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Age and Gender difference on Resilience among School going Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Resilience refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity. There is limited research into the age and gender effect on resilience among school going adolescents and this paper provides an initial attempt to study this important area. This study explores the effect of age and gender on resilience among adolescents in Kerala, India. Surveys were administered to 484 male and 487 female students (N = 971) to assess resilience. The finding in the this study suggests that there is no gender difference in resilience among adolescents on the other hand there exists a difference between age and the score of resilience

KEYWORDS : Gender, Age, Adolescents, Resilience

Background of the study

Researchers who examine the concept of resilience agree that resilience is a process, rather than a skill (Masten, 2001; Richardson, 2002). Resilience of adolescents is attributed to circumstantial and normative factors that endorse healthy and positive growth of the population group that ha being studied (Masten&Obradović, 2006; Werner, 1995; Werner & Smith, 1982).The worksadolescents'resilience is basically divided into internal characteristics and protective factors. In general, internal factors are recognizedby strategies directed towards modifying internal goals, problem solving strategies, and feelings of self-worth. Protective factors, on the other hand focus on strategies directed towards regulating or adapting external resources or support.

In order to understand the significance of resilience, many studies have focused their attention on the influence that individual characteristics such as age and gender have on individual's ability to bounce back from adversities (Sun & Stewart, 2007).Earlier studies indicate that gender has a notable effect on a resilience of adolescents (Boardman et al., 2008,Costa et al., 2001) Research evidence suggests that girls cope with daily stressors by seeking social support and utilizing social resources (Frydenberg& Lewis, 1993). On the other hand, boys use physical recreation such as sport to cope with adversity (Frydenberg& Lewis, 1993). It was also found that girls have been found to use resilience factors such as seeking and getting support more than boys(Hampel.P&Petermann, 2005,Grotberg, E. 1995).

Resilience has been used to describe individuals who overcome difficult and challenging life circumstances (Garmezy et al., 1984; Luthar, 2003; Rutter, 1984; Werner, 1992). This perspective has conceptualized resilience as successful adaptation, despite various risk factors. Risk factors have been defined as vulnerabilities relating to the individual or the environment that increase the likelihood of a problem occurring .Extensive research has been conducted in recent years to investigate the important relationships between individual resilience and various socio demographic variables. (Garmezy et al., 1984; Luthar, 2003; Werner, 1990).

Most studies that focused on the developmental perspective have found that increases in individual resilience factors are age-dependent among children and adolescents (Bolognini, Plancherel, Bettwshart, &Halfon, 1996).

But there are not many studies available to ascertain this difference and there is no study that examines age and gender differences in resilience in school going adolescents in India. In the current study, the effects of gender and age (late childhood, early, and middle adolescence) on resilience were investigated.

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to examine the gender and age differences in resilience among adolescent between the age group of 13 to 18 yrs.

The specific hypotheses of the present study are:
Male and female adolescents differ significantly in their resilience
There is a significant difference in the score of resilience of adolescences on the basis of their age.

A sample of 971 school going adolescents (*Male=484 ,Female=487*) were selected using systematic random sampling procedure from five schools which are randomly chosen locality in Kerala. The main instrument used for this study is Bharathiar University Resilience Scale (BURS) (Form A). The BURS (Form A) (Annalakshmi, 2009) consists of 30 Likert type items. The scale is used to measure seven domains of resilience including duration for getting back to normalcy, reaction to negative events, response to risk factors (specifically disadvantaged environment) in life, perception of effect of past negative events, defining problems, hope/confidence in coping with future and openness to experience and flexibility. The responses of the participant for all the thirty statements in the scale are summed up to yield a single score on the scale representing the level of psychological resilience of the individual. The maximum score possible of a subject on the scale is 150 and the minimum score possible on the scale is 30. The scale has adequate reliability. The Cronbach Alpha for the scale was found to be 0.82. The scale has adequate concurrent validity. The scale had significant positive correlation with Friborg Resilience Scale, 0.349* and with Bells Adjustment Scale 0.382 *.In addition to this scale a demographic data sheet to assess gender and age was also provided. Data was collected in class room setting with the informed consent of the adolescents. To answer the research question, an independent *t-test* with a two-tailed test of significance and one way ANOVA was employed.

Result and Discussion

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Resilience by Gender

Variable	Gender	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t
Resilience	Male	484	100.21	17.591	.800	969	.575ns
	Female	487	100.87	18.727	.849		

ns- Not Significant

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the score of resilience between male and female. Results of the two-independent samples t-test shows that mean resilience score do not differs between male (M = 100.21, SD = 17.591, n = 484) and female (M = 100.87, SD = 18.727, n = 487) . Hence it is clear that resilience score do not differ by gender (t=.575, ns, df= 969). However, when the mean scores on resilience of male and female are compared, it is found that female have comparably more resilient than male.The result suggests that gender really does have an effect on resilience, rejecting the main hypothesis.

Table 2 Mean and SD of scores of Resilience obtained by the respondents classified on the basis of Age Groups

Variable	Age groups	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Resilience	Below 14 Yrs.	367	102.78	17.849	.932
	14 – 16 yrs.	360	97.13	18.182	.958
	Above 16 yrs.	244	102.20	17.919	1.147

Table 2.1 of One way ANOVA for Resilience by Age

Source of Variation	Df	Sum of squares	Mean Square Value	F Value	Sig.
Between Groups	2	6713.867	3356.933	10.372	.000
Within Groups	968	313299.277	323.656		
Total	970	320013.143			

Table 2.2 Post Hoc Test: Resilience and Age

Dependent Variable	Age groups(I)	Age Group (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Resilience	Below 14 yrs.	**14 – 16 yrs.**	5.657*	.000
		Above 16 yrs.	.584	.971
	14 – 16 yrs.	Below 14 yrs.	-5.657*	.000
		Above 16 yrs.	-5.073*	.002
	Above 16 yrs.	Below 14 yrs.	-.584	.971
		14 – 16 yrs.	5.073*	.002

*P<0.05 Significant level

To test the hypothesis that age group has a significant on resilience, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted. A significant value of F= 10.372 was obtained (P<.05). As there is a significant different between age and resilience, a post hoc test for pair-wise differences of means was used. The mean resilience by age groups was: Below 14 yrs., 102.78, 14 to 16 yrs., 97.13 and above 16 yrs. 102.20. Post-hoc tests of pair-wise mean differences using the Tamhane statistic indicated that significant differences in resilience were obtained between 14 to 16 yrs. and above 16 yrs. between below 14 yrs..and above 16 yrs., and between below 14 yrs. and 14- 16 yrs. Hence from the tables it is clear that there exists significant difference between different age groups and resilience (F= 10.372, P<.05) and Post hoc analysis of the difference among the mean scores, taken in pair have been done using Tamhane Test shows that adolescents between the age group of 14 to 16 yrs. are more resilient (Mean difference =5.657 ,Sig. = .000, P<0.05) when compared with other age groups.

Discussion

This research establishes the impact of age and gender on scores of resilience for school adolescents. The result suggests that gender really does have an effect on resilience. Hence it can be concluded that both the genders are likely to report positive connections with parents, teachers, and adults in the community, peer relations and autonomy experiences (Broderick &Korteland, 2002; Frydenberg& Lewis, 1993; P. Hampel&Petermann, 2005). The result of the studies is against the studies that discussed the gender-specific behavioral characteristics at primary school age, such as girls having a more positive level of social emotional development and a higher level of caring relations with adults and peers and social support than boys (Sun & Stewart, 2007).

On the other hand there exists a significant difference between different age groups and resilience. The results from the current study indicate that early adolescents are more resilient than middle and late adolescents. This may be because younger students' coping strategies are acquired in the early years of primary school, such as belief in the usefulness and importance of communication and cooperation, seeking adult support in and gaining more experience in autonomy.

It can also be important to understand that early adolescence is a period where the young person begins to pay more attention to them. It is, therefore, rational to expect changes in the evaluation of self at this time, and assessment of other areas like family, schools, society, and peers. For these reasons, early adolescence is a time when resilience may be especially accountable to variation. The declining scores in these areas may be due to reduced use of these strategies to deal with stressful events.

Implication, Limitations and Conclusions

There is limited research into the age and gender effect on resilience among school going adolescents and this paper provides a humble attempt to study this important area. But, some limitations are apparent. First, on the basis of the sample examined in this study, findings are limited on resilience in the particular culture. Cultural differences cannot be ruled out. Second, resilience has been assessed by a self-report questionnaire. Finally, however, the results of this study support the multidimensional operationalization of resilience. Thereby, inconsistent findings of studies examining effects of age and gender on resilience can be partly explained by methodological differences. Finally, findings permit further investigations of the interaction effects of age and gender on resilience.

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