

Resiliency and Overcoming Obstacles

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Research Problem:

One of the most interesting yet underdeveloped issues in resiliency research today is what causes some of us to be resilient, and others of us to fall in the face of obstacles.

What is resiliency?

A person being able to achieve positive outcomes despite challenges (Dinsmore et al. 2011)

Research Question & Hypothesis

Are individuals given the ability to actively utilize resiliency, or is resiliency something that we acquire as we encounter interactions with others?

Hypothesis: Our perspective is that in order to gain a particular level of resiliency, it is necessary that individuals have overcome stressful obstacles throughout their lives, and if an adolescent is portraying resiliency in childhood and adolescence, it will follow them into adulthood.

Purpose:

1. To examine the relationship between resiliency and the ability to overcome obstacles throughout one's lifetime.
2. To develop an email interview protocol to assess this relationship through our participant's rich lived experience.
3. To aid practitioners in the helping profession gain awareness on the importance of promoting resilience and positive behaviors

Theoretical Framework:

Family Ecological theory assumes that every level of society has an effect on the way that individuals and families live (Berk, 2009).

As applied to our study, this theory would suggest that the family influences alone do not lead to resiliency in children and adults.

Interview Questions and Themes Derived from Interviews

Questions (Selected Interview Questions)	Themes
Tell us about obstacles that you have overcome in your life and how you have overcome these obstacles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education not being valued • Lack of family support • Drug/alcohol abuse in the family • Recognizing their resiliency
Explain to us about your personality growing up; were you a more positive or negative person and how did this approach to life either assist you overcome obstacles or serve as a barrier? Can you give an example?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of attention at home • Finding outlets for attention • Trying to impress others
How easy is it for you to ask for help? If it is, can you explain how you have come to believe that asking for help is a strength? If it is not, what is the specific barrier? Can you give an example?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once seen as a weakness • Can be seen as a healthy choice
How do you think about the word "stress"...how does how you think about the word influence how you react when you experience stress in your life?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different Kinds of Stress • Stress causing a panic or overwhelming feeling • Associated with achievement
Think of a time in your life when you handled a stressful situation poorly. Did you learn anything from the way you reacted? Did you change the way that you reacted to the situation in the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing Behavior • Changing the Outcomes

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Participant #1	Participant #2
Gender	Male	Female
Age	47	22
Current Marital Status	Married	Single
How Many Times Married	1	0
Number of Children	2	0
Number of Siblings	5	0
Primary Caretaker Growing Up	Single Mother	Single Father
Family's Average Yearly Income Growing Up	Less than \$15,000/yr	\$45,000 before parents divorced, unknown after the divorce

Methods:

Qualitative Email Interview
 Participant Sampling Types: Purposive and Snowball
 Research Design: Phenomenology
 Data Analysis Plan: Thematic Analysis

Literature Review:

Heitzeg et al. (2012) found that young teens with low resiliency showed an early onset of alcohol and drug abuse in their early adult years.

Dinsmore et al. (2011) found that those with a high level of resiliency were less likely to use alcohol because they were able to handle stress effectively.

Barnett et al. (2010) findings indicated that resilience decreased as gender role conflict increased.

Hammel (2008) found that resiliency can be met through certain individual traits. If resiliency is met, individuals are able to form trusting adult relationships.

Heitzeg et al. (2008) found that children of alcoholics (COA's) have differences in risk and resilience.

Implications:

For Practitioners: Professionals can help clients develop healthy ways to deal with stress, and to encourage that asking for help is a strength. If practitioners are able to help people recognize how they react to stress and turn negative reactions into positive, healthy ways of dealing with stress, then we can help promote resilient behavior.

For Research: Use a larger number of participants in order to gain multiple perspectives and examples of resilient behavior, and compare a sample of participants who may not have shown resilient behaviors.

Conclusions:

This study gives first-hand insight from the lived experience of resilient individuals who have been able to overcome obstacles they have been faced with throughout their lives. In spite of a body of research, resilience in many ways remains mysterious.

