

The Resilience, Adaptation and Well-Being Project



Family Inventory of Resources for Management

FIRM

FIRM:

Family Inventory of Resources for Management

Overview

In an attempt to assess the family's repertoire of resources, the Family Inventory of Resources for Management (FIRM) was developed by Hamilton McCubbin, Joan Comeau, and Jo Harkins (1981). In order to describe or predict how a family adapts to stressful events, the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation calls for information about which resources a family has, does not have, or has depleted. It is hypothesized that families possessing a larger repertoire of resources will manage more effectively and will be able to adapt better to stressful situations. Along with the social-psychological resources assessed by FIRM, the clinician or research investigator should consider two sociodemographic resources: family income and the parents' education.

Development of FIRM

The selection of items for FIRM was influenced by literature and theory in three major areas: (a) personal resources; (b) family system internal resources; and (c) social support.

Personal resources refer to the broad range of resources, qualities and aids characteristic of individual family members which are available to any family member in need. They include: financial (economic well-being); education (contributing to cognitive ability, facilitating realistic perceptions and problem solving abilities); health; and psychological attributes (personality characteristics) (George, 1980; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Family system resources encompass primarily the original concepts identified by Hill (1958) and in Burr's (1973) synthesis of the literature-family adaptability and family integration or cohesion. Managerial ability (resource management) has been emphasized by proponents of family management frameworks (Deacon & Firebaugh, 1975; Paolucci, Hall, & Axinn, 1977), along with the ability to identify resources (Paolucci et al., 1977). Problem solving ability has been examined as a key family system resource (Aldous, Condon, Hill, Straus, & Tallman, 1971; Hill, 1949; Reiss, 1971).

Social Support, as defined by Cobb (1976), is information exchanged between people which provides: emotional support, resulting in the individual feeling loved and cared for; esteem support, resulting in the individual feeling esteemed and valued; and network support, resulting in the individual feeling he or she is part of a network of mutual obligation and understanding. Social support from within the family, as well as from extended family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and community, is a dimension of resources which is particularly important for managing stress and for adaptation.

Conceptual Organization

The initial instrument consisted of 98 self-report items and the respondent was asked to evaluate on a 0-3 scale how well the items describe their family. Factor analytic procedures were used on the data from 322 families with a chronically ill child (myelomeningocele and cerebral palsy) to determine the underlying dimensions. Four scales representing perceived family resources emerged from this process. The four scales in the final inventory of 68 items are:

- I. **Family Strengths I: Esteem and Communication.** This factor (15 items) reflects the presence of a combination of personal, family system and

social support resources in six areas: (a) family esteem (respect from friends, relatives, co-workers and among family members); (b) communication (sharing feelings, discussing decisions); (c) mutual assistance (helping each other and relatives); (d) optimism; (e) problem solving ability; and (f) encouragement of autonomy among family members. Items: 36, 38, 39, 44, 46, 50, 52, 53, 55, 58, 60, 62, 65, 67, 68.

- II. **Family Strengths II: Mastery and Health.** This factor includes 20 items that reflect personal, family system and social support resources along three dimensions: (a) sense of mastery over family events and outcomes (fate control, flexibility, managerial abilities); (b) family mutuality (emotional support, togetherness, cooperation); and (c) physical and emotional health. Items: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 29, 32.
- III. **Extended Family Social Support.** This scale contains 4 items which indicate the mutual help and support given to and received from relatives. Items: 41, 48, 56, 66.
- IV. **Financial Well-Being.** This factor consisting of 16 items reflects the family's perceived financial efficacy: (a) ability to meet financial commitments; (b) adequacy of financial reserves; (c) ability to help others (relatives, the needy); (d) optimism about the family's financial future (adequacy of insurance, employment benefits, retirement income, earning power, and the family's financial future progress). Items: 35, 37, 40, 42, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 54, 57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 69.

Two subscales were added to give the investigator additional information, but they are not considered major dimensions or subscales of FIRM and are not included in the factor analysis (due to the dichotomous nature of the items).

- V. **Sources of Financial Support Index.** This index of financial well-being contains 7 items: 1, 10, 21, 25, 28, 31, 33.

Although the reliability of this (V) subscale is low (Cronbach's alpha = .44), the source of family income may be useful information when looked at along with actual income and/or net worth, since it reflects the sense of stability and esteem associated with income.

- VI. **Social Desirability Scale.** Items: 5, 12, 16, 19, 24, 30, 34.

This subscale is based on the Edmonds Scale of marital conventionalization (Edmonds, 1967).

Reliability

The internal reliability for these four subscales (I, II, III, & IV) is .89 (Cronbach's alpha), The internal reliabilities for the individual scales are as follows: Family Strengths I: Esteem and Communication = .85 (Cronbach's alpha); Family Strengths II: Mastery and Health = .85 (Cronbach's alpha); Extended Family Social Support =.62 (Cronbach's alpha); and Financial Well-Being =.85 (Cronbach's alpha).

The intercorrelation matrix (Table 8.1) of the FIRM scales was examined and the scales were found to correlate moderately, as might be expected with this type of instrument designed to assess dimensions of family life which are in reality related.

Table 8.1
Intercorrelation Matrix of FIRM Scales

FIRM Scales	Family Strengths I	Family Strengths II	Extended Family Social Support	Financial Well-Being	Sources of Financial Support	Social Desirability
Family Strengths I: Esteem& Communication	----	.29***	.37***	.29***	-.01	.48***
Family Strengths II: Mastery & Health	.29***	----	.27***	.28***	.17***	.46***
Extended Family Social Support	.37***	.27***	----	.19***	.05	.23***
Financial Well-Being	.29***	.28***	.19***	----	.38***	.18***
Sources of Financial Support	-.01	.17***	.05	.38***	----	-.002
Social Desirability	.48***	.46***	.23***	.18***	-.002	----

***p < .001

Validity

It was hypothesized (Comeau, 1985) that the FIRM scales would be moderately correlated with selected Family Environment scales since the latter were designed to assess family relationships and characteristics. Table 8.2 presents data showing significant positive correlations between the FIRM scales and family environment dimensions of cohesion, expressiveness and organization, and negative correlations between family conflict and four FIRM scales. These associations between family resources and desirable family functioning offer support for the validity of FIRM.

Test-Retest Reliability

No additional studies to report at this time.

Table 8.2
Correlations Between Family Resource (FIRM)
and Family Environments (FES)

FIRM Scales	Family Environment Scales			
	Cohesion	Expressiveness	Conflict	Organization
Family Strengths I: Esteem & Communication	.37***	.31***	.22***	.21***
Family Strengths II: Mastery & Health	.41***	.25***	-.30***	.19***
Extended Family Social Support	.14***	.15***	-.02	.04
Financial Well- Being	.23***	.08	-.13**	.15**
Total of the four Family Resource Scales	.46***	.27***	-.30***	.26***

*p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

Additional Validity Checks

No additional studies to report at this time.

Scoring Procedures

Scoring procedures for FIRM involve summing the values of the responses (i.e., Not at all = 0, Minimally = 1, Moderately = 2, and Very well = 3). However, for thirty items (2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 41, 49, 57, and 61) the values must be reversed (i.e., Not at all = 3, Minimally = 2, Moderately = 1, and Very well = 0). This will ensure that all items are weighted in the same positive direction for both the analysis and the interpretation of results. Add the items for Family Strengths I, Family Strengths II, Extended Family Social Support, and Financial Well-being to obtain the FIRM total score. Items in the subscales were mentioned earlier in the chapter.

Two subscales, Sources of Financial Support and Social Desirability, were added to give additional information, but are not considered major dimensions or subscales of FIRM and are not included in the analysis.

Norms and/or Comparative Data

A brief overview of the means and standard deviations for the FIRM scales are presented in Table 8.3.

Instrument Utilization for Research

To facilitate the review of research involving the use of FIRM, a summary table of related publications is provided. This table includes the authors, subjects, reliabilities, and notations on findings. The results of our review of FIRM are presented in Table 8.4.

Notes

1. The earlier writings on this instrument included a comprehensive description of the instrument's development. For the sake of brevity we limited the chapter to the basic information that users have requested and needed. If you desire a copy and are unable to find our earlier publications, either the 1987 or the 1991 edition, please write to us at the Center for Excellence in Family Studies, Family Stress, Coping and Health Project, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1300 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706 or send email to manual @macc.wisc.edu. There will be a charge for these additional materials.
2. When referencing this instrument, the proper citation is: McCubbin, H.I., Comeau, J., & Harkins, J. (1981). Family Inventory of Resources for Management (FIRM). In H.I. McCubbin, A.I. Thompson, & M.A. McCubbin (1996). *Family assessment: Resiliency, coping and adaptation – Inventories for research and practice*. (pp. 307-323). Madison: University of Wisconsin System.

Table 8.3
Means and Standard Deviations for FIRM Scales

Scale	Number of items	Standard Mean	Standard Deviations
Family Strength I:			
Esteem & Communication	15	35	6
Family Strength II:			
Mastery & Health	20	39	9
Extended Family Social Support	4	9	2
Financial Well-Being	16	29	9
Total of the Above Four Scales	55	110	18
Sources of Financial Support	7	5	3
Social Desirability	7	12	1

Table 8.4
Family Inventory of Resources for Management (FIRM):
Select Published Reports

Author(s)	Sample	N Count	Alpha Reliability	Validity Notes
Auslander, W.F., Bubb, J., Rogge, M., & Santiago, J.V. (1993)	Children recently diagnosed with insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus	53	.89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family resources (FIRM) were significantly related to child's higher level of metabolic control.
Clause, R. (1993)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's Thesis
Collins, E. (1993)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation
Duong, D. (1994)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation
Fong, J. (1993)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation
Giard, J. (1995)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's Thesis
Filliss, C.L., Neuhaus, J.M., & Hauck, W.W. (1990)	Cardiac surgery patient/spouse pairs 6 months after surgery	67	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant effects of treatment on family resources (FIRM) after surgery
Halvorsen, J.G. (1991)	Families randomly selected from family practice clinics in Minnesota & University of Minnesota faculty & staff	382	.89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIRM significantly related to new Family Stress & Support Inventory measuring intrafamilial stress & support
Knecht, L.D. (1991)	Mothers with infants in home apnea monitoring program	124	.92	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIRM was significantly related to mood disturbance in mothers of diagnosed children for all time periods. • FIRM explains family functioning for Time 1 & 2 but not for Time 3.
Kunnie, T.Y. (1992)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation
Leavitt, M.B. (1990)	Families coping with major vascular surgery & recovery	42	.85	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family resources (FIRM) related to mastery & health at admission
Mather, M.S. (1993)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation

Table 8.4 cont.
Family Inventory of Resources for Management (FIRM):
Select Published Reports

Author(s)	Sample	N Count	Alpha Reliability	Validity Notes
McCubbin, M.A. (1989)	Single-parent families of children with cerebral palsy, matched to two-parent families based on severity of impairment	166	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, no difference in family resources between single-parent & two-parent families with one exception: single-parent families were significantly lower on familial resources, as predicted.
Morena, P. (1995)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation
Phipps, S., Drotar, D., Joseph, C., Feiss, C., & Doershuk, C. (1989)	Families of previously healthy infants who had an emergency apnea episode & were subsequently placed on a home apnea monitor	30	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A highly significant main effect for resources was evident, & subjects with greater family resources experienced less distress throughout the study period.
Reddon, J.E., McDonald, L., & Kysela, G.M. (1992)	Families raising preschoolers with developmental disabilities	16	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The less the family resources as measured by FIRM, the higher the family functioning scores
Scott, L.S., (1992)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation
Scott, L.S., (1993)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation
Shin, H. (1995)	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral Dissertation
Theis, S., Moss, J., & Pearson, M. (1994)	Caregivers of elderly	130	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIRM did not suggest pathology in the area of resource management, although the ranges show diversity of scores.
Weigel, D., & Weigel, R. (1993)	Intact families (all 4 members completed questionnaires)	284	.76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscale of FIRM used: 4 items from esteem & communication subscale. Significant differences were found. The younger generation saw fewer communication resources & were less satisfied with intergenerational communication.

Table 8.4 cont.
Family Inventory of Resources for Management (FIRM):
Select Published Reports

Author(s)	Sample	N Count	Alpha Reliability	Validity Notes
Wertlieb, D., Weigel, C., & Feldstein, M. (1987)	Children 6-9 years of age & their mothers	159		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strong inverse relationship between a family's social support and child behavior symptomatology was evident.

FIRM

FAMILY INVENTORY OF RESOURCES FOR MANAGEMENT

English Version



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FIRM

FAMILY INVENTORY OF RESOURCES FOR MANAGEMENT ©

Hamilton I. McCubbin Joan K. Comeau Jo A. Harkins

Purpose

FIRM – Family Inventory of Resources For Management was developed to record what social, psychological, community and financial resources families believe they have available to them in the management of family life.

Directions:

To complete this inventory you are asked to read the list of “Family Statements” one at a time. In each statement, “family” means your immediate family (mother and/or father and children).

Then ask yourself: *“How will does the statement describe our family situation?”*

Then make your decision by circling one of the following:

- 0 = Not At All – This statement does not describe our family situation. This does not happen in our family.
- 1 = Minimally – This statement describes our family situation only slightly. Our family may be like this once in a while.
- 2 = Moderately – This statement describes our family situation fairly well. Our family is like this some of the time.
- 3 = Very Well – This statement describes our family very accurately. Our family is like this most of the time.

Please begin – Please read and record your decision for each and every statement below.


Family Statements:	Not At All	Minimally	Moderately	Very Well	
1. We have money coming in from our investments (such as rental property, stocks, bonds, etc...)	0	1	2	3	
2. Being physically tired much of the time is a problem in our family	0	1	2	3	®
3. We have to nag each other to get things done	0	1	2	3	®
4. We do not plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad luck anyway	0	1	2	3	®
5. Our family is as well adjusted as any family in this world can be	0	1	2	3	
6. Having only one person in the family earning money is (or would be) a problem in our family	0	1	2	3	®
7. It seems that members of our family take each other for granted	0	1	2	3	®

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	Not At All	Minimally	Moderately	Very Well	
Family Statements:					
8. Sometimes we feel we don't have enough control over the direction of our lives are taking.	0	1	2	3	®
9. Certain members of our family do all the giving, while others do all the taking	0	1	2	3	®
10. We depend almost entirely upon financial support from welfare or other public assistance programs	0	1	2	3	®
11. We seem to put off making decisions	0	1	2	3	®
12. Family members understand each other completely	0	1	2	3	
13. Our family is under a lot of emotional stress	0	1	2	3	®
14. Many things seem to interfere with family members being able to share concerns	0	1	2	3	®
15. Most of the money decisions are made by only one person in our family	0	1	2	3	®
16. There are times when family members do things that make other members unhappy	0	1	2	3	®
17. It seems that we have more illness (colds, flu, etc.) in our family than other people do	0	1	2	3	®
18. In our family some members have many responsibilities while others don't have enough	0	1	2	3	®
19. No one could be happier than our family when we are together	0	1	2	3	
20. It is upsetting to our family when things don't work out as planned	0	1	2	3	®
21. We depend almost entirely on income from alimony and/or child support	0	1	2	3	®
22. Being sad or "down" is a problem in our family	0	1	2	3	®
23. It is hard to get family members to cooperate with each other	0	1	2	3	®
24. If our family has any faults, we are not aware of them	0	1	2	3	
25. We depend almost entirely on social security retirement income	0	1	2	3	®
26. Many times we feel we have little influence over the things that happen to us	0	1	2	3	®
27. We have the same problems over and over – we don't seem to learn from past mistakes	0	1	2	3	®
28. One or more working members of our family are presently unemployed	0	1	2	3	®
29. There are things at home we need to do that we don't seem to get done	0	1	2	3	®
30. We feel our family is a perfect success	0	1	2	3	
31. We own land or property besides our place of residence	0	1	2	3	
32. We seem to be so involved with work and/or school activities that we don't spend enough time together as a family	0	1	2	3	®
33. We own (are buying) a home (single family, condominium, townhouse, etc.)	0	1	2	3	
34. There are times when we do not feel a great deal of love and affection for each other	0	1	2	3	®
35. If a close relative were having financial problems we feel we could afford to help them out	0	1	2	3	
36. Friends seem to enjoy coming to our house for visits	0	1	2	3	
37. We feel we have a good retirement income program	0	1	2	3	
38. When we make plans we are almost certain we can make them work	0	1	2	3	

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Please continue on next page 

	Not At All	Minimally	Moderately	Very Well
Family Statements:				
39. In our family we understand what help we can expect from each other	0	1	2	3
40. We seem to have little or no trouble paying our bills on time	0	1	2	3
41. Our relatives seem to take from us, but give little in return	0	1	2	3
42. We would have no problem getting a loan at a bank if we wanted one	0	1	2	3
43. We feel we have enough money on hand to cover small unexpected expenses (under \$100)	0	1	2	3
44. When we face a problem, we look at the good and bad of each possible solution	0	1	2	3
45. The member(s) who earn our family income seem to have good employee benefits (such as paid insurance, stocks, car, education, etc.)	0	1	2	3
46. No matter what happens to us, we try to look at the bright side of things	0	1	2	3
47. We feel we are able to go out to eat occasionally without hurting our budget	0	1	2	3
48. We try to keep in touch with our relatives as much as possible	0	1	2	3
49. It seems that we need more life insurance than we have	0	1	2	3
50. In our family it is "okay" for members to show our positive feelings about each other	0	1	2	3
51. We feel we are able to make financial contributions to a good cause (needy people, church, etc.)	0	1	2	3
52. We seem to be happier with our lives than many families we know	0	1	2	3
53. It is "okay" for family members to express sadness by crying, even in front of others	0	1	2	3
54. When we need something that can't be postponed, we have money in savings to cover it	0	1	2	3
55. We discuss our decisions with other family members before carrying them out	0	1	2	3
56. Our relative(s) are willing to listen to your problems	0	1	2	3
57. We worry about how we would cover a large unexpected bill (for home, auto repairs, etc. for about \$100)	0	1	2	3
58. We get great satisfaction when we can help on another in our family	0	1	2	3
59. In our family we feel it is important to save for the future	0	1	2	3
60. The working members of our family seem to be respected by their co-workers	0	1	2	3
61. We have written checks knowing there wasn't enough money in the account to cover it	0	1	2	3
62. The members of our family respect each other	0	1	2	3
63. We save our extra spending money for special things	0	1	2	3
64. We feel confident that if our main breadwinner lost his/her job, (s)he could find another one	0	1	2	3
65. Members of our family are encouraged to have their own interests and abilities	0	1	2	3
66. Our relatives do and say things that make us feel appreciated	0	1	2	3
67. The members of our family are known to be good citizens and neighbors	0	1	2	3
68. We make an effort to help our relatives when we can	0	1	2	3
69. We feel we are financially better off now than we were 5 years ago	0	1	2	3

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