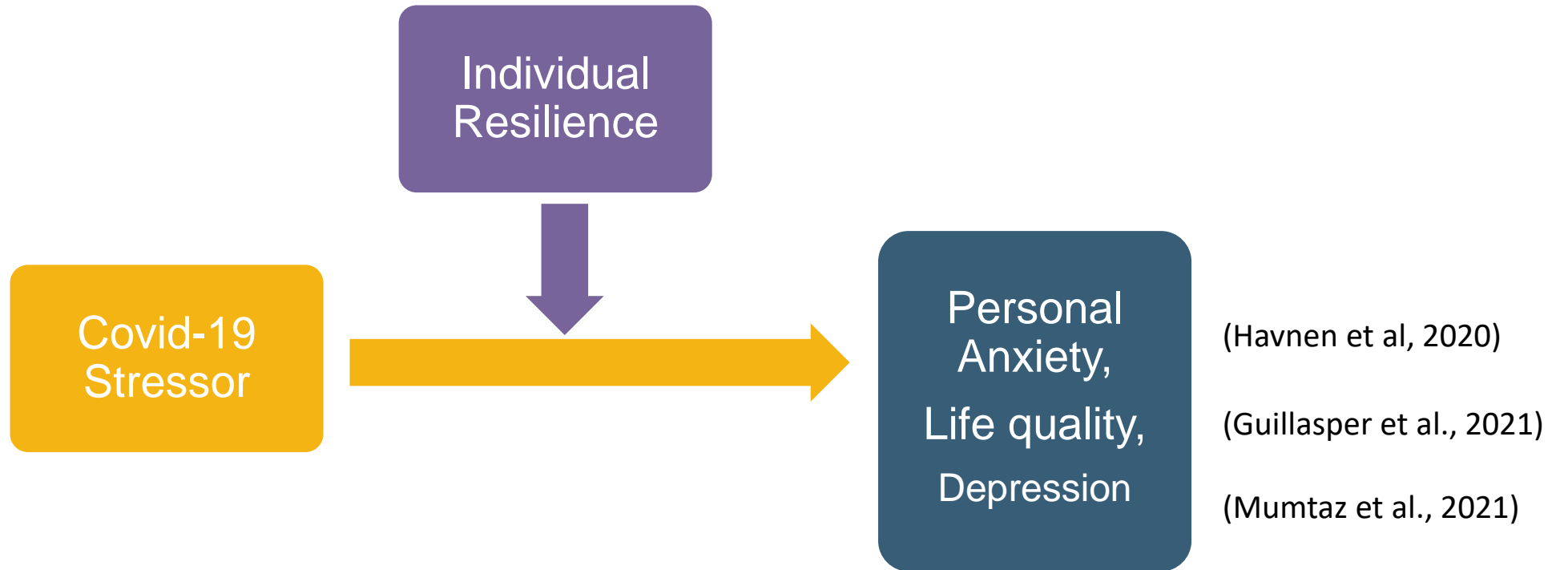
Correlation between Individual Resilience and Mental Well-being



Individual Resilience as Mediator



Individual Resilience as Moderator



Policy Gaps

02. Financial capital alone isn't enough:
Family Social Capital is IMPORTANT

Human capital

Individual Resilience



Social capital

Family Resilience

Change in Family Resilience Under COVID-19

- 10.4 % U.S. households suffered a **deteriorated relationships**, exhibiting low family resilience
- It manifested mainly by difficulties in maintaining family routines.

(Eales et al., 2021)

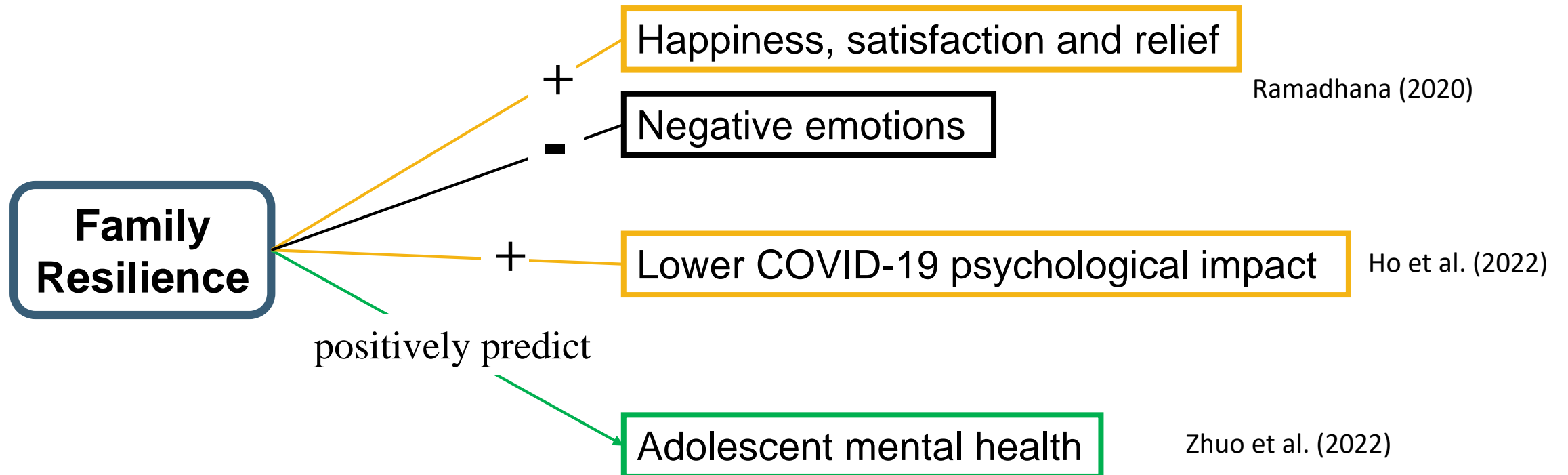


- 20% of UK families (N=4,000) reported financial difficulties, and most participants have experienced worsening physical (30%) and mental (38%).
- Just 12% reported deteriorated relationship with their children
- Nearly half felt wider **support from colleagues, neighbours, and the wider community.**

Family Action (2021)



Correlation between Family Resilience and Family Well-being



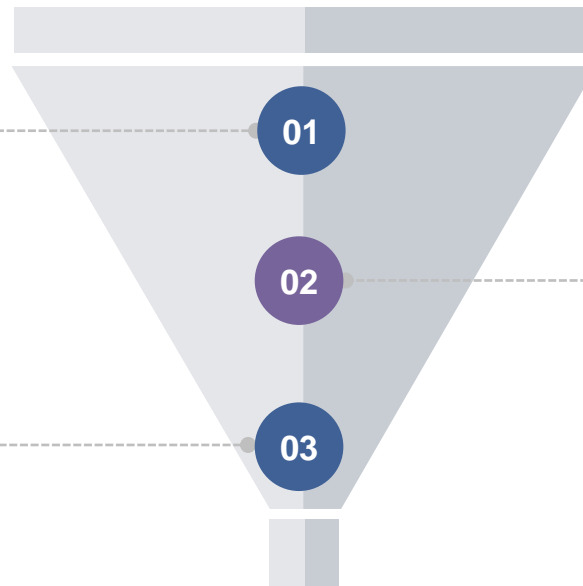
Family Resilience as a **Protective Factor**

Improved family relationships had a **protective** role in promoting child well-being.

Zhang et al. (2022)

Family resilience **mediated** the association between parents' perceived stress and children's hyperactivity, prosocial behaviour, and emotional symptoms.

Giordano et al. (2022)

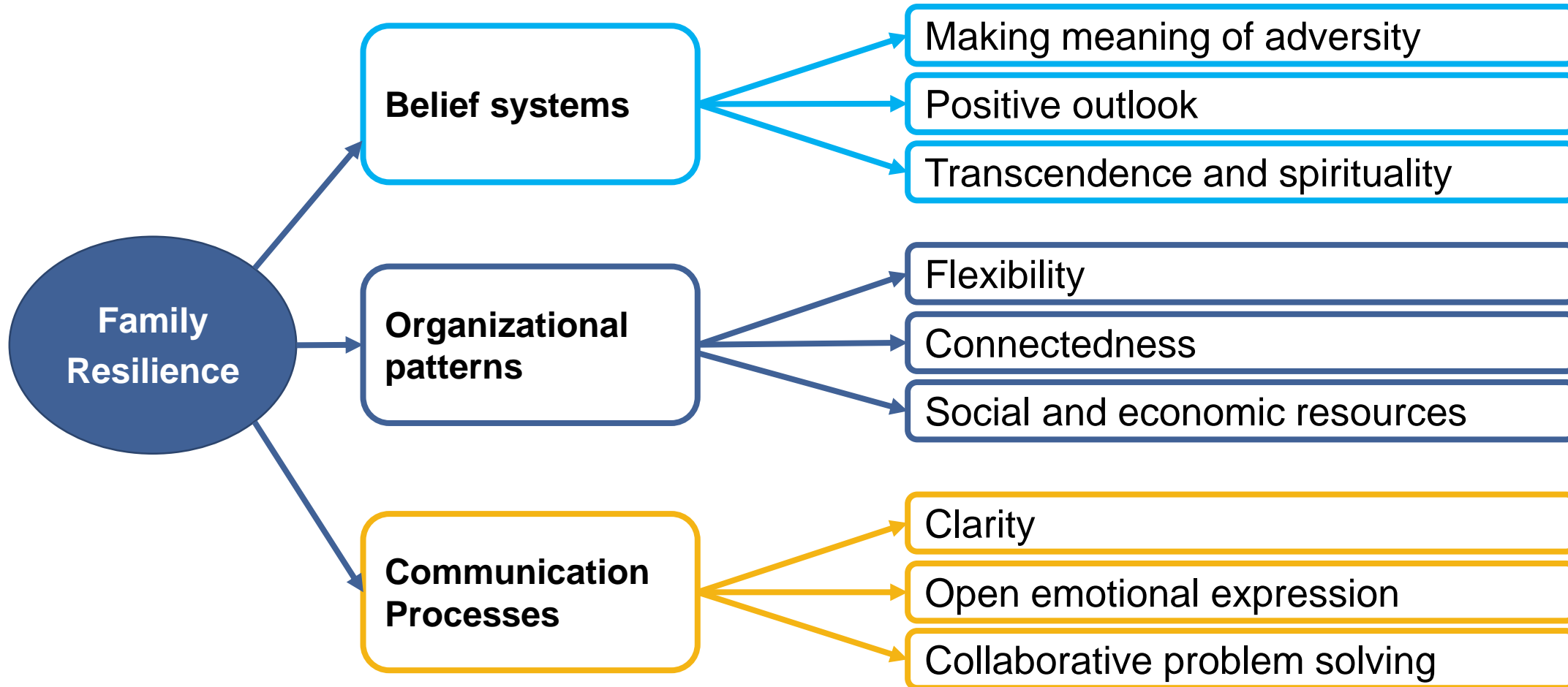


Family communication and problem-solving **moderated** the negative association between pandemic stressors and depression in Minnesota (N=442);

Family positive outlook moderated the relationship between pandemic stressors and anxiety in Hong Kong (N=597).

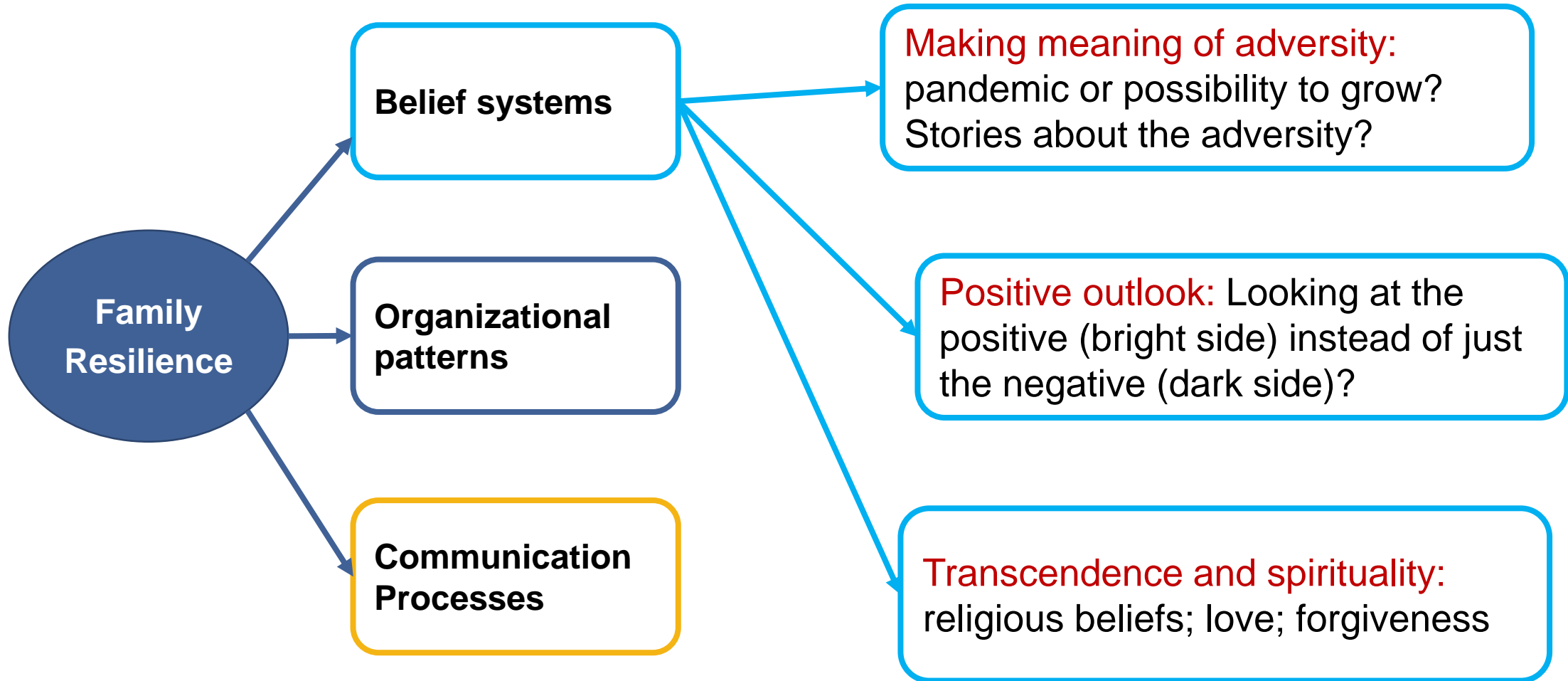
Chan et al. (2021)

Walsh's Family Resilience Framework



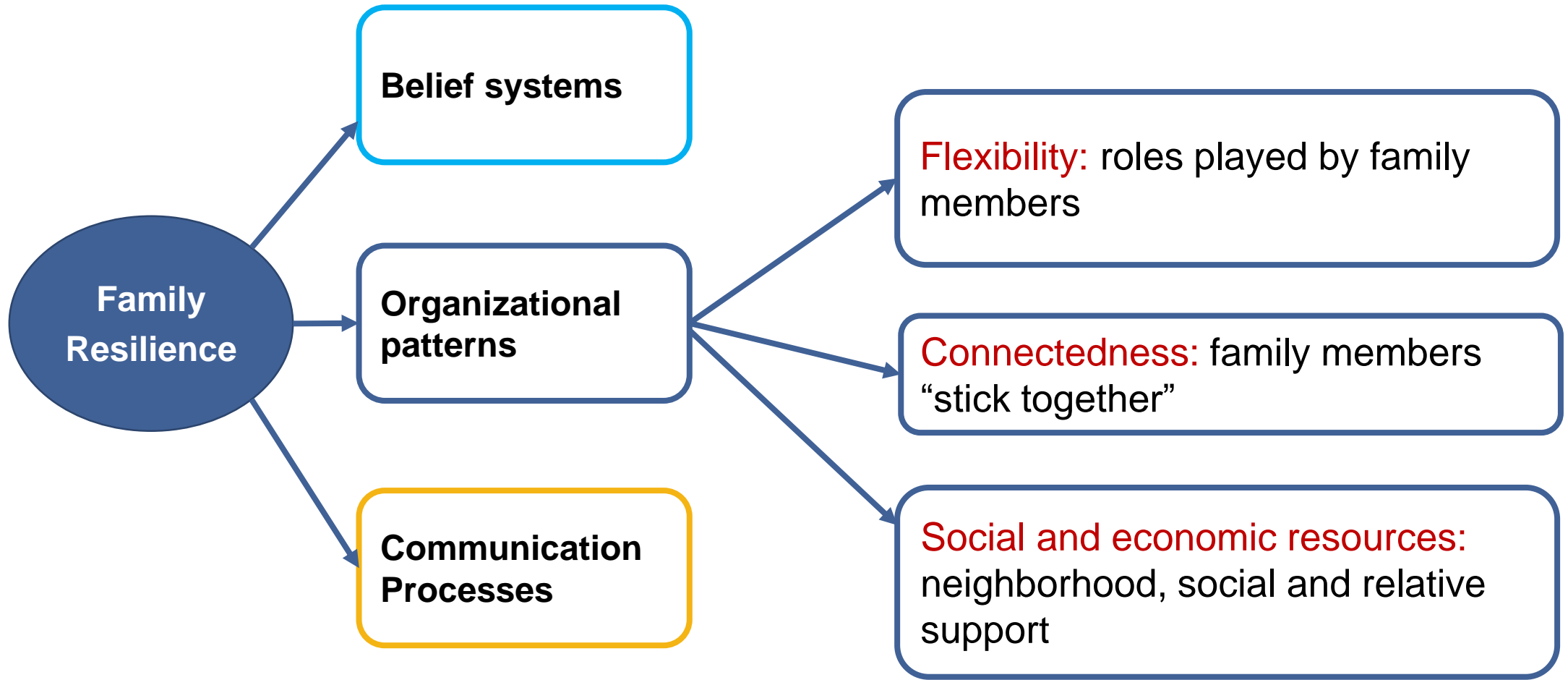
(Walsh, 1996, 1998, 2022)

Walsh's Family Resilience Framework



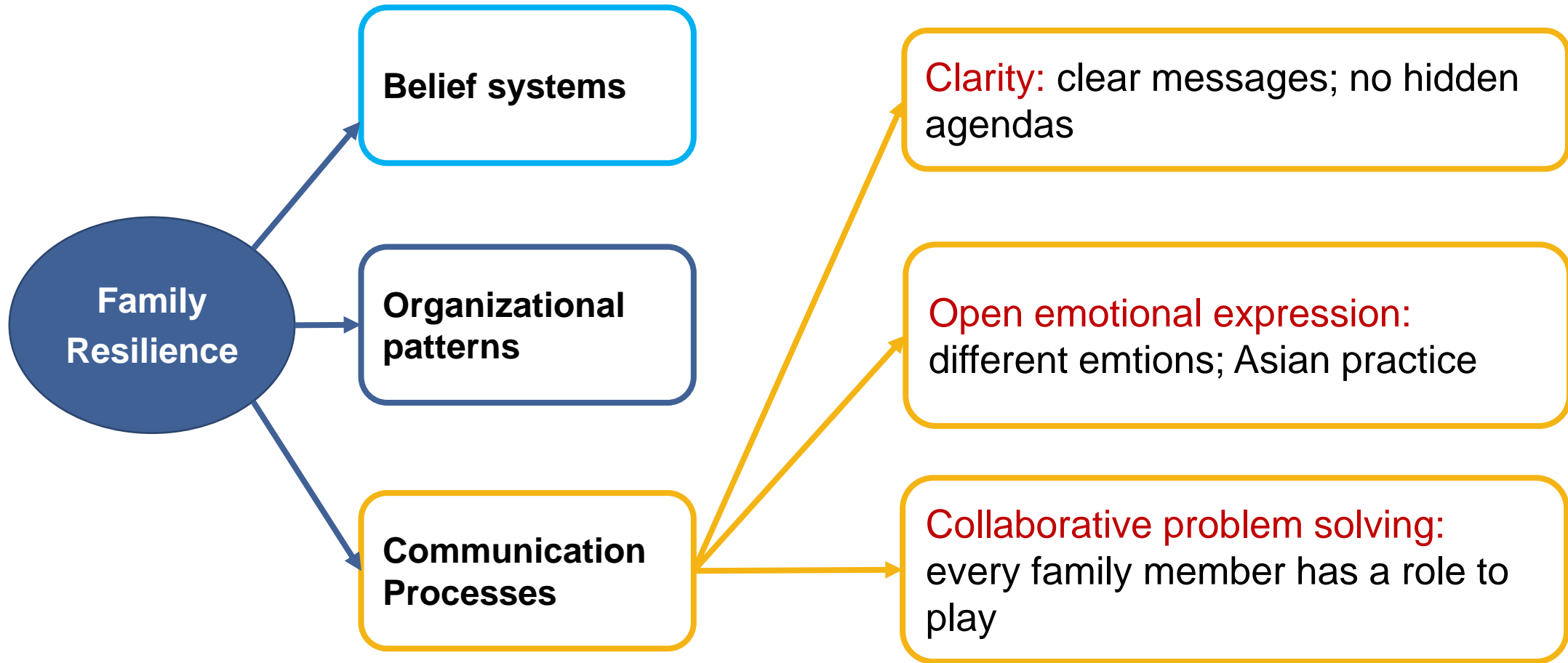
(Walsh, 1996, 1998, 2022)

Walsh's Family Resilience Framework



(Walsh, 1996, 1998, 2022)

Walsh's Family Resilience Framework



(Walsh, 1996, 1998, 2022)

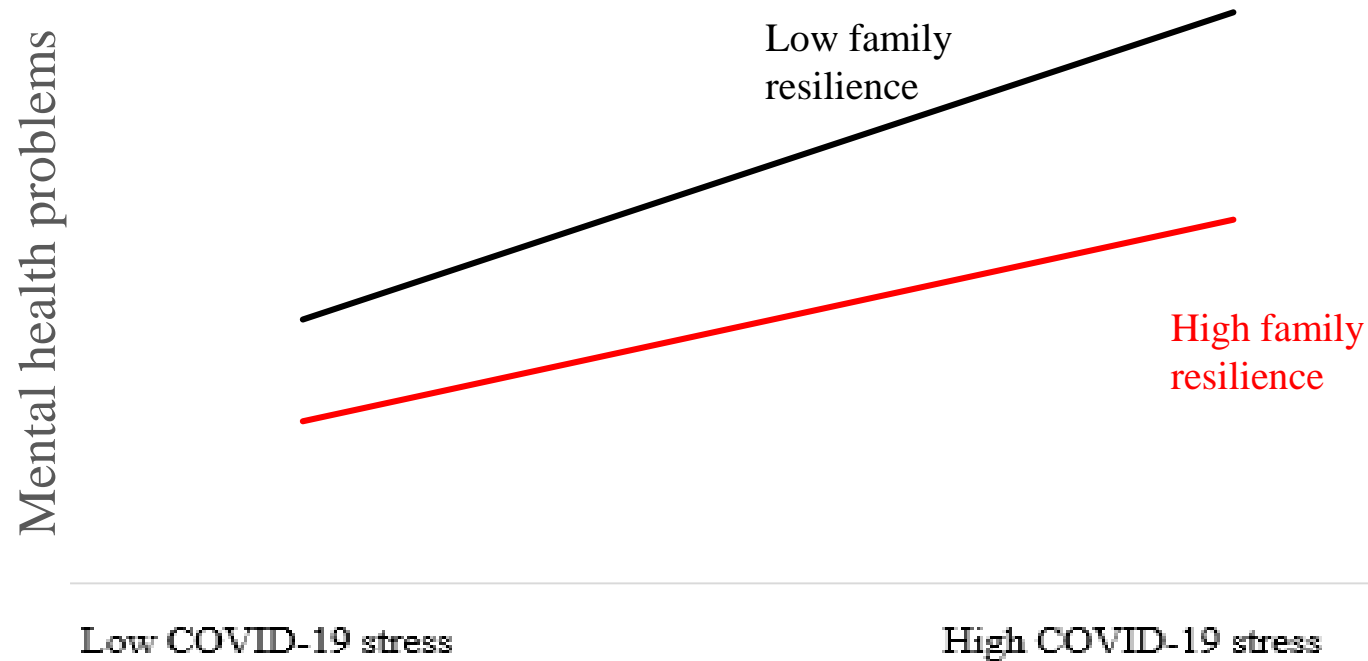
Family Resilience as a Moderator (HKJC Project)

- Family resilience reduced the effect of COVID-19 induced posttraumatic stress on anxiety of fathers
- When family resilience was high, father's anxiety was lower than those having lower family resilience



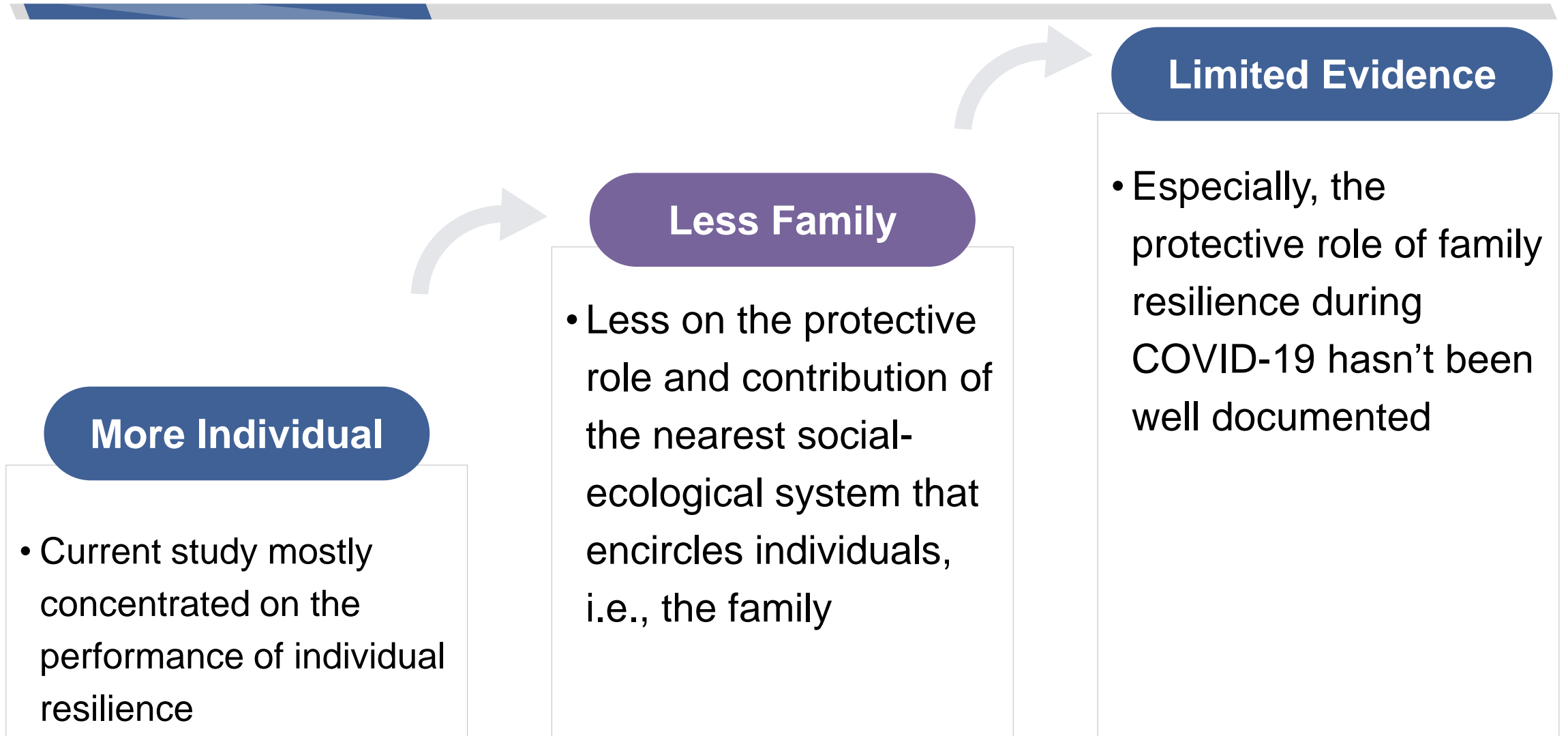
Family resilience as moderator (HKJC Project)

- Family resilience reduced the effect of children's COVID-19 induced posttraumatic stress on children's mental health problems
- When family resilience is high, children's mental health problems were lower than those having lower family resilience





Resilience Research Gaps



Policy Gaps

03. Policies addressing preexisting family vulnerabilities

- ❖ **Families and intergenerational relationships:** underexplored source of risk for transmission of COVID-19
- ❖ **Women and racial minorities:** likely to be caregivers for one or more family members of older and younger generations
- ❖ Policies aimed at health, employment, and social welfare should take the diversity of **family structure** and the importance of family caregiving into account
- ❖ Policies aimed at families and caregivers: **balance work and caregiving responsibilities**

(Stokes & Patterson, 2020)

Policy Implications to Enhance Family Resilience

Policies should incorporate:
progressive, anti-oppressive, critical and **social justice** elements

- + 01. “Generic” COVID-19 policies are not enough
 - + 02. Consider intergenerational relationships
 - + 03. Design flexible “family-friendly” policies
 - + 04. Take serious of **“forgotten” family caregiving economy**

(C. Fong and Iarocci, 2020; Phillips et al., 2020; Stokes and Patterson, 2020)

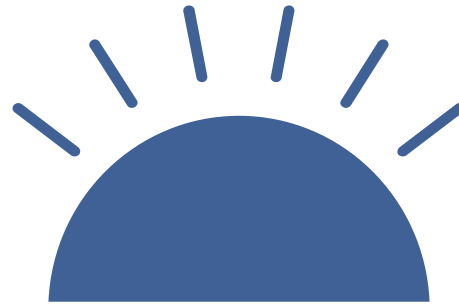
05

Research and Practice Direction



Research Directions

- Conduct **longitudinal studies**
- Find **mediators & moderators**
- **Mixed-method** research
- Ask whether the “general” stress-coping models are **applicable** under COVID-19



Directions



- Explore the **relationship** between human capital and social capital
- How do resilience processes **differ** across Western and non-Western **contexts**?
- **Evaluation** studies of COVID-19 social policies

Family Practice Directions Under the Pandemic

Identify family members who may be “at-risk” for mental health



Cultivate personal resilience of family members



Promote the significance of individual resilience and family resilience via public messages



Address the specific and unique needs of groups with “pre-existing” vulnerabilities



Promote family resilience in the situation with and without COVID-19



Consider adding human capital and macro policies

Family Resilience Research Implications

Example to promote family resilience to collaboratively cope with the epidemic

- ✓ Creating daily **gratitude practices**
- ✓ Promoting **families' communication**
- ✓ Fostering **shared positive mindsets**
- ✓ Facilitating **social support**

(Gayatri and Irawaty, 2022)



Overall Reflection

- **Social science knowledge and theories** have important potential contributions under COVID-19
- COVID-19 has generated many **negative impacts on family**, including individual, dyadic, and family processes
- COVID-19 related **policies** mainly focus on physical well-being with a weaker emphasis on psychological well-being
- **Human capital** (personal resilience) and **social capital** (particularly **family resilience**) are relatively neglected
- Research and practice **directions** to promote quality of life under COVID-19 should be considered



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Thanks!

Prof. Daniel T. L. Shek