

Resilience Capacity and Support Function of Paniya Tribal Adolescents in Kerala and Its Association with Demographic variables

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ABSTRACT

Paniya tribes are the vast majority tribal group of Kerala and are found mainly in the northern districts of the state. They are economically backward with low literacy rate (49.5%) comparing to the states average of 93.9%. Adolescents are the future and hope of this community because most of them are first generation learners. This study aims to understand the resilience capacity and support function of the adolescents in association with demographical variables. Resilience scale Support Function scale and Background information scale were used to obtain the information. To achieve the purpose of the study the researcher selected 108 subjects using multi-stage sampling method and collected data. The researcher found that resilience capacity and support function are positively related to each other ($p < .01$) and both resilience capacity and support function are found higher among females ($p < .01$). The study also revealed that school environment and educational status acts as protective factors for resilience capacity and support function ($p < .01$). The findings of the study will be useful for NGOs and governmental organization for policy implementation in the area.

Keywords: *Resilience Capacity, Support Function, Paniya Tribal, Adolescent*

Paniyas are the vast majority of tribal group settled in the districts of Kerala, namely Wayand, Kannur, Malappuram and Calicut. The total population of Paniyas is 93,000 out of which 64% resides in the hilly areas of Kerala (Census Report, 2011). They are the backward community with the literacy rate of 49.5% against the state literacy level of 93.9% (Census Report, 2011). Paniyas follow different religious faiths; among these are the Traditional religion, Hinduism and Christianity. Paniya Tribes have different life style and daily routine while comparing to the non-marginalized sections. Poverty, social seclusion, lack of educational facilities, impoverished family conditions and lack of nurturing parental care are the main problems of Paniya Tribes.

Resilience is that ineffable quality of life which allows some individuals to strive for the best even if they are knocked down by some particular life events. It is an individual's ability to

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properly adapt to the stress and adversity. Individuals with high resilience capacity will be able to manage equilibrium of positive and negative emotions. Resilience acts as a powerful weapon to fight against all the odds.

Adolescence is a phase of rapid physical and psychological change and, resilience capacity acts as a protective factor against these changes. The benefits of resilience are that it helps in reducing the affect of stress and it even prevents stress to some extent (Newman, 2005). Resilience capacity of an adolescent is affected by many factors like family support, individual personality traits, peer group relationship, school environment, parent's socio-economic status etc.

Individual factors like stress coping styles, optimism and personality can alter the experience of stressful life events and life changes. In a study conducted on Kosavar refugees it is found that resilience is highly correlated with the individual factors of higher optimism, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, control coping and lower level of neuroticism (Laura, Victor & Ariana, 2006). It is also found that openness to experience, extraversion and task-oriented stress coping are positively correlated with resilience capacity (Campbell, Cohan & Stein, 2006) along with agreeableness and high self-worth (Davey, Eaker & Walters, 2003). Resilience is a construct with different dimensions, and each of these dimensions was studied in relation with big five personality traits by Friberg, Barlaug, Martinussen, Rosenvinge, & Hjemdal (2005). They found that the personal strength dimension of resilience is positively correlated with 5PFs- emotional stability, along with social competence dimension of resilience with 5PFs-extroversion and 5PFs-agreeableness and structured style dimension of resilience with 5PFs-conscientiousness.

Family support and family protective factors is the central feature of resilience construct. Family recovery factors in combination with family protective factors assist families in bouncing back from crises. Key characteristics of resilient families include warmth, affection, cohesion, commitment, and emotional support for one another. Resilient families generally have reasonable and clear-cut expectations for their children. They participate in family celebrations, share spiritual connections, have specific traditions, and predictable routines. Moreover, resilient families generally share core values around financial management and the use of leisure time, even when money and time are in short supply (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988). The family environment plays an important role in the experience of psychological distress, increased family cohesion results in the lower level of psychological distress as found by (Riveria, et al., 2008). Shared beliefs and narratives within the family foster the sense of cooperation, collaboration, coherence, competence and confidence that are vital in coping with the stress (Walsh, 1996). Children or adolescents if faced with adversities look up towards an adult who positively can guide them and this positive relationship increase their competency and self-worth (Mansten, Best, & Garnezy, 1990). The parenting style determines the resilience capacity of the child, and

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it is the parents who teach the children to learn from their experiences (Brooks, 2013). Thus, resilience cannot be considered as an inherited quality but it is the result of frequent interaction of person with his environment, so responsive care giving mediate the effects of high-risk environment on children (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993).

Despite adverse family environment some adolescent shows high resilience. During problematic parent adolescent relationships, peer group act as a backup system along with siblings and teachers and results in higher resilience capacity of adolescents. School environment, teacher student relationship and social networks are the external factors other than the family which enhances the capacity of resilience among adolescents (Crosonoe & Elder, 2004).

There is a lack of research to reveal the relationship between resilience capacity and support function of tribal adolescents of Kerala. In this study the researcher tries to find out the relationship between resilience capacity and support function of tribal adolescents.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the socio-economic background of Paniya tribal adolescents of Kerala.
2. To study the resilience capacity of Paniya tribal adolescents of Kerala.
3. To study the support function of Paniya tribal adolescents of Kerala.
4. To study the relationship between support function and resilience capacity of Paniya tribal adolescents of Kerala.

HYPOTHESES

- H-1: There exists a significant gender difference in the resilience capacity of tribal adolescents of Kerala.
- H-2: Educational status of Paniya tribal adolescents plays significant role in the resilience capacity
- H-3: There exists a significant gender difference in support function of tribal adolescents of Kerala.
- H-4: Educational status of Paniya tribal adolescents plays a significant role in the support function.
- H-5: Family type and support function has significant relationship with each other.
- H-6: Support function and resilience capacity has significant positive relationship among Paniya adolescents of Kerala.

METHOD

Site

The study sites were Malappuram and Calicut, which are the South Indian districts of Kerala. Malappuram district is having the population of 1,698,645 (Census of India, 2011). The data was collected from the tribal colonies of Paniyampadi (Nilambur), Punchamkolli(Nilambur)and Munderi (Nilambur) of Malappuram district. Calicut district is having a total population of 3,086,293(Census of India, 2011). The data was collected from the tribal villages of Pullurampara, Vattachira and Adivaram.

Sample

Participants of the study were a group of 108 Paniya tribal adolescents, aged 14-18 years. Most of the Paniya tribal adolescents were students but some of them had dropped their studies. The participants were selected using multi-stage random sampling technique. The final sample was selected from 6 tribal colonies of Kerala.

Study Tools

1. **Background Information Scale (Deb & Saranya, 2012):** The semi-structured questionnaire was developed to understand the socio-economic background, demographic background and perceived parental care and support services of tribal adolescents. The semi-structured questionnaire consists of following three sections:

Section I: This section consisted of items covering the background information of the adolescents like their name, age, gender and education details.

Section II: This section consists of information related to the family background like, the size of the family and the educational and occupational profile of parents.

Section III: This section covers the information related to care and support services.

2. **Resilience Scale (Neil & Das, 2001):** This scale measures components of resilience in different domains of young peoples' lives, ranging from planning and thinking ahead to level of independence. The scale has a total number of 25 items. The responses range from 1= Disagree to 7= Agree. No responses require reverse coding. Responses are summed to produce a total scale score. Cronbach's alpha of the resilience scale is .91.
3. **Support Function Scale (Hu et al., 2007):** The scale contains of 7 items. Cronbach's alpha of the support function scale is .84. The scale assesses the support function of the individual from different domains. The responses range from 1= Never to 4= quite often and the responses are summed to produce a total score.

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Data Collection and Analysis

Prior permission was collected from KIRTARDS, a governmental organization working in the area for tribal welfare and research. The researcher has done field visits to the tribal colonies and explained the study objectives to the subjects. Data was collected in one to one setting in the format of interview.

The collected data was reviewed carefully, no missing data was found by the researcher. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS 21 software. Descriptive statistics was used to obtain the background information. One-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation was also done to achieve the objectives of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all the study subjects, after explaining the objectives of the study. Confidentiality of the information was ensured. The freedom to withdraw from the study was provided to them. Prior permission was taken from KIRTARDS, a governmental organization which is working for the tribal welfare and development.

RESULTS

Background Information

The sample size of the study was 108, out of which 67 were females (62%) and 41 (38%) were males. The subjects were drawn from two villages Malappuram (62%) and Calicut (48%) and most of the adolescents belong to joint family (55%) than single family (45%). There are many school dropouts in these villages (32%).

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Table 1, The descriptive features and frequency of the demographic variables of the population under study

Background Variables	f (%)	Background Variables	f (%)
Gender		Mothers Education	
• Male	41 (38.0)	• Illiterate	80 (74.1)
• Female	67(62.0)	• Up to 5 th	21 (19.4)
Age		• Up to 10 th	3 (2.8)
• 12-14 years	56(51.9)	• Up to 12 th	4 (3.7)
• 14-16 years	23 (21.3)	• Graduate & Above	0 (0)
• 16-18 years	29 (26.8)	Fathers Education	
		• Illiterate	81 (75.0)
Family Income		• Up to 5 th	15 (13.9)
• Less than 1000	56 (51.9)	• Up to 10 th	12(11.1)
• 1001-3000	39 (36.1)	• Up to 12 th	0 (0)
• 3001-5000	13 (12.0)	• Graduate & Above	0 (0)
• 50001 & above	0 (0)	• Mothers Occupation	
Family type		• Self-employment	24(22.2)
• Single	60 (55.0)	• Service sector	12 (11.1)
• Joint	48 (45.0)	• Seasonal employment	23 (21.3)
District		• Agriculture & related	24 (22.2)
• Calicut	67(62.0)	• House wife	25 (23.1)
• Malappuram	41(48.0)	Father's occupation	
Educational status of adolescents		• Self-employment	54 (50.0)
• Studying	73 (67.6)	• Service sector	6 (5.4)
• Dropped studies	35 (32.4)	• Seasonal employment	26(24.1)
		• Agriculture & related	9 (8.3)
		• Not working	13 (12.0)

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Resilience capacity

The resilience capacity of adolescents was determined by the factors like gender and educational status. The level of resilience is also affected by the age and educational status of adolescents.

Resilience capacity and age

The level of resilience capacity was studied with respect to the age of the Paniya tribal adolescents. In the present study there were 56 (51.8%) adolescents who belonged to the age group of 12-14 and there were 23 (21.3%) adolescents between the age group of 14-16 along with 29 (26.8%) adolescents who belonged to the age group of 16-18.

Table 2, The frequency of the level of resilience capacity across the age

Age groups	Level of resilience capacity					
	Very low	Low	Moderately low	Moderately high	High	Very high
• 12-14	8(14.3)	0 (0)	6 (10.7)	3 (5.4)	24 (42.9)	15 (26.8)
• 14-16	0(0)	3 (13.0)	3 (13.0)	5 (21.7)	12 (52.2)	0 (0)
• 16-18	11(37.9)	7 (24.1)	4 (13.8)	5 (17.2)	2(6.8)	0 (0)

Resilience capacity and gender

The study revealed that there is a significant gender difference in experiencing resilience capacity (Table 1). Female adolescents reported high resilience than male adolescents (F-value: 102.824; $p < 0.01$). These findings lead to accept the H-2 hypothesis that there exists significant gender difference in resilience capacity among tribal adolescents at .01 confidence level.

Table 3, The resilience capacity across gender

Gender	Mean	df	F-value
Male	72.594	2	102.824**
Female	144.69		

** p-value significant at .01 level

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Resilience capacity and educational status

It is found that 32.4% of Paniya tribal adolescents had dropped their studies. Resilience is found higher among those who are attending the school than who dropped out from the school (F-value, 84.284, p-value >.01). Thus the H-3 hypothesis that the educational status of Paniya tribal adolescents has significant role in the resilience capacity is accepted at .01 confidence level.

Table 4, The level of resilience capacity in relation with educational status

Educational status	Level of resilience capacity					
	Very low	Low	Moderately low	Moderately high	High	Very high
• Studying	8(10.1)	3 (3.7)	9(11.4)	8(10.1)	36(45.5)	15 (19.0)
• Drop-out	10(28.0)	12(34.2)	6 (17.1)	5 (14.2)	3 (8.0)	0 (0)

Support function

Support function of the Paniya tribal adolescents were found to be determined by gender, educational status and family type.

Support Function and Gender

Gender is found to be a significant factor affecting the support function of adolescents (Table 3). The researcher found that there is a significant gender difference in the support function among tribal adolescents and female have more support function in comparison with males (F-value, 177.40 p-value >.01). Hence, the H-3 hypothesis that, there is a significant gender difference in the support function among tribal adolescents is accepted at .01 confidence level.

Table 5, Support function across gender

Gender	Mean	df	F-value
Male	9.67	2	177.40**
Female	24.43		

** p-value significant at .01 level

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Support Function and Educational Status

Support function is also found higher among those who are attending the school than who dropped out from the school (F-value, 103.40 p-value $>.01$). Thus the H-4 hypothesis that educational status has significant relationship with support function is accepted at .01 confidence level.

Support Function and Family Type

The type of the family to which the adolescent belong is a determining factor of his support function. The Paniya tribal adolescents who hail from joint family receive more support than those who hail from single family (F-value, 4.467, p-value $=.05$). These findings lead to accept the H-5 hypothesis that family type has significant relationship with support function is accepted at .01 confidence level.

Resilience and Support Function

Pearson correlation results showed that there is a significant positive correlation ($r = .853$; $p < 0.01$) between the variables of Resilience and Support function. These findings lead to accept the H-6 hypothesis that, there is a significant positive relationship between resilience and support function among the tribal adolescents of Kerala at .01 confidence level.

DISCUSSION

Paniya tribal community is the backward community of Kerala. The descriptive statistics of the demographical variables explain the living condition of the community. More than 50% of the adolescents reported that their monthly family income is less than Rs 1000. 80% of the adolescents reported that their mothers are illiterate and 81% of them reported that their fathers are illiterate. In the present study no illiterate adolescent was found, but there were many school drop-out (35%) adolescents in the community.

The level of the resilience capacity of Paniya tribal adolescent is determined by his age. The adolescents between the age group of 16-18 experienced low level of resilience capacity than the adolescents of other age group. Age along with other demographical variables plays an important role in the level of resilience capacity of the adolescents (Wasanga, Christman & Kilmer, (2003).

Resilience capacity is found to be higher among females with a mean score of 144.69 than males whose mean score is 72.52. It may be because females have more peer group support and family support than males (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987). About one-third (29.6%) of the tribal adolescents dropped their studies before enrolling into the higher secondary level. The school

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going adolescents have higher mean score of resilience capacity (141.32) than the dropped out adolescents (68.65) this may be because school environment acts as a protective factor against the stressors of life (Benard, 1991).

Support function is found higher among the female adolescents than that of male adolescents. It may be due to the support they receive from various sources like family, school and peer group. The mean score of the support function of school going adolescents was 23.61 which is significantly higher than 9.24, the mean score of dropped out adolescents. The teacher student relationship increases the support function of an adolescent; adolescents view teachers as the most significant persons of their life (Hendry, Roberts, Glendinning & Coleman, 1992).

The adolescents who hailed from joint family have more support function (mean score=21.774) than those who belongs to nuclear family (mean score=16.44). This may due to the reason that there are more members in a joint family who can attend to the problems of the adolescents other than the parents. Living in the middle of cousins is like having friends inside the home itself (D'cruz & Bharat, 2001). Support function is also found higher among females (24.33) than males (9.61). There are research evidences to support the findings that females tend to have more confident relationships with relatives and friends than males (Due, Holstein, Lund, Modvig & Avulund, 1999).

Resilience and support function of the adolescents are positively related ($r=.853$) to each other. One of the reasons for this positive relationship may be that those who have reliable support systems can fight with the setbacks of the life in a more powerful way (Dumont & Provost, 1999). Another reason may be that the resilience capacity helps an individual to manage interpersonal relationships in more effective manner. The resilience capacity makes a person less likely to perceive threat on self, thus he will have less problems in relationships than non-resilient individuals (Leviene, Laufer, Stein, Hamama & Solomon, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Paniya community is the marginalized section of the society due to their socio-economic status. In the present study most of the adolescents reported that their parents are illiterate. Almost half of them reported that their family income is less than Rs.1000. These conditions make them vulnerable to stress and pressure to quit the studies. The researcher was not able to find an adolescent who is illiterate despite of finding the drop-outs.

The result of this study shows that the adolescents who are pursuing their education have significantly higher resilience capacity and support function than those who discontinued their studies. This may be due to the reason that adolescents who attend the school reported that they

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have someone to share their problems with, and they have someone to seek advice from, this increases the resilience capacity and support function of the tribal adolescents.

The dropped out students are deprived of the opportunity for recreational activities, because they are forced to take up the responsibility of family by involving in labour. Participating in recreational facilities reduces stress, and enhances social relationship which results in higher resilience and higher support function. Dropped out students are deprived of these facilities which leads to the lesser resilience capacity and lesser support function.

Females reported more resilience capacity and support function than males. One probable reason may be that, the female adolescents of Paniya tribal community are not going for labour. So they don't have the responsibility to earn the livelihood and they don't have to earn to support other family members. Other than this, females have more friends and support systems other than family members while comparing to males.

Government bodies and non-governmental organization must look into the issue of discontinuation of studies of adolescents of this area with immediate effect. Most of the time, adolescents are forced to take up the responsibility of the family by quitting their studies. Implementing "re registration in school" programme in this area can help some adolescents who wish to pursue higher education. The existence of gender inequality against any gender affects the equilibrium of the community and it can result in community damage at large. Government must implement programmes to address this issue.

IMPLICATION

Paniya tribal adolescents are facing problems of lack of educational facilities in their village. Male adolescents are forced to quit their studies at an early age to take up the responsibilities of the family. The community based programmes like income generating activities and skill development programmes must be implemented to address the issue of poverty which is a triggering factor for the discontinuation of studies. NGOs and state government must take up the responsibility of education continuation programmes for adolescence. In the current research, researcher has not found any illiterate adolescent, which means that there are high chances for the success of education continuation programmes.

LIMITATION

The study was limited to 6 Paniya tribe settlement areas, different findings might have found from other areas due to the geographical and economical features. The researcher ignored the tribal group other than Paniyas in the study, in Kerala there are other backward communities like Irula, Kadar and Cholla naikers.

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