

Resilience as a Pathway: Exploring Its Role in Optimism and Life Satisfaction Among Adolescents

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This study examines the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between optimism and life satisfaction, as well as gender differences in these constructs, among Indian adolescents. A sample of 264 adolescents, aged 12 to 18 years, was obtained from randomly selected schools in Chandigarh. The LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994) assessed dispositional optimism, the CYRM-R (Jefferies et al., 2019) evaluated resilience, and the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) examined life satisfaction. Research on mediation revealed a significant indirect effect of optimism on life satisfaction via resilience. Personal resilience had a more pronounced mediating impact than caregiver resilience. Gender discrepancies were observed in personal resilience and overall resilience, with females scoring higher than males. No significant gender differences were detected in caregiver resilience, optimism, or life satisfaction. The study demonstrated that heightened optimism is associated with greater resilience, which significantly predicts life satisfaction. These results suggest that school and therapy-based interventions that intentionally cultivate optimism and strengthen personal resilience, particularly for socioeconomically disadvantaged adolescents, can significantly enhance life satisfaction and should be prioritized in policy and practice.

Keywords: Adolescents, Indian Psychology, Life Satisfaction, Optimism, Resilience.

Resilience, the capacity to endure stress and maintain psychological well-being, is characterized by hardiness, which encompasses viewing the world as meaningful, actively engaging with stressors, and employing effective coping strategies (Thomassen et al., 2018).

The capacity to recover from adversity is especially vital for adolescents from poor socio-economic situations. Resilience not only helps them navigate the numerous challenges brought about by their environment but also plays a significant role in their psychological well-being and life fulfilment (Yildirim et al., 2022). Life satisfaction, or the overall sense of life, is one such indicator of well-being influenced by numerous psychological determinants, such as resilience and optimism. It could foster in youth who have socioeconomic

disadvantages an enduring sense of optimism, and this optimism could translate into life satisfaction despite the harshness that might exist externally (Kumar, 2023).

Optimism and life satisfaction have a substantial research opportunity in the possible mediating function of resilience between them. Less privileged adolescents frequently encounter additional stressors that hinder their psychological growth and well-being (Sánchez-Castro et al., 2024). Insights are needed regarding how resilience mediates the effects of optimism on life satisfaction in these adolescents. To design interventions with the potential to increase resilience or optimism in this vulnerable group, understanding is necessary to enhance life satisfaction and mental health. The goal of this study is to examine these interrelationships and explore how resilience

can serve as a tool to improve life satisfaction by increasing optimism in socioeconomically disadvantaged adolescents.

The idea of optimism, which is the disposition to look forward, has received much research attention related to life satisfaction. Piper (2022) validated a strong relationship between optimism and life satisfaction, finding pessimism has a profoundly negative tone. This suggests the importance of cognitive processes in well-being, highlighting that the contribution of negative cognitions to life satisfaction is significantly greater than that of positive cognitions, and emphasizing the need to manage negative cognitions effectively.

Following this cognitive-emotional paradigm, Oriol et al. (2020) discovered an essential relationship between optimism and positive affect; however, they did not find a direct mediation of optimism on life satisfaction. Nevertheless, they demonstrated a serial mediation process involving gratitude, meaning in life, and grit—an interplay of emotions and psychological capital that manifests in nuanced ways.

In Sany et al. (2023), the path analysis includes a broader range of psychological constructs (general health, positive attitude, optimism that have been identified as key predictors of quality of life among students, and life satisfaction acts as a pivotal mediator.

Blasco-Belled et al. (2022) and Usan Supervioa et al. (2020) studies on emotional intelligence (EI) and goal orientation are added to this context. Investigation and Review found that optimists have higher EI but perceive more reality, meaning they can repair their emotions and adjust to reality more readily, resulting in life satisfaction. However, their results indicated that goal orientation, especially task orientation, mediates the relation between optimism and life satisfaction among adolescents, such that

structured goals strengthen the positive effects of optimism on life satisfaction.

Among demographic groups, resilience—the ability to respond effectively to adversity—is a key indicator of life satisfaction. Regarding the prediction of resilience on life satisfaction, Yildirim et al. (2022) found an effect, and a gender difference was also observed in psychological adjustment. According to Wang et al. (2022), resilience serves as a protective factor in an academically stressful environment, predicting life satisfaction and mitigating academic burnout.

Social factors are also essential. Just as in their study, Kalaitzaki et al. (2021) also highlight the vital role that social factors play, and how social capital, social support, and offline social support enhance resilience, improve life satisfaction, and reduce perceived stress. Given that Santilli et al. (2020) provide research that similarly shows career adaptability and resilience correlate with increased life satisfaction among adolescents, this suggests that developing adaptability skills may benefit the development of a resilient individual and enhance life satisfaction.

As outlined by Wang and Kong (2019), they extended the mindfulness construct to life satisfaction by showing how it is predicted by self-esteem and resilience. This relationship pattern confirms that mindfulness can reinforce the personal resources that contribute to overall well-being and mental well-being in families. However, family conflicts, as documented in Trong Dam et al. (2023) and Chong and Baharudin (2017), contribute to the improvement of family support.

According to Hassan et al. (2018), females are characterized as being more optimistic and more hopeful, leading to higher life satisfaction. According to Shi et al. (2015), stress has also been discussed, along with

its direct and indirect influences on life satisfaction, with resilience acting as a partial mediator.

The findings of Bibi et al. (2017) also focus on occupational and social factors, as well as how social trust, self-esteem, and resilience mediate the favourable link between optimism and work satisfaction. For Sevari et al. (2020), Hope, optimism, and resilience mediated the favourable relation between social support and life happiness.

Finally, in many cases (e.g., Collazoni et al. 2020; Kose et al. 2021), resilience functioned as a mediating variable in diverse settings (from resource during struggle with mental health issues to means to expand work–life balance) and it was argued that the effective agency of psychosocial factors on life satisfaction rests on the role of resilience.

Dehghanizadeh et al. (2024) investigated how the job stress in the pandemic shaped. Thus, they found that job stress had adverse effects on emotional exhaustion. Interestingly, they discovered that optimism and resilience moderated this effect, such that an increase in these qualities results in reduced emotional exhaustion, even in the face of high job stress. According to this study, Indian undergraduates were explored to identify the role of socio–economic status (SES) on resilience. Kumar (2023) suggests that strategies enhancing optimism and resilience in high-stress healthcare settings are essential, as is the significance of psychological resources in minimizing work-related stress. The results showed that there is a higher chance that people from higher SES backgrounds will have more chances to develop resilience, resulting from having more social and economic resources. Lastly, this study examines the socio-economic inequalities in resilience and proposes that those from lower SES may need additional help to be resilient and thereby live with higher satisfaction.

The literature review shows evidence of interplay between optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction. Optimism is consistently associated with more life satisfaction, but if so, its impact is often mediated by other psychological constructs (resilience, gratitude, emotional intelligence). Resilience emerges as a pivotal factor in moderating the effects of stress and promoting well-being, with support playing a supportive role in bolstering resilience and, in turn, life satisfaction. Taken together, these findings demonstrate the vital importance of developing psychological resilience and optimism for better life satisfaction. Despite evidence suggesting that optimism and resilience influence life satisfaction, no study has investigated resilience as a mediator between optimism and life satisfaction among socioeconomically disadvantaged Indian adolescents. The present study addresses this gap.

Objectives:

1. To assess resilience as a mediator in the connection between optimism and life satisfaction.
2. To calculate and interpret the correlations among optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction.
3. To explore any gender differences in optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction.

Hypotheses:

1. Resilience will positively mediate the relationship between optimism and life satisfaction.
2. There will be a positive relationship among all three variables.
3. There will be no gender difference in any of the three variables.

Method

Sample

For the current study, a sample of 264 adolescents (121 girls and 143 boys) aged 12 to 18 (Mean = 15.6, SD = 1.34) was collected via random sampling from five different schools in Chandigarh. These schools were randomly selected from among more than 100 schools in the city. Schools near slum areas were chosen to confirm the inclusion of adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Written data collection permission was obtained from the District Education Officer, informed consent was obtained from the school authorities, and student assent was secured prior to participation. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; no identifying information was collected. We deliberately chose a zero-period for data collection, as it is a free period, and no classes of students were missed due to the research. Research was conducted in the absence of class teachers, allowing students to be more open in their responses. Before data collection, we provided the students with proper information regarding the research and instructions on how to complete the questionnaires. Students took less than 30 minutes to complete all the forms. The data were later coded, and descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and mediation analysis were performed using Jamovi software.

Tools

Socioeconomic Status (SES): The administration of standardized SES questionnaires was not permitted by the District Education Office (DEO), as all questionnaires are required to be pre-checked by the DEO office during the permission stage; only those given permission are used. Therefore, the construct needed to be indirectly operationalized. The five participating schools were all government schools in

Chandigarh, where tuition fees were either nominal (less than 100 INR per month) or non-existent. Students had access to government-funded schemes, including free textbooks, uniforms, and midday meals. Government schools in the urban Indian setting have enrolled mostly children belonging to the economically weaker sections, and hence, enrolment itself can be a good proxy indicator of low SES. As a result, the study participants were categorized as individuals with low socioeconomic backgrounds. Although this method was designed to consider administrative limitations, it does not account for individual-level variation, particularly in parental education or occupation, and this is acknowledged as a limitation.

LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994) is intended to assess dispositional optimism, indicating broad expectations for favourable vs unfavourable life events. The Cronbach's alpha reported is .78, indicating good internal consistency. Moreover, the Test-Retest Reliability is 0.68 (4 months), 0.60 (12 months), 0.56 (24 months), and 0.79 (28 months), demonstrating reasonable stability.

CYRM-R is designed by Jefferies et al. (2019). It assesses resilience from two aspects: 1. from a personal perspective, and 2. from a caregiver/relational perspective. The Cronbach's alpha value is 0.82 for the personal and caregiver/relational resilience subscales, and 0.87 for overall resilience.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a concise 5-item tool developed by Diener et al. in 1985 to assess overall life satisfaction. It measures life satisfaction using a 7-point Likert scale and is recognized for its strong reliability and validity, characterized by consistent internal consistency (Cronbach's α of approximately 0.87) and one-dimensionality. The SWLS correlates well with other well-being measures and is widely used in both research and clinical settings

globally, making it a key tool for studying happiness and life satisfaction across different populations.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive data for the entire group.

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	264	13	18	15.6	1.34
Personal Resilience	264	13	30	24.8	3.08
Caregiver Resilience	264	7	21	18.1	2.42
CYRM-R	264	21	51	42.8	4.90
LOT-R	264	2	20	12.5	3.31
SWL	264	5	35	21.2	6.84

Table 2 presents the results of a mediation analysis, examining the impact of optimism on life satisfaction via resilience. The study found significant positive pathways, suggesting that higher optimism enhances resilience, which in turn contributes to greater life satisfaction. Optimism also directly predicts life satisfaction, independent of resilience. The total effect, encompassing both direct and indirect influences, confirms that optimism has a significant impact on life satisfaction. These findings highlight the potential benefits of cultivating optimism in promoting overall well-being.

Table 2: Mediation Analysis of Optimism on Life Satisfaction Through Overall Resilience

	β	SE	Z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Components						
Optimism => resilience	0.472	0.0862	5.48	<.001	0.3030	0.641
Resilience => Life Satisfaction	0.443	0.0839	5.27	<.001	0.2782	0.607
Direct effects						
Optimism => Life Satisfaction	0.276	0.1240	2.23	.026	0.0332	0.519
Indirect effects						
Optimism => Resilience => Life Satisfaction	0.209	0.0550	3.80	<.001	0.1011	0.317
Total effects						
Optimism => Life Satisfaction	0.485	0.1235	3.93	<.001	0.2430	0.727

Table 3: Mediation Analysis of Optimism on Life Satisfaction Through Personal Resilience and Caregiver Resilience.

	β	SE	Z-value	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Components					
Optimism => Personal resilience	0.283	0.0544	5.21***	0.1765	0.390
Personal resilience => Life Satisfaction	0.645	0.1340	4.81***	0.3820	0.907
Direct effects					
Optimism => Life Satisfaction	0.303	0.1243	2.43*	0.0588	0.546

Indirect effects					
Optimism => Personal resilience =>Life Satisfaction	0.183	0.0517	3.53***	0.0813	0.284
Optimism => Caregiver Resilience	0.189	0.0435	4.34***	0.103	0.274
Caregiver Resilience => Life Satisfaction	0.728	0.1689	4.31***	0.397	1.059
Direct Effect (Optimism => Life Satisfaction)	0.348	0.1235	2.81**	0.1055	0.590
Indirect Effect (optimism => Caregiver Resilience => Life Satisfaction)	0.137	0.0449	3.06**	0.0493	0.225
Total Effects (Optimism => Life Satisfaction)	0.485	0.1235	3.93***	0.2430	0.727

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 3 presents the findings of a mediation analysis examining the impact of optimism on life satisfaction through personal and caregiver resilience. The analysis indicates significant pathways where optimism boosts both forms of resilience, which in turn, significantly enhances life satisfaction. Both individual and caregiver resilience act as potent mediators,

emphasizing that higher resilience linked to optimism leads to greater life satisfaction. Direct effects of optimism also significantly influence life satisfaction independently of resilience. The total effect, considering both direct and indirect impacts, confirms the substantial role of optimism in promoting life satisfaction, underlining the benefits of cultivating optimism, particularly in caregiving contexts, to improve overall well-being.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

	Personal	Caregiver	Overall Resilience	Optimism	SWL
Personal	1				
Caregiver	0.58***	1			
CYRM-R	0.91***	0.86***	1		
Optimism	0.30***	0.26***	0.32***	1	
SWL	0.33***	0.30***	0.36***	0.23***	1

N = 264. All correlations are two-tailed. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

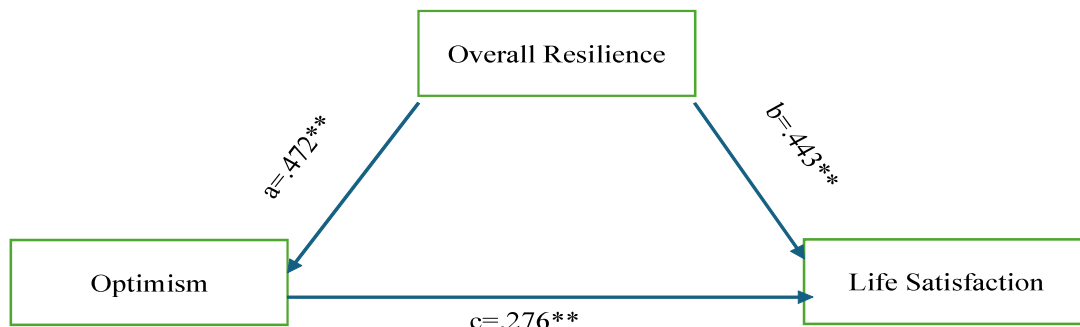
Table 5: One-Way ANOVA

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	SE	F	df	p
1. Personal Resilience	Female	121	25.5	2.67	0.243	13.777	1,262	<.001***
	Male	143	24.1	3.26	0.272			
2. Caregiver Resilience	Female	121	18.3	2.34	0.213	1.524	1,262	.218
	Male	143	17.9	2.49	0.208			
3. CYRM-R	Female	121	43.8	4.55	0.413	8.582	1,262	.004**
	Male	143	42.0	5.05	0.422			
4. LOT-R	Female	121	12.6	3.18	0.289	0.439	1,262	.508
	Male	143	12.4	3.43	0.287			
5. SWL	Female	121	21.2	6.87	0.625	0.004	1,262	.944
	Male	143	21.3	6.84	0.572			

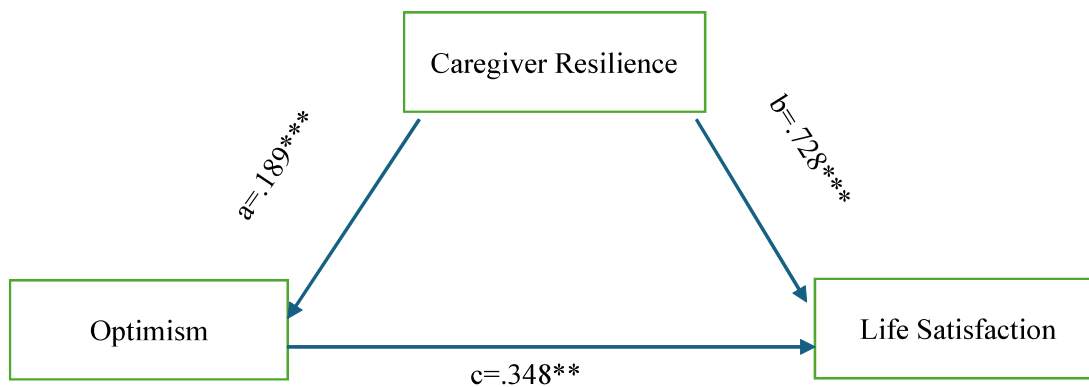
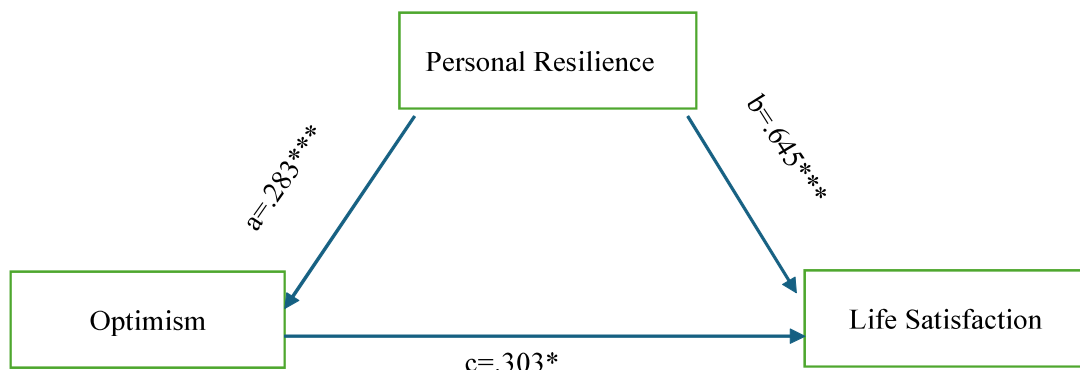
A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine gender differences across all variables. Significant gender differences were observed in Personal resilience ($F(1, 262) = 12.777, p < .001$) and overall resilience ($F(1, 262) = 8.582, p =$

$.004$), with personal resilience showing a particularly strong gender difference. It suggests that gender may play a role in personal resilience. In all other variables, the gender difference was not found to be significant.

Mediation Model Diagram for Model 1 about table 2



Mediation Model Diagram for Model 2 and Model 3, with reference to table 3



Discussion

This study was conducted to investigate the mediating effect of resilience on the relationship between Optimism and life satisfaction among adolescents. Along with mediation, the correlation among variables and gender differences was also assessed.

The mediation study found that resilience significantly mediates the effect of optimism on life satisfaction, supporting the hypothesis that resilience is a key intermediary in this relationship. This emphasizes the importance of enhancing resilience as a strategy to boost life satisfaction among individuals with different levels of optimism. This is consistent with Miranda and Cruz (2020), who first tested this mediation model among Filipino students. Our study confirms this mediation model and generalizes it to Indian adolescents. This generalization implies that the role resilience plays as a mediator is robust across different cultural contexts in the samples compared. This cross-cultural validation of the model suggests that fostering resilience can be a global strategy for enhancing life satisfaction, regardless of an individual's initial level of optimism.

The study confirms that optimism significantly predicts resilience, aligning with prior research that optimistic individuals tend to exhibit greater resilience during adversity. This finding is supported by Gómez-Moliner et al. (2018), who also found a positive correlation between optimism and student resilience. The findings advocate for the integration of life skills training, focusing on optimism and resilience-building, into school curricula to better equip students to handle challenges.

Resilience significantly predicted life satisfaction; higher resilience was associated with higher life satisfaction. This outcome reinforces the perspective that resilience plays a critical role in individuals' overall well-

being and contentment with life. The outcome aligns with that of Yildirim et al. (2022) and Karaman et al. (2020). In line with our study, Wang et al. (2022) reported that resilience positively predicts life satisfaction, while also noting that academic burnout negatively predicts life satisfaction among students.

In addition to analysing the main model, we examined the mediating effects of two subscales of the CYRM-R to determine which type of resilience—personal or caregiver/relational—has a more pronounced impact on the relationship in question (models 2 and 3). We found that personal resilience exhibits a more substantial mediating effect ($\beta = 0.183$) compared to caregiver resilience ($\beta = 0.137$). This suggests that personal resilience may play a more substantial role in mediating the relationship between optimism and life satisfaction than caregiver resilience, based on the data provided. Our literature review revealed that previous studies using the older version of the CYRM-R scale (CYRM) did not differentiate between personal and caregiver resilience, instead measuring it as a single construct of general resilience (Caqueo-Urizar et al., 2021; Ali & Butt, 2022). Adolescents seek independence from their caregivers and strive to complete tasks independently. They avoid talking about their feelings to caregivers, as they prefer their peers of their age. Particularly in our sample, the majority of students come from lower SES families, where both parents work on low-paying salaries, causing the children to become self-reliant at a very early age. This explains why adolescents demonstrated higher personal resilience than caregivers. This is consistent with Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, specifically the "Identity vs. Role Confusion" stage described in 1962. Erikson suggested that adolescence, typically between the ages of 12 and 18, is crucial for individuals to explore their identity and develop a sense of self as they

determine their role in the world. The inclination towards peer relationships rather than familial ties allows adolescents to explore various roles, concepts, and identities, which is essential for the formation of a cohesive self-concept. Both Brittan and Lerner (2013) agree that Erikson proposed that a successful navigation of this stage would entail the development of the virtue of 'fidelity', meaning behaving as a person who is compliant with social norms and expectations yet fully formed as an individual. The study supports Fredrickson's 2001 Broaden and Build Theory, which posits that positive emotions expand one's mental and behavioral repertoire, thereby creating enduring resources such as resilience. They find that what makes optimism matter for life satisfaction is personal resilience, which mediates the link; personal resources are the main factor in expanding cognitive and behavioral capacities and thereby increasing well-being. The theory is supported by the fact that it not only increases current states but also promotes growth and resilience to improve life quality. The phenomena underlying the theory are also validated for use across different cultures.

The findings of the present investigation offer strong validation for Hypothesis 2. According to the hypothesis, it was stated that all three variables would be positively correlated with each other. The correlation matrix presented in Table 4 supports this hypothesis, as it reveals positive correlations among these variables. Overall resilience, along with both subscales (personal and caregiver), correlated positively with optimism. Similar results were reported by Bibi et al. (2017), Maheshwari and Jutta (2020), and Singh and Vinayak (2024). Resilience also correlated positively with life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with those of Kalaitzaki et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2022). Consistent with the existing literature (Piper, 2022; Orio et al., 2020;

Sany, 2021), our correlation analysis revealed a significant positive association between optimism and life satisfaction. Such results hint at the multifaceted nature of resilience and suggest that the beneficial effects of optimism may extend beyond personal well-being to influence the resilience and well-being of individuals in their care. Collectively, these findings not only validate the proposed hypothesis but also contribute to the broader psychological discourse by highlighting the interconnectedness of dispositional and situational factors in shaping life satisfaction.

We also examined gender differences across various psychological constructs. Our findings provide a nuanced perspective on Hypothesis 3, which is partially rejected. Significant gender differences were observed in constructs related to personal and overall resilience. Females showed higher levels of personal and overall resilience than males. These results suggest that gender may influence these specific areas, potentially due to factors such as socialization processes or gender-specific experiences that contribute to resilience. Specific to our sample, in India, females generally assume home responsibilities at an earlier age than males, starting to perform household chores at a young age. In a house where both parents are working, female children are often responsible for taking care of the household, irrespective of their age (Sharma, 2017). Our study's findings are inconsistent with those of Peyer et al. (2022), underscoring the importance of considering gender when developing and implementing interventions to enhance personal resilience.

Conversely, the analysis partially supported the hypothesis of no gender differences in caregiver resilience, optimism, or life satisfaction. Some of these regimes may be inherent human qualities or may be influenced by factors that are not too different from those that influence gender. Bjuggren

and Elert (2019) also found that women scored lower on optimism than men, and Chui and Wong (2015) found that males scored higher in life satisfaction than women. The discrepancies with our findings may stem from different sample characteristics that were not accounted for in our study.

Implications

These results suggest that resilience serves as the primary psychological pathway through which optimism enhances life satisfaction in socioeconomically disadvantaged Indian adolescents, with both theoretical and practical implications. Conceptually, the findings expand existing models of positive psychology (e.g., broaden and build) by showing that resilience can play a mediating role in a collectivist, low-resource setting, thus increasing the cross-cultural applicability of these theories. Policy-wise, the implication is that resilience- and optimism-building modules should be integrated into the government's school curricula through life skills classes, counselor-led workshops, and peer support groups, among other initiatives, to strengthen the well-being of adolescents without requiring significant financial investment. School psychologists and teachers should focus on interventions that concurrently address optimism and resilience, as opposed to the outcomes of well-being in isolation. On a policy level, the results suggest that it is rational to invest in psychological support services and the training of educators working in government schools, where there is a fee waiver and a lack of parental resources, alongside increased emotional vulnerability. Since socioeconomic status was measured by type of schooling rather than personal financial measures, future research should combine more detailed measures of SES with longitudinal designs to explain how long-term increases in optimism and resilience can lead to long-term life satisfaction.

Limitations

The study's results may not be generalizable beyond the specific cultural context of Indian adolescents. While the mediation model has been validated in different cultural contexts (Filipino and Indian samples), it is unclear whether the findings can be extrapolated to other cultural or age groups. To establish causal linkages, it may be necessary to use longitudinal or experimental designs. Self-reported measures were used in this study, which may introduce biases such as response bias or social desirability, potentially jeopardizing the validity of the findings. Other variables that potentially influence life satisfaction, like family dynamics, socioeconomic status, and mental health issues, were not taken into consideration, which could have distorted the findings. The main limitation of the current study is that socioeconomic status (SES) is identified based on the type of school and tuition structure, rather than being assessed using a standardized scale. Although government schools with low fee charges can be considered as providing services to low-income groups, this proxy might not be a complete reflection of individual differences in SES. Future studies may include direct indicators such as parental education, occupation, or household income.

Conclusion

This research confirms the mediation model where optimism fosters life satisfaction through personal and caregiver resilience, extending its relevance to Indian adolescents. Optimism directly and indirectly enhances life satisfaction, with personal resilience showing a more substantial mediating effect than caregiver resilience. The findings support Erikson's and Fredrickson's theories and suggest universality across cultures. Although the original hypothesis anticipated no gender differences, observed disparities in resilience suggest that tailored

approaches for building resilience may be beneficial. The study's cross-cultural application and novel insights are strengths, although potential biases and a lack of generalizability due to cultural specificity limit them.

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