



Stress and Resilience : A Comparative Study Between Hostellers and Day Scholars

KEYWORDS

Stress, Resilience, Hostellers, Day Scholars.

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ABSTRACT *Stress is a fact of everyday life. When people reach out for help, they are often dealing with circumstances, situations, and stressors in their lives that may leave them feeling emotionally and physically overwhelmed. Increasingly, we are focusing not just on who is vulnerable to developing problems related to stress, but those who are able to resist it as well, despite difficult*

circumstances. Everyone sees situations differently and has different coping skills. A whole new field of stress devoted to the concept of "resilience" has emerged and is the focus of study today. Resilience is a process whereby people exposed to severe levels of stress, trauma, and adversity are able to thrive and survive despite their difficulties. Psychologists have long since recognized the capabilities of humans to adapt and overcome risk and adversity. Therefore, being resilient doesn't mean going through life without experiencing stress and pain or adversity. The road to resilience lies in working through the emotions and effects of stress and painful events.

The focus of the present study is on comparing the stress and resilience levels of college going girl students. It looks to compare the scores on these two variables among hostellers and day scholars. It is hypothesized that hostellers will be higher on stress and resilience than the day scholars.

Introduction

We all know that chronic stress is bad for our health, Increasingly, we are focusing not just on who is vulnerable to developing problems related to stress, but those who are able to resist it as well despite difficult circumstances. Stress is a fact of everyday life. When people reach out for

help, they are often dealing with circumstances, situations, and stressors in their lives that may leave them feeling emotionally and physically overwhelmed. Many people feel that they have very little resources or skills to deal with the high levels of stress they are experiencing. Stress can come from any situation or thought that can make you feel frustrated, angry, or anxious. Everyone sees situations differently and has different coping skills. For this reason, no two people will respond in exactly the same way to a given situation.

A whole new field of stress devoted to the concept of "resilience" has emerged and is the focus of study today. Charles R. Darwin, famous for his ground-breaking work on the theory of evolution, stated that species which are able to survive throughout time are those which are best adapted to their environment. So, in any given situation, what is different about the people who successfully adapt to their environment and those that cannot?

Emmy Werner(1982) is one of the most cited researchers even today. In a study undertaken by her, it was found that a significant proportion of human beings can face important adversity and yet, go through life without any problems and even develop better ways to manage stress. The Concept of psychological resilience was definitely born after this important study, and is now a very important concept in the field of stress research.

"When facing adversity, being able to positively adapt represents Resilience"

(Garmezy, 1985). Garmezy was a pioneer in this domain. In 1985, Garmezy and his colleague Ann S. Masten made three conclusions based on their studies:

- (1) stress-resistance is relative;
- (2) stress-resistance is due to both genetic and environmental

factors;

(3), stress-resistance depends on the situation.

Resilience is a process whereby people exposed to severe levels of stress, trauma, and adversity are able to thrive and survive despite their difficulties. The word resilience was coined at the beginning of the 17th century, taking its roots from Latin. As Anaut (2008), said, Resilientia was defined as a "material's resistance to shock and its ability to absorb kinetic energy without breaking apart." Psychologists have long since recognized the capabilities of humans to adapt and overcome risk and adversity. Individuals and communities have been known to rebuild their lives even after devastating tragedies. Therefore, being resilient doesn't mean going through life without experiencing stress and pain or adversity. The road to resilience lies in working through the emotions and effects of stress and painful events.

Resilience is most commonly understood as a process, and not as a trait of an individual (Rutter, 2008). It is often mistakenly assumed to be a trait of the individual, an idea more typically referred to as "resiliency (Masten, 1994)". Most research now shows that resilience is the result of individuals being able to interact with their environments and the processes that either promote well-being or protect them against the overwhelming influence of risk factors (Zautra, et al. 2011). These processes can be individual coping strategies, or may be helped along by good families, schools, communities, and social policies that make resilience more likely to occur (Leadbeater et al. 2005). In this sense "resilience" occurs when there are cumulative "protective factors". These factors are likely to play a more and more important role as the individual's exposure to cumulative "risk factors" increases. The phrase "risk and resilience" in this area of study, is quite common. Commonly used terms, which are closely related within psychology, are "psychological resilience," "emotional resilience," "hardiness," "resourcefulness," and "mental toughness."

Resilience is also not something that you're either born with or not. Resilience develops as people grow up and gain better thinking and self-management skills and more knowledge. Resilience also comes from supportive relationships with parents, peers and others, as well as cultural beliefs and

traditions that help people cope with the inevitable bumps in life. Resilience is found in a variety of behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed across the life span.

Many of us have the emotional and physical resilience that is accumulated over the years as we grow older, thus enabling us to get less affected by the changes and challenges that life throws up. However, the fact remains that emotional resilience is also related to some factors that are beyond our control, such as age, gender and exposure to trauma. But resilience can also be developed with a little effort. With some basic skills, we can become more resilient, even if we are naturally more sensitive to life's difficulties.

Traits of Emotional Resilience

The varying degrees of how well a person is able to handle stress creates a differentiation between those who are resilient and those who are not or are less resilient. The following are some of the characteristics of a resilient person:

- Positive Self-talk:
- Acceptance
- Internal Locus of Control
- Optimism:
- Sense of Humour:
- Ability to continue to find meaning in the challenges in life rather than seeing themselves as victims
- Perseverance
- Altruism

Resilience has been shown to be more than just the capacity of individuals to cope well under adversity. Resilience is better understood as the opportunity and capacity of individuals to navigate their way through psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that may sustain their well-being, and their opportunity and capacity to individually and collectively negotiate for attaining these resources (Ungar, 2008). Studies of demobilized child soldiers, high school drop-outs, urban poor, immigrant youth, and other populations at risk are showing these patterns (Suarez et al, 2009),(Eggerman and Panter, 2010) and (Boothby, 2006). Among adults, these same themes emerge, as detailed in the work of Zautra et al. (2010).

Emmy Werner (1982) was one of the early scientists to use the term resilience in the 1970s. She studied a cohort of children from Kauai, Hawaii. Kauai was quite poor and many of the children in the study grew up with alcoholic or mentally ill parents. Many of the parents were also out of work. Werner noted that of the children who grew up in these very bad situations, two-thirds exhibited destructive behaviours in their later teen years, such as chronic unemployment, substance abuse, and out-of-wedlock births (in case of teenage girls). However one-third of these youngsters did not exhibit destructive behaviours. Werner called the latter group 'resilient'. Resilient children and their families had traits that made them different from non-resilient children and families.

An emerging field in the study of resilience is the neurobiological basis of resilience to stress (Sciencenews.org , 2012). For example, neuropeptide Y (NPY) and 5-Dehydroepiandrosterone (5-DHEA) are thought to limit the stress response by reducing sympathetic nervous system activation and protecting the brain from the potentially harmful effects of chronically elevated cortisol levels respectively (Charney, 2004). In addition, the relationship between social support and stress resilience is thought to be mediated by the oxytocin system's impact on the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (Ozbay et al. 2008).

Aim and focus of the present study

The focus of the present study is on comparing the stress and resilience levels among college going girl students. It

looks to compare the scores on these two variables among hostellers and day scholars. It is hypothesized that hostellers will be higher on stress and resilience than the day scholars.

Methodology

A sample of 30 girl students who were day scholars and 30 girl students of the college hostel were chosen. All students were in the age group of 18 to 20 years and were pursuing undergraduate study. The following two tests were used to measure resilience and stress:

Stress symptoms rating scale by Heilbrun and Pepe (1985)

RS- 14 resilience scale by Wagnild and Young (1993)

T-Ratio analysis was conducted to compare the two groups.

Results

T-Test Group 1= hostel Group 2= Day Scholars

VARIABLES	N	Mean	t-ratio
Resilience Hostellers	30	77.0000	5.083**
Day Scholars	30	58.7667	
Stress Hostellers	30	42.1000	-.771
Day Scholars	30	45.5333	

The results are significant at the .01 level.

Significant differences emerged on resilience which indicates that girls living in the hostel are more resilient as compared to the girls living at home. ($t= 5.08^{**}$ Mean scores (Hostel= 77.00; Day scholars=58.76). However both groups of girls reported equal levels of stress irrespective of the place they live in.

Discussion

These results indicate that hostellers employ better coping strategies as they learn to depend on themselves, as a result of living away from the protective home environment. They develop a strong will to survive. It is no secret that staying independently provides an opportunity to experience the real world. In addition, it also imparts many important skills. For instance, one can learn ways to overcome one's problems independently and to tackle the complex situations maturely. Furthermore, it also helps in boosting one's confidence level to face a world full of challenges. Living away from home, one also has nothing to fall back on if things do not work. Therefore people must learn to accept responsibility for their actions sooner than those living in a protective home environment. There are some great advantages to living away from home. One has the chance to build one's own network of support systems, preparing oneself for the need to get out in the community when one starts a career in the future. Students get to experience a different culture when they attend college far away from their own comfortable local area, therefore bringing them to a more understanding view of others and making them more empathetic.

Several factors are found to modify the negative effects of adverse life situations. Many studies show that the primary factor is to have relationships that provide care and support, create love and trust, and offer encouragement, both within and outside the family. Additional factors are also associated with resilience, like the capacity to make realistic plans, having self-confidence and a positive self-image, developing communications skills, and the capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.

Another protective factor related to moderating the negative effects of environmental hazards or stressful situations is in order to direct vulnerable individuals to optimistic paths, is external social support. More specifically Werner, (1995) distinguished three contexts for protective factors:

- Personal attributes, including outgoing, bright, and positive self-concepts;
- The family, such as having close bonds with at least one family member or an emotionally stable parent; and
- The community, such as receiving support or counsel from peers.

Besides the above distinction on resilience, research has also been devoted to discovering the individual differences in resilience. Self-esteem, ego-control, and ego-resiliency are related to behavioral adaptation (Cicchetti et al., 1993). For example, despite maltreatment, children who feel good about themselves, may process risk situations differently by attributing different reasons to the environments they experience and, thereby, avoid producing negative internalized self-perceptions.

Sylvie et al. (2007), undertook a qualitative research to better understand the processes that contribute to resilience among adolescents in foster care. Twelve boys and girls (X=15.9 years), identified as resilient, participated in this study. The mean duration of the teenagers' placement is 7.3 years. The results point to three types of turning points: action, relation and reflection. Four processes, directly or indirectly linked to the turning point, have also been identified: increase in perceived self-efficacy, distancing oneself from the risks, new opportunities, and the multiplication of benefits.

Furthermore, a study of the elderly in Zurich, Switzerland, illustrated the role that humor plays as a coping mechanism to maintain a state of happiness in the face of adversity (Ruch et al., 2009).

Tips for building resilience to cope with stress

The American Psychological Association suggests "10 Ways to Build Resilience", which are:

- to maintain good relationships with close family members, friends and others;
- to avoid seeing crises or stressful events as unbearable problems;
- to accept circumstances that cannot be changed;
- to develop realistic goals and move towards them;
- to take decisive actions in adverse situations;
- to look for opportunities of self-discovery after a struggle with loss;
- to develop self-confidence;
- to keep a long-term perspective and consider the stressful event in a broader context;
- to maintain a hopeful outlook, expecting good things and visualizing what is wished;
- to take care of one's mind and body, exercising regularly, paying attention to one's own needs and feelings.
- A number of other factors that promote resilience have been identified:
- The ability to cope with stress effectively and in a healthy manner
- Having good problem-solving skills
- Seeking help
- Holding the belief that there is something one can do to manage your feelings and cope
- Having social support
- Being connected with others, such as family or friends
- Self-disclosure of the trauma to loved ones
- Spirituality
- Having an identity as a survivor as opposed to a victim
- Helping others

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