

The Effects of Resilience on the Psychological Well-being of University Students – Article Review

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Taylor, H., & Reyes, H. (2012). Self-Efficacy and Resilience in Baccalaureate Nursing Students. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 9(1), 1-9.

Pidgeon, A. M., Natasha, F. R., Stapleton, P., Magyar, H. B., & Lo, B. C. Y. (2014). Examining Characteristics of Resilience among University Students: An International Study. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 2, 14-22.

The “state” or “trait” that is known as resilience is becoming increasingly important within the academic field. Resilience has been broadly defined as a characteristic controlling the negative effects of stress, helping with adaptation and increasing one’s psychological well-being (Pidgeon et al., 2014). Articles by both Taylor and Reyes (2012) and Pidgeon et al. (2014) discuss resilience and its influence on student psychological wellbeing and academic success.

In their study, Taylor and Reyes explore the role of self-efficacy and resilience pertaining to test scores of 136 baccalaureate nursing students in multiple courses during one semester. A strong sense of self-efficacy provides a boost in personal accomplishment and positive psychological well-being, it also serves as an indicator for potential issues such as attrition, career progress and nursing education competence (Taylor & Reyes, 2012). This goes hand in hand with resilience, as researchers have concluded, a high level of resilience contributes to increased self-efficacy even during unfavourable situations (Taylor & Reyes, 2012). Students may face unique challenges such as a change of environment, academic stressors, loss or weakened social support networks, developing peer relationships and financial management (Pidgeon et al., 2014). There were no significant differences present in perceived resilience or self-efficacy scores in the early or late semester (Taylor & Reyes, 2012). Researchers used the Resilience Scale which directly measures resilience by examining five characteristics: self-reliance, meaning, equanimity, perseverance and existential aloneness (Taylor & Reyes, 2012). Significant differences were discovered in the early and late semester for the two characteristics of perseverance and existential aloneness (Taylor & Reyes, 2012).

In the study by Pigeon et al., researchers looked at student characteristics when reporting high or low resilience in explaining its clinical relations to mental health, specifically focusing on psychosocial variables that could be potentially modified (Pidgeon et al., 2014). Taking an international perspective, 214 university students from Australia, the United States and Hong Kong measured for resilience, perceived social support, campus connectedness and psychological distress (Pidgeon et al., 2014). Perceived social support comes from an individual’s perception of emotional and physical care they receive from family, friends and significant others (Pidgeon et al., 2014). It shows the relationship between students and their educational environment. Campus connectedness reflects the ability students have to develop positive relationships with peers and fitting in within their campus environment (Pidgeon et al., 2014). This is especially important for increased academic motivation and positive psychological outcomes for students (Pidgeon et al., 2014). Lastly, psychological distress includes three negative emotional states: depression, anxiety and stress (Pidgeon et al., 2014). The results of this study found that students with low levels of resilience have significantly lower perceived social support, campus connectedness, and higher psychological distress and therefore the opposite for high resilience students (Pidgeon et al., 2014).

Both of these studies conclude that a higher level of resilience is extremely favourable for positive psychological and academic success within the university environment. Literature suggests that self-efficacy, being directly related to resilience, improves when people overcome very difficult circumstances (Taylor & Reyes, 2012). Despite this, research has found a significant decrease in student's confidence to solve problems "if they tried hard enough" (Taylor & Reyes, 2012, p.5). This stands as an indicator that academic institutions need to provide resilience boosting programs for this population (Pidgeon et al., 2014). Some students may not have the strength of resilience they require and are therefore feeling this attrition within their university experience. As an academic institution, programs that help students differentially manage stress, build positive personal and professional identities and develop self-management strategies, do in fact encourage resilience (Finn & Hafferty, 2014).

As a current university student, I certainly do agree with the positivity of resilience boosting in order to strengthen students for the hardships they may face. To be resilient when under any type of pressure will allow the student to not only thrive during challenges they regularly endure, but to also be capable of handling even more, pushing them to reach their ultimate potential.

References:

Finn, G. M., & Hafferty, F. W. (2014). Medical student resilience, educational context and incandescent fairy tales. *Medical Education*, 48, 340-348.