Gender Differences of Resilience among Young Adults in Punjab Province

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Abstract

Resilience enables positive adaptation when facing adversities and is vital for healthy adjustment and well-being for young adults. This study examined relationships between resilience and psychosocial factors like self-esteem, self-efficacy, presence of meaning in life, search for meaning in life, social support, satisfaction with life, and grit among 420 young adults (aged 18-22 years) in Punjab, Pakistan. The complex interplay between cultural values, socioeconomic deprivation, trauma exposure, and protective resources shapes resilience trajectories among Pakistani youths

confronting extensive barriers. The prevalence of risk factors like unemployment, poverty, discrimination, violence and political conflict adversely impact youths in developing nations like Pakistan. However, resilience resources can promote effective coping and adaptation.

A correlational research design was utilized and participants from various colleges/universities completed validated self-report scales measuring the study variables. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations. Results revealed significant small to moderate positive relationships between resilience and most psychosocial variables. Self-efficacy had the highest correlation, followed by presence of meaning in life, grit, self-esteem and social support subscales. An independent samples t-test further showed females scoring higher than males on resilience and some factors like self-esteem and social support. Findings align with prior evidence that positive self-appraisals, life purpose, perseverance and relationships can bolster resilience and adaptive outcomes when encountering major stressors. Developing such psychosocial competencies is vital for disadvantaged youths frequently facing socioeconomic and political adversities in impoverished Pakistan. Study implications include need for multicomponent youth empowerment interventions targeting self-efficacy, meaning, grit and social skills to promote wellbeing. Universities should offer resilience-based counseling and positive education.. Providing psychosocial resources and support can aid resilience and success among vulnerable young adults in arduous developing contexts.

Keywords: Resilience, Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Grit, Meaning In Life, Psychosocial Factors, Gender difference

INTRODUCTION

Background Resilience refers to adapting positively when encountering adversities, trauma, failures or challenges (Windle, 2011). It allows for effectively managing stressors and

bouncing back from difficult situations. Resilience is vital for healthy development, well-being and success. Prior evidence shows resilience is shaped by life experiences and resources like self-efficacy, relationships, meaning, and social support aid coping (Gloria & Steinhardt, 2016). However, limited recent research has examined resilience processes among youths in adverse developing contexts.

Pakistani Youth and Resilience

Youths comprise over 60% of Pakistan's population, highlighting the nation's young demographic profile (Government of Pakistan, 2022). However, factors like unemployment, poverty, malnutrition, gender discrimination, terrorism, natural disasters, political conflicts and lack of institutional support severely impact socio-emotional health and productivity among young citizens, increasing risks for adversity and distress (Khan et al., 2016). There is a need to advance resilience capacities that promote effective coping and growth when encountering conditions like loss, abuse, displacement, academic failure or financial hardships. Hence, this study assessed relationships between resilience and related positive psychosocial factors among young adults in Pakistan to advance understanding of resilience processes and resources needed. Identifying key variables that bolster resilience can guide designing supportive interventions and policies tailored for youths confronting hardships. Building capacities by facilitating access to psychosocial resources remains essential for enabling healthy trajectories and productivity.

Gender Differences Context:

Resilience has garnered increasing research attention as a vital protective process that moderates adversities' negative impacts and promotes wellbeing globally (Khan et al., 2019). Resilience encompasses effectively negotiating risks, stressors or crises by utilizing available psychological, social, cultural and spiritual resources. However, resilience manifests contextually based on meaning systems and sociocultural ecologies (Ungar & Theron, 2020). Factors like unemployment, poverty, malnutrition, poor healthcare, gender bias, disasters, conflicts and trauma put Pakistani youths' well-being at substantial risk (Khan et al., 2016). However, resilience resources can promote effective coping and adaptation. Hence, this study assessed relationships between resilience and related positive psychosocial factors among young adults in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience research in Pakistan is still nascent but a few studies have assessed resilience processes among vulnerable populations like women (Naz & Mohyuddin, 2022), earthquake survivors (Farooq et al., 2021), and nurses (Bakhtiar et al., 2020) using cultural ecological frameworks. Evidence shows community integration, collective identities, religious coping and family support can enable resilience by fostering meaning-making and growth (Siddiqui et al., 2022). However limited recent research has examined resilience processes among youths in adverse developing contexts. This underscores the study rationale and objectives.

Resilience and Associated Factors Resilience refers to one's capacity to cope with adversities and adjust positively when encountering major stressors or crises (Windle, 2011). It is a vital attribute enabling healthy developmental outcomes. Resilience research has examined related psychosocial factors like self-efficacy, social support, grit, meaning in life and subjective wellbeing (Gloria & Steinhardt, 2016). Self-efficacy and Resilience Perceived self-efficacy denotes individuals' self-appraisals about their abilities to perform tasks or cope with challenges. It determines motivation and perseverant efforts for managing difficulties, thereby influencing resilience processes and adaptive outcomes (Madewell & Ponce-Garcia, 2016).

Social Support and Resilience Social support provides emotional comfort, affirmation and tangible assistance during stressful events, thus facilitating coping and resilience (Holt & Pollard, 2022). Support from family, friends and significant others have differential protective effects. Grit and Resilience Grit refers to passion and perseverance to achieve long-term goals despite hindrances. Prior research shows gritty individuals demonstrating higher resilience, commitment and performance in academic and professional domains (Jin & Kim, 2017).

Meaning in Life and Resilience Meaning or purpose in life also gives direction and motivates constructive responses when dealing with traumatic events or conditions (Rasheed et al., 2022). It further enhances satisfaction and wellbeing. However, there is limited recent evidence regarding relationships between these psychosocial resources and resilience processes among young adults in adverse developing contexts like Pakistan. This underscores the study rationale and objectives.

OBJECTIVES
1. To assess the self-esteem, self-efficacy, social support, grit, meaning in life, satisfaction with life and resilience among young adults
2. To determine the correlations between resilience and the positive psychosocial factors
3. To examine the gender differences on study measures

HYPOTHESES
1. There will be significant small to moderate positive correlations between resilience and self-esteem, self-efficacy, social support, grit, meaning in life and satisfaction with life
2. Female young adults will report higher resilience and score higher on associated psychosocial factors than their male counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
Correlational research design was used to assess the relationship of self-esteem, self-efficacy, Presence of meaning in life, search for meaning in life, social support, life satisfaction, and grit in the resilience among young adults

Sample
Young adults (both males and females) with an age range of 18-22 years Data was collected from 420 young adults by using purposive sampling technique. Sample characteristics are mentioned in the table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=420).

Characteristics		F	%	M	SD
Age (years)				19.46	1.03
Gender					
	Male	180	42.9		
	Female	240	57.1		
Institute					
	GCU	49	11.7		
	KCWU	58	13.8		
	LCWU	55	13.1		
	PU	48	11.4		
	UE	37	8.8		
	UET	50	11.9		
	UHE	33	7.9		
	UHS	29	6.9		
	UVAS	61	14.5		
No. of siblings					
	1-3	185	44		
	4-6	219	52.1		
	7-9	16	3.9		
Birth order					
	First Born	152	36.2		
	Middle Born	188	44.8		
	Last Born	80	19		
Family monthly income (rupees)					
	<50000	226	53.8		
	50000-100000	146	34.8		
	>100000	48	11.4		
Family System					
	Nuclear	282	67.1		
	Joint	138	32.9		

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 420 young adult participants included in the study. The sample had a mean age of 19.46 years and was comprised of 57.1% females and 42.9% males recruited from various institutes.

Information is provided on number of siblings, birth order, family monthly income, and family system.

Measuring Instruments

Personal information sheet

Demographic information of respondents included age, gender, number of siblings, birth order, monthly income; family type according to composition (nuclear/joint/single parent family) etc.

Connor Davidson Resilience Scale

This scale consists of 25 items from which each rated on 4-point likert type scale (0=not true at all; 4= true nearly all the time). Total score is obtained by sum of all items ranging from 0-100. Higher score reflects more resilience. (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES)

It was developed by Rosenberg (1965) comprises of 10 items from which each item rate on 4 point likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 4= strongly agree. Item no. 2, 5, 6, 8 & 9 are reversed score. All items are summed up and scoring are kept continuous. High scores reflect high self-esteem. (Akhter & Ferdous, 2019).

General Self Efficacy Scale (GSE)

It is comprised of ten items and each item denotes successful coping and suggests an internal stable ascription of achievement.Items are rated on a 4 point likert type scale i.e. not at all true=1, hardly true=2, moderately true=3 and exactly true = 4. Total score is obtained through sum of all items; ranging 10-40. Higher scores indicate higher level of self-efficacy and vice versa (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support is a 12-item scale which is a metric of perceived social support from family, friends and significant others. Every item is answered on a 7-point Likert type scale (1 = very strongly disagree; 7 = very strongly agree), with high scores suggesting high social support (Mitchell & Zimet, 2000). For calculating mean scores; sum of item no. 3, 4, 8 & 11 then division by 4=family; sum of item no. 6, 7, 9 & 12 then division by 4 = friends; sum of item no. 1, 2, 5 & 10 then division by 4 = significant others; and sum of all 12 items then division with 12= total scale (Brugnoli et al., 2022).

Satisfaction with Life Scale

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWL) is a 5-item measurement of perceived life satisfaction (Diener et al. 1985). Every item is rated on a 7-point Likert type scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree), with high scores indicating high satisfaction with life. However, scoring must be kept continuous by summing up the scores of items. Some cutoff points should be used as benchmark (31-35=extremely satisfied, 26-30=satisfied, 21-25=slightly satisfied, 20=neutral, 15-19=slightly dissatisfied, 10-14=dissatisfied and 5-9=extremely dissatisfied) (Espejo et al., 2022).

Short Grit Scale

The Short Grit Scale is an 8-item scale. Each item is rated on a Likert type 5-point scale. For items 2, 4, 7&8 following points are assigned i.e. 5=very much like me, 4=mostly like me, 3=somewhat like me, 2=not much like me and 1=not like me at all but for items 1, 3, 5&6 different values are assigned i.e. 1=very much like me, 2=mostly like me, 3=somewhat like me, 4=not much like me and 5=not like me at all. Then all values are firstly added up and secondly divided by 8. On this scale highest scoring is 5 (extremely gritty) and lowest scoring is 1 (not at all gritty) (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009 and Iqbal et al., 2023).

Meaning in Life Scale

Using the 10 items meaning in life scale, the variable meaning in life was assessed (Steger et al., 2006). It has 2 subscales including presence of meaning in life and search for meaning in life (Rasheed et al., 2022). Each subscale contains 5 items rated on 7 point likert type scale where 1=absolutely untrue to 7=absolutely true. High scores reflect high levels.

Procedure

After obtaining approval from the relevant ethics review boards, the researcher visited various institutes, explained the purpose and procedures of the study to potential participants, obtained written informed consent from willing participants, and distributed the questionnaires. Participants were requested to carefully read and respond to each questionnaire item.

Ethical Considerations

The study procedures were explained to participants and written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Permission was sought before using the copyrighted resilience scale, while the other measures used were open access scales that can be freely used in research studies. Participant confidentiality was maintained throughout the conduct of the study.

Results

The data of the study was analyzed through various descriptive and inferential statistics to find out the relationship between the measuring variables. The reliabilities and the frequencies among the demographic variables were computed and Cronbach alpha were analyzed.

Table 2

Cronbach alpha reliability of the Measuring Instruments

Measuring Scales	α
Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale	0.64
Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale	0.77
General Self Efficacy Scale	0.81
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	0.84
Social Support from Significant Others	0.81
Social Support from Family	0.73
Social Support from Friends	0.64
Satisfaction with Life Scale	0.78
Short Grit Scale	0.47
Presence of meaning in Life	0.85
Search for meaning in Life	0.87

This table 2 shows the internal reliability values (Cronbach's alpha) and number of items (k) for the different scales used in the study. The resilience scale has an alpha of 0.64 based on 25 items, indicating moderately adequate reliability. The self-esteem (0.77), self-efficacy (0.81), social support (0.84), life satisfaction (0.78) and meaning in life scales (0.85 to 0.87) all demonstrate acceptable reliability. However, the grit scale has the lowest alpha value of 0.47 based on 8 items, suggesting poor internal consistency reliability which makes findings related to grit less reliable. The multidimensional social support scale overall and its subscales measuring perceived support from family, friends and significant others yield good reliability coefficients from 0.81 to 0.64. Thus, most instruments demonstrate adequate psychometric properties for use among the Pakistani sample except for the grit scale. Researchers should improve or replace this scale in future studies.

Table 3

Correlation analysis of self-esteem, self-efficacy, Presence of meaning in life, search for meaning in life, social support, life satisfaction, and grit in the resilience of young adults (N=420).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Self-Esteem	-									
2. Self-Efficacy	.42**	-								
3. Social Support from Significant Other	.21**	.31	-							
4. Social Support from Family	.27**	.44	.62**	-						
5. Social Support from Friends	.13**	.30**	.51**	.42**	-					
6. Life Satisfaction	.33**	.25**	.16**	.24**	.10*	-				
7. Grit	.34**	.39	.12*	.21**	.13**	.17**	-			
8. Presence of Meaning in Life	.46**	.46	.33**	.44**	.22**	.37**	.36**	-		
9. Search for Meaning in Life	-.06	.25**	.20**	.26**	.21**	-.12*	.09	.25**	-	
10 Resilience	.42**	.67**	.32**	.4**	.27**	.24**	.40**	.51**	.28**	-

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

This table 3 presents Pearson correlation analysis results between the key study variables. Most variables show statistically significant positive bivariate relationships with each other and the outcome resilience at p<0.05 or p<0.01 level. Resilience demonstrates the highest correlation with self-efficacy (r = 0.67) indicating a moderately strong association, whereby higher self-efficacy beliefs are related to greater resilience capacities for positive adaptation. After self-efficacy, resilience has the next strongest correlations with presence of meaning in life (r = 0.51), grit (r = 0.40), self-esteem (r = 0.42) and social support from family (r = 0.44). All these psychosocial resources share significant small to moderate positive linkages with resilience, supporting study hypotheses. Furthermore, resilience correlates significantly with social support from friends and life satisfaction also at p<0.05 level although these associations are comparatively weaker. An unexpected finding is the negative correlation of search for meaning in life with life satisfaction (r = -0.12) suggesting those still exploring life purpose tend be less satisfied. Overall, correlations provide evidence for the role of positive self-appraisals, relationships, grit, meaning and wellbeing in contributing to resilience capacities that promote coping, adaptation and overcoming adversities.

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation and independent t test of self-esteem, self-efficacy, Presence of meaning in life, search for meaning in life, social support, life satisfaction, and grit in the resilience of young adults (N=420).

Variables	Female N(240)		Male N(180)		t	P	95% cl		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Self-Esteem	16.88	3.99	17.29	3.84	1.7*	.04	1.2	.34	0.10
Self-Efficacy	29.43	5.17	28.74	4.65	1.2	.31	.26	1.62	0.14
Social Support from Significant Other	20.83	5.93	18.72	6.35	3.5**	.002	.91	3.31	0.34
Social Support from Family	20.14	5.53	19.13	5.57	1.8*	.02	.06	2.08	0.18
Social Support from Friends	21.25	5.77	20.37	5.69	1.5	.06	-.23	1.98	0.15
Life Satisfaction	23.03	6.01	23.07	5.60	-.07	.94	-1.16	1.08	0.01
Grit	25.01	4.48	25.05	4.13	-.08	.92	-.86	.79	0.01
Presence of Meaning in Life	23.85	6.07	23.41	5.61	-.77	.43	-.68	1.57	0.08
Search for Meaning in Life	24.74	5.91	23.41	5.61	-1.1	.25	-.47	1.78	0.22
Resilience	62.76	14.29	61.78	13.86	.70**	.001	1.74	3.70	0.07

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, *LL*=lower limit, *UL*=upper limit and *d* = effect size

In table 4 independent samples t-test was conducted to compare Self-esteem the self-esteem scores of female participants (M = 16.88, SD = 3.99) were slightly lower compared to males (M = 17.29, SD = 3.84). This difference was significant (t(418) = 1.7, p = .04), with a small effect size of .10. Thus, the hypothesis that females have higher self-esteem is not supported. Males reported significantly, though only slightly higher levels of self-esteem.

Self-efficacy Females reported marginally higher self-efficacy (M = 29.43, SD = 5.17) than males (M = 28.74, SD = 4.65).However, this difference was not statistically significant

(t(418) = 1.2, p = .31). So there were no actual gender differences in self-efficacy, contrary to the hypothesis.

Social Support from Significant Other Females scored significantly higher (M = 20.83, SD = 5.93) in perceived social support from significant others compared to males (M = 18.72, SD = 6.35), and this difference was significant, t (418) = 3.5, p = .002. The effect size was small (.34). Thus, females reported receiving greater emotional support from special people in their lives.

Social Support from Family Similarly, the level of family social support reported by females (M = 20.14, SD = 5.53) was significantly higher than that reported by males (M = 19.13, SD = 5.57), t(418) = 1.8, p = .03. The effect size was small (.18). So, females perceived greater support from family members as well.

Social Support from Friends Females (M = 21.25, SD = 5.77) reported slightly higher friend support also compared to males (M = 20.37, SD = 5.69) but this difference only approached significance, t(418) = 1.5, p = .06, d = .15.

Life Satisfaction Interestingly, life satisfaction scores were nearly equal for females (M = 23.03, SD = 6.01) and males (M= 23.07, SD = 5.60), with the difference being non-significant, t(418)=-.07, p = .94. So males and females reported similar levels of satisfaction with life.

Grit similarly, in terms of grit scores, there was hardly any gender difference, with females (M = 25.01, SD = 4.48) and males (M= 25.05, SD = 4.13) reporting near equal scores on this measure of passion and perseverance. The differences was not statistically significant t(418)=-.08, p = .92.

Presence of Meaning in Life Scores on presence of meaning in life were slightly higher among females (M = 23.85, SD = 6.07) than males (M = 23.41, SD = 5.61). However the gender difference did not reach statistical significance, t(418)=-.77, p = .43, again contrary to hypotheses.

Search for Meaning in Life Females (M = 24.74, SD = 5.91) reported marginally higher levels of searching or seeking for meaning and purpose in life compared to males (M = 23.41, SD = 5.61). However, this difference only approached significance, t(418) = -1.1, p = .25, d = .22

Resilience Finally, resilience scores were significantly higher among females (M = 62.76, SD = 14.29) compared to males (M = 61.78, SD = 13.86), t(418) = .70, p = .001. The difference had a small effect size of .07. Thus, hypothesis regarding gender difference in resilience was supported, with females showing greater resilience capacities.

DISCUSSION

The present findings provide new evidence regarding the significant role of positive psychological and psychosocial factors in predicting resilience among young adults within a developing South Asian context. Results revealed small to moderate positive correlations between resilience and self-efficacy, meaning in life, self-esteem, social support, grit, and life satisfaction in the Pakistani sample. This aligns with prior Western research, thus confirming the relevance of these linkages for Asian youths confronting substantial cultural and socioeconomic adversities related to poverty, discrimination and violence in the country (Khan et al., 2016).

Youths in disadvantaged societies like Pakistan face pervasive educational, financial, and employment barriers, as well as limited healthcare and counselling support, which exacerbate risks for problems like trauma, depression and suicide behaviours (Naqvi & Ritchie, 2019). Having self-regulatory and interpersonal resilience resources like self-efficacy, grit, social skills, and emotional coping fosters positive adaptation and progress among vulnerable populations (Arshad et al., 2020). Present findings highlight the relative significance of self-efficacy beliefs in predicting resilience, which reflects their role in building motivation and equipping youths to tackle various personal, academic and career challenges. Besides, supportive connections act as a buffer during crises, while discovering meaning and purpose also assists in constructively overcoming arduous circumstances (Holt & Pollard, 2022).

There are widespread misconceptions regarding mental health issues in Asian regions, further marginalizing struggling groups like traumatized youths and women who have limited access to services (Khan, 2016). Study implications include the need for establishing culturally sensitive resilience-based interventions, counselling and peer-support groups in colleges and community settings to mitigate adversities. Learning skills related to self-efficacy, stress management, cognitive restructuring, family communication, goal setting and meaning-making through positive education programs can aid adaptive capacities (Arshad et al., 2020). Government and organizational collaborations are vital for survivor empowerment and progress in developing nations (Naqvi & Ritchie, 2019).

The collectivistic Pakistani culture emphasizing family connections and religious values can provide vital psychosocial resources that shape resilience trajectories during crises or persistent hardship conditions. Present findings highlight the relative significance of self-efficacy beliefs in predicting resilience, which reflects their role in building motivation and equipping youths to tackle various personal, academic and career challenges.

LIMITATIONS

However, study limitations include the cross-sectional data, which restricts determining causality. The use of self-report measures and convenient sampling also limits generalizability. Additionally, the poor reliability of the grit scale warrants a cautious interpretation of related findings. Future studies should address these issues and evaluate tailored interventions for enhancing psychosocial resources like self-efficacy and purpose among disadvantaged young populations across Pakistan and other developing Asian regions using robust longitudinal designs. Nevertheless, the present research highlights the need to advance youth resilience through multi-component educational initiatives. School-based posed modules, peer-support programs and parent-teacher sessions building competencies like optimism, family communication, stress management, self-regulation, meaning-making and grit are required locally to promote empowerment and progress (Khan, 2022). This can aid current empowerment efforts and progress.

CONCLUSION

The present study makes a significant contribution to the underdeveloped resilience research realm by investigating relationships between resilience and positive psychosocial factors among young adults specifically belonging to Pakistan's disadvantaged context. The findings revealed significant positive associations of resilience with self-efficacy, meaning in life, self-

esteem, grit, social support, and life satisfaction. Results thus confirm the vital protective effects of these psychosocial factors when encountering adversities.

Importantly, the study also found higher resilience capacities among young women compared to men. This gender difference aligns with patterns of socialization in collectivistic cultures like Pakistan, where masculine norms discourage help-seeking and emotional expression while girls learn to value interdependence and support (Khan, 2022). Such inhibition of resilience processes can increase risks among male youths facing chronic stresses. Therefore, evidence on gender variations contributes uniquely to Pakistani resilience research by identifying targets for tailored interventions. Implications encompass need for gender-sensitive resilience education programs, peer networking, and counselling initiatives focused on transforming masculine attitudes and stigma related to positive coping. Enhancing psychosocial competencies for seeking meaning, building self-efficacy and relationships during crises remains imperative across genders.

This timely study advances contextual understanding of the intersections between cultural factors like gender and resilience-based capacities that promote positive adaptation in the face of adversity. Developing supportive youth policies and services leveraging both systemic and individual resources is key for empowering vulnerable young populations through fostering holistic resilience in Pakistan's arduous developmental contexts.

IMPLICATIONS

Youths comprise a significant segment of Pakistan's growing population. However, barriers like unemployment, poverty, malnutrition, poor healthcare, gender bias, disasters, conflicts and trauma put their well-being at substantial risk (Khan et al., 2016). Building resilience can mitigate adverse effects by facilitating coping capacities to deal with socioeconomic deprivation, anxiety, adjustment issues, academic pressures, and lack of support systems. Accordingly, study implications include implementing resilience education programs, counselling services, mentoring and community support groups in colleges/universities focused on promoting self-efficacy, social skills, stress management, meaning-making and other psychosocial competencies among young citizens. This can aid current empowerment efforts and progress.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further studies can build on findings using longitudinal designs to clarify directionality and investigate the impacts of tailored interventions for bolstering resilience processes among disadvantaged youths in Pakistan and comparable developing regions over time. Evaluating multicomponent training programs that foster self-efficacy, relationships, purpose, family communication and grit through college posed courses or support groups can expand this research.

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