

Differentiation of Self and Resilience among Adolescents: Moderating role of Gratitude using SPSS Process Macro model

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ABSTRACT

The current study examines the role of Gratitude as a moderating variable between Differentiation of Self and Resilience. One hundred and twenty participants from various colleges in Mangaluru completed Gratitude- Resentment Appreciation Test, Bharathiar University Resilience Scale and Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short Form. The data obtained was analyzed using Moderation Analysis. The results showed that there is a significant positive correlation among all the variables under study. Moderation analyses using SPSS Process Macro showed that Gratitude was found to moderate the relationship between resilience and Differentiation of Self.

Keywords: *Gratitude, Differentiation of Self, Resilience, Adolescents*

Resilience in human development is defined in relation to positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity (Masten & Reed, 2002). Resilience is a construct with two distinct dimensions: significant adversity and positive adaptation (Luthar SS, 2006). People who display Resilient adaptation become stronger by learning new skills, developing creative ways of coping, and meeting and overcoming life's challenges (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003). Resilient youth seem to Survive in high-risk families through their ability to adjust and cope with inconsistency and adversity (Beardslee & Schwoeri, 1994). Resilience processes can have outcomes such as Avoiding a negative outcome or coping successfully with a traumatic event such as the death of a loved one. (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Differentiation of self (DoS) is a construct that refers to a personal level of maturity capable of balancing thoughts with feelings, and connection with independence in relationships (Majerus & Sandage, 2010). Late adolescence, i.e. of the ages 18 to 24 years is a period of changes in the aspects of family, work, school, home, role and resources and a process of becoming an adult. These changes greatly vary between gender roles, race, ethnicity and social class (Teipal of State Adolescent Resource Health Centre, 2021).

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According to Bowen's family systems theory (1978) Differentiation of self is a multigenerational process where young individuals achieve a more developed sense of differentiated self. It includes balancing between intrapsychic, which is emotional and intellectual systems, and inter-psyche which is togetherness and autonomy. This balance is well established by the time an individual reaches late adolescence and remains relatively stable thereafter (Bowen, 1993).

Gratitude is the appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself and represents a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation (Sansone & Sansone, 2010). Gratitude not only encourages people to appreciate what is good in life and compels them to take this goodness forward. It is the "social glue" that strengthens all relationships and serves as the backbone of human society (Allen, 2018). Mental health can be understood as a complete model based on a grateful mindset which affirms that mental health is not only the absence of mental illness but also the presence of a positive state of functioning (Keyes et al., 2011).

Gratitude, Resilience and Differentiation of Self.

Resilience was a significant predictor of humility, gratitude, and forgiveness (Dwiwardani et al., 2014). A number of studies supported the premise that forgiveness and gratitude are related to resilience (Broyles, 2005); in which forgiveness and gratitude play a part as effective adaptive coping in order to deal with negative stressors (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). There's a low but statistically significant positive correlation among forgiveness, gratitude and resilience (Kumar and Dixit, 2014).

Differentiation of self is positively correlated with resilience (Yanyan, Qin, & Qing, 2014). The literature in the area of differentiation of self and relational development supports the idea that the better an individual is at navigating relationships, the more resilient they are against distress. In essence, promoting relational development also promotes resiliency and psychological well-being (Drake et al., 2015). Higher scores of differentiations were related to greater resilience (Sadeghi et al., 2020). As the level of differentiation of self-increases, resilience also increases; differentiation of self is also known to predict resilience (Süloğlu & Güler, 2021). Differentiation of self not only serves to improve family functioning but is also central to improving resilience (Mackay, 2017).

Gratitude and Resilience have a low level of positive correlation (Mary & Patra, 2015). Promoting positive mental health involves not only reducing psychopathologies, but also promoting robust psychological characteristics (Folkerts, 2021). Gratitude plays a significant role in predicting resilience among adolescents with divorced parents. (Shabrina et al., 2020). Gratitude lessened mental health difficulties and fostered positivity at the onset of the pandemic, but more research is needed to determine whether gratitude and other strengths promote resilience as COVID-19 continues. (Kumar et al, 2022).

The current study intended to examine whether gratitude moderated the positive relationship between resilience and differentiation of self.

METHOD

Based on the above literature, the objectives were framed assuming that Gratitude mediates between Differentiation of Self and Resilience as shown the figure below:

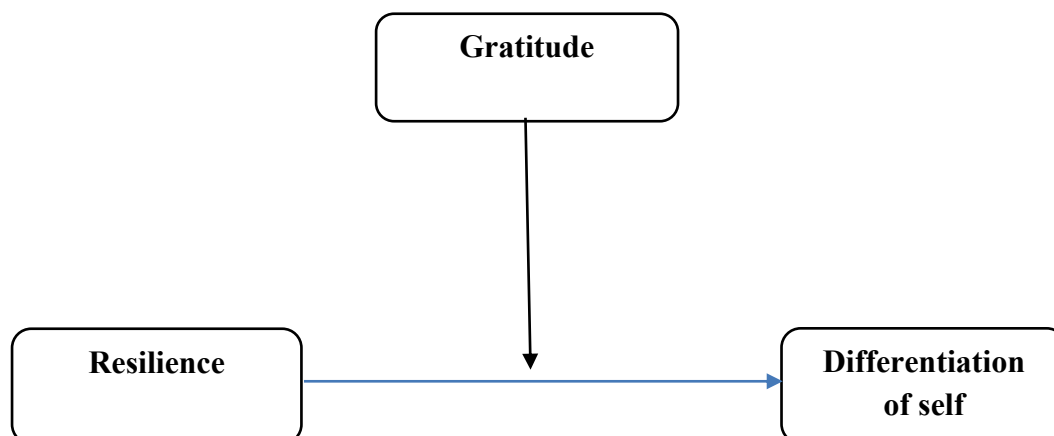


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the relationship between Resilience and Differentiation of self, and the moderating role of Gratitude.

Objectives

- To find the correlation between variables of the study.
- To find out whether Gratitude acts as a moderating factor between Differentiation of Self and Resilience.

Hypothesis

- **H₁**: Gratitude moderates the relationship between Differentiation of Self and Resilience.

Research Design and Sampling

The research design used here is Correlational Design. A Convenient Sampling procedure was employed to collect data.

Tools

- **Gratitude, Resentment, Appreciation Test-Short Form (GRAT-Short Form):** GRAT measures dispositional gratitude the GRAT-short form measures adults' sense of abundance in life and appreciation of others. According to Thomas and Watkins' exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the GRAT-short form has three factors: (a) lack of a sense of deprivation (LOSD; six items), (b) simple appreciation (SA; six items), and (c) appreciation for others (AO; four items). It was positively correlated with the GQ-6 ($r = .82$), life satisfaction ($r = .65$) (Watkins et al., 2003).
- **Bharathiar University Resilience Scale;** Bharathiar University Resilience Scale is designed to assess the capacity of an individual to cope with stress and catastrophe, and a characteristic of resistance to future negative events. The Bharathiar University Resilience Scale consists of 30 Likert-type 5-point items. It is reported to have high reliability. The Reliability coefficients are .84 (Spearman Brown), .84 (Guttman Split half) and .86 (Cronbach Alpha) (Annalakshmi, 2009).

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- **Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short form:** It is a 20 item scale measuring four dimensions of Differentiation of self namely, Emotional cut off, Emotional reactivity, I position and Emotional fusion. The inventory consists of 20 items based on 6-point Likert scale. It has test-retest reliability of 0.85 (Drake, 2011).

Procedure

Data was collected from 120 adolescents (40 boys and 71 girls) aged between 18 to 22 years from different colleges in Mangaluru. Informed consent was taken and confidentiality was assured to the respondents.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Participants aged between 18 and 24 years who are studying in undergraduate or postgraduate course.
- Participants residing in the state of Karnataka.
- Participants who own a personal mobile phone.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Participants diagnosed with any mental illnesses.
- Participants diagnosed with any physical illnesses or currently taking medication for such conditions.

RESULTS

The data was first analyzed using Pearson Correlation. Then Mediation analysis was done using the SPSS PROCESS macro. The Bootstrap Estimation Procedure was adopted to calculate the confidence interval of direct and indirect effects and to test further the mediating effects.

Characteristics of the sample

Out of the 120 participants 74 were females (61.7%) and 46 were males (38.3%). The participants were under-graduate and postgraduate students studying in various colleges in Mangalore, Karnataka. Most of the participants were from urban domicile (70.8%) and the remaining were from rural background (29.2%). Hundred and ten participants were from the Nuclear family (91.7%) and 10 were from joint families (8.3%). Eighty percent of the participants reported that their family atmosphere was good and the remaining 20% of them reported that the family atmosphere was average.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and Correlation coefficient among Gratitude, Resilience and Differentiation and Self (DoS)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Resilience	Differentiation of Self	Gratitude
Resilience	73.86	15.17	1		
Differentiation of Self	97.98	11.55	.522**	1	
Gratitude	99.42	14.59	.665**	.552*	1

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

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The participants showed almost similar levels of Differentiation of self ($M=97.98$, $SD=11.55$) and Gratitude ($M=99.42$, $SD=14.59$) whereas Resilience ($M=73.86$, $SD=15.17$) was found to be relatively low. Table 2 shows a strong positive correlation between Gratitude, resilience and Differentiation of Self which is significant at 0.01 level.

Table 2 Moderating effect of Gratitude

Model	Coefficients	SE	t	F	R ²	R ² change
Resilience	0.320	0.105	3.037**			
Gratitude	0.304	0.079	3.816	22.795**	0.370	0.022
Interactional	0.007	0.003	2.055*			

* $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Moderating effect of Gratitude on the relationship between resilience and Differentiation of self, was analyzed according to the procedure of PROCESS Macro model 1 for SPSS proposed by Hayes (Hayes, 2017). Bootstrap was used for verification, the confidence interval was 95%, and the number of samples was 5000. As shown in Table 2, Resilience was found to have a positive significant effect on Differentiation of self (0.320, $p < 0.001$). The confidence interval of bootstrap [0.111, 0.529] did not include zero.

The interaction term between Resilience and Gratitude had a positive significant effect on Differentiation of self (0.007, $p < 0.05$), and the confidence interval of bootstrap [0.0003, 0.014] did not include zero. Gratitude moderates the relationship between Resilience and Differentiation of self. Hence H_1 is accepted.

Findings

- The purpose of the study was to find whether and Gratitude moderates the relationship between Differentiation of Self and Resilience.
- The result shows that there is a significant, strong positive correlation between Gratitude and Resilience ($r=.665^{**}$) also between Gratitude and Differentiation of Self ($r=.552^*$).
- Gratitude moderates the relationship between Differentiation of Self and Resilience.

Implications

- Gratitude is an important variable to understand the relationship between Resilience and Differentiation of self.
- The present study provides empirical evidence for the hypothesis that Gratitude mediates between Resilience and Differentiation of Self.
- The findings provide valuable guidance for the potential interventions aimed at increasing an individual's differentiation of self.
- Comprehensive intervention programmes involving increasing gratitude can be incorporated.
- The curricula can be revised based on gratitude modules to improve differentiation of self for university students.

Limitations

The sample is limited to late adolescents, which may undermine the generalizability of study results. Future studies are needed to examine the results by experimental design. Finally, the participants in our study were recruited only from India. Future research is needed to

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reexamine the findings in other cultures to extend the generalizability of the present findings.

Suggestions

- A more representative and larger sample could be employed.
- The mediating role of multiple personality traits, life events, family function etc. could be taken into consideration.
- Future works could use a longitudinal or experimental approach to facilitate more causal evaluations.
- Further study could investigate early and middle adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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