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1. Learning Outcomes

After studying this module, you shall be able to

- Know the concept of resilience
- Learn the various models of resilience
- Identify the pathways to resilience and
- Understand the various ways of fostering resilience

2. Introduction

In the 1960s, Lois Murphy criticized the negative focus of research studying individual differences in children. Around 1970, some developmental psychologists focused their attention to the phenomenon of children who despite being at risk for problems and psychopathology succeeded in life (Masten, 1999). These pioneers inspired research on resilience in development in the following decades.

Resilience has been an area of research focus for a long time. There has been a lot of interest in how the individual adapts to the environment, and many theories such as those of natural selection and psychoanalytic ego psychology focus on it. The concepts of ego, mastery, competence, and self-efficacy focused on positive aspects of adaptation.

Resilience refers to humans' amazing ability to bounce back and even thrive in the face of serious life challenges. It generally refers to phenomena which involves positive adaptation in adversity. Two main evaluations are required to identify individuals as resilient:

1. Individuals are “doing OK” or better than OK in terms of certain expectations for behavior.
2. There have been circumstances that posed a major challenge.



FIGURE 1. REPRESENTING TWO MAJOR JUDGMENTS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO IDENTIFY INDIVIDUALS AS RESILIENT

3. Conceptual framework

The main concepts in resilience research are as follows:

Defining and Assessing Good Developmental Outcomes

Good outcomes can be defined on the basis of how successfully an individual meets age-related developmental tasks. Developmental tasks are the expectations of the society for the behavior of children at different ages and situations.

One of the ongoing debates with respect to resilience is whether the criteria must involve good internal adaptation as well as good external adaptation. It is usually understood that external adaptation standards define resilience. Another debate relates to whether to expect resilient children to function just fine or better to excel.

In studies of resilient children and youth, the following are assessed in terms of good outcomes: academic achievement; conduct; peer acceptance and friendship; normative mental health; and involvement in age-appropriate activities. Most studies focus on multiple indicators of good functioning, and not just one.

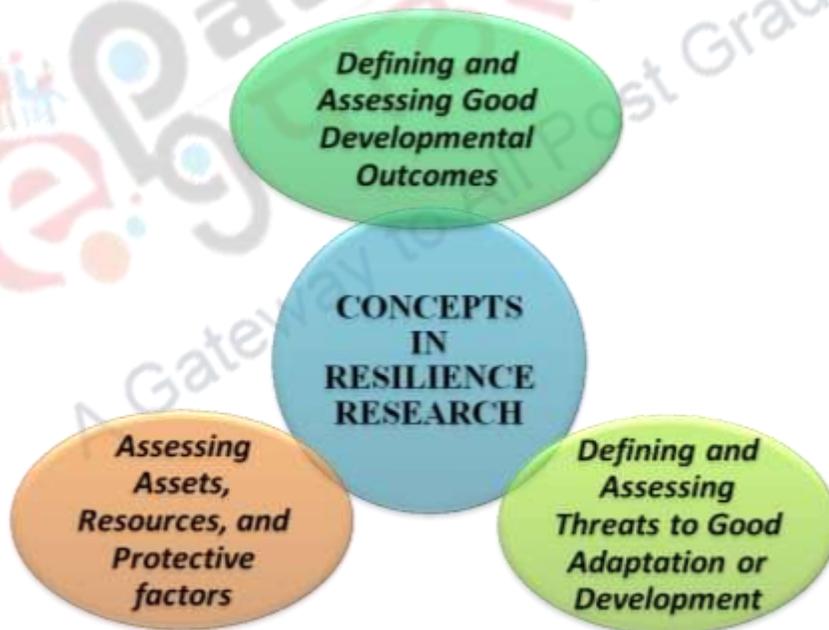


FIGURE 2: REPRESENTING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OPERATING IN RESILIENCE.

Defining Threats to Good Adaptation

Various threats to individual functioning and development have been identified: premature birth, divorce, maltreatment, poverty, homelessness, and traumatic experiences due to disasters. Initially

researchers focused on a single indicator to define risk but later there was a shift to studying cumulative risk. There are two major forms of cumulative risk assessment: risk indices and stressful life experience scores. Cumulative risk scores add the number of risk factors present in a child's life. Life stress scores add up the number of negative life experiences during that time.

Assessing Assets, Resources, and Protective factors

Assets, resources, and protective factors have been studied in resilience research. Assets predict better outcomes for good adaptation. Resources refer to the human, social, and material capital that is used in adaptation. Protective factors are the qualities of persons or the situation that predict better outcomes under high-risk conditions.

4. Resilience among disadvantaged youth

Resilience research has also been conducted on disadvantaged youth. Buckner and his colleagues (2003) identified a resilient group and a non-resilient group of children. They found that resilient children had no clinically significant mental health symptoms and showed generally positive functioning. Resilient youths showed higher levels of intellectual competence and self-esteem. Resilience was found to be linked to the number of negative life events and to chronic life stress. Non-resilient children had suffered more negative life events. Self-regulation was also found to be the most powerful predictor of resilience.

5. Sources of resilience in adulthood and later life

Many factors which contribute to resilience in childhood also contribute to resilience in later life. Ryff and her colleagues have provided a very extensive model of well-being. Research has shown that the following six dimensions are predictive of resilient responses in the face of adversity:

1. Self-acceptance
2. Personal growth
3. Purpose in life
4. Environmental mastery
5. Autonomy
6. Positive relations with others

6. Successful aging

Old people have been found to be as happy as people in other periods of adulthood. Studies show low rates of nearly all psychological disorders among older adults except dementia (Regier et al, 1988). This can be explained with the help of socio-emotional selectivity theory. It helps explain how age-related changes can be the basis for a more satisfying, pleasurable, and hassle-free life and for stronger social support (Cartensen, 1992).

Cartensen argues that people's perception of how much time they have left in life exerts a powerful influence over the goals they pursue. According to the socio-emotional selectivity theory, as people realize that they have fewer years to live, they shift their energies and attention away from activities and goals related to the future and focus more on the present.

7. Models of resilience

There are mainly two major approaches in research on resilience:

Variable focused approaches focus on the links among individual characteristics, environments, and experiences to understand the factors leading to good outcomes during adversity.

Person-focused approaches identify the traits of resilient people.

7.1 Variable-Focused Models of Resilience

Several variable focused models of resilience are additive models, interactive models, and indirect models.

Additive models

The additive effects of risk factors, assets, and bipolar asset/ risk variables are examined in relation to a positive outcome.

Interactive Models

There are moderating effects in which one variable alters the impact of the risk/ adversity variable such as temperament, personality etc. Another example of moderator is the threat activated protective system which is triggered by the occurrence of threatening experiences.

Indirect models of resilience

Mediated effects refer to situations where a powerful influence on outcome is itself affected by risks and resources.

7.2 Person-Focused Models of Resilience

Three types of person-focused models are very important in resilience research. One model is based on the single case study of individuals, the second on identifying high-risk individuals who do well and full diagnostic models of resilience which classify children on the basis of good outcomes and adversity/risk.

7.3 Pathway models

Pathway models of resilience explain patterns of behavior over time. This is reflected in studies of antisocial behavior, normative life-span and family systems theory and research.

Three resilient pathways

Path A reflects a child growing up in a high-risk environment who functions well in life. Path B reflects a child who is doing well, is diverted due to some trauma but recovers. Path C reflects a high-risk child who is not doing well is provided with life-altering opportunities.

8. Protective Factors for Resilience

There are certain protective factors for resilience in children and youth which are as follows:

Within the Child

- Good cognitive abilities
- Adaptable personality
- Positive self-perceptions
- Positive outlook in life
- Good emotional regulation
- Attractiveness to others

Within the Family

- Close relationships with caregiving adults
- Authoritative parenting but high on warmth
- Positive family climate
- Involvement of parents in child's education
- Socioeconomic advantages

Within Family or Other Relationships

- Close relationships to supportive adults
- Connections to prosocial peers

Within the Community

- Good schools
- Prosocial organizations
- Public safety
- Health care facilities

9. Strategies for Fostering Resilience

Strategies for Promoting Resilience in Children and Youth are as follows:

Risk-Focused Strategies

These strategies aim to reduce the exposure of children to hazardous experiences.

- Prenatal care
- Prevent child abuse
- Community programs
- Housing policy
- Community policing



FIGURE REPRESENTING THE RISK-FOCUSED STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING RESILIENCE

Asset-Focused Strategies

These approaches aim to increase the quality of resources.

- Provide a tutor
- Organize a Club
- Parent education
- Recreation center

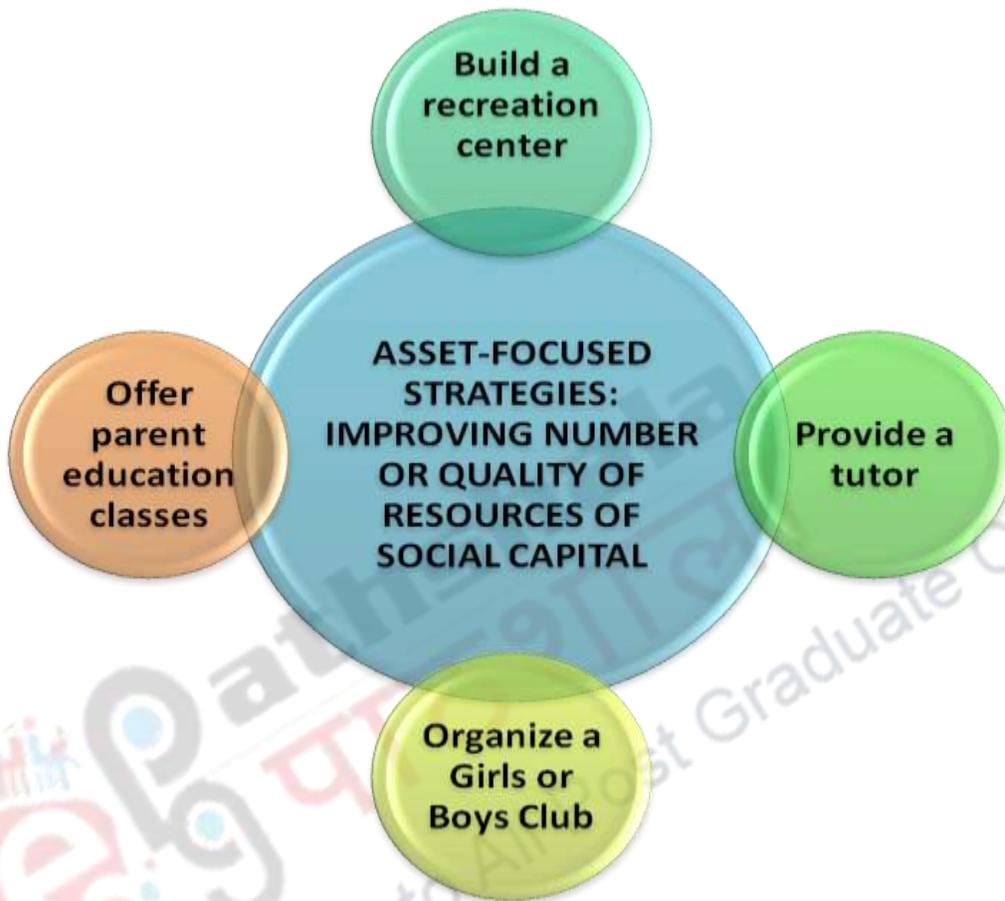


FIGURE REPRESENTING THE ASSET-FOCUSED STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING RESILIENCE

Process-Focused Strategies

These strategies aim to mobilize protective systems for development and promote good adaptation.

- Build self-efficacy.
- Effective coping strategies.
- Parental-sensitivity training etc.
- Mentoring relationships.
- Friendships of children with prosocial peers.
- Opportunities to bond with prosocial adults.

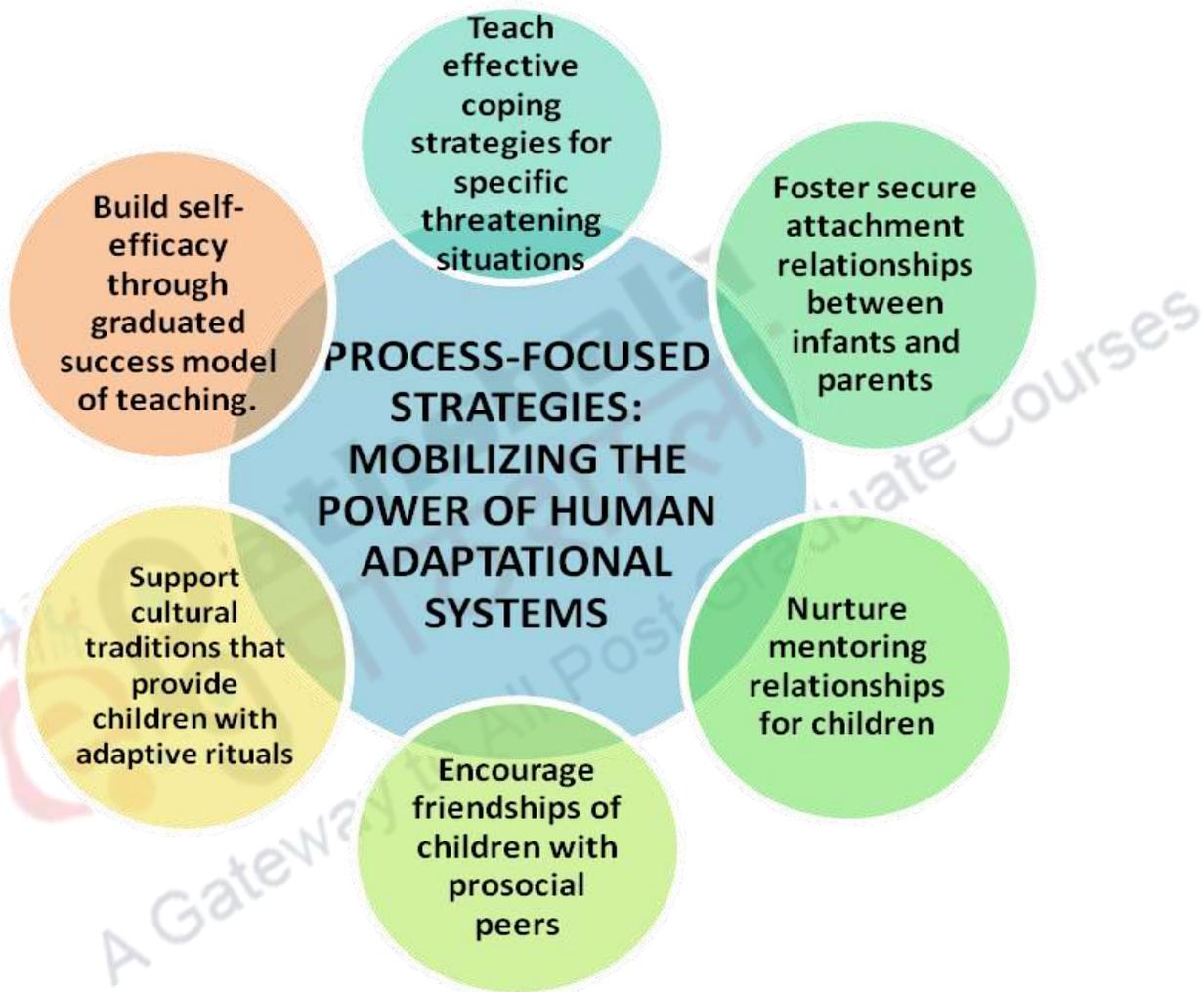


FIGURE 6: REPRESENTING THE PROCESS-FOCUSED STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING RESILIENCE

A group of cognitive-behavioral interventions, called the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), has been shown to be quite effective in fostering resilience and significantly reducing depressive symptoms over time.

10. Future Directions for Resilience Research

Resilience research shows that extraordinary resilience of children arises from ordinary processes known as **ordinary magic** (Masten, 2001). Researchers have started formulating new frameworks for understanding and helping children at risk. Many researches have also started focusing on the biological underpinnings of resilience.

11. Summary

- Around 1970, some developmental psychologists focused their attention to the phenomenon of children who despite being at risk for problems succeeded in life.
- Resilience refers to humans' amazing ability to bounce back and even thrive in the face of serious life challenges.
- The framework for resilience involves: Defining and Assessing Good Developmental Outcomes, Threats to Good Adaptation and Assessing Assets, Resources, and Protective factors.
- Resilience research has also been conducted on disadvantaged youth.
- Research has shown that the following six dimensions are predictive of resilient responses in the face of adversity: Self-acceptance, Personal growth, Purpose in life, Environmental mastery, and Autonomy and Positive relations with others.
- According to the socio-emotional selectivity theory, as people realize that they have fewer years to live, they shift their energies and attention away from activities and goals related to the future and focus more on the present.
- The main models of resilience are: variable-focused models, person-focused models and pathway models.
- There are certain protective factors for resilience in children and youth within the child, within the family, other relationships and within the community.
- There are various Strategies for Promoting Resilience in Children and Youth.