

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG ADOLESCENTS: EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THRIVING AND RESILIENCE TOWARDS STRESS ADAPTATION

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Abstract

Adolescence is a critical period of psychological welfare, as it occurs during the formative years and depends heavily on resilience and thriving, particularly in managing the stress of pubertal changes. Developing resilience in teenagers contributes to their progressive and prospective youth development by lowering stress levels. The purpose of this study is to examine how adolescents adjust to stress in terms of levels of thriving and resilience. The researchers collected data using the Stress Adaptation Scale (SAS), the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), the Brief Thriving Scale (BTS), and a questionnaire based on sociodemographic traits. A sample of 100 school students aged between 13 and 15 years were selected randomly for this descriptive study design. The results show that 50% of adolescents show a medium level of stress adaptation, 70% have a medium level of resilience, and 68% have a low thriving level. The study also reveals a significant relationship between stress adaptation, resilience, and thriving at 0.05. The positive associations between thriving and resilience in adolescents highlight the interconnectedness of psychological well-being, positive emotions and adaptive coping strategies. Cultivating thriving characteristics in adolescents may contribute to their overall resilience and ability to navigate the complexities of adolescence in a positive and growth-oriented manner.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, Emotional Well-being, Social Relationships, Identity Formation, Social Support, Emotion Regulation, Mental Health, Positive Youth Development.

I. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical development period marked by significant psychological changes as individuals transition from childhood to adulthood. This phase is characterized by the development of identity, self-awareness, and autonomy alongside the physical changes of puberty. While physical changes are apparent, mental and social adjustments are equally crucial. Adolescents face unique stressors related to identity formation, social relationships, and academic pressures. Coping with these stressors requires resilience, which is the ability to bounce back from adversity.

Positive associations between thriving and resilience suggest that thriving adolescents are better equipped to navigate these challenges. Thriving adolescents are more likely to experience positive emotional well-being, including joy, satisfaction, and enthusiasm. This positive emotional state can contribute to their resilience by providing a buffer against the negative impact of stressors and fostering a more optimistic outlook. Thriving adolescents may actively seek and maintain supportive social relationships, further enhancing their resilience (Bluth et al., 2018).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) emphasizes the importance of forming and preserving adolescent social and emotional routines, as these routines play a crucial role in promoting mental health and well-being. However, adolescents facing various challenges and obstacles need to learn resilience to navigate the complexities of life effectively. Building resilience is crucial for handling stressors and promoting mental well-being. The following were investigated as the main objectives of this study: 1) to find out the levels of Stress Adaptation, Thriving and Resilience among adolescents, and 2) to know the relationship between Stress Adaptation, Thriving and Resilience.

II. Methods and Measurements

The researchers gave five teenagers a pre-test and conducted a pilot study to

determine the study's feasibility and the instrument's validity. In this study, the researcher surveyed teenagers using a questionnaire that included sociodemographic information, the Stress Adaptation Scale (SAS), the Brief Thriving Scale (BTS) and the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) developed by Smith. et al., (2008). The Brief Thriving Scale and Brief Resilience Scale consist of six questions with five levels: very low, low, medium, high and very high. Scores are given as 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Agree, and 5 for Strongly Agree. The final scores range from 6 to 30; mean scores are calculated by adding each score and dividing by 6. The Stress Adaptation Scale combines BRS and BTS, ranging from 12 to 60.

Moreover, the mean score of SAS can be calculated by dividing the total value by 12. The sociodemographic details include age, gender, religion, and family income. Using a structured questionnaire, researchers gathered information from 100 teenagers (50 males and 50 females) between the ages of 13 and 15. Simple random sampling was used as the data gathering method in a high school in the Ernakulam district of Kerala state. Data was collected between January 3, 2023, and January 30, 2023. A consent form was attached at the start of the questionnaire to confirm that the respondent gave their approval to participate in the survey and that their participation was voluntary. To preserve data confidentiality and ensure anonymity, the researchers did not gather any identifying information from the respondents in this study, such as name, school name, address, or contact information.

III. Analysis of Data and Results

Collected data were analyzed based on the sociodemographic traits in percentage. This study analyzed the stress Adaptation Scale, Brief Thriving Scale and Brief Resilience Scale at three levels: low, medium and high. The tables below show the computations and presentations for each scale. Mean, standard deviation (SD), Pearson correlation, and percentage analysis were the statistical tools used to examine this data using SPSS. Regarding sociodemographic characteristics, the age distribution of the respondents is 36%, 48%, and 16% for the age groups 13, 14, and 15, respectively. The mean age of respondents is 13.8, and the gender ratio for this study was 50:50 for males and females. The majority of the respondents, 58% (N=120), are from the Christian community, and 42% of the respondents are from the Hindu religion. 42% are from low and middle-income, whereas only 16% are from high-income status.

Most adolescents, constituting 50%, are categorized as having a medium level of stress adaptation, with a mean value of 41.58 and 2.65 as the standard deviation. 46% of adolescents fall into the low-stress adaptation category, with a mean value of 34.60 and a standard deviation of 1.80. In comparison, only 4% exhibit high levels of stress adaptation, with a mean value of 51.25 and a standard deviation of 1.50. Regarding resilience levels among adolescents, 70% are classified as having medium resilience, with a mean value of 20.51 and 1.65 as the standard deviation. 20% are categorized as having low resilience, with a mean value of 15.45 and a standard deviation of 1.46, while only 10% exhibit high resilience levels, with a mean value of 25.4 and a standard deviation of 1.26.

Regarding thriving, 68% of adolescents are placed in the low-level category, with a mean value of 17.35 and 1.26 as the standard deviation. 30% are classified as having medium levels of thriving, with a mean value of 21.46 and a standard deviation of 1.54. In comparison, only 2% of the respondents are categorized as having high levels of thriving, with a mean value of 26.5 and a standard deviation of 0.70.

The Pearson Correlation test was used to find the association between Stress Adaptation, Resilience, and Thriving of the respondents' variables. The associations between stress adaptation, resilience, and thriving are 0.878 and 0.812, respectively. Hence, a significant positive relationship was found between these variables. The association between Resilience and Thriving is 0.435, which indicates that these variables have a significant positive relationship.

Regarding stress adaptation, 4% of respondents exhibit high levels, 50% are categorized as medium, and 46% fall into the low-level category. Regarding resilience, 10% of respondents demonstrate high levels, 70% are classified as medium, and 20% fall into the

low-level category. In thriving, 2% of respondents are categorized as high, 30% exhibit medium levels, and 68% fall into the low-level category.

IV. Discussion

The present study's result evaluates adolescents' stress adaptation, thriving, and resilience levels. This evaluation involves assessing how adolescents cope with stress, their ability to thrive in various aspects of life, and their overall resilience in facing challenges. The tension arises from the contrast between traditional societal expectations for adolescent behaviour and the contemporary aspirations of adolescents for autonomy in seeking well-informed solutions to their challenges (Nagabharana. et al., 2021). Acknowledging stress is an essential step towards promoting teenagers' well-being. Stress related to academic pressures, such as homework, exams, and other educational responsibilities, is common among students, especially adolescents. The impact of stress arising from the adjustment to university life and academic pressures has a more pronounced influence on psychiatric morbidity among students compared to experiences of childhood trauma and ongoing family issues (Zhang. et al., 2022). It is crucial to acknowledge that stress can originate from diverse sources, and its triggers may differ from one individual to another. According to Perez and Laudadio (2008), the main causes of stress are a lack of time and excessive commitments. Successfully managing stress typically entails recognizing particular stressors and creating coping mechanisms for individual requirements and situations.

This study also explores the interplay between thriving and resilience towards stress adaptation. Understanding the relationships between these factors can shed light on how adolescents navigate and overcome stressors, contributing to their overall well-being. Adolescents demonstrate good resilience despite vulnerability to stress. Resilience is crucial in helping adolescents face stress effectively and overcome adversities associated with stress (Romeo, 2014). Stevenson and Zimmerman (2005) highlight resilience models as important tools for understanding why some youths are exposed to risks, thus emphasizing the significance of resilience in mitigating the impact of stress and adversity. Benson and Scales (2009) state that the development of new theories and the measurement of constructs are crucial steps in advancing knowledge in a particular field and suggest that the investigation into thriving has the potential to make meaningful contributions to positive psychology. Reduction in disruptive behaviours, relief from affective symptoms such as depression and anxiety, and a demonstrable increase in social skills. By addressing these aspects, these interventions contribute significantly to young individuals' overall well-being and mental health, creating a more supportive and conducive environment for their development (Gracia-Carrion. et al., 2019). Families and educational institutions play pivotal roles in establishing an environment that enables adolescents to manage stress positively and constructively effectively. Sahin-Baltaci and Karatas (2015) suggest that family structure may play a role in cultivating resilience among students. Implementing effective strategies and creating a supportive environment will assist adolescents in cultivating resilience and acquiring lifelong skills for better stress management. The focus on strengths-based and resilience-oriented approaches suggests a proactive and positive perspective (Nesbitt. et al., 2023). If stress becomes too much to handle or persists, it is advisable to prompt adolescents to seek assistance from school counsellors, mental health professionals, or other available support services.

Findings

The study investigated various aspects of psychological well-being among adolescents, focusing on stress adaptation, resilience, and thriving. The majority of respondents were 14 years old (48%), with a mean age of 13.8 years, indicating a predominantly young adolescent sample.

In terms of stress adaptation, half of the adolescents fell into the medium level (50%), while only a small percentage exhibited a high level (4%). This suggests that a significant portion of the adolescent population may be experiencing moderate levels of stress adaptation, which could impact their overall well-being.

Regarding resilience, the highest percentage of adolescents demonstrated a medium level (70%), with a relatively small percentage exhibiting a high level (10%). This finding implies that while many adolescents show some degree of resilience, there is room for improvement in developing higher levels of resilience among this group.

In contrast, a significant majority of adolescents were categorized as having a low level of thriving (68%), with only a very small percentage classified as having a high level (2%). This indicates a potential area of concern, as a large portion of adolescents may not be experiencing optimal levels of thriving, which is essential for overall well-being.

The correlation analysis revealed several important relationships. A strong correlation was found between stress adaptation and thriving (0.878), indicating that those better adapted to stress also tend to exhibit higher levels of thriving. Additionally, there was a significant positive relationship between stress adaptation and thriving ($r = 0.812$), highlighting the importance of stress management in promoting overall well-being.

Finally, a significant and meaningful positive relationship was observed between thriving and resilience (0.435), suggesting that adolescents who exhibit higher levels of resilience are also more likely to experience greater levels of thriving. These findings underscore the complex interplay between stress adaptation, resilience, and thriving in adolescents and emphasize the importance of these factors in promoting psychological well-being in this population.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

This study was conducted among adolescents between the ages of 13 and 16. It was limited to a few sociodemographic variables but can be extended to other related variables and different contexts. The findings suggest that a considerable number of adolescents experience moderate levels of stress adaptation and resilience, and a large majority of adolescents report low levels of thriving. These results may have implications for understanding and addressing the well-being and mental health of adolescents, highlighting potential areas for intervention and support.

V. Conclusion

Positive associations with resilience indicate that having a strong social support network is crucial to their ability to adapt to stress. Supportive relationships can serve as a resource during difficult times, promoting resilience. Thriving often involves a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Adolescents with a clear sense of purpose may find it easier to navigate challenges and setbacks. In this context, resilience may involve the ability to maintain a sense of meaning even in the face of adversity. Thriving adolescents may exhibit positive attitudes toward learning and personal development. Resilience, in the academic and personal spheres, involves overcoming setbacks, learning from failures, and using challenges as opportunities for growth. Thriving adolescents are likely to employ adaptive coping strategies. In this context, thriving and resilience involve the use of effective problem-solving skills, emotion regulation, and the ability to bounce back from setbacks. These coping strategies contribute to their overall ability to adapt to stressors. Social workers can utilize a strengths-based approach when working with adolescents, focusing on their strengths and capabilities rather than only addressing weaknesses. Understanding how thriving and resilience interact allows social workers to effectively customize interventions to suit each adolescent's specific needs. They can also work alongside families, schools, and community organizations to create environments that encourage positive psychological development and opportunities for resilience-building. Collaborating with other professionals, such as psychologists, counsellors, and educators, enables social workers to provide comprehensive support services that address the complex needs of adolescents. These research findings highlight strong and positive relationships among the respondents between Stress Adaptation, Resilience, and Thriving. These results suggest that efforts to enhance stress adaptation and resilience contribute to an individual's ability to thrive and experience greater well-being.

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