

Resilience, Optimism and Perceived Social Support among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Young adulthood is a vital development period in which major social, emotional and physical changes take place. Leaving usual surrounding behind and entering into unknown territory further create tension and anxiety among them. This period expects them to make various decision particularly for higher education and career development. Therefore, this research focuses on examining resilience, optimism and perceived social support among young adults to better understand the role of these psychological attributes in overcoming the challenges faced by them. Various objectives and hypothesis were formulated. Data was collected from 104 young adults ranging between 20-30 years of age using purposive sampling technique. Three scale were administered to measure resilience, optimism and perceived social support respectively. Statistical analysis like mean, standard deviation, t-test and pearson correlation was applied. The result showed no gender difference in resilience and optimism among young adults. Females were found to be significantly high on perceived social support than male young adults. Overall resilience was significantly positively correlated with optimism and perceived social support whereas no significant correlation was found between optimism and perceived social support in young adults.

Keywords: Resilience, Optimism, Perceived Social Support, Young Adults

Young Adulthood is considered to be a period of essential development in which significant changes take place physically, socially and emotionally. During this stage they enter into unknown territory leaving their known environment behind. This period demand greater autonomy and wide range of choices in life than early developmental stage creating anxiety, terror and tension amongst them (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Latham & Green, 1997). Making choices related to higher studies, career and relationships further create tension about financial stability and autonomy (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). These challenges collectively lead to the beginning of a new developmental stage called adulthood allowing them to develop their identity and flourish even in the adverse situation (Connor & Davidson, 2023; Jadhav & Navyashree C, n.d.; Seligman, 1991). Therefore, developing positive attributes like resilience, optimism and perceived social support are considered to be an important step to overcome these challenges.

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Resilience

According to Luthans (2002) Resilience is “the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility”. For Lee et al. (2013) resilience involves two groups of perspective. The first group i.e., resilience as a trait state that “resilience is the ability to bounce back” whereas the second group view resilience as a developmental process making it a dynamic process that can change due to demand of the environment (Block and Kremen, 1996). Resilience has strong positive correlation with optimism and increases the degree of optimism when face stressful situation (Panchal et al., 2016; Rutter, 2006). It acted as a mediator between optimism and subjective well-being (He et al., 2013). When resilience increases, people are able to handle future issue better because it adds confidence and positivity in one’s self-esteem (Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020). Pleasant emotions are also linked with resilience which further strengthen a person’s focus and behavior (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004) indicating resilience to be an important attribute in helping young adults during their challenging phase.

Optimism

According to Scheier & Carver (1985) Optimism is a person’s positive attitude and general belief about their future outcomes to be positive. It is an anticipation people make about the desirable things happening in future which reduce their worry and doubt further motivating them towards their goal. Optimism has two components, first learned optimism is the ability of an individual to have positive perspective towards unfavourable events (Peterson & Seligman, 1984). Dispositional optimism, the second component is a general belief that good things will be experienced in future (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Unrealistic optimism is considered more harmful resulting in lack of effort but realistic optimism also requires greater efforts (Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020). Optimistic view improves a person’s ability to adjust, cope and become goal directed (Scheier & Carver, 1993). It reduces the rate of postpartum depression, strengthened immunology, cardiovascular systems and increase the result of alcoholism recovery (Sweeny et al., 2006). Highly optimistic people show low level of stress, depression, and negative affect during significant transition in life (Srivastava & Angelo, 2009). Such people undoubtedly get back when challenging situation occur. This reduces the impact of stressor and make them stronger as well as resilient, helping them during their critical phase (Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020; Snyder et al., 2002; Tusaie-Mumford, 2001)

Perceived Social Support

According to Shumaker and Brownell (1984) social support is “an exchange of resources between at least two individuals where not less than one individual perceives that the exchange enhances his or her well-being”. Perceived social support is a cognitive framework people have about their social network, its availability and satisfaction in the amount of support they get (Demaray and Malecki, 2002; Sarason & Sarason, 1985). A person who perceives to have support, love and care will have a satisfying experience and maintain positive well-being (Siedlecki et al, 2010). It helps a person in preventing development of psychopathology and make them more resilient (Ozbay et al., 2007). College students adjust well with the universities problem when they perceive to have support from friends (Zaleski et al, 1998). It also enhances psychological well-being and hope among young adults (Horton & Wallander, 2001). Perception of having someone who will protect and help them when they are in problem or crises further give them security and assurance (Taylor, 2011).

Therefore, this crucial period of major developmental changes enables them to experience stress and anxiety (Higley, 2019; Latham & Green, 1997). Additionally, making various decision about education and career further create tension. To cope with such challenges, resilience, optimism and perceived social support are considered to be important

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psychological attributes effectively helping during this changing phase. Although various researches have been conducted on these attributes, very limited has focused on exploring these variables together in terms of gender in Indian context. Life is constantly changing in fast pace creating uncertainty especially among these young adults. Therefore, this research will contribute in highlighting the role of psychological resources in promoting well-being of these young adults. Further, it will help professionals in the field of education, health and policymaking in introducing new interventions and support programs.

Objectives

1. To see the level of Resilience, Optimism and Perceived Social Support among Female and Male Young Adults
2. To see the relationship between Resilience, Optimism and Perceived Social Support among Female and Male Young Adults

Hypotheses

- **H1:** There would be a significant difference in Resilience among Female and Male Young Adults
- **H2:** There would be a significant difference in Optimism among Female and Male Young Adults
- **H3:** There would be a significant difference in Perceived Social Support among Female and Male Young Adults
- **H4:** There would be a correlation between Resilience and Optimism among Young Adults
- **H5:** There would be a correlation between Resilience and Perceived Social Support among Young Adults
- **H6:** There would be a correlation between Optimism and Perceived Social Support among Young Adults

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The research included total 104 young adults ranging between 20-30 years from Delhi and NCR regions. Purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. Student or working adults both married or unmarried were included in the research.

Research Design

Research aim to assess Resilience, Optimism and Perceived Social Support among Young Adults. For research purpose data was collected digitally and correlational design was used.

Tools Used

1. **Resilience:** To measure resilience The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) by Smith et al (2008) was administered. The scale consist 6-items measured on 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Selected item no. (2,4 and 6) was reversed before summing up the score.
2. **Optimism:** To measure optimism Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) by Michael Scheier and colleagues (1994) as administered. This scale consists of 10-items measured on 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Selected items (3,7, and 9) were reversed before scoring. There were four (2,5,6,8) filler items and were not scored. Rest all items were summed up to achieve overall score.

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- 3. Perceived Social Support:** To measure perceived social support Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) by Zimet et al. (1988) as administered. It measures how people perceive to have social support on dimensions that is “significant others”, “friends” and “family”. 12 items are there which is measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “Very Strongly Disagree” to “Very Strongly Agree”. Score is calculated on each scale separately and for overall PSS as well by summing the items and then averaging it.

Statistical Analysis

Various statistical techniques were applied to measure resilience, optimism and perceived social support among young adults. For descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation was calculated. Independent sample t-test was examined to find difference in female and male young adults. Further relationship between three variables were administered by calculating Pearson Product-Moment Correlation using SPSS IBM (version 26). All data were examined descriptively along with preliminary analysis to examine the distribution of variables.

RESULT

Table 1: Mean Difference, Standard Deviation, t-value and significance of Resilience among Female and Male Young Adults

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Resilience	Female	59	3.07	.64	1.37	>.05
	Male	45	3.24	.55		

Independent sample t-test was analyzed to examine the difference between female and male young adults on resilience. The result table 1 showed no significant gender difference among young adults ($t=1.37, p>.05$).

Table 2: Mean Difference, Standard Deviation, t-value and significance of Optimism among Female and Male Young Adults

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Optimism	Female	59	13.76	3.33	.04	>.05
	Male	45	13.73	2.94		

The above table 2 showed no significant gender difference ($t=.04, p>.05$) indicating that there is no difference between female and male young adults on level of optimism.

Table 3: Mean Difference, Standard Deviation, t-value and significance of Perceived Social Support among Female and Male Young Adults

Variable	Female (N=59)		Male (N=45)		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Significant Other	5.53	1.25	4.7	1.54	2.78**	<.01
Family	5.47	1.40	5.2	1.2	1.03	>.05
Friends	5.36	1.34	4.7	1.42	2.15*	<.05
Perceived Social Support	5.45	1.05	4.91	1.01	2.63**	<.01

Note: * Significant at the 0.05 level; ** Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 indicate difference among female and male young adults on perceived social support and its various dimensions i.e., significant others, family and friends. The result showed a significant gender difference. Females are found to be high on perceiving support from

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significant other ($t=2.78$, $p<.01$) and friends ($t=2.15$, $p<.01$). Overall, they are high on perceived social support ($t=2.63$, $p<.01$) than male young adults.

Pearson correlation was analysed to examine the relationship between resilience, optimism and perceived social support on female and male young adults.

Table 4: Correlation between Resilience and Optimism among Female and Male Young Adults.

Variable	Gender	Optimism
Resilience	Female	.38**
	Male	.42**
	Overall	.39**

Note: ** Significant correlation at the 0.01 level

The result showed significant positive correlation between resilience and optimism ($r=.38$, $p<.01$) in female and male ($r=.42$, $p<.01$) young adults. Overall resilient young adults are found to be optimistic ($r=.39$, $p<.01$). This indicate that both male and female who are highly resilient are also optimistic (table 4)

Table 5: Correlation between Resilience and Perceived Social Support among Female and Male Young Adults.

Variable	Gender	Significant Other	Family	Friends	Perceived Social Support
Resilience	Female	.16	.12	.18	.19
	Male	.36*	.37*	-.01	.33*
	Overall	.20*	.19*	.07	.21*

Note: * Significant correlation at the 0.05 level

Young Adults are found to be high on resilience when they perceived to have support from significant others ($r=.20$, $p<.05$) and family ($r=.19$, $p>.05$). Resilience is found to be significantly positively correlated with overall perceived social support ($r=.21$, $p<.05$) shown in table 5. The result showed that male young adults who perceived to have high social support are high on resilience ($r=.33$, $p<.05$) and its dimension i.e., significant other ($r=.36$, $p<.05$) and family ($r=.37$, $p<.05$). No significant relationship has been found between resilience and perceived social support among female young adults ($r=.19$, $p>.05$).

Table 6: Correlation between Optimism and Perceived Social Support among Female and Male Young Adults.

Variable	Gender	Significant Other	Family	Friends	Perceived Social Support
Optimism	Female	.28	.01	.29	.24
	Male	.25	.21	-.22	.11
	Overall	.26*	.09	.07	.18

Table 6 demonstrate correlation between optimism and perceived social support among young adults. Young adults who perceive to have support from significant other are high on optimism ($r=.26$, $p<.05$). However overall, no significant correlation was found between optimism and perceived social support ($r=.18$, $p>.05$) and its dimensions i.e., family ($r=.09$, $p>.05$) and friends ($r=.07$, $p>.05$). Further no correlation between the two has been found among female

($r=.11$, $p>.05$) and male ($r=.24$, $p>.05$) young adults. This indicates that perceiving to have social support doesn't affect the level of optimism in young adults.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

Young adulthood is a transition period from school to higher education with various learning and psychosocial developmental opportunities (Tao et al, 2000). This period witnesses an increasing demand of academic responsibility, autonomy and financial stability making it a stressful transition. Resilience is a psychological attribute that helps people to recover from challenging situations. Optimism enables them to think about the future in a positive rather than a negative way. Perceiving about the availability of social support further helps these young adults to cope well. The present research intends to investigate the relationship between resilience, optimism and perceived social support among female and male young adults ranging between 20-30 years. Data was collected from 104 young adults residing in Delhi, NCR region through purposive sampling technique. Several objectives and hypotheses were formulated. The brief resilience scale, revised life orientation test (LOT-R) and multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) was used to measure the three variables respectively. Independent sample t test was examined for gender difference whereas the relationship between the variables were analysed using Pearson correlation.

The research examines the role of gender among young adults. It showed no significant difference between female and male on resilience (table 1). Johnson (2011) showed a similar result where no gender difference on resilience was found, indicating that gender doesn't affect a person's resilience level. Other factors like individual's appraisal processes and coping strategies help in responding to uncertain situations. Additionally, their personal factors, adaptive strategy and interaction with the environment might be more influential than gender in determining resilience outcomes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Similarly, no significant gender difference was found among female and male young adults on optimism (table 2). Joshi and Joshi (2013) found that females did not differ significantly from males on optimism. McCann (2014) and Huan et al (2006) also showed no relationship between optimism and gender, demonstrating an insignificant gender gap in relation to dispositional optimism. A significant gender difference was found in perceived social support (table 3) and its dimension, i.e., significant other and friends, suggesting that female young adults are significantly high on perceiving social support than male young adults. This happens because women have larger overall social support networks which they receive from friends and coworkers as they approach them more than men (Day and Livingstone, 2003). Females being emotionally high make it easy for them to share their feelings with friends (Lian and Geok, 2010). They also receive support from significant other, peers and family (Zimet et al., 1988). Seeking support emotionally from their relationships further enhances their perception of the availability of social support. Therefore, sharing personal feelings and maintaining the same group leads them to experience high perceived social support. Therefore, hypotheses 1 and 2 are rejected. However, hypothesis 3, i.e., there would be a significant difference in perceived social support among male and female young adults, is accepted.

Various challenges coming from education to career put a lot of weight on these growing adults. Most of the time these challenges are overcome by them because of the positive traits they acquire. Overall, resilience is found to be significantly positively correlated with optimism among young adults (table 4). A similar relationship was found among male and female young adults. This indicates that young adults who are resilient are also optimistic irrespective of gender. Extremely optimistic people have a high capacity of recovering from stressful circumstances (Agarwal & Malhotra, 2019). It is a personal quality that helps

individual to create and maintain a good psychological attribute as well as increase one's self-efficacy in handling particular circumstances, which boosts resilience (Folkman, 1997; Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020). This indicates that individuals who have the ability to overcome themselves from traumatic events are highly optimistic (Agarwal & Malhotra, 2019). Similarly, optimistic individuals promote the growth of internal resilience while facing problems. This helps them to focus on their self-efficacy for effectively dealing with new situations and improving their levels of resilience (Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2018; Gómez-Molinero et al., 2018; Kleiman et al., 2017; Pathak & Lata, 2019; Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020). Positive attitudes towards adverse circumstances and a positive mindset to undertake challenges with the confidence of succeeding is reflected in optimistic people (Yu and Zhang, 2007; Sweeny et al., 2006). It seems that the desire for high optimism is reflected due to resilience and acts as a protective factor enhancing the level of resilience (Rutter, 2006; Gómez-Molinero et al., 2018). Therefore, hypothesis 4 i.e., there would be a correlation between resilience and optimism is accepted.

Resilience is also found to be positively correlated with perceived social support and its dimension i.e., significant other and family (table 5). The difference between male and female young adults, male's resilience is significantly positively correlated with perceived social support and its dimension i.e., significant other and family than female young adults. Verma (2024) showed that male adolescents have a positive correlation between perceived social support and resilience. This difference exists because women have a greater degree of perceived social support from several sources for instance significant others, friends, and family (Cumsille and Epstein, 1994). For male society has developed and set certain expectations because of which sharing their feelings portray them weak. They are expected to suppress and control their emotions to become masculine. They only perceive social support at a moderate level from significant others (Connell, 2005). That is why when males perceive to have high availability of social support it helps them in enhancing their resilience level than females. However, overall resilience is correlated with perceived social support indicating a beneficial effect between the two. High perceived social support enables people to better cope with adverse situations and enhances resilience. It not only helps people to recover from stress enhancing their resilience but is also a protective factor to reduce stress after traumatic events (Obzay, 2007). Greater resilience is also associated with support from friends and family (Wilks, 2008). When the level of perceived social support increases, individuals' ability to adapt in challenging and stressful situations also increases (Bhat & Rangaiah, 2015a; Siriwardhana et al., 2015) accepting hypothesis 5.

Optimism has been found to be not significantly related with perceived social support neither in females nor in male young adults (table 6). This result is supported by the Mosher et al. (2016) study which showed no significant relationship between optimism and social support perception. Perception of having social support is the assessment of our cognition focusing on linking social support with others at the time of need (Barrera 1986). Whereas having a future positive outlook is the quality of an optimistic person. They think that difficult situations can be overcome and good things will happen in the future. Even in adverse situations positive growth and development may occur. But unrealistic optimism enables a person to overlook upcoming problems (Sharma, 2023). Therefore, where perception of social support helps in improving mental and physical health, optimism is a future positive expectation and outlook which perceiving the availability of social support cannot along guarantee, rejecting hypothesis 6.

Therefore, the result showed a significant relation between resilience, optimism and perceived social support among young adults emphasizing on females high on perceived social support than male.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research found that level of resilience and optimism among young adults did not differ significantly based on gender. However female young adult exhibit high perceived social support than male. Additionally, there was a significant positive correlation between resilience and optimism, as well as resilience and perceived social support among young adults.

Future implication

The finding of the research imply that optimism and perceived social support help young adults in being resilient and manage stress inducing circumstances. This may assist professionals from different field to develop and host workshops for these young adults who face major challenges from the changes happening during this period.

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Conflict of Interest

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