

Comparative study on resilience and psychological well-being among female college students who have experienced bullying and who have not faced bullying

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Abstract- The quantitative study aims to find the role of bullying in the levels of individual resilience and psychological well-being of female college students in Chennai. This also aims to identify the role of bullying in the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being. The participants belong to an age category of 17 to 25 years. With simple random sampling, the study performed Pearson's correlational analysis and independent samples test to attain the objectives of the study. The tools used include Nicholson McBride's Resilience Scale (12-item) and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (18-item). Olweus Bullying Questionnaire was referred for making the bullying victimization checklist. The results indicate that the correlation between resilience and psychological well-being is significant and weak in students with no bullying experience while the relation is significant and moderate in students with bullying victimization. There is no significant difference in the levels of individual resilience and psychological well-being despite the experience of bullying in female college students.

Keywords- Bullying, Resilience, Psychological well-being, Female college students, Comparison, Correlation

I. INTRODUCTION

Bullying operationally can be defined as the intentional harming or harassing actions targeted toward seemingly gullible individuals and typically recurring in a setup. It includes a wide range of malicious and aggressive behaviors such as physical harm, verbal insult, threats, ostracism, and spreading false rumors about the person, even in the online medium. (Diane Felmlee, Robert W. Faris, 2025)

Resilience in practical aspects refers to, the process of better adaptation in the face of trauma, tragedy, adversity, threats, or any significant sources of stress in the course of life. (American Psychological Association, 2014)

From a practical perspective, psychological wellbeing can be defined with six subsets which can be measured according to Carol Ryff (1989). These domains explain how people handle their daily life challenges and make meaning in their lives. The six domains are: autonomy (the ability to make self-decisions despite social pressure), environmental mastery (the capacity to manage one's surroundings and make profitable situations), personal growth (the pursuit of individual potential and skills, especially in overriding difficulties), positive relations with others (the engagement in purposeful, empathetic relationships with others depending on love and intimacy), purpose in life (setting goals or dreams which directs the individual's actions and make meaning in their lives), self-acceptance (sustaining positive perceptions about oneself including the flaws and past experiences in life). (Carol Ryff, 1989)

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study by Zhang et al (2024), on 12,058 Chinese adolescents found that verbal bullying, physical bullying, and relational bullying are all related to poor well-being while relational and physical bullying tends to be more harmful than verbal. In conclusion, resilience was reported to have mixed effects where it reduces the negative impacts of physical victimization but worsens the consequences of verbal and relational victimization. Hence, this study proves that more than one strong protective factor besides resilience plays a role in the overall mediation of the negative effects of bullying or any sort of adversity.

Resilience and social support are important factors in eliciting positive mental health status and improving the overall well-being of students. Focusing on this, this study examines the effects of resilience and social support on the subjective well-being of college students. The research employed a descriptive-correlational method to survey 255 college students. The results showed that individuals with higher resilience are better able to manage stress and adversity while those with strong social support connections get better emotional, informational, and practical assistance, therefore contributing to an improved state of wellbeing. (Calonia et al., 2024) This study also shows that resilience along with other factors is a strong determiner of the psychological well-being of a person.

A study investigated the effects of bullying victimization in adolescents, targeting those who show resilience despite bullying. Using the latent profile analysis of 2,339 students in late adolescence, four profiles were classified as resilient (8.0%), normative (59.2%), vulnerable (29.0%) and adverse (3.8%). The results focus on the broader use of resilience factors which is related to teacher and peer support. (Yang et al., 2023) This shows that multiple variables may coordinate with the resilience factor which establishes the psychological well-being despite adversities.

Traditional bullying involves verbal, physical, or social aggression which frequently happens in educational settings. This paper explores different aspects of traditional bullying such as the characteristics of bullying, psychological effects of bullying on victims,

individual factors that improve resilience, and intervention programs. By combining the existing research conclusions, this paper brings results on the complex nature of traditional bullying and its contribution to effective intervention programs. (-S. K et al., 2023) This suggests that the effects of bullying can be moderated by resilience which is reflected in the psychological well-being of individuals.

A pilot study focusing on promoting mental health among college students was done through culturally adaptive resilience interventions in India. This addresses the lack of efforts for resilience enhancement programs. The study included 81 2nd year architecture engineering students and employed a single uncontrolled group design with pre-test, post-test, and follow-up tests. Key tools include resilience scales, self-esteem, coping, and stress-measuring instruments. The results show that the intervention has good retention and feasibility where students found it useful and acceptable. Considerable improvements were seen in resilience, coping, problem-solving, and negative indicating a medium level of change. The findings emphasize the culturally inclusive resilience intervention is effective and practical with evidence on promoting mental health among college students. (Herbert & Manjula, 2022) The intervention programs on resilience bring significant positive changes in the mental health of students which is related to psychological wellbeing.

Adolescents who experience bullying may be likely to develop psychopathological issues such as anxiety and depression. Therefore, identifying the role of protective factors can help reduce the negative effects of bullying victimization. This study investigates resilience as a mediating factor in the relationship between bullying victimization and symptoms of anxiety and depression in a group of 2155 adolescents. The findings have shown that individuals with higher resilience levels have reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression whereas those with lower levels of resilience have greater symptoms of both anxiety and depression. (Anderson et al., 2022) This study proves that resilience can act as a successful mediator (partially) between bullying experiences and anxiety or depressive symptoms which can be a strength for young people who face bullying.

A study analyses the impact of adverse early childhood experiences on the psychological well-being among Chinese college students, having resilience as the mediating factor and gender as the moderating factor. This is conducted on 1,871 social science students from 12 Chinese universities. The results found that gender influences the relationship between adverse childhood experiences, resilience, and psychological well-being. In female students, resilience alleviated the negative effects of neglect or abuse on their psychological well-being. In male students, challenges in the home environment negatively affect their psychological well-being via decreased resilience. The findings emphasize the need for adverse childhood experiences-focused initiatives and resilience-developing interventions to improve psychological well-being. (Chen et al., 2021) These results show that when resilience is enhanced, psychological well-being is also enhanced.

Psychological well-being is an important measure of individual wellness and has been related to positive outcomes in one's life. This study analyzed the data collected from 1,871 Chinese college students between September 23 and October 5, 2020, to explore their psychological well-being during the pandemic of COVID-19 also to check how the relationship between resilience and stress during the pandemic influences their PWB. The findings showed that resilience had a significant positive relation with psychological well-being during a pandemic. The environmental stress had moderate effects and somewhat reduced psychological well-being. The results insist that improving resilience can effectively reduce the negative effects of environmental stress on psychological well-being. (Tan et al., 2021) The increased resilience can moderate the negative effects of adverse life experiences and protect psychological well-being.

Collen & Onan (2021) conducted a study that investigates the role of resilience in the relationship between psychological well-being and cyberbullying among 455 undergraduates at Karabuk University, Turkey. The participants aged 17 to 36 (M=20.93) were included in the study. The results show that resilience plays a mediating role in the negative effects of cyberbullying on psychological well-being. The findings emphasize intervention programs on awareness of cyberbullying and developing resilience to help the well-being of young adults. This adds to the point that improved resilience can enhance the psychological well-being of the students.

A study by Puri & Pandey (2020), in the form of a literature review focuses on variables of positive psychology such as resilience to help individuals realize their full potential in life despite the external situations. Within this framework, the research paper tries to unravel the rationale behind the methods of improving resilience so that individuals can feel empowered in their life situations and alleviate the effects of bullying on their own. This paper is also an example of the existence of resilience as an impeccable protective factor against bullying.

III.NEED FOR THE STUDY

The relationship between psychological wellbeing and resilience is positive in some studies but in a less specific context which does not employ participants with perceived bullying victimization, the south Indian population, etc. The available data suggests the mitigating role of resilience on the negative effects of adverse experiences affecting the psychological well-being of the person. However, this is looked into in a smaller number of studies. The role of bullying in these variables is even less researched and to be established with empirical data. The existing research does not specifically focus on bullying victimization among female college-going students. The focus of this study serves to show the actual relationship between resilience and psychological well-being concerning bullying experience, the comparative analysis of resilience and psychological well-being in group A students (who have faced bullying in college) & group B students (who have not faced bullying in college). The significance of individual variables in maintaining the psychological well-being of individuals can be known from the analysis of the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being. The population is selected to be female as there is barely available research data on bullying in Indian female college students. Since female students are included equally in bullying victimization and their coping with the experiences are all comparatively different than males, they are specifically chosen for the study. This aims to find the average levels of resilience and psychological well-being in the female participants despite adverse experiences such as bullying. Also, the significance of the role of bullying in the levels of resilience and psychological well-being among the female college students located in Chennai can be identified.

IV.OBJECTIVES

1. To find the correlation between the variables, psychological resilience, and psychological well-being concerning bullying experience in female college students

2. To find the significance of the difference in the average levels of resilience and psychological well-being in female students who have faced bullying compared to those who have not faced bullying in their college

V.METHODOLOGY

The participation population selected for this study includes late adolescents and young adults of the age group 17 to 25 years old at the time of study. The participants are females only based on the need for study in gender differences in case of bullying experiences. Hence, the data was collected from female students from a few colleges in Chennai. The participants should be pursuing their college degree either undergraduate or postgraduate at the time of study. The sampling technique used was simple random sampling which comes under the probability sampling method. Out of 310 total participants, one hundred and fifty-five were separated as group A who have faced bullying and one hundred and fifty-five were separated as group B who have not faced bullying in college. The tools and questionnaires used for this study include,

1. A subjective checklist to check the incidence of bullying from the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ) (Olweus, 2007)
2. The abbreviated version (12 items) questionnaire of the Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ) (Nicholson & Clarke, 2010)
3. The questionnaire for Psychological well-being (18 items) by Carol Ryff et al (1989)

VI.HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses for this study based on the overall literature found in the existing research database are,

H1: There is a significant relationship between resilience and psychological well-being in groups- A and B

H2: There is a significant difference in the resilience of Group A and Group B

H3: There is a significant difference in the psychological well-being of group A and group B

Where group A has students who have experienced bullying and group B has students who have not faced bullying.

VII.RESULTS

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the female students who participated in the study. The age group expected was from 17 to 25 based on the traditional age group in regular college in undergraduate and postgraduate course programs. The age group of the participants was from 17 to 23 where there are no participants in the age category of 24 and 25. The highest response rate is in the age group of 20 with a total of 88 participants (28.4%) whereas the lowest response rate is in the age group of 22 with 2 participants (0.6%).

Table 1

Participants Age groups

Age	Percentage	No. of responses
17	12.6%	39
18	24.5%	76
19	26.8%	83
20	28.4%	88
21	5.2%	16
22	0.6%	2
23	1.9%	6
24	Nil	0
25	Nil	0

Table 2 shows the educational qualifications of the female participants, who were categorized as either undergraduate or postgraduate. Among the students about 299 responses were collected from students pursuing undergraduate degrees which constitutes about 96.5% of the sample. The rest of the participants around 3.5% which includes 11 participants were pursuing their postgraduate coursework.

Table 2

Participants Educational Qualification

	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
No. of respondents	299	11
Percentage	96.5%	3.5%

Table 3 shows the group-wise mean scores on resilience for group A and group B, where group A has students who have faced bullying, and group B never had such exposure. The groups had equal participants of 155 each. The average score of Group A on resilience is 40.94 and Group B has an average score of 42.67. There can be some differences seemingly as the resilience score of group B is slightly greater than group A. However, both the scores are categorized as an established or moderate level of resilience in the standard questionnaire.

Table 3
Group Statistics (Resilience)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Resilience	A	155	40.94	8.294	.666
	B	155	42.67	7.703	.619

Table 4 shows the average scores of groups A and B on psychological well-being (PWB), where group A has 155 students who have faced bullying, and group B with 155 students who never faced bullying. The mean score of psychological well-being of group A students is 82.12 which indicates a moderate to high level of psychological well-being. The mean score of group B is given as 84.63 which shows the students have a moderate to high level of psychological well-being. This implies that despite the seeming differences in the scores of the two groups on PWB, they both come under the moderate to high level of psychological well-being on the scale.

Table 4
Group Statistics (PWB)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PWB	A	155	82.12	11.341	.911
	B	155	84.63	12.040	.967

Note: PWB- psychological well-being

Table 5 represents the correlational analysis between the variables, resilience, and psychological well-being for group A students who have faced bullying in college. Pearson's correlational analysis showed that there is a moderate positive correlation with the value of $r = 0.333$ at a significance level of 0.01. This explains that there are high chances of this correlation being true where the significance value is less than 0.0005 which is lesser than the standard value of 0.05. Hence, there is a moderate positive correlation found between resilience and psychological well-being in students who have faced bullying which is highly statistically significant.

Table 5
Correlations (Group A)

		Resilience	PWB
Resilience	Pearson Correlation	1	.333**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	155	155
PWB	Pearson Correlation	.333**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	155	155

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: PWB- psychological well-being

Table 6 represents the correlation of resilience and psychological well-being in group B which has students who have not faced bullying. The Pearson's correlation coefficient value for this group is 0.289 (r). Since the 'r' value is slightly less than 0.3, the relation between resilience and psychological well-being can be declared as a weak positive correlation at a significance level of 0.01. This is comparatively less than the correlational value found in group A which is 0.333, at the same significant level. The 99% confidence level shows the high validity of the correlation.

Table 6

Correlations (Group B)

		Resilience	PWB
Resilience	Pearson Correlation	1	.289**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	155	155
PWB	Pearson Correlation	.289**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	155	155

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: PWB- psychological well-being

Table 7 represents the independent samples t-test or paired t-test for the resilience scores of the groups- A and B. On the assumption of equal variances, the independent samples test has given a difference in resilience score of -1.902 with a significance value of 0.058 (p>0.05). This indicates that there is no significant difference between the resilience scores of group A and group B and the null hypothesis is statistically accepted at 95% level of confidence.

Table 7

Independent Samples Test (Resilience)

			t-test for Equality of Means				
			t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Resilience	Equal variances assumed		-1.902	308	.058	-1.729	.909
	Equal variances not assumed		-1.902	306.332	.058	-1.729	.909

Table 8 represents the independent sample t-test for evaluating the significant difference between the average scores of groups- A and B on psychological well-being. First, there is equality of variances assumed for the two groups on psychological well-being. In the independent t-test, the t-value for psychological well-being is -1.884 with a significance value of 0.060 (p>0.05), meaning, the p-value is greater than the standard value of 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis can be accepted where the statistically significant difference between the two groups is not present. There is no significant difference between groups- A and B on psychological well-being.

Table 8
Independent Samples Test (PWB)

t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
PWB	Equal variances assumed	-1.884	308	.060	-2.503	1.329
	Equal variances not assumed	-1.884	306.908	.060	-2.503	1.329

Note: PWB- psychological well-being

VIII.DISCUSSION

The results in correlational analysis indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation of 0.333 between resilience and psychological well-being in group A participants where the students have experienced bullying in college. This has a statistically significant value at a 95% confidence level. This can be inferred from Table 5 done for group A with students who have experienced bullying. Meanwhile, the correlational coefficient for resilience and psychological well-being in group B students where the participants had never been exposed to bullying is 0.289 with a 95% confidence level which is represented in Table 6. This indicates a weak positive correlation between resilience and psychological well-being among students in group B. Comparatively, the correlation is stronger in group A than in group B with the same significance level. This shows that the interaction between resilience and psychological well-being is relatively more in students who have faced bullying experiences compared to those who have not. The strength of the relationship is determined by the level of interaction between the variables. In this study, the interaction between resilience and psychological well-being of the students is found to be stronger when there is a need, like situations involving negative emotions. In this paper, perceived bullying victimization is observed as the event leading to negative emotions either in the past or the present at the point of study. There can be a possibility that bullying was in the experience of the students or the present during the time of study. Despite this, the results indicate the role of resilience as a protective factor as mentioned in several studies done in the field. Therefore, the results from previous research data are validated and the alternate hypothesis (H1) is accepted. However, an additional finding from this study is that the interaction and influence of resilience and psychological well-being on each other is stronger in case of adverse experiences. This can be a significant indicator of the role of resilience in maintaining the psychological well-being of individuals along with other strengthening factors which need further research.

The groups are equal in strength as each group has 155 students accounting for an even distribution. The average resilience score of group A students who have experienced bullying is classified as a moderate level of resilience (Mean=40.94) whereas group B students who have never experienced bullying in college scored the same level of resilience i.e., moderate (Mean=42.67). This is represented in Table 3 in the results section. This shows that both groups fall into the same levels of resilience and do not have considerable differences. Similarly, in psychological well-being, the students in group A obtained an average score indicating moderate to high levels of psychological well-being (Mean=82.12). The students in group B who do not have exposure to bullying have gained an average score of moderate to high level in psychological well-being (Mean=84.63). This is shown in Table 4 of the results section. This once again shows that both the groups fall into the same levels of psychological well-being with no concerning variances. These results show that both groups do not differ in resilience and psychological well-being.

The independent samples test for resilience in the two groups has shown no significant difference ($p > 0.05$), as shown in Table 7. The t-value for the test is -1.902 with a significance of $p = 0.058$. This shows that the experience of bullying victimization has no considerable effect on the existing resilience level of the students at least in the long run. However, the immediate or temporary effects of bullying on resilience are not studied in this paper and just the experience of bullying during their college years is taken

into account to know the possibly lasting effects on the students. The findings show that bullying has no possible significant effect on individual resilience. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis (H2) is rejected in this case.

Likewise, the independent t-test for finding the difference in the scores of psychological well-being between these groups has shown the same results. As indicated in Table 8, the two groups have shown no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in psychological well-being despite the perceived bullying victimization. The t-value is found to be -1.884 with a significance of $p = 0.060$. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis (H3) is rejected to deny the assumed differences in the psychological well-being of students. This shows that bullying may not affect the psychological well-being of college-going students who face bullying. This needs to be verified with other specific age groups such as students below age 17 or adults above age 23 for accurate generalization of the findings. This again proves the conclusion in some research data where the protective factors alleviate the negative effects of bullying and neutralize it. The research focusing on current experiences of bullying and the short-term effects of it and comparing it to the long-term effects of it on psychological well-being can be approximated in determining the validity of results as this specificity may eliminate the effects of confounding variables.

The female participants have shown significant levels of resilience and psychological well-being despite the bullying experiences. In resilience, they have a moderate score in total, and in psychological well-being, both groups have shown moderate to high levels of psychological well-being. There is no considerable difference in resilience and psychological well-being between the two groups. Hence, both resilience and psychological well-being are not affected by perceived bullying victimization among female college students as inferred from the results. This may involve the moderation of more than one active variable. Based on gender, there can be some differences in the major protective factors securing the psychological well-being of the students. In females, resilience is found to be one strong protective factor as it is considerable in the sample, along with this there can be other strong protective factors specific to the female population. This can be evaluated by including other variables in the further research studies. The positive correlation between resilience and psychological well-being shows that they both have significant interaction in preserving each other.

These results apply to similar populations especially female students between age 17 to 25 and the cause-and-effect study of these variables can help gain a clear understanding of the relationship among them. The generalization of these results extends to all undergraduate and postgraduate female students in Chennai. Due to the availability of resources, differentiation in the demographic of participants may be a confounding factor to an extent. For other genders, further research is needed to check for any differences in the findings of the study.

IX.CONCLUSION

The main findings of this study are,

1. There is a moderate positive correlation between resilience and psychological well-being with a high statistical significance among female students who have experienced bullying
2. There is a comparatively weak positive correlation between resilience and psychological well-being with a high statistical significance among female students who have not faced bullying
3. There is no significant difference in resilience and psychological well-being between female students with perceived bullying victimization and female students without bullying experience in college

X.LIMITATIONS

The study has certain disadvantages to look into in case of generalization. This includes,

1. The selected participants were female, so the generalization of the results is not applicable across diverse genders.
2. The data collected may have a bias on the participants' side as there may be social desirability in responding to the questions.
3. The length of the questionnaire which is 40 items could have created fatigue in the participants leading to some inaccurate responses.
4. The study does not measure bullying type or levels and only takes into account if the participants have had experience with it. This lacks the detailing of the variable in getting to know the effects of it on resilience and psychological well-being.

XI.FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Further research can focus on the following prospective directions.

1. The cause-and-effect relationship between resilience and psychological well-being and the role of other protective factors such as social support, intelligence quotient, emotional quotient, etc.
2. A qualitative study of bullying, especially perceived victimization, would provide more insights and help to understand the topic clearly.
3. To consider the role of culture on the psychological well-being of students who are bullying perpetrators versus those who are bullying victims.
4. To analyze the prevalence of bullying based on environment and age group such as in school settings (adolescents), and workplace (young adults, middle adults, and senior adults).
5. To test resilience intervention or training programs on the development of individual resilience and maintaining the psychological well-being of individuals.
6. To study the role of bullying on resilience and psychological well-being in the male population and compare the results with the findings from the female population.

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