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Relationship between Resilience, Optimism and Psychological Well-Being in Students of Medicine

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to examine the relationships between resilience, optimism and psychological well-being. Four hundred fourteen students of medicine (213 male and 191 female) were selected using cluster sampling and were required to fill up the Ryff Scale of Psychological Well-Being (RSPWB), Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and Scheier and Carver’s Life Orientation Test (LOT). The results revealed that resilience is able to predict psychological well-being, and optimism played a minor mediation role in the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being. The results indicated that psychological well-being is influenced by personal characteristics such as resilience, and the individual’s optimism regardless of his/her degree of resilience can to some extent provide for psychological well-being.

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Keywords: resilience, optimism, psychological well-being

1. Introduction

According to Zautra, Hall, and Murray (2010), resilience is best defined as successful adaptation to adverse circumstances. Personal characteristics would determine resilience processes if those characteristics lead to healthy outcomes after the stressful situations (Zautra, Hall, and Murray, 2010). In general, it seems that the concept of resilience reflects desire for great optimism under adversity (Rutter, 2006); in other words, optimism accompanies resilience in stressful situations (Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom, 2010). Optimism appears to be an individual difference variable that reflects the extent to which people hold generalized favorable expectancies for their future (Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom, 2010). Optimism has a major role to play in adaptation to stressful conditions. When confronting a challenge, optimists show more resilience, even if progress is difficult and slow (Synder and Lopez, 2002). Previous literature showed that optimism is a factor contributing to resilience, and it also has been identified as the most influential adolescent cognitive factor to temper the effects of life stressors (Tusaie-Mumford, 2001).

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Psychological well-being is another variable related to resilience and optimism. The relationships between optimism and psychological well-being have been observed in case studies as well as longitudinal studies (Wrosch and Scheier, 2003). From Coward and Reed (1996)’s viewpoint, psychological well-being is defined as a sense of feeling healthy leading to a complete awareness of personal integrity which also includes spiritual elements of life. Ryff and Singer (2003) argue that resilient individuals are generally able to maintain their physical and psychological health and have the capacity to recover more quickly from stressful events. Fredrickson (2001) states there are evidences suggesting that resilience is effective in improving psychological well-being.

2. Methodology

The sample consisted of 414 students of medicine in Tehran and Iran Universities of Medical Sciences. The participants were selected using random cluster sampling.

2.1. Instruments

*Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC).* CD-RISC comprises of 25 items. Mohammadi (2005) and Jokar (2007) reported the alpha coefficient of 0.89 and 0.93 respectively. Alpha Cronbach of the scale in the current study was 0.87.

*Optimism Scale.* Optimism was assessed by using the Scheier and Carver’s (1994) Life Orientation Test (LOT). In examining the reliability of the test, Smith et al. (1989) obtained test-retest reliability of 0.79 and alpha Cronbach of 0.76. Hassanshahi (2002) validated the test in Persian and reported alpha cronbach of 0.74 and 0.65 for test-retest reliability. In this study, internal consistency of optimism scale was 0.60 using alpha cronbach.

*Ryff Scale of Psychological Well-Being (RSPWB).* RSPWB used to assess the psychological well-being of the participants. Van Dierendonck (2005) reported internal consistency coefficients of the subscales from 0.52 to 0.90. It has been translated and validated into Farsi by Shokri et al (2008). In the current paper, the following internal consistency coefficients of the subscales and total psychological well-being were obtained (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological well-being</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>personal growth</th>
<th>purpose in life</th>
<th>Positive relations with others</th>
<th>Environmental mastery</th>
<th>Self-acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Results

Descriptive indices were calculated and Pearson correlation coefficient was employed to demonstrate the relationship among the variables. The summary of the results are presented in the Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$1$</th>
<th>$2$</th>
<th>$3$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Resilience</td>
<td>62.11</td>
<td>11.93</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Optimism</td>
<td>18.07</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Psychological well-bei</td>
<td>238.54</td>
<td>34.55</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>0.45**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**= $p<0.01$

To predict the psychological well-being through predictor variables of resilience and optimism, hierarchical regression analysis was used. The summary of the results were reported in Table 3.
Table 3: Standardized coefficients in hierarchical regression model of psychological well-being through resilience and optimism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>F(df)</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>15.06 (1,412)**</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td>109.2 (2,411)**</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.3**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** = p < 0.01

According to Table 3, the first model indicates that the resilience variable alone explain 27 percent of psychological well-being variance and the second model shows that resilience and optimism together explain and predict 35 percent of psychological well-being variance.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study indicated that resilience is related to psychological well-being. The results are consistent with the results of Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom (2010) and also consistent with Miller et al. (1996) as well.

Moreover, the results showed that people’s resilience might be rooted in their cultural and religious values. This directs people to optimism. In our society that has religious context, religion and faith appear to be the key elements in optimism. Such people strongly believe that life is meaningful. This belief is often supported by their values. They have a great capacity to quickly adjust themselves to big changes. This result is consistent with the studies of Werner and Smith (2001), Masten and Wright (2010), Pargament and Cummings (2010), and Schumann (2002). On the other hand, there seems to be a causal relationship between resilience and optimism. Optimism and resilience seems to accompany each other in adverse events. It means that there is an interactive relationship between these two variables; resilience results in optimism and optimism leads to resilience. These results are consistent with the studies of Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom (2010), Tusaie-Mumford (2001), and Bonanno (2005).

The literature supports trait optimism as a factor contributing to resilience, and it has been identified as the most influential adolescent cognitive factor to moderate the effects of life stressors (Tusaie-Mumford, 2001). Yu and Zhang (2007) argue that optimism reflects individuals’ positive attitude towards adverse situations and therefore considers optimism as an important aspect of resilience. In line with this research, the previous studies have indicated that there appears to be a positive relationship between optimism and well-being (Scheier and Carver, 1985). In short, the results of the current study pointed out a positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being and these results are consistent with the results of Besharat et al (2007). The results of the current paper revealed that resilience plays a key role in psychological well-being and this is consistent with the results of other studies as well (Tusaie-Mumford, 2001; Yu and Zhang, 2007; Yee Ho, Cheung and Cheung, 2010; Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom, 2010; Karademas, 2006).

Research in well-being can lead to discovering and indentifying the ways which could promote the level of psychological well-being and mental health of members of society. In addition, research about well-being and its ingredients could enrich the theoretical foundations of the subject. Thus, investigating the relation of resilience, optimism, and well-being not only increases our understanding from the well-being itself, but also contributes for promoting the psychological well-being of individuals.

References


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