



THE CONFLUENCE OF SUPPORT AND OUTLOOK: EVALUATING RESILIENCE FACTORS AMONG CHANDIGARH'S GOVERNMENT SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS.

Jaswant Singh^{1*}, Professor Seema Vinayak²

¹*Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh

²Professor, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh

***Corresponding author:** Jaswant Singh

*Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Abstract

This study examined the perceptions of social support, optimism, and resilience among adolescents from government schools in Chandigarh. A sample of 200 adolescents (102 male and 98 female) was assessed using the LOT-R by Scheier & Carver, 1994, CYRM-R by Jefferies et al., 2018, and the MSPSS by Zimet et al., 1988. The Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis was performed using SPSS (version 26). The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between the variables and their subscales. Also perceived social support and optimism both predicted resilience significantly. These results underscore the potential benefits of interventions aimed at enhancing optimism and social support networks to foster resilience in this population. The implications of these findings for psychological well-being and educational practices are discussed.

Key words: Resilience, Support, Optimism, Adolescent, Chandigarh.

Introduction

The interplay of social support, resilience, and optimism among adolescents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds offers a critical area of inquiry, particularly in understanding how these variables contribute to their general well-being and opportunities. This study aims to explore the current state of this cohort with respect to these dimensions, acknowledging that despite the adversity associated with poverty, the presence or absence of social support and individual resilience can significantly impact their outlook on life. By examining these relationships, this study aims to illuminate how young individuals navigate their challenges, with the goal of identify potential pathways for intervention and support. Through this investigation, we aspire to contribute to the more general discourse on promoting positive psychological outcomes in adolescents facing economic hardships, thus enriching the field of positive psychology with nuanced insights into resilience and optimism amid adversity.

Perceived social support encompasses an individual's perception of care, comfort, love, worth, and assistance they receive from their social network, which is crucial for accessing supportive relationships and resources (Clark, 2023). Social support theory suggests that robust family and community networks are vital for adolescents living in poverty, as these can alleviate psychological distress and mitigate behavioral problems by providing a buffer against financial stress. Such support, essential for mental health and resilience, influences an individual's development from birth

throughout life. Availability of support is often contingent on social factors, notably poverty. For instance, parents in financially strained households might prioritize material needs over psychological ones, such as social support (Cohen & McKay, 2020). Furthermore, an individual's economic status can significantly influence the reception and perception of support from various sources, such as relatives, friends, teachers, and significant others (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017). The support provided by such networks can serve as a foundation for building resilience, particularly in financially challenged households.

Along with impacting social support, financial circumstances introduce a chain of challenging events that – if viewed positively – may contribute to building resilience among individuals. Resilience is a complex and dynamic process shaped by neurobiological profiles, experiences, and training (Kaye-Kauderer, 2021). A resilient individual can bounce back from setbacks, and due to this ability, they may start looking at the future positively (Gómez-Molinero et al., 2018).

Optimism is a multifaceted concept, encompassing positive expectations for the future, a "glass half full" perspective, and the belief in the strength of good over bad (Massin, 2022). An optimistic individual generally sees opportunities in the face of challenges. Recently, with the wave of positive psychology, many researchers have attempted to document what makes life worth living among different populations. Hence, we designed this study to assess the interrelationship between social support, resilience, and optimism among adolescents of poor socioeconomic status in Chandigarh city.

Recognizing the unique context of Chandigarh, with its dense network of government schools serving largely underprivileged communities, provides a fitting backdrop for this investigation. There are very few studies where researchers have incorporated this cohort due to hectic permission acquisition and long waiting (sometimes even months) to be able to visit these schools for research purposes ethically. Our current study sheds light on the perception of social support, resilience, and optimism among adolescents studying in government schools in Chandigarh.

Review of Literature

Optimism and Resilience

"Höltge et al. (2019) suggested how optimism acted as a resilience resource—especially in later life—implying that this relationship may have roots in earlier developmental stages. Rutter (2012) explained this by considering resilience as a dynamic interplay between the individual and environment, which may be pertinent to adolescent experiences. These concepts set the stage for exploring how optimism could play a vital role in the resilience of adolescents from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Social Support as a Resilience Factor

Ungar (2004) argued the importance of parental social support in fostering resilience among high-risk adolescents. Researchers have documented that in some areas, families led by adolescents display remarkable resilience despite their scant resources. Annalakshmi (2015) conducted a study in India and found that social support is crucial for adolescents in impoverished households. A survey by Kour (2022) found that family environment plays a pivotal role in fostering resilience along with achievement motivation.

Social Support and Coping Strategy

As children age and enter into adolescence, they start seeking peer support rather than parents (Hombrados-Mendieta et al. 2012). However, adult support remains an important factor in developing effective coping strategies among adolescents in urban poverty (Reife et al., 2020). Perceived social support is also found positive related to mental well-being and negative related to stress (Mohan & Mustafa, 2022). In recent research it is documented that that social support and resilience are vital in aiding adolescents through divorce's challenges, underscoring the need for solid networks to bolster their coping and resilience (Emad et al., 2023).

Social Support and Mental Health

Perception of social support is studied in connection with well-being among adolescents from various cultural contexts, highlighting the significant role of parental support (McGrath et al. 2012). Later, Chang et al. (2014) also identified the positive impact of social support on the mental health of vulnerable adolescents. A recent study has found that social support increases well-being and mental health among ageing people which shows how important social support is for different age people. The recent empirical evidence elucidates that augmented social support correlates positively with enhanced mental health and subjective well-being in the geriatric demographic, underscoring the quintessential influence of social support across various age strata (Awad et al., 2024).

Socioeconomic Status and Behavioral Outcomes

The socioeconomic factor is seen impacting behaviour and relationships of adolescents directly or indirectly. In a study Malakar (2021) examined the impact of the parent-child relationship and socioeconomic status on children's behavior. It was found that lower socioeconomic status was associated with heightened externalizing problems. The parent's financial status is also related to academic achievements and family education level.

Socioeconomic Status, Social Support, and Quality of Life

Parents' financial conditions are documented to impact parental social support and health related quality of life. Along with financial status, IQ, and Gross Motor Functioning of sick children also play critical role in quality of life (Lawson, 2018). In a recent study Li et al. (2020) explored the relationship between socioeconomic status and social relationships and concluded that adolescent's perceived social status strongly predicts peer relationships, while objective socioeconomic status influenced parent-child and student-teacher relationships.

The study by -- indicated that social determinants such as socioeconomic status and family dynamics are linked to developmental outcomes, suggesting that these factors may also influence social support, optimism, and resilience among adolescents.

Objectives

1. To find correlation among perceived social support, resilience, and optimism of optimism among adolescents.
2. To find out if perceived social support and optimism predict resilience among adolescents.

Hypotheses.

H1: Optimism is expected to have a positive relationship with (a) perceived social support and (b) resilience.

H2: Perceived social support is expected to have a positive relationship with Resilience.

H3: Perceived social support and optimism are expected to predict resilience among adolescents.

Material and Method

We conducted this study to identify the predictors of resilience among adolescents enrolled in government schools in Chandigarh. We obtained authorization for data collection from the District Education Office, Sector 19, Chandigarh, and from the principals of these schools. To ensure participation of financially challenged adolescents, we approached schools adjacent to slum areas. We randomly selected a sample of 200 students (102 female and 98 male) aged 13 to 18 (Mean15.22, SD=1.26) for participation. Initially, students were briefed on the study's procedures before we provided them with self-report questionnaires. The students completed these during a designated 'zero period', without their class teachers present, to ensure unbiased responses. Subsequently, we entered the data from the questionnaires into MS Excel for organization and analysed it using SPSS software (Version 26).

Tools

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived social support (MSPSS) by (Zimet, et al., 1988): The MSPSS is a 12-item questionnaire that assesses the perceived sufficiency of social support from three sources: family, friends, and significant other. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale is 0.84 (95% CI = 0.83-0.86).

The Child & Youth Resilience Measure-Revised (CYRM-R) (Jefferies et al., 2018): CYRM-R by is a simplified, 3-point scale designed to assess resilience among children and adolescents. It comprises 17 items that cover various domains of resilience, including personal skills, social support, and cultural factors. The Cronbach's alpha for overall scale is 0.87, for personal resilience = 0.82, and for caregiver/relational resilience = 0.82.

Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) (Scheier & Carver, 1994): The Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) is used to measure dispositional optimism and pessimism. The scale consists of two sub-scales for optimism and pessimism, and a combined total score can be calculated by summing the optimism score and the inverse of the pessimism score. The Cronbach's alpha for Optimism is 0.70, and for pessimism is 0.74, and for total scale is 0.68.

Results:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables including Age, Optimism, Perceived Social Support, and Resilience.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age (years)	200	13	18	15.220	1.264
Optimism	200	4	20	12.650	3.115
PSS	200	2.03	7.00	5.271	1.041
PSS-Fam	200	1.00	7.00	5.253	1.244
PSS-Fri	200	1.25	7.00	5.456	1.378
PSS-So	200	1.00	7.00	5.103	1.489
Resilience	200	28.00	51.00	43.715	4.647
P-res	200	14	27	22.895	2.572
C-res	200	10	21	18.325	2.352

Note: PSS = Perceived Social Support, PSS-Fam= Perceived Social Support from Family, PSS-Fri= Perceived Social Support from Friends, PSS-SO= Perceived Social Support from Significant Other, P-res = Personal Resilience, C-res = Caregiver Resilience.

Table 2: Correlation among Optimism, Perceived Social, Support and Resilience along with their subscales.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Optimism	1							
2 PSS	.28**	1						
3 PSS-fam	.29**	.70**	1					
4 PSS-fri	.12	.73**	.21**	1				
5 PSS-SO	.22**	.84**	.44**	.42**	1			
6 CYRM	.29**	.53**	.45**	.33**	.42**	1		
7 P-res	.27**	.48**	.32**	.39**	.38**	.89**	1	
8 C-res	.24**	.46**	.51**	.19**	.37**	.88**	.59**	1

*Note: *p < .05. **p < .01., PSS= Perceived Social Support, PSS-Fam= Perceived Social Support from Family, PSS-Fri= Perceived Social Support from Friends, PSS-SO= Perceived Social Support from Significant Other, P-res= Personal Resilience, C-res = Caregiver Resilience.*

Table 3: Multiple Regression analysis predicting Resilience

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95%CI
Constant	29.37	1.62	18.12***	[26.177, 32.572]
Optimism	.23	.09	2.54*	[.052, .417]
PSS	2.16	.28	7.80***	[1.612, 2.703]

Discussion

The current study was conducted to measure resilience, social support and optimism among adolescents studying in Government schools of Chandigarh.

As the table 2 shows, we found significant positive weak correlation between optimism and perceived social support ($r = .28, p < .01$). This supports the findings of (Khasanah et al., 2020; Gheinaghi et al., 2018). This indicates that adolescents who hold a more optimistic view of their future tend to perceive higher social support. In addition optimism only correlated with two out of three subscales of social support scale. The association between optimism and family support was found ($r = .29, p < .01$) and with significant other ($r = .22, p < .01$). However, we did not find significant correlation between optimism and perceived social support from friends, suggesting a unique role of closer ties in fostering optimism within this cohort.

The correlations are engrossing when seen in light of socio-economic setting of our sample. The weak relations could be partly attributed to the adolescents' immediate focus on survival needs and limited resources within distressed communities, which may overshadow the potential benefits of optimism and its associated social support. The experience of constant hardship could foster pessimism and a sense of distrust, which in turn erode the possibility of a more optimistic outlook and the ability to garner social support, as documented by Chang et al., (2020).

The participant's preference for practical support over emotional support, stemming from the pressing need to satisfy basic necessities, further explicate the weak correlation. This tendency aligns with the notion that optimism centres on emotional and psychological well-being, which may not be prioritized when immediate tangible needs are pressing. Furthermore, a cultivated sense of self-reliance due to necessity may have resulted in lower levels of perceived social support and optimism.

We also found a weak positive correlation between optimism and resilience ($r = .29, p < .01$). We also tested correlation of optimism with subscales of the resilience scale (CYRM-R). The subscales included personal resilience and caregiver resilience. We found optimism correlated slightly more with personal resilience ($r = .27, p < .01$) than caregiver resilience ($r = .24, p < .01$). This supports and replicates the findings of previous researchers (Souri et al., 2013). Which contributes in supporting our first hypothesis. This finding also supports the Broaden and Built theory of Positive Emotions, which implies that positive emotions such as gratitude and optimism broaden people's thought-action repertoires, which in turn leads to more expansive thinking and actions. This broadening effect can build personal resources, fostering resilience over time (Fredricson 2004). Optimistic individuals typically possess higher self-efficacy, which increases their resilience, as they are more likely to attempt to overcome difficulties rather than avoid them (Bandura 1982).

The second hypothesis of our study is supported by a positive correlation between Social support and resilience ($r = .53, p < .01$). In addition, we also found a positive correlation among subscales of social support and resilience (mentioned in Table 2). This finding supports Rutter's theory of resilience, which suggests resilience as an interactive concept. The theory proposes that exposure to risk or adversity and the presence of protective factors, such as social support, are both necessary for resilience (Rutter, 2012). These results suggest that social support is a protective factor that can buffer the adverse effects of low socio-economic status on resilience.

Finally, We conducted a multiple regression to predict Resilience (measured by CYRM) based on Perceived social support (measured by MSPSS) and Optimism (measured by LOT-R), which was our third hypothesis. The model significantly predicted resilience, $F(2, 197) = 42.33, p < .001$, and accounted for approximately 30.1% of the variance in resilience scores, $R^2 = .301, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .293$. The regression equation for predicting resilience was: Resilience = $29.37 + 2.16(\text{PSS}) + .23(\text{LOT-R})$.

In this model, both perceived social support ($B = 2.157$, $SE = .277$, $\beta = .484$, $p < .001$) and LOT-R ($B = .23$, $SE = .09$, $\beta = .16$, $p = .012$) were significant predictor of resilience. Perceived social support predicted strongly, with a higher beta weight indicating a larger impact on resilience. The standard error of the estimate was 3.90665, indicating the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line. Our research corroborates and builds upon the findings of Umucu et al. (2022). Both perceived social support and optimism contribute significantly to the understanding of resilience among adolescents, and our hypothesis is supported. Recognizing that both perceived social support and optimism are indispensable to adolescent resilience can influence the development of educational curricula and psychological services aimed at reinforcing youth resilience.

Strengths of the study.

The present study provides vital support to previous findings on the same variables. The comprehensive scales used are well-established and provide essential support for the findings. We also considered subscales, which provide more nuanced understanding of the relationship between variables. Our study's findings are supported by theoretical frameworks such as Broaden and Built Theory and Self-efficacy Theory. This theoretical grounding helps to explain the mechanism behind observed relationships. The current study also considers socioeconomic status as a potential influencing factor, which shows an awareness of external factors or confounding variables that may affect the result. The findings have practical implications and they could be used to tailor interventions to enhance social support, resilience, and optimism among adolescents in school settings. This study is one of the very few in which the sample was selected from Chandigarh. These results can be helpful in understanding this cohort more deeply to help them academically by knowing their thinking pattern.

Limitations of the study.

We conducted this study on adolescents studying in government schools in Chandigarh, which might restrict the generalization of these findings. We acknowledged the possible impact of socioeconomic factors but did not include specific factors to control or explore within this study: This was because of time limitations implied by the school authority, as we were given only one period (35 minutes) to collect data from each school and sensitivity concern related to family socioeconomic status. We also might not have included all cofounding variables that could have impacted optimism, social support, and resilience, such as family dynamics, individual personality characteristics, and previous experiences of adversity. The regression model also signals this as it accounts for only 30 percent of the variance, and the rest, 70 percent of the variance, is not explained. This also indicated there are other factors affecting resilience that we did not include in this study.

Conclusion

This study adds to the growing body of literature on the importance of social support and optimism in fostering resilience, particularly among adolescents within the socio-economic context in Chandigarh. Despite the mentioned limitations, our study provides a clear understanding of adolescents' thinking patterns and can give the basis for interventions to enhance social support, optimism, and resilience. We included literate adolescents studying in government schools, who belonged to poor households but were literate enough to fill out the self-reported questionnaire. In the future similar research could be replicated on the illiterate population from slum areas with interview or some more appropriate method to go deeper into socio-economic factors as a moderator of social support, optimism, and resilience. Overall, this study provides an understanding of how well these adolescents are doing in their lives in spite of facing shortages in resources and works as a brick in building positive psychology.

Data availability statement

The datasets collected and analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to confidentiality constraints but are available from the corresponding author, Jaswant Singh, upon

reasonable request. Researchers interested in accessing the data should contact Jaswant Singh directly, providing a detailed explanation of their research purpose and how they plan to use the data. Access to the data will be granted following a review of the request to ensure compatibility with the confidentiality agreements.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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