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Exploring the relationship between resilience and perceived parental authority among adolescents

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explore the association between resilience and perceived parental authority. Resilience is the ability to overcome or bounce back from a situation that causes significant distress to the individual. Parental authority on the other hand, is the pattern of interaction between a parent and child, which influences the relationship between them. A quantitative study was conducted on a sample of 120 adolescents. The parental authority questionnaire (Buri, 1991) and Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Conner and Davidson, 2003) was used to collect data. Analysis of data revealed that there was a significant correlation between resilience and authoritative parenting style.

Keywords: resilience, parenting style, authoritative parenting

Introduction

Parent-child relationships are primal in the growth and shaping of resilience. Parents act as the primary learning source for coping with stress (Power, 2004) [36]. Adaptive behavioural abilities, emotional functioning (Prevatt, 2003) [37] along with effective coping can be noted in children with cohesive families along (Valiente, Fabes, Eisenberg, & Spinrad, 2004; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & Swanson, 2009) [46, 47]. This is also associated with academic achievement (Jeynes, 2007) [22], physical health (Bell & Belsky, 2008) [7] and social competence (Bugental & Grusec, 2006) [9]. Because supportive parents model appropriate behaviours, children learn adept social skills that are linked to competence with peers and academic achievement (Buysse, Goldman, West, & Hollingsworth, 2008) [11]. Children in such families also have better health behaviours (Riesch, Anderson, & Krueger, 2006) [39].

Resilience

Resilience is an important component for a “good life” and its study has gained momentum recently with the wave of positive psychology. The shift from the study of abnormality and illness towards human strengths, hope and well-being show a trend change in the subject matter under study by researchers. Resilience is defined as the tendency to bounce back, recoil or rebound (Garmezy, 1991) [16]. It is a capacity, process, and an outcome of adapting successfully to situations despite threatening circumstances (Garmezy & Masten, 1991) [16]. Not a mere adaptation to stress, trauma or challenge, resilience is rather the active participation in creating one’s own environment. Luthar *et al.* (2000) [30] defined resilience as a process of positive adaptation in significantly adverse situations. Resilience is derived from the normative development processes, which is further promoted by positive experiences like a favourable home environment and supportive parenting (Masten, 2001) [32]. It is developed when individuals experiences lesser threats to their well-being along with adept social support from the family (Lerner, Lerner, De Stefanis, & Apfel, 2001) [29].

Majority of childhood is spent within the family system. Changing times have transformed the structure and nature of families, the role of caregivers and importance on raising healthy children. Apart from providing the first and foremost form of education (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, & Soodak, 2006) [45], the pattern of interaction among family members impacts the behavioral, emotional and social development of children. Family environment plays an important role in the development of resilience when faced with an adversity (Bradley-Davino *et al.*, 2013; Gabalda, Thompson, & Kaslow, 2010; Hanson & Chen, 2010; Parade, Supple, & Helms, 2012) [8, 15, 20, 35].

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Parents are also an important source for children to develop the skill of emotion regulation (Webster-Stratton, 2005) [49]. Parenting styles can be defined as a constellation of various attitudes towards a child, which create an emotional climate wherein parents express their behaviours (Darling and Steinberg, 1993) [13]. Supportive parenting is characterized by parenting that reinforces the child's positive behaviours like empathy and providing them with a safe, positive and engaging learning environment. Parents deal with the children following structured rules and independence that is developmentally appropriate, yet harbour realistic expectations (Sanders, 1999) [41].

Parental authority

Seminal work by Maccoby and Martin's (1983) [31] and Baumrind's (1966, 1967, 1971) [5, 6] established four major categories of parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. Authoritative parenting is considered the most effective due to use of developmentally appropriate demands, appropriate control, responsiveness and effective communication between the parents and child. Authoritarian parents on the other hand are excessively controlling and show miniscule affection with their child, along with very little communication. Permissive parents have lesser demands, exercise lesser control but are extremely affectionate and responsive towards their children (Walker, 2008) [48]. Neglectful parents are called uninvolved because they exercise very little control, show less affection and do not communicate well with their children.

Positive parenting is an amalgamation of responsive techniques including an attitude of nurturance, support and warmth (Jouriles *et al.*, 2008; Tildesley & Andrews, 2008) [23, 44]. Responsive parents hence, have children with lower externalizing behaviour, better self-regulation (Eiden, Edwards, & Leonard, 2007) [14] and apt psychological adjustment (Khaleque, Rohner, & Riaz, 2007) [26]. Moreover, parental values, appropriate communication within the family and parental receptiveness is important to develop a buffer against the stressors one faces in life (McCubbin, Hamilton, Thompson, Thompson, and Futrell, 1999, Haan, Hawley, and Deal, 2002) [19, 34]. Parents who encourage autonomy yet maintain discipline help children to adjust better, and foster better social networks (Gilligan, 2001) [18]. Resilience can be affected by both internal and external factors, like biological and psychological factors on one hand, versus factors in one's environment on the other respectively. Parenting style is an essential external factor and therefore, essential to be understood in the context of development and maintenance of resilience. An increase in psychological problems during adolescence is coupled with decreased well-being during adolescence, which can be mitigated through a strong attachment with parents (Ainsworth, Blehar, & Waters, 1978). Development and maintenance of resilience is impacted by the relationship between the child and the parent.

Swanson *et al.* (2011) [43] reported significant positive correlations between resilience and supporting parenting styles. Controlling parents however, are intrusive in their children's life which often hampers emotional and psychological development (Barber, 1996) [3] and is related to poorer outcomes in the aforementioned domains (Arredondo *et al.*, 2006; Keown & Woodward, 2006) [1]. Poorer health outcomes are associated with negativity and

unresponsiveness that is presented in families with controlling parents (Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002) [38]. Such children have shown to have lesser effective coping abilities as well (Zhou *et al.*, 2008) [52]. Parent child relationships are effective promoters of positive outcomes in youth (Mattanah, 2001). Zhai *et al.* (2015) [51] reported a significant relationship between parenting styles and resilience. Warm, accepting, responsive and engaged parents display higher affection, involvement, and intimacy towards children, thereby providing assistance with everyday problem solving. They praise the children for their accomplishments and is related to adolescents' adjustment (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002) [25], along with positive attitudes in interpersonal interactions (Barber *et al.*, 2005) [2].

Ritter (2005) [40] reported that authoritative parenting style was associated with a high level of resilience because these parents are more attuned to the child's needs, helping the child to master developmental tasks with ease. This also helps the child in developing more complex, differentiated capacities which in turn help master environmental challenges effectively (Wyman *et al.*, 1999) [50].

Present study

The present study was undertaken to explore the relationship between resilience and perceived parental authority. Resilience has been a topic of research since many decades to identify the factors resulting in its development and maintenance. However, parenting styles have a huge impact on resilience, which is important to study especially in the Indian context.

Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between resilience and authoritative parenting among adolescents

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 120 adolescents aged between 16-20 year old (mean age = 18 yrs), equally divided between males (60) and females (60). The participants were Indian nationals. They could comprehend English with ease and were technologically sound.

Instruments

Resilience was measured using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC 25). The scale was developed by Kathryn M. Conner and Jonathan R.T. Davidson (2003) [12]. The scale has twenty five items that are rated on a five point Likert rating scale ranging from not true at all to true nearly all of the time. The scale has a high validity and test-retest reliability of 0.93.

The parental Authority Questionnaire by Buri (1991) [10] was used to measure the participant's perception of parenting style adopted by their parents. The responses are rated on a five point likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A total of 30 questions are a part of the scale which is divided into three subsections, namely Permissive, Authoritative and Authoritarian parenting style. The scale has a high reliability hanging from 0.75-0.92 and high criterion validity.

Procedure

Informed consent was acquired from the participating individuals for the study. The confidentiality of data, was assured. Demographic data was collected followed by the CD-RISC 25 and Parental Authority Scale. The data was analyzed using Pearson's correlation.

Results

The collected data through the questionnaires was subjected to analysis, namely Pearson's correlation.

Table 1: Correlation between resilience and perceived parental authority

	Resilience
Authoritative parenting	0.40***
Authoritarian parenting	0.05
Permissive parenting	0.11

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

The analysis of the data revealed that there was a positive moderate yet significant correlation between resilience and authoritative parenting (0.40, $P < 0.01$). The correlation of authoritarian parenting style and permissive parenting style with resilience however, was insignificant and almost negligible (0.05, $p > 0.05$; 0.11, $p > 0.05$ respectively).

Discussion

The present study was conducted to explore the relationship between resilience and perceived parental authority. The importance placed on studying resilience has increased over the past years, keeping in mind the changing circumstances that call for bouncing back from adversities effectively. The fast pacing life has made the idea of living a stress free and healthy life all the more quintessential. Luthar *et al.* (2002) defined resilience as the dynamic process involving the maintenance of positive adaptation and coping strategies when one is faced with an adversity. It is not a passive response to stress, but rather an active process to overcome a situation that has caused significant distress to the individual. Since much of childhood is spent within the family system, parenting styles influence a child's social, emotional and behavioural development. It is also important in the development of resilience, as supportive parents create an appropriate emotional climate for children to learn how to deal with adversities. Out of the four categories of parenting style put forth by Baumrind (1966, 19167) [4], authoritative parenting is considered the best because parents balance well between maintaining discipline yet being attentive to their child's needs.

Studying the influence of parenting styles on resilience is especially important in adolescents because this period is characterized by innumerable emotional, psychological and physical changes. Since resilience is an individual's ability to bounce back from an adversity, the kind of parenting style adopted by the parents can make a huge difference in either enhancing this ability or diminishing it.

Analysis of scores on the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and the Parental Authority Questionnaire revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between resilience and authoritative parenting ($r = 0.40$, $P < 0.01$). The results can be attributed to the fact that supportive and child centred parenting styles contribute to the development of resilience. It can be regarded as a protective factor, increasing the ability to successfully overcome crisis and negative life

events. Authoritative parents understand their children better and therefore, have more understanding and unanimity towards the child. Such parents then, help the child to overcome stressful situations by fostering a warm, positive and close relationship with the child thereby, increasing resilience. Individuals with high resilience often rate the relationship that they share with their families more positively, which indicates how there is both cohesion and acceptance in the family system (Ritter, 2005) [40].

The present findings are also in sync with studies conducted in the past. Khalid and Aslam (2012) [27] reported a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and resilience. Children raised by authoritative parents score higher on scales on adjustment (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, & Mounts, 1994) [42], resilience (Kritzas & Grobler, 2005) [28] and attachment (Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003) [24]. They also tend to display higher prosocial behaviour as compared to children raised by authoritarian parents (Hastings, McShane, & Parker, 2007) [21]. Gera and Kaur (2015) [17] too reported a significant relationship between resilience and parenting styles in adolescents. The role of resilience in dealing with emotional and psycho-social self that is fostered when parents are affectionate yet set rules can be used to support the current findings. Positive parenting techniques used by authoritative parents, which is a confluence of being responsive yet having an attitude of nurturance, warmth and support towards the child results in better psychological adjustment among them (Khaleque, Rohner, & Riaz, 2007) [26]. These children are then, able to indulge in better self-regulation in the wake of adversity (Eiden, Edwards, & Leonard, 2007) [14], thus building upon resilience from an early age. Since development of resilience is impacted by the parent-child relationship (Zakeria, Jowkara and Razmjoebe, 2010) it is imperative to provide the child with a safe and positive environment.

Conclusion

A moderate yet positive significant correlation was found between resilience and authoritative parenting among adolescents in the present study. The crucial impact of parenting on resilience makes it imperative to study the relationship between the two, in order to further the research on enhancing resilience in individuals as they grow to face adversities in the future. The warmth, support and appropriate disciplinary rules set by authoritative parents is well balanced by their willingness listen to their children, thereby creating a positive environment for social, emotional and psychological growth. This in turn, builds and enhances the child's ability to deal with the stressors they face in life and emerge out of it successfully.

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