

The Resilient Individual: A Personality Analysis

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Resilience is the ability to spring back from adversity and successfully adapt to it. The present study examined the plausible differences between high and low resilient individuals on their personality traits in terms of needs. The sample consisted of 155 young adult graduates whose age ranged from 20 to 25 years. There were 75 females and 80 males in the sample. Resilience Scale for Adults and Personality Research Form were used to assess resilience and personality traits of the subjects respectively. Criterion groups on Resilience were formed for studying the relationship between resilience and various personality traits. Findings of One-way ANOVA suggest that the criterion groups differed significantly in Affiliation, Cognitive Structure, Dominance, Endurance, Exhibition, Impulsivity, Nurturance and Understanding. Discriminant analysis revealed that Exhibition, Impulsivity and Understanding predicted over 67% of the variance in resilience.

Keywords: Resilient, Personality

Resilience refers to the capacity of individuals to cope with stress and catastrophe. In addition to coping with past and current negative events resilience also indicates a characteristic resistance to future negative events. Resilience connotes one's capacity to withstand stressors and not to manifest psychopathological conditions. Resilience is the ability to spring back from adversity and successfully adapt to it. It is a universal capacity that allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity. The resilient behavior may spring in response to adversity in the form of maintenance or normal development despite the adversity, or a promoter of growth beyond the present level of functioning. Resilience may be promoted not necessarily because of adversity, but may be developed in anticipation of inevitable adversities.

Resilient individual escapes psychological dysfunction in spite of being in

difficult circumstances. While less resilient individuals get worn out and negatively impacted by stressors in life, those high on resilience display dynamic self-renewal when faced with similar stressors. Despite their exposure to severe risk factors children who are resilient thrive and excel under such circumstances. A longitudinal study on resilient children reported that despite extreme disadvantage these children managed not only to succeed but also to contribute to the society (Werner, 1994). Resilience is the ability to thrive, mature, and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances. These circumstances may include biological abnormalities or environmental obstacles. Further, the adverse circumstances may be chronic and consistent or severe and infrequent. To thrive, mature, and increase competence, a person must draw upon all of his or her resources: biological, psychological, and environmental (Gordon, 1995). Problematic

social ties and downward social comparison together predicted over 48% of the variance in resilience among low-income, employed, African American women (Todd & Worell, 2000). Students with learning disabilities obtained significantly higher resiliency scores and significantly higher scores on the "Need for Achievement Scale" than their counterparts without learning disabilities (Hall, Spruill & Webster, 2002). A study that investigated three outcome groups of late adolescents identified as at risk for major depression revealed interesting findings. Examination of the phenomenon of resilience among the at-risk adolescents with no diagnosis revealed that family cohesion and social support are associated with resilience (Carbonell, Reinherz & Giaconia, 2001).

Of the several factors associated with resilience personality factors seem to have an appeal to psychologists. A study of university freshmen examined the relation between intention to withdraw from college and personality. The variables studied included the Big Five personality factors as well as narrow personality traits. The findings suggest that agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, as well as aggression, career-decidedness, optimism, self-directed learning, sense of identity and work drive were significantly related to withdrawal intention. However, intention to withdraw from college was not related to openness and tough-mindedness. Sense of Identity, emotional stability, and work drive accounted for 22% of the variance in the measure of intention to withdraw (Lounsbury, 2004).

Another study investigated the relationship between resilience and Eysenck personality dimensions among post-graduate students, both males and females. Findings revealed that, as expected, psychoticism, extraversion and neuroticism to have a significant effect on resilience. Low psychoticism group, high extraversion group

and low neuroticism groups have significantly higher resilience than high psychoticism group, low extraversion group and high neuroticism group respectively. The personality dimensions studied did not interact significantly with one another with regard to resilience (Annalakshmi, 2007).

A cross validation study of resilience scale related the scores on the scale to measures of the Big Five Personality Factors and cognitive abilities and social intelligence. The measures were obtained using tests administered to a large group of applicants for the military college. Confirmatory factor analyses confirmed the fit of the five-factor model, measuring 'personal strength', 'social competence', 'structured style', 'family cohesion' and 'social resources'. Using Big Five to discriminate between well adjusted and more vulnerable personality profiles it was found that all resilience factors were positively correlated with the well adjusted personality profile obtained using Big Five. The measure of personal strength was most associated with the measure of emotional stability. The measure of social competence was most associated with the measures of extroversion and agreeableness, as well as TSIS-social skills. The measure of structured style was associated with conscientiousness. The measures of social competence were associated with extroversion and agreeableness, as well as social skills. The measure of structured style was associated with conscientiousness. Measures of family cohesion and social resources were also found to be related to personality. Furthermore, the measure of resilience obtained using the scale being validated was unrelated to cognitive abilities. Thus individuals scoring high on resilience scale are reported to be psychologically healthier, better adjusted, and thus more resilient (Friborg, Barlaug, Martinussen, Rosenvinge & Hjemdal 2005). Confirmation of a few findings just cited has been obtained in

another study that involved on moderately large group of undergraduate students. The findings of this study revealed that resilience was negatively associated with neuroticism and positively associated with extraversion and conscientiousness (Campbell-Sills, Cohan & Stein, 2006).

The effect of probabilistic orientation on resilience among graduate students and scientists was examined in a study. This study attempted to relate resilience with probabilistic orientation, a typical phenomenological construct of personality. Findings revealed that, as expected, the high group on probabilistic orientation had significantly greater resilience as compared to the low group on probabilistic orientation. The group of graduate students had significantly greater resilience than the scientists (Annalakshmi, 2007).

In the present study focuses on identifying and delineating the needs manifesting as personality traits associated with resilience. Behavior is driven by an internal state of disequilibrium and a need is a potentiality or readiness to respond in a certain way under certain given circumstances. Need is a noun which stands for the fact that a certain trend is apt to recur (Murray, 1938). The secondary needs, those which either are derived from our biological needs or are inherent in our psychological nature include achievement, recognition, acquisition, dominance, aggression, autonomy, affiliation, rejection, nurturance, play and cognizance. The stronger needs are expressed more often over time and lead to more intense behavior. Thus personality is being driven by the secondary needs and the extent to which each of these needs was felt by an individual shaped their personality and behavior. Thus needs may be recognized as traits within the psychoanalytic literature. In the light of accumulated research evidences, Jackson (1989) has modified the needs proposed by Murray and has

redefined them to describe personality comprehensively, if not exhaustively. The present investigation attempts to identify the personality traits associated with resilience as discussed above.

Method

Sample:

The sample for the present investigation consisted of 155 young adults who were postgraduate students in the university. The age of the subjects ranged from 20 to 25 years. The sample included 80 males and 75 females.

Instruments:

Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA) (Friborg et al., 2005) and Personality Research Form (Jackson, D.N., 1989) was used to measure resilience and personality traits of the subjects.

The Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA) consists of 33 items with bipolar response options. The respondent is to give his rating for each of the item of a 5-point Likert type of rating scale. The Scale provides measure on 6 sub-scales namely Personal strength/ Perception of Self, Personal strength/ Perception of future, Structured style, Social competence, Family cohesion and Social Resources. The scoring was done based on the guidelines given in the manual.

Personality Research Form: It was developed by Jackson (Jackson, D.N., 1989) refining the concepts of personality variables put forth by Murray (1938). The Research form focuses on the areas of normal functioning rather than upon psychopathology, and provides an assessment of traits that are relevant to a variety of human functioning. This test which consists of 352 statements yields measures of 20 variables namely abasement, achievement, affiliation, aggression, autonomy, change, cognitive structure, defence, dominance, endurance,

exhibition, harmavoidance, impulsivity, nurturance, order, play, sentience, social recognition, succorance and understanding. In addition to these the test also includes scales on test taking attitudes and validity. The various traits cited are grouped into 7 factors including measures of impulse expression and control, orientation toward work and play, orientation toward direction from other people, intellectual and aesthetic orientations, degree of ascendancy, and degree and quality of interpersonal orientations besides test-taking attitudes and validity based on factor analysis of the various scales.

The respondent is required to give a 'True' or 'False' response indicating whether the statement described him or not. Certain statements are positively stated while some are negatively stated. A score is assigned to every response made by the subject that endorses the presence of the particular personality trait that is implied by the statement. The scoring is done based on the scoring key provided in the manual.

Results

Construction of Criterion Groups on Resilience: The median of the distribution of scores of the subjects on Resilience was used to form the criterion groups distinguishing high and low levels of resilience. The scores of the subjects in the sample on Resilience ranged from 37 to 165. The mean and standard deviation of the scores of subjects on Resilience were 134.63 and 18.28 respectively. The median of the distribution of scores of the sample on Resilience was 138.

All the subjects in the sample who had a score less than the median score were grouped together to constitute the Low Resilience Group and the subjects with score greater than the median score were grouped together to form the High Resilience Group. The median score was shared by 8 subjects in the sample. These eight subjects were

equally distributed randomly to the low and high group on Resilience. There were 78 and 77 subjects in the low and the high groups respectively. The mean and standard deviation of resilience scores of the Low Resilience Group were 120.45 and 14.21 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the resilience scores of the High Resilience Group were 149.00 and 7.54 respectively.

Comparison of the Criterion Groups on Personality Traits: Prior to analyzing the data, the social desirability and validity of the responses of the subjects were analyzed. The mean and standard deviation for the scores of the whole sample on the desirability scale were 9.76 and 2.90, and on the infrequency scale were 6.22 and 2.98 respectively. The maximum score on desirability scale and on the infrequency scale were 16 and 13 respectively.

The mean and standard deviation of the low resilient group on Desirability were 9.12 and 2.71 respectively; the mean and standard deviation of the low resilient group on Infrequency were 6.22 and 3.04 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the high resilient group on Desirability were 10.42 and 2.96 respectively; the mean and standard deviation of the high resilient group on Infrequency were 6.23 and 2.93 respectively.

The student-t value on analysis of Desirability score was 0.002 that indicated that the criterion groups did not differ significantly with regard to Desirability. Similarly the student-t value on analysis of Infrequency score was 0.4869 that indicated that the criterion groups did not differ significantly with regard to Infrequency. The test taking attitude and validity of the responses of the subjects seem to be acceptable for further analysis.

The criterion groups on resilience were compared on the various measures of personality traits obtained using ANOVA. With regard to measures of Impulse Expression

and Control the F-ratios relating to impulsivity [$F(1,153) = 7.38; p < 0.01$] and cognitive structure [$F(1,153) = 5.68; p < 0.01$] are significant and the F-ratios relating to change, harmavoidance and order are not significant. The high resilience group has an impulsivity score (Mean=5.91; SD=3.30) that is lesser than that of the low resilience group (Mean=7.26; SD=2.86), and the high resilience group has a cognitive structure score (Mean=10.13; SD=3.36) that is greater than that of the low resilience group (Mean=9.00; SD=2.51).

The findings show that high resilience group is having lesser impulsivity and greater cognitive structure than the low resilience group. However both resilience groups have similar level of needs for change, harmavoidance and order. The results show that the high resilience group is less impulsive and desires to have well defined cognitive structure. It tends to have control over it self and resists acting on the "spur of the moment" and without any deliberation. With adequate control over its expression of feelings and wishes, it may never be volatile in its emotional expression. It is characterized by intolerance of ambiguity. It could not tolerate ambiguity or uncertainty in information. It wants all questions answered completely. It desires to make decision based upon definite knowledge, rather than upon guesses and probabilities. However, the low and high probabilistically oriented groups do not seem to differ from another on need for change, harmavoidance and order.

The finding relating to the relationship between resilience and impulsivity is in expected direction. Similarly the finding relating to the relationship between probabilistic orientation and cognitive structure is also in line with the expectation.

On dimension of measures of Orientation toward Work and Play, the F-ratio relating to endurance is significant [$F(1,153) = 5.90; p < 0.01$], while the F-ratios relating to

Achievement and Play are not significant. The high resilience group has an endurance score (Mean= 9.61; SD=2.99) that is greater than that of the low resilience group (Mean= 8.50; SD=2.70). However, the two groups compared do not distinguish themselves from one another on achievement and play. The high resilience group has high endurance than the low resilience group. However, both the groups have similar levels of needs for achievement and play.

With regard to Measures of Orientation toward Direction from Other People, the F-ratios relating to succorance and autonomy are not significant. Thus the results show that the high and low resilience groups do not differ from another with regard to succorance and autonomy. Both the groups have similar levels of needs for succorance and autonomy.

Findings relating to the factor of measures of intellectual and aesthetic orientations are interesting. The F-ratio relating to understanding is significant [$F(1,153) = 7.29; p < 0.01$] and while the F-ratio relating to sentience is not significant. The high resilience group has a score on understanding (Mean=8.99; SD=2.95) that is greater than that of the low resilience group (Mean=7.65; SD=2.94). The groups, however, do not distinguish themselves from one another with regard to sentience. High resilience group has greater need for understanding than that of the low resilience group. Both the groups have similar levels of need for sentience.

The scores of the subjects on measures of degree of ascendancy show that the F-ratio relating to dominance is significant [$F(1,153) = 4.90; p < 0.05$] and the F-ratio relating to abasement is not significant. The high resilience group has a score on dominance (Mean= 9.53; SD=3.58) that is greater than that of the low resilience group (Mean= 8.32; SD=3.23). The results show that the two groups do not differ from another with regard

to Abasement. The high resilience group has greater need for dominance compared with the low resilience group. Both the groups have similar levels of need for abasement.

The scores of the subjects on measures of degree and quality of interpersonal orientation show that the F-ratios relating to Affiliation [$F(1,153)=10.38$; $p<0.01$], Nurturance [$F(1,153)=5.09$; $p<0.05$], and Exhibition [$F(1,153)=17.08$; $p<0.01$] are significant and the F-ratios relating to Social Recognition, Aggression and Defence are not significant. The high resilience group has greater scores on Affiliation (Mean=10.49; SD=3.12), Nurturance (Mean=11.77; SD=2.81), and Exhibition (Mean=9.12; SD=2.94), than the low resilience group on Affiliation (Mean= 8.83; SD=3.29), Nurturance (Mean=10.72; SD=2.97), and Exhibition (Mean= 7.01; SD=3.38). The groups do not differentiate themselves from each other on Social Recognition, Aggression and Defence.

The high resilience group has greater needs for affiliation, nurturance and exhibition than the low resilience group. Both the groups have similar levels of the needs social recognition, aggression and defence.

The Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients of the scores of the subjects on Personality Research Form is shown in Table1. The Classification Results of the Discriminant Analysis of the scores of the subjects on Personality Research Form is shown in Table-1.

Table 1: Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients Discriminating the high and low groups on Resilience (R).

	Function
Exhibition	.232
Impulsivity	-.186
Understanding	.138
(Constant)	-1.795

(Unstandardized Coefficients)

As may be seen from the above table Exhibition, Impulsivity and Understanding contribute to discriminate the high and low resilience groups among the variables studied in this investigation. The prediction equation formed by these variables runs as follows: $R = 0.232 E - 0.186 I + 0.138 U - 1.795$

The Classification Results of the Discriminant Analysis of the scores of the subjects on Personality Research Form is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Classification Results of the Discriminant Analysis of the scores of the subjects on Personality Research Form.

Variable	Predicted Group Membership		
	LRG	HRG	Total
Original			
Count %			
Low Resilience Group	51	27	78
High Resilience Group	24	53	77
Low Resilience Group	65.4	34.6	100.0
High Resilience Group	31.2	68.8	100.0

67.1% of original grouped cases correctly classified. As given in the above table when grouped based on the prediction equation for resilience given elsewhere about 67.1% of original grouped cases are classified correctly.

As may be seen in Table among the various needs involved in the comparison of high and low groups on resilience (R) in this study, needs for Exhibition (E), Impulsivity (I) and Understanding (U) have been found to predict the resilience status of individuals: $R = 0.232 E - 0.186 I + 0.138 U$. This prediction equation has correctly predicted the classification of subjects originally grouped as belonging to high and low resilience groups to the extent of 67.1%.

Discussion

The findings of the present study suggest that the resilient is characterized by

lesser impulsivity and greater cognitive structure, greater endurance, and understanding, greater dominance as well as greater affiliation, nurturance and exhibition also distinguishes the resilient from others. Of the various traits studied here exhibition, impulsivity and understanding could correctly discriminate to a greater extent the highly resilient from others. Thus the personality profile of the resilient etching out of the findings seems to show that the resilient wants to be centre of attention and may enjoy being dramatic and witty. He is not hasty or rash and not easily excitable. He is inquiring and curious, rational and inquisitive.

The findings are in line with earlier studies that report a positive relationship between resilience and extraversion (Friborg O et al., 2005; Laura Campbell-Sills et al., 2006 & Annalakshmi, 2007). Resilient children were found to be more sociable than those who were less resilient (Garmezy, 1993; Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; Werner, 1989a; Luthar, 1991). Therefore we find that the finding of the present study suggesting high sociability is in line with the expectation. That the resilient is less impulsive has been confirming the earlier finding of the previous studies reporting negative relationship between resilience and neuroticism (Annalakshmi, 2007), and positive relationship between resilience and emotional stability (Lounsbury, 2004).

The finding of the present study relating to understanding characteristic of the resilient is inline with the findings of the earlier studies on resilient children. The earlier findings report that the resilient children have superior reasoning and problem solving (Dubow & Luster, 1990; Werner, 1989a; Werner, 1990). Resilient children were also reported to display high intellectual motivation and a probing drive to understand (Murphy & Moriarty, 1976). The resilient children are further reported to mediate their own learning and problem-solving by taking the initiative

to question, suggest, observe, and imitate (Nelson-Le Gall & Jones, 1991). It is interesting that the findings obtained on adults in the present study augment the findings obtained on children with regard to cognitive structure and understanding.

Being high on endurance the resilient shows willingness to work for long hours. He/she perseveres and does not give up quickly on a problem, even in face of great difficulty. It demonstrates patience and is unrelenting in work habits. Resilient adolescents demonstrated healthier academic behavior by spending more time on homework (Lee, Winfield, & Wilson, 1991).

It is likely that resilience and the personality traits reinforce one another in a cyclic manner. An entertaining, colorful and dramatic individual is able to look at the lighter side of every event happening in his life, even ones that are negative. This helps in taking things with the seriousness they rightly deserve instead of exaggerating its importance in one's life, thus influencing his/her resilience. Being less impulsive helps an individual to have a complete control over his emotions. The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram states remaining silent and avoiding spontaneous expression of anger in any form is the only remedy to control anger. Such an approach would help the person think of resources that would enable him get out of the negative circumstances of which he would be otherwise blind if he gets emotional. This could contribute to resilience. Inquiring and analytical attribute resulting in more rational, astute and investigative thinking would contribute to better awareness of alternatives when one is stuck in a crisis. Their probing characteristics results in better understanding of the real root of the problem, an appreciation of which helps him to handle it in a more realistic manner.

Resilience is not a permanent capacity but is a dynamic construct (Winfield, 1991).

Personality traits like exhibition, impulsivity and understanding seem to contribute to resilience, and being resilient enables one to be more exhibitionistic, less impulsive and have more understanding than the less resilient individuals. Thus the relationship between resilience on one hand and personality traits like exhibitionism, impulsivity and understanding can be seen as circulatory. Personality traits like exhibitionism, impulsivity and understanding contributes to resilience, and being resilient enhances the personality traits. The findings imply that the stronger needs contributing to resilience are expressed more often over time and lead to more intense resilient behavior. Thus resilient personality is being driven by certain secondary needs and the extent to which each of these needs was felt by an individual shaped their personality and behavior. Further when an individual develops resilience to greater extent it might also influence the needs that contribute to it and accentuate them. This explains the dynamics of resilience personality.

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