

Resilience and Psychological Adjustment in Young Adults from Military and Civilian Family Backgrounds- A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the relationship and comparison between resilience and psychological adjustment in young adults from civilian and military families, aiming to offer perceptions into the impact of family background on psychological well-being. Through a comparative analysis, the research explores resilience levels and psychological adjustment scores among young adults from civilian and military families. Data collection involved a sample of 110 young adults between the age group of 18-28, with participants segregated based on their family background. The Brief Resilience Scale and Brief Adjustment Scale (BASE-6) were utilized to assess resilience and psychological adjustment, respectively. Statistical methods, including Independent samples T-Tests and, Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation, were employed to examine differences between the two groups and the relationship between variables. The findings reveal consistent patterns between resilience and psychological adjustment across civilian and military family backgrounds. Young adults from military families demonstrate higher resilience and psychological adjustment levels compared to their civilian counterparts. Correlation analyses further reveal the relationship between resilience and psychological adjustment, highlighting the positive relationship between the two. This research contributes to the understanding of resilience and psychological adjustment in the context of family upbringing, showing the relationship between these factors. The implications of the findings extend to policymakers, families, educators, and mental health professionals, encouraging for targeted interventions to endorse the well-being of young adults from diverse family backgrounds

Keywords: *Resilience, Psychological Adjustment, Young Adults, Military Family Backgrounds, Civilian Family Backgrounds*

Resilience and adjustment are essential facets of psychological well-being, particularly in the developmental years of young adulthood. This study embarks on a journey to explore the complex interplay between resilience and psychological adjustment among young adults originating from military and civilian families. Against the backdrop of different familial environments and life experiences, this study aims to shed light on the dynamics shaping the adaptive dimensions of individuals transitioning into adulthood.

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Resilience, defined as the ability to bounce back from difficulties and maintain psychological well-being, serves as a keystone in understanding how individuals navigate life's challenges. Coping mechanisms, social support, and individual characteristics are rooted within the concept of resilience, that influences one's capacity to thrive within adversity.

Similarly, psychological adjustment plays a key role in determining an individual's overall well-being and functioning. As young adults navigate the changes from adolescence to adulthood, they are confronted with many developmental tasks and challenges. Psychological adjustment incorporates the ability to effectively manage these demands, maintain stability, and adapt to different circumstances, hence nurturing a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction in life.

The distinction between military and civilian families introduces an exceptional dimension to the study of resilience and psychological adjustment. Military families, characterized by the demands of military service, including deployments, frequent relocations, and separation from loved ones, face distinct challenges that can deeply impact family dynamics and individual well-being of family members. On the other hand, civilian families typically experience a more stable and predictable environment, but with their own kind of stressors and burdens. "Military population is trained in a particular way to confront these challenges whereas the individuals constituting the civil population develop its own individual ways to overcome the stressors." (Marva Sohail and Gulzar Ahmad, 2021).

RESILIENCE

Resilience, a core concept of psychology. It represents the ability of a person to adapt and succeed when facing challenges, trauma, or significant stress. Resilience is the capacity of individuals to navigate their ways to resources that sustain well-being (Ungar et al., 2007). It involves a dynamic process of experiencing growth and transformation in the aftermath of facing adversity and focus on psychological well-being. Understanding resilience is extremely important for a comprehensive knowledge of how a person journeys through life's success and failures, especially in early years of being an adult.

In essence, resilience encompasses the relation between intrinsic and extrinsic factors that design a person's way of coping to difficulty. Intrinsic qualities include self-effectiveness, optimism, problem-solving abilities, and regulating emotions. Such qualities help a person to deal with stress, look at the silver lining, succeed in adverse conditions. On top of these, support from social groups, be it family, friends, and community, play an important part in crucial role in resilience by providing support both emotionally and practically.

As per the resilience theory, risk and protective factors are the determinants for resilience. These factors include hardiness, acceptance, hope, mastery, resourcefulness, self-efficacy, and sense of coherence (Curwen, 2016) Research on resilience has identified many factors that increase resilience across a person's life. These are, a secure attachment style, effective coping mechanisms, a sense of purpose in life, and opportunities for skill-based leaning. Moreover, the ability to be adaptable, and look at the brighter picture, and garner and maintain healthy relations are important components of resilience.

Understanding resilience in young adults from serving and civilian backgrounds requires considering the unique stressors and experiences associated with each. Military families, for

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example, are often relocated frequently, stay away from one or both parents at different times, while civilian families may face financial instability, family conflict or community violence. Due to these differences, research poses that youth with a connection to the military often showcase strong resilience that can be traced to their experiences of adapting to and adopting different cultures, always relying on themselves, and having a strong sense of patriotism.

In summary, resilience shows an ever-changing process through which individuals face challenges and succeed in the face of adversity. Understanding the reasons that increase resilience in young adults from unique familial backgrounds is important for having good development of resilience in this populous.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

Psychological adjustment involves a person's self-efficacy to cope with emotions, stress and maintain psychological wellbeing while facing challenges. It showcases an ever-changing process of adapting and learning how to create a balance between the intrinsic and extrinsic demands of life. Psychological adjustment problems reflect the individual's subjective emotional distress and the effects of emotional distress in daily life (Cruz RA,2020)

At its center, psychological adjustment involves many important parts like regulation of emotions, social functioning, having cognitive flexibility and self-esteem. Effectively regulating emotions helps a person to deal with their emotions in a healthy manner, hence increasing resilience and boosting mental health in a positive manner. Psychological adjustment problems positively predicted anxiety, depression and stress, and negatively predicted satisfaction with life (Yıldırım and Solmaz, 2016).

Social functioning talks about the quality of one's relationships and their ability to be a valued member in social interactions. Healthy social relationships can give support, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging, which are all important for psychological well-being.

Cognitive flexibility entails the ability to be adaptable in one's thinking patterns and behavioral patterns in the context of current circumstances being faced. It entails being open-minded, having good problem-solving skills, and the vision to view circumstances from different perspectives.

Self-esteem plays a vital role in psychological adjustment, affecting how people see themselves and their qualities. Healthy self-esteem is intertwined with self-worth, competence, and a sense of belonging, whereas low self-esteem can be detrimental to confidence and resilience.

Understanding the reasons that contribute to psychological adjustment in young adults from unique familial backgrounds is important for improving mental health. By identifying defensive factors and risk factors associated with psychological adjustment, clinicians and researchers can develop targeted interventions to support young adults in their journey toward psychological well-being and adaptive functioning.

Military Families and Civilian Families

The differences between military and civilian families poses a unique perspective to the study of resilience and adjustment in young adults. Military families are defined by the

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requirements and way of life in military service, while civilian families usually have a more customary civilian lifestyle.

Military families face a number of re-locations, deployments, and living far from loved ones. These challenges can disorganize family customs and traditions, affect social networks, and breed uncertainty and stress for family members, including young adults. Frequently changing locations, schools, friends leads to lesser stability and a feeling of not belonging at any one particular place. Also, the deployment of the person in the military to a “field post” (active zone where families are not allowed due to being dangerous) can be stressful. “Military personnel are exposed to most stressful situations as compared to any other professionals due to multiple factors like seclusion during deployment, staying away from families, physical threats, and the weight on one’s consciousness for being responsible for others’ lives” (Harms, Krasikova, Vanhove, Herian, & Lester, 2013).

While civilian families generally have better stability in terms of location and social networks. Civilian families have their fair share of challenges like economic instability, familial conflict but these challenges are not as unique as their counterparts.

All these challenges do vary on an individual level as well. There might be certain civilian families who, relocate frequently and certain military employees choose to settle their families at one particular place while relocating and living on their own during their service.

Difference in Upbringing

Young adults from military families and civilian families have been brought up in very different ways. These are a result of differences in lifestyles in the two families. These differences affect various aspects of a person’s life like coping mechanisms, resilience, adjustment, values, beliefs. According to Bronfenbener, “children's early development is impacted by several social and cultural factors, including family, educational environment and community as well as the broader society.”

The most notable difference between the two is the number of re-locations and the nomadic nature of their life in terms of location. These relocations can happen every 2 years to maybe every 5 years or more depending on the stream of military and the post. They disrupt education, social relationships and overall stability which requires them to be extremely adaptable and resilient. They need to be good at making new connections and learning new cultures, traditions and much more. They also have to deal with separations, uncertainty, deployment of parent, which could result in heightened levels of anxiety, stress and responsibility.

There is a level of discipline followed in military households. There is an emphasis on physical fitness, punctuality, respect, patriotism that is not usually seen in civilian households. There is also a sense of separation from the civilian world as most families live in cantonments that have heavy security and restricted access compared to civilian areas.

Statement of Problem

Mental health of military families is a concern because they face a number of re-locations, deployments, and living far from loved ones. These challenges can disorganize family customs and traditions, affect social networks, and breed uncertainty and stress for family members, including young adults.

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These relocations can hamper the building and continuity of long-term therapeutic relationships. Also due to the uncertain nature of the postings that military families go to, there could be challenges regarding the availability of mental health professionals.

Significance of the Study

The research on resilience and adjustment in young adults both from military and civilian families has a key significance, it can help in both academic and practical implications.

First, there is a gap in the research and this this research addresses that gap. There have been studies exploring the impact of military life on family dynamics and individual well-being but there have not been many exploring the transition these young adults go through when they grow up. By researching about this and filling this gap there are a lot of valuable learnings that can be achieved.

Second, the findings from this research can greatly help in support for these young adults in terms of clinical practices that support their mental health and individual well-being. By pinpointing the exact factors that affect these young adults from military family's mental health professionals can make targeted approaches that address the specific needs of these people.

Moreover, this study can influence policymakers and community stakeholders who support military families by promoting mental health initiatives. By pointing out these people in the direction of the challenges military families face there could be an improvement in the resources allocated to these issues and supporting mental health initiatives for military families.

Research Gap

Although there is a lot of research being done on resilience and adjustment, there are very few notable papers on the experiences of young adults from military and civilian backgrounds. Studies have tried to understand the effect of military life on family dynamics and other parameters, there are not any notable ones that try to understand the unique situation of young adults growing up in the contexts of military and civilian life.

Another gap involves the lack of understanding of how military life shapes a person and how the unique experiences military children face have a significant role in shaping personalities, forming identities and psychological well-being.

There is a significant vacuum in the Indian research related to the impact on and state of psychological well-being of families of military personnel due to the unique life events experienced by them. There are also a lack of comparative studies between the resilience and adjustment of young adults from military and civilian families. These studies can help in understanding the similarities shared among the two groups and differences between them as well, which can further help in creating unique approaches to promote the psychological well-being of these young adults that cater to their specific needs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

O'Neal, C.W., Lucier-Greer, M., Duncan, J.M. et al. (2018) examined Vulnerability and Resilience within Military Families: Deployment Experiences, Reintegration, and Family Functioning by studying how family factors that diminish feelings of loss (frequent

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communication) and reflect system-level adaptation (effective household management) during deployment were associated with enhanced resilience and fewer vulnerabilities during reintegration and, ultimately, the promotion of family functioning following deployment. Multiple reporters from active duty (AD) military families (N = 214 families; 642 individuals) were examined, including AD members, civilian spouses, and their adolescent offspring, results indicated opportunity for growth that can reinforce connections between family members.

Sohail, & Ahmad, (2021) aimed to know the difference between military personnel with endurance training and civilian population (with no endurance training), with respect to resilience, psychological wellbeing, and emotional regulation. Correlation and comparative design was used for this study. A sample of 180 participants with age range of 20-55 years was taken from different walks of military units and civilian population by using snowball sampling, and purposive sampling strategies respectively. The Adult Resilience Measure (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011), Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002), and Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003) were used to assess variables. The results indicated that the military personnel with endurance training were significantly higher on psychological well-being than the civilian population (with no endurance training); while, the civilian population was significantly higher on expressive suppression facet of emotional regulation than the military personnel.

Afek, Ben-Avraham, Davidov, Gilboa, & Nahum, (2021) examined the relationship between IC, psychological resilience, psychological distress, and anxiety among 138 female and male participants in a stressful situation: during their initial combat training in the military. Using a mobile app, we assessed IC using emotional and non-emotional variations of the Go/No-Go task. Psychological resilience, psychological distress, and anxiety were assessed using mobile versions of self-report questionnaires. We found that psychological resilience is significantly correlated with non-emotional IC ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.005$), but not with emotional IC; whereas, psychological distress and anxiety are correlated with emotional IC ($r = -0.253$, $p < 0.005$ and $r = -0.224$, $p < 0.01$, for psychological distress and anxiety, respectively), but not with non-emotional IC.

Dempsey (2022) researched regarding suicide in the general population as well as among military members and veterans, The study proceeded in a pyramidal fashion from a generic overview of suicides to a more specific focus on young people, especially those who are part of the military family system who experience suicidal ideation or behaviors. The hermeneutic phenomenological experiences of surviving family members were examined. Interviews were conducted face to face or through video interface, the latter being the preferred method due to the social distancing restrictions secondary to the covid epidemic. There were varying degrees of religiosity and spiritualism perceived in the decedents by the participants, with varying amounts of importance perceived in the decedent's life.

Galimotu, & Sundaray (2022) examines the social and emotional development of children in military and civilian households, rather than the common view that children of all ages have greater rates of emotional outbursts, anxiety, and depression symptoms. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and perceived nominal stress (NPS) questionnaires were used to gather data on 131 individuals, 66 of whom were from military families and 65 of whom were from civilian families. An independent variable test and comparison of dependent as well as independent Kendall correlation analyses were included in the data analysis, independent

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variables t-test was used to assess the two hypotheses presented in the research. $F= 57.497$ at $P= 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$) indicates that group variances should be viewed as not equal, giving us $t(106.435) = 4.269$, $p= 0.000$ results from Levine's test for an equal variance for EI.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: To compare Resilience and Psychological adjustment in young adults from military and civilian families.

Objectives

- To Compare Resilience: Assess and compare the levels of Resilience in young adults from military and civilian family backgrounds.
- To Examine Psychological Adjustment: Compare the psychological adjustment in young adults from military and civilian families.
- To Explore the relationship between the two: Examine the relationship between resilience and psychological adjustment.

Hypothesis:

Assuming that the other factors are kept constant, we hypothesis that,
Hypothesis for Comparing Resilience and Psychological Adjustment:

- **Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant difference in resilience levels and psychological adjustment between young adults from military and civilian family backgrounds.
- **Alternative Hypothesis:**
(H1): There is significant difference in levels of resilience in young adults from military and civilian family backgrounds.
(H2): There is significant difference in levels of psychological adjustment in young adults from military and civilian family backgrounds.

Hypothesis for Exploring Associations Between resilience and adjustment:

- **Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant association between resilience and psychological adjustment in young adults.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H3):** There is a significant association between resilience and psychological adjustment in young adults.

Variables:

- **Independent Variable:** Family Background (Military vs. civilian)
- **Dependent Variable:** Resilience & Psychological Adjustment

Sample:

A sample of 110 people was taken for this study, where 55 were young adults from military families and 55 were young adults from civilian families, in the age group of 18-28 years.

Selection criteria: Subjects met the following criteria to be eligible for the study-

1. The subject provided an informed consent prior to the procedure of study.
2. The subjects were young adults within the age group 18-28 Years.
3. The subjects belonged either to a Military Family or Civilian Family.

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Instruments:

For the study, two psychometric tests were used to measure the variables. The first psychometric test used was the Brief Resilience Scale by Dr. Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008). The brief resilience scale (BRS) was formed to assess the ability to recover or bounce back from stress, including both positively and negatively worded items. The scale consists of 6 items, with each item having five alternatives to choose from, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The reliability for the BRS was found to be 0.90. Content and construct validity and internal consistency was also established.

The second test used for the study was the Brief Adjustment Scale (BASE-6) by Cruz et al. in 2019. The scale consists of 6 items, evaluating the general psychological adjustment. All items are rated on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 4 = somewhat, 7 = extremely), higher scores indicate lower general psychological adjustment. Test-retest reliability was found to be 0.80. High construct and content validity was established.

Ethical Guidelines

The participants were clearly explained the purpose of the study. Then, they were asked for consent. Then, those who were willing to be a part of the study were further explained the duration of the study and limits of confidentiality. The questionnaires were administered once's the subjects were ready.

Procedure

A sample of 110 subjects were selected, and google form was made and circulated, which consisted of the questions related to demographic information and the two questionnaires required for data collection, i.e., Brief Resilience Scale and Brief Adjustment Scale (BASE-6). The subjects were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was taken before giving the questionnaires, they were also ensured that their responses would be kept confidential. Instructions were clearly told and mentioned on the form. Once the responses were collected the subjects were thanked for their time.

Statistical Analysis

A statistical analysis was carried out to assess Resilience and Psychological Adjustment in young adults from civilian and military family backgrounds. For these various statistical measures were employed such as Mean, Standard Deviation, Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation as well as Independent t-tests.

RESULT

The following tables highlight the results obtained:

Table 1: Signifying the descriptive statistics for Resilience and Psychological Adjustment Civilian Family Background Military Family Background

	Civilian Family Background		Military Family Background	
	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Resilience	2.94	0.70	3.64	0.61
Psychological Adjustment	21.56	8.47	17.60	7.83

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Table 2: Signifying the T test scores for young adults from Civilian Family Background and from Military Family Background on Resilience

	df	Mean Difference	t-value(df)	p-value
Resilience	108	0.69	5.48**	0.000

Table 3: Signifying the T test scores for young adults from Civilian Family Background and from Military Family Background on Psychological Adjustment

	df	Mean Difference	t-value(df)	p-value
Psychological Adjustment	108	-3.96	-2.547**	0.012

Table 4: Indicating the correlation between Resilience and Psychological Adjustment scores

	Resilience Score	Psychological adjustment score
Resilience Score	1	0.518
Psychological adjustment score	0.518	1

DISCUSSION

Young adults and adolescents from military families experience various stressors associated with the military lifestyle (Collins & Wadsworth, 2014; Weins & Boss, 2006). These stressors impact and shape multiple parts of their personality. The current study aims to understand the difference in Resilience and Psychological Adjustment in young adults who belong to military family backgrounds from those who belong to civilian family backgrounds. Resilience can be defined as the ability to cope up with difficulties faced in life. Emmy Werner concluded from her study in 1955 that resilience is not an innate trait, rather it can be learned through our environment. Psychological adjustment in simple terms refers to the ability to adapt to changes or challenges in an individual's social, physical, and occupational environment, individuals with high psychological adjustment tend to engage in functional behaviours more.

In a research, Nikhil, C.G. and Aditya, S. studied the influence of environment on individuals in Military and Civilian Families, where the variables emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived stress were assessed and compared in family members of armed forces and civilians. 131 participants were selected by non-probable sampling, and The Schutte Self Report EI Test (SSEIT) and Perceived Stress Scale were given to them using online survey platform. It was found that participants from military and civilian households do vary significantly in their levels of emotional intelligence, however, no significant differences were found in the perceived levels of stress.

To measure and assess resilience the Brief Resilience Scale by Dr. Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008) was used. It consists of 6 questions including both positively and negatively worded items, each item having five alternatives to choose from, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Scoring was done by adding value of responses for all items, creating range 6-30, and dividing it by 6. The final BRS score range is 1.00-5.00. Higher score indicates higher resilience. 1.00-2.99 is interpreted as low resilience, 3.00-4.30 as normal resilience and 4.31-5.00 as high resilience.

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The young adults from military family background scored higher on the scale than those from civilian family background. The mean resilience score for military and civilian family background came out to be 3.64 and 2.94 respectively, as signified in table 1. In order to figure out the differences in scores of both the groups independent t-test was conducted, results of which can be seen in table 2. The t-test score was 5.48 with a mean difference of 0.69 at p-value 0.000, indicating significant difference in the resilience levels of both the groups. Hence, hypothesis (H1) is accepted that states there is significant difference in levels of resilience in young adults from military and civilian family backgrounds.

Psychological adjustment was assessed using the Brief Adjustment Scale (BASE-6) by Cruz et al. in 2019. The scale consists of 6 items, that evaluate the general psychological adjustment. All items are rated on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 4 = somewhat, 7 = extremely), higher the scores, lower the general psychological adjustment. The test is inversely interpreted.

The young adults from military family background scored lower on the BASE-6 scale than those from civilian family background. The mean psychological adjustment score for military and civilian family background came out to be 17.60 and 21.56 respectively, as signified in table 1, indicating high level of psychological adjustment in young adults with military background (higher the score, lower the psychological adjustment). In order to figure out the differences in scores of both the groups independent t-test was conducted, results of which can be seen in table 3. The t-test score was -2.547 with a mean difference of -3.96 at p-value 0.012, indicating significant difference in the levels of psychological adjustment of both the groups. Hence, hypothesis (H2) is accepted that states there is significant difference in levels of psychological adjustment in young adults from military and civilian family backgrounds.

In a research Yildirim M. et.al. aimed to examine the role of resilience in psychological adjustment and satisfaction with life in college students in Turkey. 224 undergraduates were selected by convenience sampling method, and assessed by using psychometric tools such as Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) and Brief Adjustment Scale (BASE-6). Results indicated that resilience negatively predicted the psychological maladjustment ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$) and positively predicted satisfaction with life ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$) after controlling for age, gender, and perceive socioeconomic status.

The third hypothesis states that there exists correlation between an individual's resilience and psychological adjustment. To determine the same, the Pearson-moment correlation test was conducted which has been shown through the table 4, the value for the Pearson-moment correlation coefficient (r) was found to be 0.518 which indicates that there exists a positive relationship between the resilience and the psychological adjustment of an individual even though a moderate one. This association implies that people who possess higher levels of resilience also likely to have better psychological adjustment. The aforementioned discovery emphasizes the significance of resilience as a safeguard against psychological discomfort and draws attention to the possible advantages of interventions designed to improve resilience in fostering general well-being. Hence, the hypothesis (H3) that there is a significant association between resilience and psychological adjustment in young adults is accepted.

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The findings of this research reveal a moderately positive relationship between psychological adjustment and resilience. Despite the disciplined upbringing, constant relocations and uncertainties experienced by young adults in military families, the military upbringing not only promotes resilience but also fosters positive psychological adjustment. These results emphasize the potential benefits of a military upbringing for psychological well-being and highlight the requirement for more researches and support networks to improve our awareness of and efforts to promote the mental health of young adults raised in military families.

CONCLUSION

With the aim to study the comparison of resilience and psychological adjustment in young adults from military and civilian families, we conducted this study. As it can be seen through the results and discussion above, we can conclude that there exists significant difference between the resilience levels between both groups, which proves our 1st hypothesis that states, 'There is significant difference in levels of resilience in young adults from military and civilian family backgrounds.'. Our 2nd hypothesis states that there is significant difference in levels of psychological adjustment in young adults from military and civilian family backgrounds, which has also been proved further by using the statistical method of Independent T-test. The 3rd hypothesis that there is a significant association between resilience and psychological adjustment in young adults, which has also been proved by using the statistical method of Pearson-Moment Correlation which indicates a moderate, positive correlation between resilience and psychological adjustment. Therefore, we conclude this study on the note that the three hypothesis statements were found to be true.

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Conflict of Interest

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