

COMPARISON OF RESILIENCY, OPTIMISM AND SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY IN DELINQUENT AND NORMAL ADOLESCENTS

Fahime Rajabi*, Sedigheh Salmanpour

*Department of Educational Sciences, Payame Noor University, PO BOX 19395-3697,
Tehran, Iran.*

*Corresponding author email: fahimmehrajabi@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine and compare resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy in delinquent and normal adolescents in Fars Province, Iran. The statistical population comprised 100 delinquent adolescents in Shiraz Juvenile Detention Centre and 100 normal adolescents. Research hypotheses were investigated in this descriptive-analytical study using Scheier and Carver's Life Orientation Test, the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, and Sherer's Self-Efficacy Scale and statistical analysis was conducted using independent samples t-test. Results showed that there was a significant difference between two groups of adolescents in terms of the optimism, resilience and self-efficacy. The optimism in adolescents had a significant impact on the mental health and behaviour of them and plays an important role in the personal and social life of individual. Furthermore, the resilience and self-efficacy have crucial roles in the life of adolescents. Having any of these traits and enhancing and improving them play important roles in the life of adolescents.

Keywords: *resilience, optimism, self-efficacy, adolescent*



INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is one of the most critical periods of life, accompanied by extensive physical, psychological, and social changes. It is also an important period for starting high-risk and delinquent behaviours because of the adolescents' egocentrism and lack of proper understanding of their own behaviours (Saeedy *et al.*, 2017; Boyer, 2006). By advancing in age, adolescents participate in several risky activities and have rising tendency to engage in such behaviours, consecutively (Croisant *et al.*, 2013). Thus, this participation and the tendency towards delinquent behaviours have become one of the major sources of concern. One of the inconvenient issues of today's societies attracting the attention of many researchers is the delinquency of adolescents and young adults (Thornberry *et al.*, 2016). Adolescents and young people engage in delinquent acts (Tate *et al.*, 2008). The new psychology attempts not to emphasize solely all on mental problems but also tries to focus more on positive aspects of life. The aim of positive psychology is to accelerate the change of the very centre of psychology, so that it takes action to build positive living qualities in addition to treatment of diseases (Duckworth *et al.*, 2005). Optimism is one of the positive characteristics of human beings and has attracted special attentions in psychology and social sciences over the past two decades (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Optimism refers to a perspective in which positive outcomes are expected; these consequences are considered as the results of constant, general and internal factors (Boyer, 2006).

Resilience is the ability to successfully adapt to threatening situations (Windle, 2011). It is not a mere resistance to damages or threatening situations, but the active and constructive participation in the environment. In general, resilience is one's ability to establish biological-psychological balance in dangerous situations (Weavera *et al.*, 2008; Dolan & Martin, 2008). A resilient person is flexible and finds solutions, adapts to environmental changes and quickly returns to recovery after the stressors are removed (Southwick *et al.*, 2014). People with low resilience (on the continuum of high and low resilience) can hardly adapt themselves to new situations; they recover slowly from stressful conditions to a normal and natural status (Schweizer & Koch, 2001).

According to Karademas and Kalantzi-Azizi (2004), resilient people often return to normal situation by creating positive emotions after stressful confrontations. Individuals with high resilience can pass stressful events

without any reduction in their mental health or suffering from mental illness (Shrivastava & Desousa, 2016). Also, it seems that in some cases, they have made progress and been successful despite their hard experiences (Karademas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 2004). The optimism has an important role in adaptation with the life events. Among all factors and elements contributing to a developed and high resilience, the role of internal and personal processes should not be neglected. This issue is true about the overall human behaviours and characteristics (including the resilience). There are other factors that act as triggers of human behaviour, but all of them are subject to the individual's beliefs (Boyer, 2006). In addition to reducing fears and expected inhibitions, perceived self-efficacy affects the level of motivation and the effort to coping with life events (Karademas, 2006). Perceived self-efficacy decreases fears and expected inhibitions and affects behavioural outcomes as well as one's motivation and effort to cope with different situations by increasing expectations of probable success (Sayal *et al.*, 2002; Karademas, 2006). Optimism accompanies resilience and is identified as the most effective cognitive factor in adults, reducing the effects of stressors in life. The self-efficacy or self-esteem is defined as the level of confidence that each individual to his ability in performing a set of actions or carrying out a particular task (Williams, 2010). In investigating the statistical population of the research, the delinquent people referred to the adolescents who are under the age of 18 and their behaviour is such that is punishable by law. Some criminal acts such as robbery, assault, rape, murder or use of drugs are also considered as crime if they are committed by an adult (Schweizer & Koch, 2001).

Krasikova *et al.* (2015) reported a significant difference between resilience, optimism and self-efficacy in normal and delinquent adolescents. Normal adolescents have optimistic and self-efficacious capital and have a positive view of their ability, which leads to resilience in them. While, optimism and self-efficacy are very low in delinquent adolescents.

Hodder *et al.* (2016) also reported that there was a difference between the two groups of delinquent and normal in terms of resilience, self-efficacy and optimism. Having a sense of self-efficacy and optimism will make people more active and seek to resolve the problem and deal with incompatibilities and problems.

Bartone *et al.* (2015) concluded that low levels of resilience are correlated with tendency to misdemeanour. In other words, resilience

represents a state of efficiency and flexibility in dealing with life's problems. Delinquent adolescents have a low self-efficacy and optimism, and have weak social connections.

People with high self-efficacy are more resistant to problems, and they do not believe in a negative and non-realistic view of their abilities. Therefore, this capability leads to the resistance of these individuals to the pressures of life and peer groups. Accordingly, even if the person does not want to have any delinquency behaviour, in the event that the level of self-efficacy is low, it may lead to misdemeanour behaviours due to pressures. This applies to resilience, because the person is fragile with low resilience against social damage and peer group and it may be biased toward harsh and unusual behaviours with the slightest adversity. Teenagers with high self-efficacy and resilience have stronger social relationships. They care about their health and have more communicative principles. As a result, they are easily creating communication networks in any environment (Khodaverdi, 2019). Therefore, in the present study comparison investigation of the resilience, self-efficacy and optimism in delinquent adolescents was performed.

METHOD

The aim of the present study was to compare the resilience, optimism and self-efficacy among delinquent and ordinary adolescents in Fars province in Iran. The statistical population of the study was all delinquent adolescents in Shiraz juvenile detention centre. Given that the age range of subjects was considered between 15 to 18, so the total number of male delinquent adolescents was 100. Due to the small size of the statistical population, all members were also considered as study samples. In contrast, for the group of ordinary adolescents, 100 ordinary adolescents in the same age range were randomly selected. Descriptive-analytic method was used in the present study. For measuring the resilience, the measurement scale of Connor and Davidson was used; this questionnaire had 25 items that are graded by Likert scale between zero (completely false) and five (always true). For measuring self-efficacy, Scherrer's Questionnaire was used; this scale contains 17 questions and each question is graded based on Likert scale from 'I totally disagree' to 'I totally agree'. From 1 to 5 points are given to each choice. The Questions 1, 3, 8, 9, 13 and 15 are scored from right

to left and the rest of the questions are scored in reverse order, from left to right. Therefore, the maximum score that a person can get from this scale is 85 and the minimum score is 17. This scale has been translated to Persian and validated by Karademas and Kalantzi-Azizi (2004). Also, the reliability coefficient of the scale was obtained 0.76 using Gutmann's two-half method and 0.79 using Cronbach's alpha (Sterling *et al.*, 2007). For measuring the optimism, the scale of Scheier and Carver (1992) was used to evaluate nature optimism; the Life Orientation Test (LOT) has compiled a summary report and subsequently revised it (Boyer, 2006). The kind of optimism evaluated by LOT is a personality trait characterised by personal desires in the future. The Life Orientation Test (LOT) included eight items; four items represented the optimistic mood, four items represented the pessimistic mood and the respondents declared their agreement or disagreement with each of the sentences, on a multi-degree scale. The following point was investigated in the test of research hypotheses using SPSS software.

RESULTS

First Hypothesis: There is a Difference between the Resilience of the Delinquent and Ordinary Adolescents

The independent variable in this hypothesis was ordinarily and delinquent adolescents, which was a double name. For measuring the relationship, an independent binary nominal variable and a dependent interval variable from *t*-test were used. As it can be seen in the Table 1, the independent variable had two categories, and the mean of the obtained score for the dependent variable for these two groups was equal to: the mean of the ordinary adolescents score: 79.64, and the mean score of delinquent adolescents: 46.41. The observed difference in the mean of scores showed that the mean score of delinquent adolescents was higher than the mean score of ordinary adolescents. Therefore, according to the *t*-value and its significance level that were respectively equal to -0.79 and 0.000 , the H_0 based on the absence of a significant difference was rejected and the H_1 was confirmed. Thus, the hypothesis was approved in the 95% confidence interval and it can be concluded that there was a significant difference between the resilience of ordinary and delinquent adolescents.

Table 1: t-Test of Resilience between the Delinquent and Ordinary Adolescents

Subjects	Frequency	M	SD	SE	t	p
Ordinary	50	79.64	6.18	0.8740	-.790	.000
Delinquent	50	81.46	15.07	2.1310		

Second Hypothesis: There is a Difference between the Optimism of the Delinquent and Ordinary Adolescents

The independent variable in this hypothesis was ordinarily and delinquent adolescents, which was a double name. For measuring the relationship, an independent binary nominal variable and a dependent interval variable from *t*-test were used. According to Table 2, the independent variable had two sides and the mean of the obtained score for the dependent variable for these two groups was 35.60 for the ordinary adolescents, and the mean score of delinquent adolescents was 34.56. The observed difference in the mean of scores showed that the mean score of ordinary adolescents was higher than the delinquent adolescents.

Therefore, consequently, according to the *t*-value and its significant level that were respectively equal to -0.88 and 0.268, the H_0 based on the absence of a significant difference was confirmed. As a result, the above hypothesis was not approved in the 95% confidence interval. In other words, there was no significant difference between the optimism of the delinquent and ordinary adolescents.

Table 2: t-Test of Optimism between the Delinquent and Ordinary Adolescents

Subjects	Frequency	M	SD	SE	t	p
Ordinary	50	35.60	4.99	.706	-.88	.268
Delinquent	50	34.56	6.63	.938		

The Third Hypothesis: There is a Difference between the Self-Efficacy of the Delinquent and Ordinary Adolescents

According to Table 3, the means of the obtained score for the dependent variable for these two groups was 54.56 for the ordinary adolescents, and 53.80 for the delinquent adolescents. The observed difference in the mean of scores showed that the mean score of ordinary adolescents was higher than the delinquent adolescents. Therefore, consequently, according to the *t*-value and its significant level that were respectively equal to 0.467 and 0.018, the H_0 based on the absence of a significant difference was rejected, and the above hypothesis was approved in the 95% confidence interval. In other words, there was a significant difference between the self-efficacy of the delinquent and ordinary adolescents.

Table 3: *t*-Test of Self-Efficacy between the Delinquent and Ordinary Adolescents

Subjects	Frequency	M	SD	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Ordinary	50	54.56	6.53	0.924	.467	.018
Delinquent	50	53.80	9.47	1.339		

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Results revealed significant differences in optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy between normal and delinquent adolescents. Optimism helps people resist depression which leads to failure and sad events. Optimists enjoy a higher level of self-efficacy and resilience. Results also showed that delinquents do not have a desirable level of optimism compared to normal adolescents. Lack of optimism has destructive mental effects. In general, delinquent adolescents had a lower resilience, tolerance, and patience. The finding was consistent with the research results of conducted by Khodaverdi (2019); Karimi *et al.* (2017), and Bartone *et al.* (2015). Also, the results of this study are also consistent with Krasikova *et al.* (2015) and Hodder *et al.* (2016) in terms of comparison between resilience, self-efficacy and optimism in two groups of normal and delinquent adolescents.

According to Scheier and Carver (1992), the optimism is defined as the tendency to adopt the most hopeful view and it requires a positive evaluation

and prediction of the person about the consequences and outcomes of life events. Therefore, the optimism creates a positive and satisfying feeling of life in different aspects, which is followed by high resilience and self-efficacy. The optimism is also defined as a strong expectation of the person that in spite of the obstacles and frustrations in the whole life, everything will be fine (Karademas, 2006). Thus, the optimist people have higher level of self-efficacy and resilience. As it has been clear in the present research, the delinquent adolescents had not satisfying level of optimism in comparison with ordinary adolescents. The lack of optimism in these adolescents has harmful effects on them in spiritual and psychological dimensions.

Some studies have shown that self-efficacy in normal adolescents has led to more activity, and they seek to resolve the problem and deal with incompatibilities and problems. They also tend to have less misdemeanor behaviours when faced with problems (Khodaverdi, 2019). Karimi *et al.* (2016) report that juvenile delinquents have lower levels of resilience. Bartone *et al.* (2015) concluded that low levels of resilience had a relationship with tendency to delinquency and can predict it. Bartone *et al.* (2015) also reported that resilience is a dynamic process, which includes positive adjustment at times of hardship, and this ability has a close relationship with self-efficacy. As a result, resilience is a strategy to deal with tensions and challenges.

Resilience includes factors such as self-concept, optimism and self-efficacy, and the creation of desirable social effective communication (Rahmati & Saber, 2017). Normal adolescent with high levels of resilience accepts existing facts and they believe that human life has a profound meaning, which makes them resistant to problems. While adolescent with low resilience consider changes in life as negative and uncontrollable (Bartone *et al.*, 2015).

Resilient people feel that they are able to cope with the problems because of their optimism, and logically deal with problems. These people have an optimistic view of the message and act and can easily control their own issues (King, 2017).

Optimistic individuals have stronger social relationships than pessimistic, they care more about their health, and have more communicative

principles. This makes it easy for them to create networks in any environment that they are placed. As a result, adolescents with high optimism have less tendency to misdemeanor behaviours (Alterman *et al.*, 2014). As it can be seen from the results of the present research and also similar studies, the delinquent adolescents have a lower level of resilience and endurance. Also, in terms of self-efficacy, there was a significant difference between two groups.

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