



Resilience in Young Adults from Dual-parent and Single-parent Families: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Background: Family structure has been shown to have a significant impact on the development of various psychological aspects, with single-parent families being associated with lower levels of psychological well-being in individuals. Given the strong link between resilience and psychological well-being, the present study aims to assess and compare resilience among Indian youth from dual-parent and single-parent families.

Aim: To study the levels of resilience in young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families and to compare levels of resilience between young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families presently living with their parents.

Method: The data was collected from 157 individuals (79 from Dual-parent families; 78 from Single-parent families), out of which 58 individuals with two-parents, while 46 individuals with a single parent were presently living with their parent(s) in the age range of 18-29 years, using the Brief Resilience Scale.

Result: Comparative analysis revealed no significant difference in the levels of Resilience between young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families, with youth from the latter obtaining a slightly higher mean score of 3.08 on the Resilience Scale as compared to the mean score of 2.97 obtained by the former, indicating moderate levels of resilience in both groups. Additional analysis of individuals from both family types, who currently reside with their parent(s), has not shown significant differences in resilience levels. The mean scores obtained on the scale were also similar: young adults from dual-parent families obtained a mean score of 3.05, while young adults from single-parent families obtained a mean score of 3.06.

Conclusion: The present findings challenge existing literature, which in the past has suggested that a particular family structure is more effective in shaping resilience, providing an intriguing direction for further research.

Keywords: Family structure, Resilience, Single-parent families

Introduction

Indian youth are leading increasingly high-paced lives and face unprecedented pressure to succeed and live up to the ever-evolving demands of a rapidly changing world. The situation has only further deteriorated after the global Covid-19 pandemic, with one study noting adverse outcomes such as stress (61%), psychological distress (43%), anxiety (34%), depression (33%), and sleep disturbances (27%) in the youth population (Singh., Bajpai., & Kaswan., 2021).

In such challenging conditions, maintaining a good level of psychological well-being is necessary, and finding ways to increase psychological well-being is key. Resilience, which is defined as the ability to “thrive in the face of adversity” is a learned process that can help to protect against occupational stresses and mental illness (Connor & Davidson, 2003) and improve psychological well-being.

Resilience can be further defined as the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. It is a dynamic process wherein individuals display positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma, and is not a personality trait or an attribute of the individual (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

The research focused on the existing resilience levels in the Indian youth population

suggests that individuals falling in this age group tend to have low to moderate levels of resilience (Bhave et. al., 2024; Kumar., & Dixit., 2014) which makes it necessary to examine ways to improve resilience and help empower the youth to face the various challenges of life.

While several distinct factors influence resilience, the family one is surrounded with is considered to be an integral influencing factor. According to the Theory of Change, based on Bronfenbrenner’s theory of ecological systems, the resilience of the family unit plays a crucial role in shaping the developmental trajectory of children, and families that exhibit higher levels of resilience are typically characterized by transparent and effective communication, optimistic outlooks on adversity, adept problem-solving skills, strong spiritual beliefs, and effective management of social and financial resources (Brajša-Žganec., Džida., & Kućar., 2024).

Additionally, positive familial relationships play an important role in the development of resilience in the child being raised in that particular family unit (Brajša-Žganec., Džida., & Kućar., 2024), which makes examining the specific relationships between different family members an interesting research purview. This is where different familial structures come into consideration. While there are a number of different familial structures that exist in the present study, families where participants have either two parents (dual-parent

families) or one parent (single-parent families) have been considered.

While individuals can have only one parent due to multiple reasons, in this study, participants with parents who have separated or have been widowed have been considered.

Both of these instances, separation of parents or the death of one parent, can prove to be extremely difficult situations and can cause distress to the individuals involved in the situation.

Research has found that while parental divorce is correlated to increased risk of maladaptive behaviors and mental health diagnoses during adolescence and adulthood (Morton., 2023), the loss of a parent due to death is associated with psychiatric disorders, especially depression (Chavda., Nisarga., 2023). Presently, the death of one parent remains one of the leading causes of single-parent families. On average, around 6.8% of children live in single-parent households worldwide with India specifically noted to have 5% of single-parent households (Kramer., Hackett., & Cooperman., 2019).

Objectives

The present study had the following objectives:

- To assess the level of resilience in young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families.
- To compare levels of resilience between young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families.
- To compare levels of resilience between young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families presently living with their parent(s).

Hypothesis

Ha⁰ - There will be no difference in the levels of Resilience between young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families.

Hb⁰ - There will be no difference in the levels of Resilience between young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families presently living with their parent(s).

Method

The present study employs a quantitative approach where data were collected from youth with dual-parent and single-parent family structures and subjected to an independent sample t-test. Additionally, youth who were presently living with their parent(s) from both groups were identified and were considered for further comparative analysis using another independent sample t-test.

Sample

The present study includes data from individuals in the age range of 18-29 years.

Total data was collected from 157 individuals (79 from Dual-parent families; 78 from Single-parent families), out of which 58 individuals with two-parents while 46 individuals with a single parent and were presently living with their parent(s).

The average age of participants from dual-parent families was 20 years, while the average age of the participants from single-parent families was 21 years. The majority of the participants were of upper-middle-class backgrounds. The snowball sampling technique was used for data collection.

Tool Used

The Brief Resilience scale which was given by B. W. Smith, J. Dalen, K. Wiggins, E. Tooley, P. Christopher & J. Bernard in 2008 has been used in this study. The BRS is a reliable means of assessing resilience as the ability to bounce back or recover from stress and may provide unique and important information about people coping with health-related stressors (Smith et. al., 2008). It has 6 items and has shown adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.80–0.91) in two student samples (Smith et al., 2008) and criterion validity and reliability (Windle, Bennett, & Noyes, 2011). The scale also demonstrated good internal consistency in the current study (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82).

Procedure

Data for the present research was collected using Brief Resilience Scale, which is a self-report measure. Data collection was done using Google Forms for the ease of participants, ensuring confidentiality of the responses shared by the participants.

Data collection was followed by pooling the quantitative data for young adults with single parents and young adults with dual parents.

Ethical Considerations

Data was collected adhering to the ethical standards, where the participants were given details of the study and its purpose at the beginning of the form. Voluntary participation was ensured, where they could opt out of the study at any point. Additionally, it was ensured that all the information and responses shared by participants were kept confidential.

Data Analysis

The data collected in the study was then analyzed using Jamovi software. The data was subjected to t-test analysis to statistically compare resilience levels between young adults from single-parent and dual-parent families. A t-test was also run to compare resilience levels between young adults from single-parent and dual-parent families presently living with their parent(s).

Result

Young adults from dual-parent families obtained a mean score of 2.97 on resilience, with a standard deviation of 0.581, while young adults from single-parent families obtained a mean score of 3.08 with a standard deviation of 0.721, indicating moderate levels of resilience in both groups.

The t-value obtained by comparing the resilience scores of young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families was -1.02 with a p-value of 0.310, indicating no significant difference between the two groups as $p > 0.05$.

Similarly, the t-value obtained by comparing resilience scores between individuals from single and dual-parent families presently living with parents was -0.0236 with a p-value of 0.981, again suggesting no significant difference between the two groups as $p > 0.05$.

Visual Presentation of Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the sample split by family structure

Table 1						
	Mean		SD		Range of Scores	
Family Structure	Dual-Parent Family	Single-Parent Family	Dual-Parent Family	Single-Parent Family	Dual-Parent Family	Single-Parent Family
Resilience Scores	2.97	3.08	0.581	0.721	1.67-4.67	1.00-4.67

Table 2: t-test for a comparative analysis of resilience levels between young adults from single and dual-parent families

Table 2			
Dual-Parent Families		Single-Parent Families	
M	SD	M	SD
2.97	0.581	3.08	0.721
Resilience Scores	t	p	
	-1.02	0.310	

Table 3: t-test for a comparative analysis of resilience levels between young adults from single and dual-parent families presently living with parents

Table 3			
Dual-Parent Families		Single-Parent Families	
M	SD	M	SD
3.05	0.658	3.06	0.801
Resilience Scores	t	p	
	-0.0236	0.981	

Interpretation and Discussion

The present study aims to assess and compare resilience among dual-parent & single-parent families in Indian youth. Data was collected from individuals in the age range of 18-29 years. The total sample consisted of 157 individuals, where 79 adults were from Dual-parent families and 78 from Single-parent families. out of which, 58 individuals with two parents, while 46 individuals with a single parent are presently living with their parent(s). The average age of participants from dual-parent families was 20 years, while the average age of the participants from single-parent families was 21 years. The majority of the participants were of upper-middle-class backgrounds.

Considering the descriptive properties of the sample (as shown in Table 1), it was observed that out of a total of 157 individuals, the mean resilience scores of participants from dual-parent families were 2.97 (moderate levels) while the mean resilience scores of participants from single-parent families were 3.08 (moderate levels).

A t-test was used to compare the resilience scores of participants from dual-parent families and single-parent families. The t-value obtained for the same was -1.02 with a p-value of 0.310 (as shown in Table 2), which fails to reject the null hypothesis stating there will be no difference in the levels of Resilience amongst young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families.

Existing literature has suggested that not all children are similarly affected by the stressors of divorce and presents a mixture of reactions which range from vulnerability to resilience (Kelly, 2012), which would explain no statistically significant difference between resilience levels found in the present study. While some studies suggest a difference between children from single-parent and dual-parent families should exist, there is less consensus on the magnitude of the differences, especially taking into consideration larger-scale and methodologically or statistically more sophisticated studies (Amato, 2001).

Studies have now also emerged that suggest that while divorce or parental separation can be a source of great emotional distress, most individuals appear to ‘bounce back’ from adversity and adjust to their new family condition (Karela., & Petrogiannis., 2020). This provides an interesting area to conduct further research on wherein researchers can conduct detailed qualitative studies to explore the initial concerns being faced by children during the separation of their parents, and the long-term well-being of such individuals can also be closely studied to further understand the psychological impacts of parental separation.

A possible explanation behind these results can be linked to the sample characteristics. The present study is composed of individuals from urban areas with upper-middle-class backgrounds, and existing literature has indicated higher divorce rates among middle and higher

socioeconomic status individuals (Ramachandrappa et al., 2016; Vasudevan et al., 2015). With these increased rates, the attitude of society towards divorce is also changing (Vasudevan et al., 2015), causing less distress to individuals with divorced parents, thereby leading to equal, if not better, scores on psychological scales as compared to individuals with parents who are not divorced.

Additional comparative analysis was done to compare resilience levels in participants presently living with their parents from dual-parent and single-parent families. The *t* value for the same came out to be -0.0236 with a *p*-value of 0.981 (as shown in Table 3), indicating an absence of significant difference in the mean of the two groups.

Possible reasons contributing to this result could be that living with parents provides individuals with an additional source of support in the form of strong familial resilience levels. Family resilience, which refers to the family's ability to strengthen family ties and enable personal growth for its members in conflict and stressful situations, plays an integral role in promoting positive outcomes for children and has been shown to contribute to a child's subjective well-being (Brajša-Žganec., Džida., & Kućar., 2024). Living with their parent(s) can help individuals develop effective coping strategies, which in turn help them deal with life stressors more capably.

Another factor that can help contribute to this result can be the availability of sibling

support. Existing literature suggests that sibling support serves as a complementary role to parental support and can even provide more extensive and direct compensatory support in situations where competent parental support was unavailable (Jacobs., & Sillars., 2012). Research has further shown that children from divorced homes have more positive sibling relationships than children from intact homes (Kunz., 2001) further contributing towards positive well-being.

Overall, the results from the present study contribute to the existing collection of literature, which suggests that divorce in and of itself cannot be considered as having adverse effects on the individuals involved. It is necessary to study the various factors involved and have a special focus on the various protective factors, such as familial support, socio-economic status, etc., that can contribute to the positive mental well-being of children with divorced parents specifically.

Limitations and Future Directions

The sample consists of individuals living in urban parts of the country, specifically the Delhi-NCR region. Further studies in this area can explore samples of a larger number from more diverse backgrounds. Future studies in this direction can also focus on additional family dynamics such as having siblings, the gender of the single-parent the individual is living with, etc., to further understand the nuances.

Conclusion

The present study aims to assess and compare resilience among individuals from dual-

parent & single-parent families in Indian youth. Data was collected from individuals from both dual-parent and single-parent families, presently in the age range of 18-29 years. Comparative analysis indicates no statistically significant difference in the levels of Resilience amongst young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families, with youth from single-parent families obtaining slightly higher scores on the Brief Resilience Scale. Additional analysis further suggested no statistically significant difference in the levels of Resilience amongst young adults from dual-parent and single-parent families presently living with their parent(s).

Author contributions

Conceptualization, Author A; methodology, Author A.; software, Author A, B.; validation, Author A, B.; formal analysis, Author A; investigation, Author A.; resources, Author A.; data curation, Author A.; writing—original draft preparation, Author A writing—review and editing, Author A, B.; visualization, Author A.; supervision, Author B project administration, Author A, B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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