Examining the Relationship Between Resilience and Perceived Stress

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between resilience and perceived stress among undergraduate students. Stress, a common aspect of modern life, can have severe psychological consequences if not managed effectively. Perceived stress refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of stress, whereas resilience represents the ability to recover from adversity. Using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and the Perceived Stress Scale, data were collected from 400 students. Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between overall resilience and perceived stress ($r = -0.243$, $p<.001$), with personal competence, control, and spirituality contributing most to stress reduction. However, positive acceptance of change did not significantly correlate with perceived stress. These findings highlight resilience as a crucial protective factor against stress, emphasizing the need for interventions to enhance resilience and promote well-being among students.

Keywords: Resilience, spirituality, perceived stress, positive acceptance

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress is an integral part of human life, affecting individuals across various domains, including workplaces, educational institutions, and personal environments. In modern societies, stress has become a widespread phenomenon, influencing employees, students, and educators. People experiencing excessive stress may respond irrationally, potentially leading to self-harm. If left unaddressed, stress can escalate into depression and, in extreme cases, even result in suicide. The incidence of suicide among young individuals is rising in many countries, with approximately 90% of those who take their own lives suffering from mental disorders such as depression or schizophrenia. In the United States, suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 12 to 19, resulting in the loss of approximately 4,600 lives annually. Similarly, data from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2016 indicate a rising suicide rate in Indonesia, increasing from 4.3% in 2012 to 5.2% in 2016 (Susilawati, 2019).

Perceived stress is an individual's subjective evaluation of the stressfulness of their life circumstances, considering feelings of unpredictability, lack of control, and being overwhelmed rather than the actual stressors themselves. Unlike objective stress measurements, perceived stress assesses how individuals interpret and manage their stress levels (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). Liu et al. (2020) describe perceived stress as a multifaceted concept, influenced by factors such as an individual's belief in their ability to manage external demands and their response to negative emotions and lack of control.

Resilience is a concept applied across multiple disciplines, including psychology, physics, and engineering. In psychological terms, resilience refers to an individual's ability to recover quickly from adversity (deTerte & Stephens, 2014). Psychological resilience enables individuals to use cognitive and behavioral strategies to protect themselves from the negative effects of stressors (Robertson et al., 2015). Those with high resilience tend to remain composed during crises and move forward without enduring long-term negative consequences.

One of the earliest researchers to study resilience was Werner (1971), who investigated children on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. She found that, despite growing up in challenging conditions such as parental alcoholism or mental illness, one-third of the children did not exhibit destructive behaviors. She labeled this group as resilient (Werner, 1989). Research on resilience gained momentum in the 1980s through studies of children with schizophrenic parents, who often lacked adequate caregiving (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990). Subsequent studies have explored protective factors that enable individuals to adapt to adversity, including experiences of maltreatment, traumatic events, or poverty (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2001; Fredrickson et al., 2003).

When confronted with adversity, individuals typically react in one of three ways: experiencing intense anger, succumbing to overwhelming negative emotions, or becoming temporarily upset but then actively working to address the situation. The latter approach, employed by resilient individuals, is the most beneficial. Those who react instinctively with anger or despair may adopt a victim mentality, failing to seek adaptive coping strategies (Siebert, 2005). Negative emotions, including fear, anxiety, and hopelessness, diminish resilience and hinder effective stress management.

Research on resilience has expanded to include career and organizational resilience. Patterson et al. (2002) classified organizations as resilient if they either sustain themselves despite challenges, recover to a stable state after adversity, or consistently improve and excel. Career resilience, as described by O'Leary (1998), refers to an individual's ability to withstand career disruptions and navigate challenging work environments effectively.

Resilience serves as a protective factor against stress, enabling individuals to maintain well-being in difficult circumstances. Shilpa & Srimathi (2015) found that pre-university students exhibited high perceived stress and low resilience, whereas undergraduate students demonstrated moderate stress and higher resilience. Their study identified a negative relationship between resilience and perceived stress. Tugade et al. (2004) further established that resilience is linked to positive emotions, which facilitate effective stress coping mechanisms. Additionally, Sahu et al. (2019) examined stress and resilience among nursing students, revealing that 77.5% experienced moderate to high stress, 20.6% demonstrated high resilience, and 25.5% frequently used mobile phones. Their findings indicated a significant negative correlation between perceived stress and resilience.

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study involved a sample of 400 undergraduate students (200 males and 200 females) with an average age of 19.5 years, ranging from 17 to 24 years. A purposive sampling technique was employed.

Measurement Tools

1. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003), a 25-item instrument measuring resilience, was utilized. It assesses five factors: personal competence, trust in instincts, positive acceptance of change, control, and spiritual influences. Scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating greater resilience.

2. The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983), a widely used 10-item tool, was employed to measure individuals' subjective perceptions of stress.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine the relationship between resilience and perceived stress, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated (Table 1). The analysis revealed significant negative correlations between perceived stress and three resilience dimensions: personal competence ($r = -0.121$), control ($r = -0.142$), and spirituality ($r = -0.154$). The overall resilience score was also negatively correlated with perceived stress ($r = -0.243$, $p<.001$). However, the correlation between positive acceptance of change and perceived stress was not significant ($r = -0.058$, $p>.05$).

Table-1 The Relationships between dimensions of resilience and perceived stress

Dimensions of Resilience	Personal	Positive	Control	Spiritual	Overall Resilience	Stress
Personal	1	-.054	-.193**	-.078	.364**	-.121*
Positive	-.054	1	.151**	-.184**	.467**	-.058
Control	-.193**	.151**	1	.101*	.413**	-.142**
Spiritual	-.078	-.184**	.101*	1	.295**	-.154**
Overall Resilience	.364**	.467**	.413**	.295**	1	-.243**
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

These findings highlight that individuals with higher resilience are more capable of recovering from adversity. Resilience fosters adaptability and emotional stability, reducing perceived stress levels. The personal competence dimension emphasizes self-efficacy, perseverance, and confidence in handling challenges. The control dimension reflects an individual's belief in their ability to manage life circumstances, while the spiritual influence dimension underscores the role of spiritual beliefs in

fostering resilience. These factors collectively contribute to effective stress management. Conversely, positive acceptance of change was not significantly associated with reduced stress among adolescents.

Previous studies support these findings. Sun et al. (2021) noted that while high-stress conditions negatively impacted mental health, they did not significantly affect resilience. Eaves & Payne (2019) found that resilience mitigated students' intentions to quit despite high stress levels. Research suggests that resilience buffers the adverse effects of stress, allowing individuals to thrive despite challenges (Kinman & Grant, 2011; Komachi & Kamibeppu, 2018). Studies by Ozbay et al. (2007) and Hao et al. (2015) indicate that resilience may mitigate occupational stressors.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between resilience dimensions and perceived stress. Results indicate that all resilience dimensions, except positive acceptance of change, are negatively correlated with perceived stress. Higher levels of resilience were associated with lower stress, supporting previous research (Hao et al., 2015; Abdollahi et al., 2014). Resilience plays a crucial role in enhancing well-being by reducing stress and increasing happiness (Chambers et al., 2009; Wills & Bantum, 2012; Jain & Cohen, 2013; McEwen and McEwen, 2016).

University students face considerable stress during their academic journey. Implementing interventions to strengthen resilience can enhance their overall well-being (Ward-Griffin et al., 2018). Psychosocial factors contributing to resilience include coping self-efficacy, positive reframing of adversity, physical well-being, and cardiovascular fitness (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Mindfulness training and resilience-building programs can foster these attributes, promoting long-term mental health benefits.

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