

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN OPTIMISM AND RESILIENCE AMONG ADOLESCENTS



Education

KEYWORDS:

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a critical period of human development. Nurmi (2001) viewed adolescence as a distinct period of adjustment in which a teenager has to face rapid physical, cognitive and social changes. Call et al. (2002) conceptualized adolescence as one of the healthiest periods of the life span. Present paper is focused on gender differences in terms of positive psychological capital components optimism and resiliency among adolescents. Optimism is a disposition or tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome. Resilience is the capacity to face challenges and to become somehow more capable despite adverse experiences. A sample of 200 adolescents has been selected randomly from senior secondary schools of Barnala district of Punjab in which 100 are male and 100 are female. Significance of the difference is used to find out the gender difference statistically. Findings of the present study reveal that there are significant gender difference among adolescents in terms of positive psychological capital i.e. optimism and resilience.

### Introduction

In the changing scenario, there are increasing pressures and challenges for adolescents. They need to deal with considerable changes in their lives to meet the requirements of time. Adolescence is a critical period of human development. Nurmi (2001) viewed adolescence as a distinct period of adjustment in which a teenager has to face rapid physical, cognitive and social changes. Call et al. (2002) conceptualized adolescence as one of the healthiest periods of the life span. Piaget (1972) characterized adolescence as a phase of cognitive development where a teenager moves from concrete operations to abstractive and systematic thinking. Erickson (1968) emphasized adolescence as a crucial period for an individual to discover his or her identity. During adolescence, young people develop certain skills which they need to make a living, raise a family, maintain a circle of supportive friends and meet all other challenges of life.

Optimism is a mental attitude that interprets situations and events as being best. Optimism is a disposition or tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome. Scheier and Carver (1985) viewed that optimism is a control belief involving thought processes associating positive thinking and maintaining a positive attitude to life events and situations.

Optimism means having hope and a strong belief and confidence to deal with different situations. Seligman (1998) described optimism as a cognitive process involving positive outcome expectancies and causal attributions. These expectancies and attributions are external, temporary and detailed in interpreting bad or negative events, as well as internal, stable and universal for good or positive events. As is defined in Oxford Dictionary (1996) optimism is an inclination to hopefulness and confidence, the theory that good must ultimately prevail over evil in the universe.

Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back and overcome the stress or successful adaptation to the challenging and threatening circumstances/ environment. Luthar et al. (2000) defined resilience as the maintenance of healthy and successful functioning or adaptation within the context of a significant adversity or threat. Thus, two elements must co-exist for resilience to be present: a circumstance that has the potential to disrupt children's development and reasonably successful adaptation. Resilience is the capacity to face challenges and to become somehow more capable despite adverse experiences. Grotberg (2000) defined resilience as a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity. A child's individual genetic make-up and temperament are fundamental to whether he or she will be resilient.

### Objectives of the study

- To study optimism of adolescents in relation to their gender.
- To study resilience of adolescents in relation to their gender.

### Hypotheses of the study

- There will be no significant difference in optimism of adolescents in relation to their gender.
- There will be no significant difference in resilience of adolescents in relation to their gender.

### Tools

In order to collect the data for the present investigation, following tools are employed:

- Optimistic-Pessimistic Attitude Scale By Parashar (1998)
- Resilience Scale by Wagnild and Young (1993)

### Sample

The population of the study is comprised of adolescents studying in 10+1 and 10+2 classes of Punjab. To collect the sample for the study Barnala district of Punjab is selected. The sample includes 200 senior secondary school students having 100 male and 100 female students.

### Statistical Analysis

Significance of the difference (t-test) has been used in the present study for the statistical analysis of the data.

### Results

The results of the study are as followed:

#### • Comparison of Optimism Scores among Adolescents in Relation to their Gender

The mean score of optimism among male and female adolescents along with standard deviation and t-value is given in table 1.

**Table 1 Comparison of Optimism Scores among Adolescents in Relation to their Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Male	100	24.06	4.99	2.87*
Female	100	26.04	4.76	

\*Significant at 0.01 level.

It is clear from the table that mean score of optimism of male adolescents is 24.06 (SD=4.99) as compared to mean score of optimism of female adolescents which is 26.04 (SD=4.76). The t-value testing the significance of mean difference of optimism of male and female adolescents is 2.87 which is significant at 0.01 level. This

shows that male and female adolescents differ significantly in optimism.

• **Comparison of Resilience Scores among Adolescents in Relation to their Gender**

The mean score of resilience among male and female adolescents along with SD and t-value is given in table 2.

**Table 2 Comparison of Resilience Scores among Adolescents in Relation to their Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Male	100	116.98	22.22	2.93*
Female	100	125.95	21.03	

\*Significant at 0.01 level.

It is clear from the table that mean score of resilience of male adolescents is 116.98 (SD=22.22) as compared to mean score of resilience of female adolescents which is 125.95 (SD=21.03). The t-value testing the significance of mean difference of resilience of male and female adolescents is 2.93 which is significant at 0.01 level. This shows that male and female adolescents differ significantly in resilience.

**Conclusions**

It is clear from the results of the present study that there are significant gender differences in optimism and resilience of adolescents. "Thus both the hypotheses are rejected. This may be because girls are more optimistic about interpersonal relations and used to cope with daily stressors by seeking social support from family and utilizing social resources more than boys." The results also revealed that female adolescents scored higher on both optimism and resilience scales. Females are more optimistic and resilient than male adolescents.

**References**

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