

Emotional Intelligence and Meaning in Life on the Resilience of College Students

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ABSTRACT

Resilience is common occurrence when we encounter challenges in life. Few people have the innate quality to face the life threat and challenges as overcome it naturally, but few others find it difficult to face adverse life challenges. Finding meaning in life's difficulties is known to contribute to positive coping and adaptation. The present study aims to find out the influence of emotional intelligence and meaning in life on the resilience of individuals. Standard measures were used to assess emotional intelligence, meaning in life and resilience. Convenience sampling procedure was used to collect data from 69 college students comprising of 40 girls and 29 boys. Pearson's product moment correlation and student 't'-test used for analysis. Findings of the study revealed no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience. Also, study reveals a significant positive relationship between meaning in life and resilience. Gender did not have an influence on emotional intelligence, meaning in life and resilience among college students

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Meaning in Life, Resilience, College Students*

Resilience is the ability to bounce back to normalcy after facing challenges in life. According to Goldstein (1997) it is the, "self-righting tendencies of the person, both the capacity to be bent without breaking and the capacity, once bent, to spring back". "Resilience is the capacity for successful adaptation, positive functioning or competence despite high-risk status, chronic stress, or following prolonged or severe trauma" (Block & Kremen, 1996). Connor and Davidson, 2003 explains that resilience is calculated by the ratio of the presence of hazardous circumstances and protective factors.

Woo (2008) proposed that personal meaning in life was comprised as one of the domains of resilience. Personal meaning was identified as a potentially significant component of psychological resilience. Psychological resilience can be further enhanced by addition of existential variables like personal meaning in life, spirituality, etc (Macdonald, Wong & Gingras, 2011). Ciarrochi, Forgas & Mayer (2001) claimed that psychological resilience, success in career and romantic relationship are other abilities clustered under the emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence signifies how well the individual is able to perceive, regulate and manage emotions. Theories related to emotional intelligence suggested direct

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connection between emotional intelligence and resilience in stressful circumstances (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler & Mayer, 1999; Ciarrochi, Deane & Anderson, 2002; Casells & Motta, 1990). According to Goleman (1995) Emotional Intelligence is defined as, “the ability to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration, to control impulsive and delay gratification to regulate one’s mood and keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathize and to hope”. According to Bar-On (1997) Emotional Intelligence is, “an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressure”. People with high emotional intelligence tend to be highly resilient as they are aware of their emotions and can control or manage their emotions. Bar-On (1988) found that “predicting success is not always based on cognitive intelligence. Many cognitive intelligent people failed in life, while many less cognitively intelligent individuals succeed and prosper”.

Researches revealed that “individuals who pursue meaningful and virtuous life goals can still achieve some level of satisfaction and well-being in spite of hardships and suffering” (Frankl, 1985; Haybron, 2000; Wong, 2011). Search for meaning has been defined as “the strength, intensity, and activity of people’s desire and efforts to establish and/or augment their understanding of the meaning, significance, and purpose of their lives” (Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan, & Lorentz, 2008) Feeling that one’s existence is meaningful, or that one has an important purpose in life has been seen as a critical component of being human (e.g., Baumeister, 1991; Frankl, 1963) and of well-being (e.g., Ryff & Singer, 1998). Considering all the above, the present study made an attempt to find out the influence of emotional intelligence and meaning in life on resilience among college students.

METHOD

Objectives

1. To find out the relationship of emotional intelligence and meaning in life with resilience among college students.
2. To study the gender difference on emotional intelligence, Meaning in life and resilience of college students.

Hypotheses:

Since, there are no earlier studies explaining the relationship of the variables chosen for the present study the following null hypotheses were formulated

- **H1:** There would be no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and Resilience among college students.
- **H2:** There would be no significant relationship between Meaning in life and resilience among college students.
- **H3:** Girls and boys would not differ significantly in their levels of resilience.

Sample

Convenience sampling technique was used select a sample of 69 College students, which include both girls (40) and boys (29).

Measures

- **Emotional Intelligence inventory** (Baron & Parker, 2000) is a 30 item rating scale, measuring emotional quotient of an individual. The scale has four response categories namely never, sometimes, often and very often. The emotional quotient is

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the aggregate of four sub components namely inter-personal, Intra-personal, Stress management and adaptability.

- **Meaning in life Questionnaire** (Steger, Frazier, Oishi & Kaler; 2006) assess two dimensions of meaning in life consisting of 10 items rated on a seven-point scale ranging from absolutely true to absolutely untrue. The questionnaire has good reliability, test-retest stability, stable factor structure and convergence.
- **Bharathiar University Resilience Scale - Form B** (Annalakshmi, 2009) consists of 30 items with five response categories with scores ranging from 30 to 150. The scale has adequate reliability and the Cronbach Alpha for the scale was found to be 0.876.

Procedure and ethical considerations:

Participants were chosen from colleges in Chennai city. The purpose of the study was explained and consent was obtained from the participants. Participants were given the liberty to withdraw from the assessment at any point if they are not willing to take part in the study. Instructions were given about how they should answer the questions and they were given enough time to answer. The filled in questionnaires were collected and participants were thanked for their participation and co-operation.

Statistics used

The data collected was analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and student t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows relationship between emotional Intelligence and resilience among college students

	N	Mean	SD	'r' Value
Emotional Intelligence	69	60.55	9.61	0.185 (NS)
Resilience	69	93.30	18.69	

Table 1 shows no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience among college students. This indicates that control and regulation that happens in the emotional level does not have a significant relationship with the resilience of the individual. Emotional intelligence alone does not seem to give the capacity to get up and carry on. The emotional stamina and balance does not provide enough for the individuals to get up and bounce back. Emotions in combination with thoughts and behaviors of the individual would possibly influence response to challenging situations rather than reacting to them. In addition to this, the sample of the present study is at that stage of life, which is quite a sensitive period when the individual begins to investigate, explore and establish relationships with people. The individuals' attention to things inside and outside the home seems to differ, due to which there might be conflicts between them and their parents. Their relations with their parents become deranged. They sometime fail to perceive correctly the feelings and concerns of their parents. However, they are comfortable with the social group outside the house. And this being a period when individuals are in for exploration, risk taking and focusing their energy to excel and fighting for what they want, they may be able to bounce back with the social support they get. Hence, emotional intelligence alone does not influence the resilience of individuals. The finding is contrary to the proposals of researchers in the field of emotional intelligence, which state that, "emotional intelligence may well be directly connected to resilience such that emotional intelligent behaviour in stressful circumstances could be considered adaptive behaviour" (Bar-On, 1997; Salovey,

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Bedell, Detweiler & Mayer, 1999; Ciarrochi, Deane & Anderson, 2002; Casells & Motta, 1990)". Hence the hypothesis stating that, "There would be no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and Resilience among college students" is accepted.

Table 2 Showing the Influence of Meaning in life on Resilience

	N	Mean	SD	'r' Value
Resilience	69	93.30	18.69	0.369**
Meaning in life (Presence)	69	21.72	7.77	

**Significant at 0.01 level

Table 2 shows a significant positive relationship between meaning in life and resilience. Resilience is the capacity of an individual to bounce back from adversity. Purpose provides a driving force especially when we experience inevitable difficulties in life. It gives us a reason to fight our challenges and overcome them. Individuals with low meaning in life only focus on the specific and concrete aspects of a problem whereas those with high meaning in life rise above the limitations by relating their current life with their future accomplishment. A clear sense of life purpose and commitment gives individuals a will to live and the persistence and endurance to face obstacles and failures. Their goal-directed behaviour and commitment to their purpose in life influence their capacity to come back after an adversity. The findings of the present study stand in line with the opinions of researchers, which states that personal meaning in life was comprised as one of the domains of resilience. (Woo, 2008). Hence the hypothesis stating the, "There would be no significant relationship between Meaning in life and resilience among college students" is not accepted.

Table 3 Shows the Gender difference on Emotional Intelligence, Meaning in life and resilience of college students.

		N	Mean	SD	't' Value
Emotional Intelligence	Male	29	61.17	11.04	0.455 (NS)
	Female	40	60.10	8.55	
Meaning in Life (Presence)	Male	29	21.86	7.67	0.124 (NS)
	Female	40	21.63	7.95	
Resilience	Male	29	93.86	15.61	0.209 (NS)
	Female	40	92.90	20.84	

Table 3 shows no significant difference between male and female on emotional intelligence. Males and females may be emotionally intelligent in different ways. Women may be better off than men in being aware of emotions showing empathy, and in interpersonal skills and men on the other hand may be better being more adaptable, confident and withstanding stress. Though these aspects of emotional intelligence seem to differ between males and females, they individually contribute in building emotional intelligence as a whole. The findings of the study are in line with the findings of Meshkat and Nejati (2017), which revealed no significant difference in gender on emotional Intelligence. The current findings are contradictory to the findings of Chu (2002) revealed that males have high level of emotional intelligence than that of females. Findings of studies reported by King (1999), Sutarso (1999), Wing and Love (2001) and Singh (2002) revealed that females have higher emotional intelligence than that of males.

The present study also indicated no significant gender difference in resilience. Today, though the intensity and degree of problems faced by individuals vary, both genders work

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under pressure and use various problem-solving skills and coping strategies to spring back from adversities. Such skills, abilities and insight accumulate in them over time and that could be a reason for males and females not differing significantly in resilience. Men and women do not differ significantly in their meaning in life. Lack of meaning in life is one of the existential concerns of human beings, more so for adolescents who are in their struggle to find the identity for themselves and are on a search to find where exactly they belong and trying to understand what they want to do with their life. Such concerns are the same for all adolescents regardless of whether they are male or female, much more in today's scenario where both genders are in par with each other.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above-mentioned results and discussion, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence does not have a significant influence on resilience among college students. The present study reveals a significant positive relationship between meaning in life and resilience, in corroboration with the existing body of literature. Gender did not have an influence on emotional intelligence, meaning in life and resilience among college students. In view of the limitations of the present study, there is a need to administer the same scales on a larger sample to be more conclusive about these findings.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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