

## **Resiliency of Inner-City Yoruba University Undergraduates in South Western Nigeria**

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**KEYWORDS** Social support; students; education; socio-economic status

**ABSTRACT** The present study focus on the influence of psychological factors on the exhibition of resilience in selected university of Ibadan undergraduates from the south-western part of Nigeria. From the study it has been observed that high self-esteem, internal locus of control and effective utilization of intra and extra-familial social support influenced resiliency among the university undergraduates in the south-western Nigeria. There is need for parents no matter their level of education and socioeconomic status to build up the self-esteem of their children and to be responsive to their needs in whichever way they can as these go a long way to ensure the success of the youths later in life. There is also need for the development of social support policy by the government

### **INTRODUCTION**

The changing Nigerian society in terms of political, economical, social, psychological, technological and in almost every facet of life and development has brought a drift from the traditionally accepted way of life in every family. These changes may also have brought some stressful situations to which individuals most especially youths have to adapt. For example two youths of the same age and sex are exposed to the same stressful experience; one crumbles while the other remains emotionally healthy. Why?

The term resiliency is derived from the Latin roots meaning to jump or bounce back. Resilient children are those who weather circumstances that would blight most others, who maintain their composure and competence under challenge or threat, or who bounce back from traumatic events. They are children of the inner-city areas or ghetto who distinguish themselves in the different professions. They are the children of farmers from remote and disadvantaged villages who become professors in higher institutions of learning. They are the products of divorce who adjust and go on with their lives. They are the neglected or abused children who manage to form intimate relationships, good marriages and good parents. They are children from poverty stricken homes who despite the lack and insufficiency in their homes have become successful in their lives. Resilient children therefore are those who weather adverse circumstances, function well despite challenges or threats or bounce back from traumatic events that would have a highly

negative impact on the emotional development of most children. Resiliency is the ability to absorb high level of disruptive change while displaying minimal dysfunctional behaviour. The adverse circumstances may include psychological, political, economic or environmental obstacles (Papalia et al., 1999). In essence, to thrive, mature and increase competence, a person must draw upon all of his or her resources: biological, psychological and environmental

Resilience arises out of a belief in one's own self-efficacy, the ability to deal with change and a repertoire of social problem-solving skills. It is the tendency for a child, an adult, or a family to rebound from stressful circumstances or events and resume usual activity and success. Resilience is the power of recovery. It therefore describes dynamic, responsive capacities fostering healthy development, interaction and adaptation in the face of non-normal challenges.

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **Risk and Protective Factors**

To classify children and youths as resilient, two criteria must be met. Firstly, there must be a significant threat to the individual, typically indexed by high risk status. Secondly, the quality of adjustment to the high risk or later development must be good. A broad array of factors may place children and youths at risk for developing psychological problems and retrogression in life. They may be at risk because of genetic or biological factors such as a psychotic parent or

serious illness; or because of demographic factors such as parent's income or education, family size and structure, or minority status. They also may be at risks because of adverse social relationships within and outside of the house because of stressful life events such as divorce, death or remarriage of a parent, accidents, and multiple shifts in caretakers, institutionalization or repeated hospitalization. There is therefore great variability in response to such risks. Many children exhibit resiliency under extremely difficult circumstances while other seem to suffer permanent developmental delays or disruptions.

Studies have shown that some children are not only able to cope with stress; they actually seem to be enhanced by it. On confronting stresses later in life they have learned from their experiences and seem better able to adapt to new challenges than are children who have experienced little or no stress.

This has been called a "steeling" or "inoculation" effect (Rutter, 1987; Hetherington, 1991). Such a "steeling" effect is most likely to occur when unresolved stresses have not accumulated over time and when supportive or protective factors are available.

Protective factors are those that buffer the individual from the effects of stress and promote coping and good adjustment in the face of adversity. The important feature of protective factors is that it modifies the children's response to a risk situation. This modification requires some form of protection of the reaction to a factor that in ordinary circumstances leads to a maladaptive outcome (Rutter, 1987). These protective factors have often been given the credit for facilitating the process of positive adjustment to otherwise adverse circumstances of life. Three protective factors have frequently been identified. The first of these are positive individual attributes such as children who have easy temperaments, high self esteem, and internal locus of control, are intelligent, independent, and in some cases children who are female are more adaptable in the face of stressful life experiences (Garmezy, 1983; Hetherington, 1991; Rutter, 1987). Moreover, resilient children and youths have been found in the face of adverse conditions to have personal attributes which include, religious faith problem solving skills, optimism, a strong sense of purpose and future, absence of organic deficits and increased responsiveness, flexibility, and are able to look at things from alternative

ways. (Seligman, 1990; Penick and Jepsen, 1992; Stipek et al., 1992). The second are protective factors, which involve a supportive family environment, for example the presence of one warm supportive parent can help to buffer the adverse effects of poverty, divorce, family discord, and child abuse. Rutter (1979) found that three quarters of children of troubled families who did not have a good relationship with one parent displayed conduct disorders compared to only one quarter of those who had good relationship. This finding is in agreement with Feldman et al. (1987) who stated that the social relationships among family members are by far the best predictors of behavioural outcomes in children. Other studies have also shown that rapport with a supportive adult, usually a parent or caregiver facilitated recovery from loss, stress and trauma, while affectionate bond to the non-alcoholic spouse in alcoholic family was found to be the most important variable in fostering adaptation. In summary, healthy child and youth development is often associated with support and affection from one or more adults as buffering the effect of risk.

The final set of protective factors involves extra-familial individuals or societal agencies such as the school system, peer group, or church, which supports the youth's coping efforts. Resilient children and youths have been found to utilize social support systems more effectively than their peers. These people form the external support systems acting like the supportive parent by forming relational bond with the resilient child or youth. For example, where a teacher becomes a source of support for a youth, his role no longer stops at teaching the child. The teacher also becomes a role model, a confidant and source of inspiration for the resilient youth. This study focus on the influence of psychosocial factors on the exhibition of resilience in selected University of Ibadan undergraduates from the south-western part of Nigeria. The psychosocial factors considered include self esteem, locus of control, age and sex. It has been considered very important to examine these factors as they influence youth resilience in the face of adverse conditions in the both the family and in the larger society in the country.

#### HYPOTHESES

1. Students with high self-esteem will score higher on resiliency scale than students with

- low self-esteem.
2. Students with internal locus of control will score higher on the resiliency scale than those with external locus of control.
  3. Age, sex, self-esteem, and locus of control will individually and jointly predict resiliency among the participants.

### METHODOLOGY

This involves an ex-post facto design in which battery of scores of the independent variables against dependent variable all of which were already in existence. All the variables were not subject to any manipulation.

The participants were 150 undergraduates from various departments in the University of Ibadan in the south-western part of Nigeria. The instrument used was a questionnaire. It consists of four sections. Section A measured the demographic data such as age, sex, and educational level of student, religion and parents' educational attainment. Section B consists of a 9-item scale designed to measure resilience in this study. It is a scale constructed in the Likert format. The scale has split-half coefficient of  $r = 0.88$  and an alpha of  $r = .78$ . The higher the score the higher the resiliency exhibited by the individual. Section D measures self-esteem. The instrument used is a 15-item Likert type scale designed by Adanijo and Oyefeso (1985). It has responses from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The higher the score, the more positive the self esteem of the individual.

The authors reported split-half reliability  $r = 0.76$  while the Cronbach alpha for this study was found to be 0.72. The last section, which is section D, measured locus of control of the participants. The instrument used was designed by Craig et al. (1984). The authors reported 0.79 among students while the Cronbach alpha for this study was 0.73. High scores indicate externality while low scores indicate internality on the scale.

### Participants

A screening device which consists of 15 items in the oral interview format was used to select those who qualify to take part in the study. The questions could exceed the 15 items depending on the responses of the respondent during the interview. The answers provided by the participants could also lead to another question. The screening device include risk factors such

as belonging to low socioeconomic background, having parents with no formal education or low educational background, large family size, and being a product of divorced parents.

The adverse conditions also include stressful life events such as having lost parents, living with stepparents, receiving inadequate support from parents or extended family members, sponsoring self, previous attendance of public primary and secondary schools. Questions were constructed, based on each participant's peculiar situation and in such a way as not to traumatize them. Those who refuse to answer certain questions were not included in the study. A total of 150 participants so selected representing the faculties in the University of Ibadan were used for the study. Those finally selected completed the questionnaires.

### Statistical Analysis

T-test for independent means was used to test hypotheses one and two while regression analysis was used to test hypothesis three.

### RESULTS

The table 1 shows the result of the hypothesis, which stated that students with high self-esteem will show greater score on resilient scale than students who have low self-esteem. This was investigated using t-test for independent measures, the result showed that significant difference existed between the high and low self-esteem students on resiliency,  $t(82)$

**Table 1: A summary table of t-test for independent measures showing the difference between students with high self-esteem and low self-esteem on resiliency**

Variable	N	X	SD
Resiliency			
High Esteem	57	39.35	3.58
Low Esteem	27	37.55	4.03

( $t=2.06$ ,  $df=82$ ,  $p<.01$ )

**Table 2: A summary table of t-test for independent measures showing the difference between students with internal and external locus of control on resilience**

Variable	N	X	SD
Resiliency			
Internal	48	39.35	3.63
External	41	36.53	3.53

( $t=3.69$ ,  $df=87$ ,  $p<.01$ )

**Table 3: A summary table of multiple regression analysis showing the joint and independent interaction on resiliency by age, sex, self-esteem and locus on control**

Variable	Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	$\hat{a}$	t	P	F	P
Resiliency	Age	.21	.668	.799	> .05	3.39	< .05
	Sex		-.595	-.618	> .05		
	Self Esteem		.405	.318	> .05		
	Locus of control		-.371	-3.02	< .05		

= 2.06,  $P < .01$ . Hence the hypothesis was supported.

As shown in table 2 above, the result of the hypothesis, which stated that those students with internal locus of control will score higher in resilient scale than those with external locus of control. This was investigated using t-test for independent measures, the result showed that significant difference existed between internal and external locus of control on resiliency,  $t(87) = 3.69$ ,  $P < .01$ . Hence, hypothesis two was supported.

As shown in table 3, there was a joint and independent prediction of resiliency by age, sex, self-esteem and locus of control. However, it is only locus of control that independently predicted resiliency among the students ( $R^2 = .21$ ;  $F(4,56) = 3.39$ ,  $P < .05$ ). Hence the hypothesis was supported.

### DISCUSSION

Hypothesis on which stated that students with high self-esteem will show greater score on resiliency scale than students who have low self-esteem was supported. This result shows that high self-esteem is a protective factor, going by the participants' higher score on resiliency. This is supported by Baumeister et al. (1989) who posited that people high on their level of self-esteem are motivated by a concern for self enhancement, that is, they are interested in enhancing their prestige and public image, also want others to think well of them and praise them when they do something well like scoring good grades.

The results also support the findings of Seligman (1990) who found that resilient children are adaptable, high on self esteem and tend to be good students. Such students feel that they are competent. It follows that the participants in the Nigerian setting have academic success as the most important factor to actualize self enhancement despite the risk factors that may hinder the attainment of such success. They are able to adapt and adjust in order to keep going

for progress and the achievement of the ultimate goal in view.

The second hypothesis which stated that students with internal locus of control will score higher on resilience scale than those with the external locus of control was supported. This could be as a result of the assumption that the students that are in adversity due to one situation or the other tend to believe that they can change their situation through diligent work on their academics or through religiosity. Rutter (1954, 1966) in his concept of generalized expectancies proposed that in a new situation we base our expectancies of what will happen on general beliefs about our ability to influence events. People are also placed along a continuum of what has been called generalized locus of control, that is, at one end of this trait dimension we find people with an extreme internal orientation and at the other end, people with an extreme external orientation. Now the resilient students that perform well in any academic environment usually have internal locus of control, that is, they generally believe that what happens to them is the result of their own actions. Those students strictly adhere to certain rules of their own such as "I think I can do it" in any given situation and they make sure that this actually came to pass. The result also supports the findings of Penick and Jepsen (1992), Stipek et al. (1992), who reported that resilient children have personal attributes such as flexibility, problem-solving skills, a strong sense of future and the ability to look at things from alternative ways. The factors boost their morale and serve as encouragement for their belief in themselves and their ability to succeed.

Bandura's (1982) theory of self-efficacy, in support of this finding reported that people with problems generally know exactly what actions they need to take in order to do the things with confidence. He termed self-efficacy to be individual's perception of the chances of being successful in any given situation. Therefore, the resilient students have internal locus of control, no matter the situation they find themselves

usually have confidence that they will succeed.

Finally, the last hypothesis, which, stated that there will be individual and joint prediction of resiliency by age, sex, self-esteem and locus of control was supported. This shows that age, sex, self-esteem and locus of control jointly interacted to influence the level of resiliency exhibited how resilient students persist in their academic pursuits in the presence of adversity. These factors accounted for or predicted 21% of the variation in resiliency exhibited by the student's locus of control that independently predicted 37.1% of the variation in resiliency among the undergraduate students. Flach (1988) made an important and encouraging observation that resilience is a strength most of us can develop and practice. He came up with a profile of resilient personality which includes:

- A strong supple sense of self-esteem
- Independence of thoughts and action
- A high level of personal discipline and a sense of responsibility
- Open mindedness and receptivity to new ideas
- Insight
- A high tolerance of distress
- Focus of commitment to life, etc.

In other words, these psychosocial factors play a vital role in prediction of resiliency among the undergraduate students.

The result is also in support of Masten and Coastworth (1998), Werner (1993), Feldman et al. (1987) who reported that supportive social relationships could be found among peer group, school system, church, family members and supportive adults which also serve as protective factors for the resilient child. Also, resilient children and youths were found to make more effective use of social support systems than their non-resilient counterparts.

### CONCLUSION

The study suggested that high self-esteem, internal locus of control and effective utilization of intra and extra-familial social support

influenced resiliency among the university undergraduates in the south-western Nigeria. There is need for parents no matter their level of education and socioeconomic status to build up the self-esteem of their children and to be responsive to their needs in whichever way they can as these go a long way to ensure the success of the youths later in life. There is also need for the development of social support policy by the government

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