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An Analysis of the Level of Psychological Resilience among College/University Students- An Indian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The researchers undertook this study titled "An analysis of the level of psychological resilience among college/university students" to understand the need of the hour. We are yet to recover from the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the education environment is no exception. The students' community was most affected by this dreadful situation. The whole education system was derailed and we saw the awakening of a new education model around the world. The education system in India was already facing many challenges, a sudden shift from classroom learning to online mode created lots of confusion, and the whole system was put to the test. In many parts of the world, India with no exception, continues to follow the hybrid mode of education. This study is an attempt to analyze the resilience level of college students in light of their mental health which is under test in various circumstances. To study the same the tools used here were the Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS) and Scale of Protective Factors (SPF) by Ponce & Garcia, Madwell & Kennison. Data was collected from 90 college students.

Keywords- Psychological resilience, mental health, life satisfaction, LSSS, SPF, etc.

INTRODUCTION

"The only journey is journey within"- Rainer Maria Rilke

Human well-being and health have long been crucial concerns, encompassing physical and mental health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), modernization has amplified the prevalence of mental disorders across all regions of the world. Ensuring mental health in society has thus become a critical global issue. In their quest to become responsible citizens, today's youth often face emotional, behavioral, somatic, and socio-economic challenges. It has therefore become a primary responsibility of higher education institutions to equip them with the tools to manage these challenges effectively. As scrutiny of the higher education system increases, universities and colleges are striving to provide a stress-free and enriching educational experience to enhance students' academic performance. The stress associated with university life can lead to depression and diminish the quality of life for many students. Consequently, education researchers are exploring various factors that influence academic success and are devising effective strategies to address the psychosocial needs of students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

Resilience encompasses self-esteem, emotional stability, the ability to cope with stress, and the capacity to seek social support. The growing body of research on resilience highlights its significance and the increasing attention it receives. Simply put, resilience is the process of adapting to hardships, distress, disasters, dangers, and other major stressors. Psychological resilience is crucial for maintaining the mental well-being of young people, and helping them to avoid mental disorders. It enhances coping strategies, aids individuals in overcoming stress, and mitigates the emotional impact of trauma and tragedies. As a result of this ongoing adaptation, resilient individuals are more likely to experience positive emotions, exhibit confidence, and demonstrate greater psychological flexibility. Resilience fosters learning, cognitive, and behavioral skills, which are instrumental in overcoming stressful situations, particularly in interpersonal relationships.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is essential for an individual's overall well-being and functionality. It goes beyond merely not having a mental illness; it includes the ability to think clearly, learn effectively, and understand and manage one's emotions and reactions. Mental health is about achieving balance, both internally and in relation to one's surroundings. This equilibrium is shaped by a variety of factors including physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual aspects. Physical and mental health are deeply interconnected, with each influencing our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Good mental health enhances our capacity to cope with stress, build relationships, and make decisions. It is vital at each and every stage of life, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Numerous factors contribute to mental health and its disorders, including biological elements such as genetics and brain chemistry, as well as life experiences and family history. Despite the prevalence of mental health issues, there are various support and treatment options available to assist individuals in managing and enhancing their mental well-being.

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LIFE SATISFACTION

Life satisfaction reflects an individual's overall quality of life and mental well-being. It is evaluated through various aspects such as mood, satisfaction with relationships, accomplishment of goals, self-concept, and perceived ability to manage life's challenges. In this context, satisfaction refers to a positive outlook on life, extending beyond mere current emotions. Many factors influence life satisfaction, including financial status, relationships, education, cultural background, experiences, and personality traits. Life satisfaction is inherently subjective because of its encompassing nature across social, emotional, economic, and physiological domains. Generally, as people age, they tend to experience higher life satisfaction due to their accumulated life experiences and improved adjustment strategies. Ultimately, adjustments in life play a critical role in achieving satisfaction; true satisfaction arises from a personal decision to embrace it.

TOOLS USED

STUDENTS' LIFE SATISFACTION SCALE (SLSS)

The Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS), created by Huebner in 1991, evaluates life satisfaction among children and adolescents. This questionnaire requires respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of general statements about their lives. Each of the seven items on the scale uses a rating system from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Importantly, two of these items are scored in reverse, where responses range from 6 to 1. To compute the overall life satisfaction score using SLSS, researchers typically sum or average the responses across all seven items. Therefore, larger values obtained on the SLSS indicate higher levels of satisfaction with life among participants.

SCALE OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS (SPF) BY PONCE-GARCIA, MADWELL & KENNISON, 2015

The SPF (Social and Psychological Foundations) scale is a tool designed to measure psychological resilience by examining factors such as social relationships, planning behaviors, and self-confidence. Applicable to both men and women, regardless of socio-economic status or ethnic/racial background, the SPF comprises 24 items/statements and is divided into four sub-scales. Two of these sub-scales assess social protective factors, while the other two evaluate cognitive protective factors. The social sub-scales gauge the availability of social support from family and/or friends. Higher scores on these sub-scales reflect a strong bond with friends and/or family, a sense of optimism within these groups, and overall support from them. The cognitive sub-scales, on the other hand, measure self-efficacy, or confidence in one's ability to accomplish goals.

EMPIRICAL REVIEWS

Many studies lay the groundwork for future research, each building upon the contributions of previous researchers. Researchers aim to identify gaps in existing literature and address them effectively. The transition to college marks a significant life milestone characterized by new challenges and the need for independent decision-making. These challenges can significantly impact mental health.

Studies conducted by Macaskell (2013) and Mey & Yin (2015) suggest that mental health typically declines upon entering university and often does not revert to pre-university levels (Cooke et al., 2006; Bewick *et al.,* 2010). While university students generally report mental health levels similar to their non-university peers (Blanco *et al.,* 2008), recent research over the past decade has indicated a rise in the prevalence and severity of mental health issues among university students worldwide, accompanied by an increase in help-seeking behaviors (Wong et al., 2019; Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Verger et al., 2010; Auerbach et al., 2018; Lipson et al., 2019). Furthermore, Davy *et al.,* (2012) underscore that despite the growth of universities, concerns persist regarding whether support services for students are adequately expanding to meet these needs.

Earlier research on resilience primarily focused on individuals. However, recent studies have highlighted the necessity of examining resilience within the context of entire communities. Issues like burnout and psychological distress are particularly pressing among young adults and have become even more relevant given today's unpredictable global environment. A recent study conducted by Ms. Joanna Chue, an alumna of Yale-NUS College, and Assistant Professor of Social Sciences Cheung Hoi Shan, identified five key components of resilience within Singapore's cultural context. Their research showed that college students with higher levels of resilience were less prone to experiencing burnout and psychological distress.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the level of psychological resilience or the level of adjustment among the student's community.
- To compare the resilience level between and among different age groups of students.
- To assess the level of life satisfaction among college students.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study was conducted with the primary objective of measuring the level of psychological resilience using the tools, SLSS with 7 items & SPF with 24 items.

SAMPLE, ADMINISTRATION OF THE TOOLS & DATA COLLECTION

The primary data was collected using the above-discussed tools, SLSS & SPF, that were distributed to the college students as Google forms. The sample consisted of 90 female students doing various UG and PG programmes in the Ernakulam district of Kerala state. Respondents were given clear instructions on how to record their responses since the tools were standardized. The responses were scored as per the instructions given in the respective manuals.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

In the study, the sample included 90 female college students enrolled in various undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The age distribution of the respondents was as follows: 53.33% were in the 18-20 years age group, 40% were aged 21-23 years, and the remaining 6.67% were 24 years or older.

Using the SPF (Social and Psychological Foundations) tool to measure resilience, the following findings were recorded:

- **Resilience Levels**:
  - 46.67% of the students were classified as resilient.
  - 43.33% were identified as robust.
  - 10% had a fragile level of resilience.
  - Notably, none of the respondents exhibited an anti-fragile level of resilience.

Regarding life satisfaction, which is an indicator of mental health, the results were as follows:

- 60% of the students reported being satisfied with their current life.
- 15.56% were highly satisfied.
- Another 15.56% were neutral about their life satisfaction.
- The remaining 8.89% expressed dissatisfaction with their life.

These findings provide insights into the resilience and mental health status of the student population in this study.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

HYPOTHESIS 1

Null Hypothesis (H_0): The level of resilience does not correlate significantly with life satisfaction. This implies that changes in resilience do not have a meaningful impact on life satisfaction.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): The level of resilience correlates significantly with life satisfaction. This suggests that changes in resilience are associated with changes in life satisfaction.

The findings of the correlation analysis are summarised in Table 1 which shows the correlation between the level of psychological resilience and life satisfaction level.

Table 1

Correlations			
		Life satisfaction	Resilience
Life satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.142
	Sig (2-tailed)		.181
	N	90	90
Resilience	Pearson Correlation	.142	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.181	
	N	90	90
** Correlation is important at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)			

Based on the analysis of the collected data:

The correlation coefficient of 0.142 indicates a positive correlation between life satisfaction and resilience. However, this correlation is weak because the value is close to zero.

In terms of hypothesis testing:

The significance level (p-value) obtained is 0.181, which is higher than the normal significance level of 0.05. Therefore, we have failed to disprove the null hypothesis.

Conclusion:

Based on the data analysis, there is not enough evidence to conclude that there is a significant relationship between life satisfaction and psychological resilience. The weak correlation and the p-value above 0.05 suggest that changes in resilience level do not meaningfully impact life satisfaction levels in this study.

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REGRESSION ANALYSIS

To support the hypothesis test, the same variables were further analyzed using regression analysis and the results are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Coefficients						
		Unconventional Coefficients		Conventional Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	25.467	2.458		10.363	<.001
	Resilience Level	.170	.126	.142	1.349	.181

The regression analysis revealed a significance level above 0.01, providing a basis to accept the null hypothesis. This means that there is no large correlation between life satisfaction and resilience levels among college and university students. Therefore, based on the analysis, we can conclude that variations in life satisfaction do not meaningfully impact the resilience levels in this student population.

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA)

For further data analysis, the statistical test ANOVA was used to see whether there was any difference in the resilience level among the different age groups.

HYPOTHESIS 2

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no statistically significant variation in the population means among the groups, indicating that all group means are equal and any discrepancies observed are likely attributable to random chance.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): A notable disparity exists among the groups, indicating that at least one group significantly diverges from the overall mean of the dependent variable (psychological resilience). This implies that the observed differences between groups cannot be attributed solely to random variation.

Results of Univariate Analysis of Variance (one-way ANOVA)

Table 3 The table below shows between-subject factors.

Between-Subjects Factors		
		N
Age Group	18 to 20	48
	21 to 23	36
	24 and above	6

Table 4 Table showing the descriptive statistics of the means and the standard deviation of resilience level among different age groups of students

Descriptive Statistics			
Dependent Variable: Resilience level			
Age Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
18 to 20	18.4229	4.81102	48
21 to 23	19.1533	4.89057	36
24 and above	20.8633	5.42630	6
Total	18.8778	4.86737	90

Table 5 Table showing the actual results of ANOVA (Tests of between-subjects effects

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Resilience Level					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	36.319n	2	18.160	.762	.470
Intercept	15864.065	1	15864.085	666.043	<.001
Age group	36.319	2	18.160	.762	.470
Error	2072.072	87	23.818		
Total	34181.866	90			
Corrected Total	2108.521	89			

R-squared = 0.017 (Adjusted R squared= -0.005)

Given that the significance level of the test is much higher than the conventional threshold of 0.05, we have failed to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is no significant variation in the mean resilience levels across the different age groups of students. Therefore, we can conclude that age does not significantly influence the resilience

levels among the college students studied, suggesting that age is not a major factor determining resilience in this context.

Table 6 Table showing the multiple comparisons between different age groups concerning resilience level.

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Resilience Level						
					95% Confidence Interval	
Age Cluster (I)	Age Cluster (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
18 to 20	21 to 23	-0.7304	1.07603	0.795	-3.4103	1.9494
	24 and above	-2.4404	2.11328	0.516	-7.7035	2.8227
21 to 23	18 to 20	0.7304	1.07603	0.795	-1.9494	3.4103
	24 and above	-1.7100	2.15206	0.730	-7.0697	3.6497
24 and above	18 to 20	2.4404	2.11328	0.516	-2.8227	7.7035
	21 to 23	1.7100	2.15206	0.730	-3.6497	7.0697

Based on the multiple comparisons shown in the table above, each age group is individually compared with the other two. The results indicate that the level of significance is higher than our α (0.05). This suggests that there is no big variation in the means of resilience levels among the different age groups.
This reaffirms the findings from the ANOVA analysis, where we failed to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, based on the data and the statistical tests conducted, we conclude that there is no big variation in resilience levels across the various age groups.

FINDINGS

The study aimed to assess the psychological resilience levels among 90 female college students from various institutions in the Ernakulam district of Kerala. The findings indicated that 46.67% of the participants were identified as resilient. Additionally, when evaluating their life satisfaction or mental health, it was observed that 60% of the respondents were satisfied with their current lives.
Hypothesis 1: This hypothesis examined the correlation between life satisfaction (independent variable) and psychological resilience (dependent variable). Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to test this hypothesis. The results showed no significant relationship between these variables, suggesting that life satisfaction does not notably influence psychological resilience in this sample.
Hypothesis 2: This hypothesis explored whether psychological resilience levels varied according to the age of the college students. An ANOVA test was performed to analyze the differences across different age groups. The results showed that there was no big variation in resilience levels among the different age groups of college students. Thus, age did not appear to impact the resilience levels in the study population.

CONCLUSION

From the researcher's perspective, the study aims to analyze the resilience levels and their impact on the mental health of college students. The findings are expected to underscore the significance of prioritizing mental health among students, thereby fostering their development as responsible members of society. Understanding psychological resilience levels also emphasizes the need for ongoing attention to help students navigate life's challenges both presently and in the future. The study's results are anticipated to guide colleges and universities in enhancing their support systems and facilities to better assist students in managing stressors. It is crucial for educational institutions and educators to continually monitor students' mental health and implement strategies to enhance their resilience levels, preparing them effectively for the future. Furthermore, recommendations include adapting the curriculum to incorporate practices such as effective time management, fostering social support networks, promoting positive reappraisal techniques, and encouraging engagement in leisure activities. These measures are aimed at promoting and sustaining students' mental well-being throughout their academic journey.

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE SCOPE

One of the major limitations of the study was the number of respondents, which was restricted to a smaller number though the topic is something that affects a large amount of the population. Understanding the level of the respondents regarding the objective and the tools administered for the study could have impaired the process. Keeping in view the limitations of the study, it is suggested to conduct longitudinal studies with a large group of students from different colleges from different cities for more elaborate results. It is also suggested to use more detailed measures and scales to assess mental health, stress, and psychological resilience to reach a more clear conclusion.

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