

Original Research Article

Study of resilience in children (4-11 year) of middle and upper-middle class families in Jabalpur, India

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ABSTRACT

Background: Resilience as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” is one of the more field. Protective factors are “influences that modify, ameliorate, or alter a person’s response to some environmental hazard that predisposes to a maladaptive outcome”. Easy going temperament and good self-regulation have been identified as protective factors in resilience. The ability to self-regulate also seems to be at the core of good interpersonal relationships and peer relationships, rule compliance, reduced risk of depression and anxiety, and a host of other areas fundamental to successful adaptation and functioning.

Methods: This study was conducted during period of January 2000 to October 2001. The sample comprised a total number of 400 children between 4-11 years age and their parents and caregivers. The material for the study was drawn from the two private schools situated in Jabalpur city. Tests used in the study were the Chi square test to test statistical significance, test of significance of difference and Correlating the effect of various factors, analysis of variance F statistics was computed.

Results: It was found in our study that the older children (8-11 years) were more outgoing, warm hearted, easy going and participating as compared to lower age group (4-7 yrs.) children. Girls were significantly more resilient than boys in both the age groups i.e. 4-7 and 8-11 yrs. The girls were found to be more emotionally stable, calm and face reality in a very cool manner. Academic achievers were found to be more resilient, easy going, accommodating. No any significant differences when children's resilience was compared with their parental educational status.

Conclusions: Girls were significantly more resilient than boys. The girls were found to be more emotionally stable, calm and faces reality in a very cool manner. Academic achievers were found to be more resilient, easy going, accommodating and participate in various extracurricular activities. Older children were more outgoing, warm hearted, easy going and participating.

Keywords: Adversity, Children, Resilience

INTRODUCTION

Definition of resilience as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” is one of the more familiar and widely accepted in the field.¹ Some have suggested that a resilient person must show positive outcomes across several aspects of his life over periods of time.²

Further, resilience is not a one-dimensional, dichotomous attribute that persons either have or do not have.³ Anthony’s description of “invulnerable” children and Murphy and Moriarty’s “good copers” sparked early interest as well.^{4,5} On examining the literature, there is a good deal of agreement on what the factors or features of resilience consist of. The problem of defining resilience as a construct may not be for lack of agreement on many

of the factors and characteristics of resilience; rather, the problem may be more related to the dynamic interaction of the resilience factors, and the sources of resilience factors e.g. internal/external resources/skills. Masten challenged the notion that resilient children possess some rare and special qualities.⁶

Protective factors are “influences that modify, ameliorate, or alter a person’s response to some environmental hazard that predisposes to a maladaptive outcome”.⁷ Protective factors arise from within the child, from the family or extended family, and from the community.⁸ Resilient children are confident in their ability to surmount obstacles, make use of resources and opportunities around them, and view hardships as “learning experiences”.^{9,10}

Easy going temperament and good self-regulation have been identified as protective factors in resilience.^{11,12} Additionally, impulse control and delay of gratification are part of self-control. The ability to self-regulate also seems to be at the core of good interpersonal relationships and peer relationships, rule compliance, reduced risk of depression and anxiety, and a host of other areas fundamental to successful adaptation and functioning.^{13,14}

In many ways, adversity is whatever the person perceives to be an adversity. Adversities may be broadly defined as events in life that are perceived as hardships; contribute to fear, discount, anxiety, depression are threatening to the effective functioning of the person’s and may be negatively affect the development a person, particularly a child. Such adversities may exist as physical or emotional disabilities either within the family grouping or in the form of external threats and dangers. The intent of the studies focused heavily on ways to identify the damage done to the children and to provide services to help them develop as well as possible with the risks they lived with.

The purpose of this study in terms of: (1) the goal, (2) The means for achieving the goal: (a) Gathering information from parents, care teachers and/or children, relating to resilience. (b) Analysing the information (data) to identify factors associated with resilience in children, both universal and culturally linked.

METHODS

This study was conducted during period of January 2000 to October 2001, in Department of Pediatrics, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical college Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh. We used random sampling method.

The sample comprised a total number of 400 children between 4-11 years age and their parents and caregivers. The study comprised of to the following two groups. Group-I: 4-7 years of age and Group-II: 8-11 years of age. The material for the study was drawn from the two

private schools situated in Jabalpur city. Viz. Little World School and Christ Church Boys and girls School.

The design and instruments used in the study incorporate the following assumption:

- Adversity is not limited to man-made disasters such as war, famine, poverty, confinement, refugee status etc. or to natural disasters which as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, droughts. etc. Adversity many occur in everyday life in the form of divorce, abandonment, abuse alcoholism, stabbing illness, death, robberies, loss of home or job, moving accidents, murder. Resilience may be promoted not necessarily because of adversity but in, fact, may be promoted in anticipation of inevitable adversities.
- The early years of development are accepted as critical time for acquiring many of the basic skills, attitudes and values that tend to remain over the life span. Children 11 years of age and younger are the most likely age group to develop many resilience factors.

Interview question

Each situation is followed by a common set of interview question relating to the Situation and a set of questions relating to a personal experience involving the select child.

Each questionnaire also included general information related to name, age, sex, height, weight, number of siblings in family, educational status of parents and ethnic/ cultural identity of family, natural disturbances faced in recent past and personal disturbances in recent past flow by family. The children were given to reply a questionnaire which consisted of a total of 9 situations organized into two groups with three packets of 3 situations at each age level. Each situation is followed by a set of interview questions for children.

Questionnaire was distributed in schools to children and they were asked to fill them. When the children were not old enough to fill the questionnaire. They were asked the same questions at their home.

No one interviewed was asked to respond to more than the three Situations in a Packet, and no one interviewed was asked to provide more than one personal experience.

Tests used in the study were the Chi square test to test statistical significance, test of significance of difference and Correlating the effect of various factors, analysis of variance F statistics was computed.

To test the heterogeneity of groups and the values obtained tested for their statistical significance these values were utilized in performing t-tests to determine the statistical significance of difference between adjacent groups.

RESULTS

A total of 400 children, between 4-11 years of age, comprised the material for the present study. To evaluate the children resilience was tested by children’s resilience questionnaire and we finds the following results.

It was found in present study that the older children (8-11 yrs.) were more outgoing, warm hearted, easy going and participating as compared to lower age group (4-7 yrs.) children (Figure 1). This finding was statistically significant ($P < 0.001$).

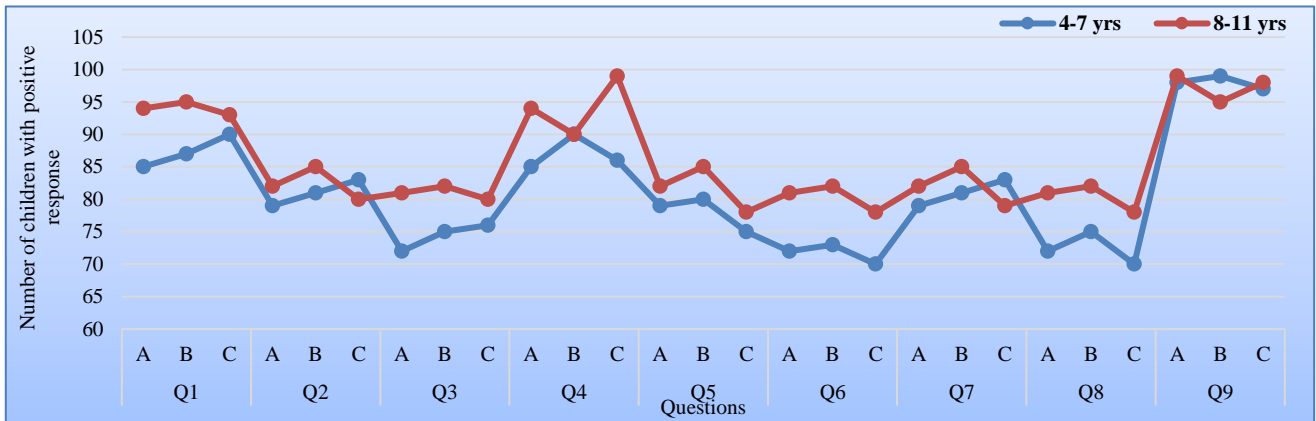


Figure 1: Correlation of children’s self-perception of different situation with their age.

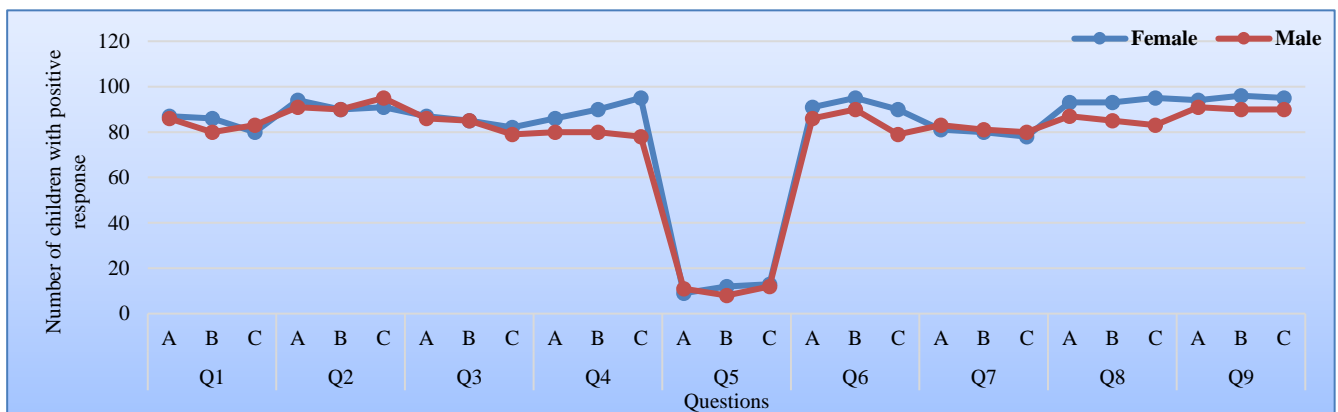


Figure 2: Correlation of children’s self-perception of different situation with sex of children (4-7 yrs).

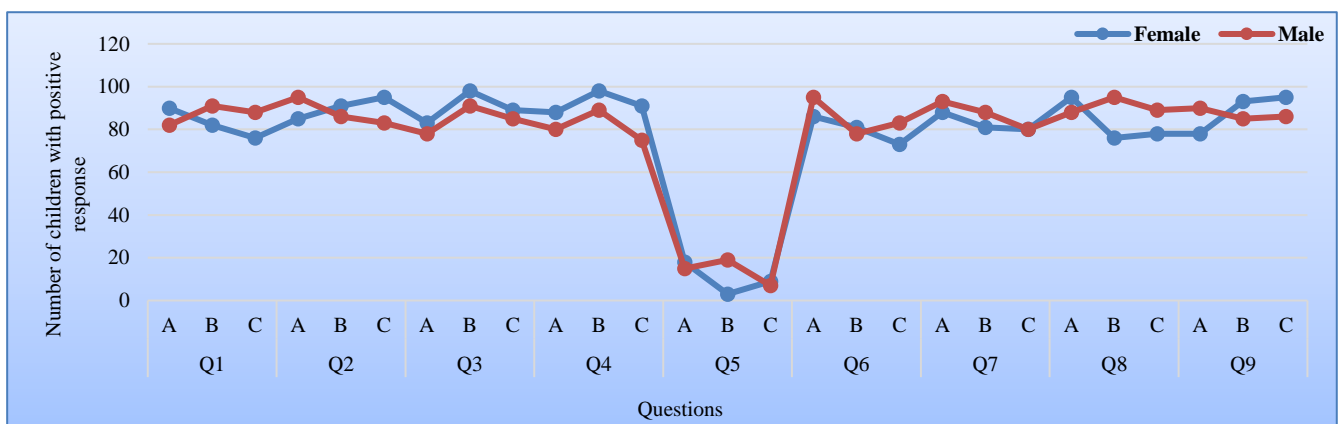


Figure 3: Correlation of children’s self-perception of different situation with sex of children (8-11 yrs).

On analysis it was found that girls were significantly more resilient than boys in both the age groups i.e. 4-7 and 8-11 yrs.

The girls were found to be more emotionally stable, calm and face reality in a very cool manner (Figure 2 and 3). On comparison of two age groups. It was observed that

girls achieve these qualities relatively at any early age i.e. around 4 years whereas the boys were not as resilient as girls.

This finding was statistically significant among 4-7 yrs age group ($P < 0.001$).

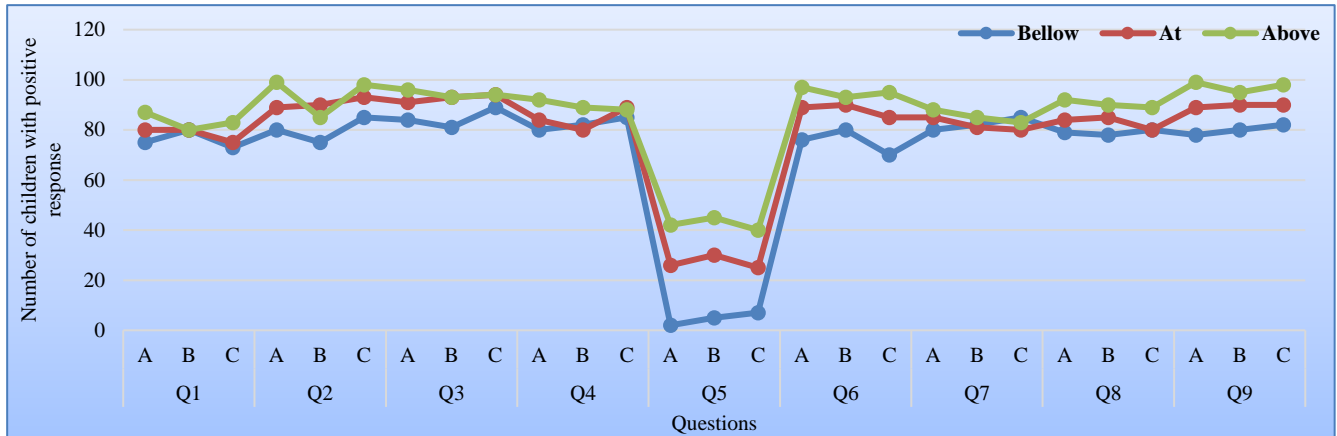


Figure 4: Correlation of children's self-perception of different situation with sex of children (8-11 yrs).

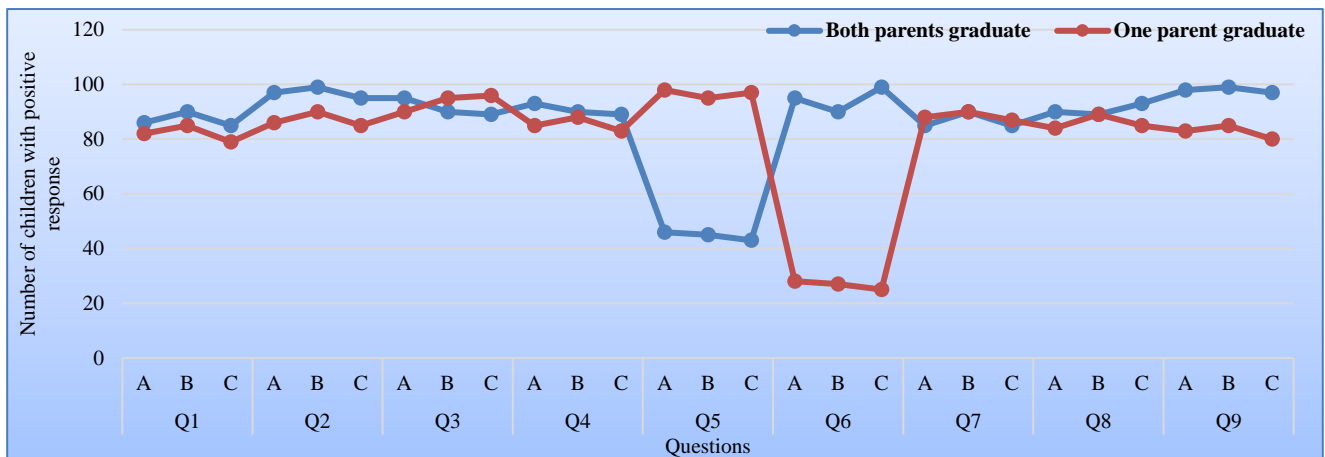


Figure 5: Correlation of children's self-perception of different situation with their parental education status.

In present study the academic achievers were found to be more resilient, easy going, accommodating and participate in various extracurricular activities whereas relatively lower scoring children were found to be more aggressive, stubborn, reserved, detached and critically cool (Figure 4).

These findings were found to be statistically significant ($P < 0.00001$).

We did not reveal any significant differences when children's resilience was compared with their parental educational status (Figure 5) ($P < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

Resilience is a combination of personal characteristics that allow the individual to function beyond that which would be expected in light of the person's vulnerability on exposure to adversities. Resilience goes beyond surviving and coping with adversity: it includes functioning in such a way as to suggest the strengthening or enhancing of the person. The sources of resilience appear to form a facilitative environment, intrapsychic (Personal) strength, skills and competences.

This is a pioneer study in this field in this country. There is no study conducted in India on Children's Resilience.

The better resilience of older children observed in the present study could be explained by the fact that school aged children are engaged in active learning in other areas besides formal education. In process of socialization is greatly accelerated during latency. Because school becomes an environment away from home for a large portion of the day. latency aged children must learn to function outside the safety of home. School aged children interact with a variety of children and adults. New and more complex rules regulations and expectations for behaviour are presented and enforced. This serve to enhance the process of socialization. Latency aged children spend an increasing amount of time in peer interactions.

It is observed in the present study the better resilience among girls could be one of the expressions of the natural sex dimorphism where the girls are reported to be early mature as compared to boys. Other reasons could be that in all probabilities this might be the reflection of certain prevalent cultural values in this country. Where the expectation from a boy and girl are different, perhaps the parent's more liberal attitude towards boy even in affluent families makes them less resilient.

There are indirect evidences of direct relationship between positive personality traits and academic performance. As we find in this study, academic achievers were found to be more resilient easy going accommodating and participating in various extracurricular activities. whereas relatively lower scoring children were found to be more aggressive, stubborn, reserved, detached and critically cool.

The observations of present study also clearly point out the fact that it is not the difference in the intelligent but the difference in the basic personality traits and general health status of children. In broad sense, resilience affects the school performance of children.

No significant relationship was found in children's resilience and father's educational status. Whereas maternal educational status was found to have positive impact on children's resilience. Similar to study conducted by Sonya Hartnett find a direct impact of parent education on child's personality was observed.¹⁵ Younger children are probably influenced by maternal education as mother is in contact of child for most of the time Mother's who are better educated are probably more aware and more concerned about their children's development.

CONCLUSION

Academic achievers were found to be more resilient, easy going. accommodating and participate in various extracurricular activities whereas relatively lower scoring children were found to be more aggressive, stubborn, reserved, detached and critically cool.

Natural calamities and accidents like earthquake, fire accidents and road side accidents etc significantly influence the resilience of children. The children, who laced such disturbances in their recent past were found to be more shy restrained, diffident and timid but on the other hand, realistic and tough minded also.

Children who faced some series disturbances i.e. earthquakes/ fire accidents roadside accidents etc. in their recent past were perceived by their parents as more tough minded, resilience and realistic. Towards these children their parent's attitude was also more protective and interfering with their activities.

When the children's responses to the resilience questionnaire was correlated with the age of children. It was found that the older children (8-11yrs.) were more outgoing, warm hearted, easy going and participating as compared to lower age group (4-7 yrs.) children.

Girls were significantly more resilient than boys in both the age groups i.e. 4-7 and 8-11 yrs. The girls were found to be more emotionally stable, calm and faces reality in a very cool manner. Girls achieve these qualities relatively at any early age i.e. around 4 years whereas the boys were not as resilient as girls.

No significant relationship was found in children's resilience and father's educational status. Whereas maternal educational status was found to have positive impact on children's resilience.

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Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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