

Struggle with adversity through life: factors influencing the level of resilience in adolescents and its enhancement pathways

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Abstract. Resilience refers to a person's psychological toughness, which is the ability to coordinate and adapt well in the face of adversity, and is mainly formed during adolescence. Also, it is significant for later adaptation and development in difficult or high-risk environments. In this paper, through document analysis and interviews, we found that the factors affecting the level of resilience of adolescents mainly include: individual negative adversity perceptions and behavioral responses; distant parent-child relationships, abusive behaviors and negative family events in the family; the quality of the school and community environment to be improved. To address this, the possible pathways of improvement are: to develop intervention plans for individuals and pay attention to adolescents' psychological health; to give full play to the supportive and protective functions of families and carry out parenting function services; to improve the quality of school and community environments and build good social support mechanisms to stimulate adolescents' endogenous motivation and promote healthy development.

Keywords: adolescents; resilience; family relationship; social worker intervention.

1. Introduction

The American Psychological Association defines resilience as the process by which a person adapts well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threat, or significant stressors. Some people, despite facing significant danger or hardship, did not experience the expected symptoms of physical and mental impairment and maladjustment, but instead adapted well and even became better. [1] Most studies have shown that resilience is mainly formed in the adolescent period. Due to the objective reasons of their own growth, adolescent groups are faced with the formation of life views and values and are highly susceptible to the influence of their surroundings.

2. Factors influencing the resilience of adolescents.

Research has shown that the risks and influences of resilience come from three main levels, namely, the individual, the family, and the external environment. [2] And from Masten's psychosocial adaptation, the levels of resilience can be divided into three outcomes: resilience reorganization, resilience adaptation, and resilience dysregulation by Masten's path model of psychosocial adaptation function. [3] Based on this, five college students were selected as interviewees for one-on-one interviews, and each case interview lasted about one hour. Three more typical interviewees were selected as cases in this paper. The interviewers anonymously used the contents of the conversations as information for this paper with informed consent. The basic conditions of the interviewees are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic situation of the interviewees

Unit: person

Gender		Age	Resilience results			Academic status		
Male	Female	Mean value	Reorganization	Adaptation	Dysregulation	Excellent	Good	poor
2	3	20.8 years old	1	3	1	2	2	1

Note: The above measures of academic status are: excellent (maintaining a GPA of 3.5 and above), good (maintaining a GPA of 3.0-3.5), poor (maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or below)

2.1 Individual level: negative adversity perceptions and behavioral responses.

The individual adolescent's understanding of self and the external environment reflects a unique psychological state that is a product of moving from a psychological entity to a social situation. [4]92 The way adolescents establish relationships with their environment affects the individual's ability to cope and adapt to their surroundings, and even their coordinated development and access to resources in difficult situations. Adolescents' own cognitive understanding of the environment constitutes a specific social context, and the definition and interpretation of the environment determines the positive or negative coping strategies they adopt. In other words, there are differences in adolescents' perceptions of adversity. As shown in Table 2, adolescents with reorganized resilience tend to give positive meaning to their surroundings, often adopt positive attitudes to resolve conflicts and use adversity as an opportunity to gain growth experiences, while those with resilience disorder have mostly negative attitudes toward the definition and understanding of the environment, often fall into a sense of self-powerlessness and loss of control, and feel high pressure and helpless even when facing minor dangers. These adolescents tend to be more susceptible to adverse environmental influences and limitations compared to the former, have difficulty understanding the logic behind adversity, and have difficulty translating the experience of adversity into later coordinated adaptive skills.

Behavioral coping is an outward behavioral response made by the individual on the basis of cognition and adjusted accordingly according to the individual's motivation. As shown in Table 2, the behavioral coping patterns of adolescents with restructured resilience tend to exhibit a future orientation, [4] 92 Actions tend to be planned and purposeful, and decisions are often made with a positive coping attitude, whereas adolescents with resilience disorders usually do not have goals, act randomly, have low expectations for the future, and lack future planning.

Table 2. Comparison of adolescent adversity cognitive and behavioral coping patterns

Case	Resilience model	Adversity perception	Behavioral coping
Student Z	Resilience Restructuring	Adversity perception is positive. (The family is poor and applied for a scholarship at school.)	Has a clear future orientation, and actions are extremely well-planned, showing a positive coping attitude.
Student W	Resilience adaptation	The perception of adversity is minimized, and it can give new meaning to adversity and regulate perception.	Has some future orientations and can try to take action in the face of problems, but lacks flexibility.
Student L	Resilience dysfunction	Negative and passive perception of adversity, with a sense of powerlessness and an avoidant attitude.	Behavior does not have a future orientation, purposeless, or no plan.

2.2 Family level: Parent-child estrangement, abusive behaviors and negative family events.

As the initial site of adolescent socialization, the family environment is most closely related to the formation and development of adolescent resilience. According to Parsons, the family is the most basic social organization or social institution for raising children, and family life experiences have a crucial influence on children's growth and life opportunities in adulthood. These influences include parent-child attachment, parental abuse, and negative family events. [5]

Coleman refers to the bond between parents and children as a form of "social capital" and considers it a key factor in the development of adolescent human capital. [6] Numerous empirical studies have shown that a good parent-child relationship is conducive to enhancing adolescents' social skills, developing positive self-perceptions, and reducing emotional and behavioral problems. And good social skills, positive self-perceptions, and positive emotions and behaviors are important characteristics possessed by resilient reorganizers. As shown in Table 3, Z and W, as resilience reorganizers and resilience adapters, had established good parent-child relationships with their parents, which enabled them to seek help from their parents when they encountered difficulties and

to acquire problem-solving skills by combining their parents' habits and experiences; whereas abused adolescents often chose to avoid direct contact with their parents when they encountered difficulties, tended to conceal the truth, and were accompanied by learning. This is not conducive to the development of the ability to internalize and sublimate the experience of adversity. In addition, some parents are more likely to abuse their children out of stress or with bad habits such as alcohol and drug abuse, and negative family events make adolescents more vulnerable while increasing their antisocial behavior and discomfort. [7]

Table 3. Comparison of family parent-child relationships, abusive behaviors and negative family events

Individual cases	Patterns of resilience	Family parent-child relationship	Abusive behaviors	Negative family events
Student Z	Resilience reorganization	Better, smooth communications with parents, and will choose to exchange experiences with parents when encountering difficulties.	None (except when he was scared by his parents for being naughty as a child)	None
Student W	Resilience adaptation	Better, often discusses and communicates with parents, and does not avoid telling them what he encounters.	None	None
Student L	Resilience disorder	Poor, almost no communication, used to use violence to solve problems (father is alcoholic and somewhat violent)	Yes	Yes

2.3 External environment level: the quality of the school and community environment needs to be improved.

Schools and communities are second only to families in importance as important places for adolescents to get the education and secure their lives. The quality of the school and community environment has a significant impact on adolescent development, and most of the major external factors affecting the level of adolescent resilience are concentrated here. School-level influences include school workload, bullying, and poor teacher-student relationships, while community-level influences on adolescents are mainly due to their low collective effectiveness and disorganization. The tight teaching style and heavy workload in schools will force individual adolescents to face high academic pressure. The most direct manifestation of this is the frustrating self-confidence, depressed mood, and lack of resilience of adolescents. [8] In addition, numerous studies have shown that academic commitment is positively correlated with the level of personal resilience, and adolescents who are more committed to academics usually have excellent academic performance, positive social adjustment, and less deviant behavior, as shown in Table 4. In addition, adolescents' physical and mental health problems and delinquent behaviors are usually associated with bullying behavior and bullying victimization relationships. Adolescents who engage in bullying behavior or are victimized by bullying tend to have poor psychological states, and individuals who both bully and are bullied by their peers are more active than the average adolescent but lack self-confidence and pro-social behavior. [9] Teacher-student relationships are also an important factor influencing adolescents' levels of resilience. Compared to adolescents with good teacher-student relationships, individuals with more strained teacher-student relationships lack adequate social support systems, and most of these groups are easily neglected, prone to participate in undesirable peer activities, have poor social control, and are not conducive to the cultivation of resilience.

At the community level, it has been shown that communities with high collective efficacy contribute to the adaptation and development of adolescents. [10] In contrast, communities with low collective efficacy and more disorganized communities suffer from a shortage of public resources,

widespread violence, and substance abuse, which adversely affects adolescents' psychological development and makes individuals more likely to be deeply emotionally disturbed.

Table 4. Comparison of school and community environment quality and academic engagement

Case	Resilience results	Academic engagement	School quality (past)	Quality of community
Student Z	Resilience Restructuring	High	Tight teaching style, but good teacher-student relationships and no bullying.	Normal (rural community)
Student W	Resilience adaptation	Higher	Teaching environment is relaxed, teacher-student relationship is good, and no bullying is experienced.	Normal (general urban community)
Student L	Resilience dysregulation	Low	Tight teaching style, tense teacher-student relationship, not subjected to bullying.	Relatively poor (demolition area)

3. The pathways of resilience enhancement in adolescents.

Resilience is the result of acquired by individuals based on their innate genetics, and can be improved through later education and training. Higher levels of resilience can effectively help adolescents cope with difficult situations. Therefore, it is extremely important to help adolescents develop their own adaptive skills and increase their level of resilience.

3.1 Develop individualized intervention plans and focus on adolescent mental health.

Research shows that there are at least three protective factors for high levels of resilience, including both internal and external protective factors. These factors have a buffering effect on stress and can mitigate the negative effects of risk factors on individuals. [11] In addition, the level of resilience not only depends on the individual's own psychological structure, physiological composition and personality temperament, but also is influenced by the individual's habits, experiences and external environment. Therefore, for some individuals who are not yet psychologically developed, lack positive social cognition, have poor self-control and lack of adaptive ability, professional social workers should intervene at an appropriate time and formulate a special intervention plan for resilience enhancement, taking into account their psychological characteristics, external environment and other actual situations. To stimulate the individual's own internal motivation, fully stimulate their own potential, tap their own internal protection factors, and enhance their ability to face adversity.

In addition, the external environment should give full play to its protective role and pay sufficient attention to the psychological health of adolescents during their growth process. When young people are found to have strong emotional changes in a particular situation, social workers should intervene in a timely manner to understand the reasons for their emotions, establish a psychological counseling mechanism, and guide young people to correctly understand failure so that they can master the ability to turn setbacks into motivation.

3.2 Give full play to family protection function and carry out parenting function service.

Family is an important protective factor for adolescents. Family atmosphere, parent-child relationship and parenting style will have a decisive impact on children's self-esteem and character, etc. A warm and harmonious family relationship often brings a sense of closeness and belonging to the individual, which is an important contribution to the individual's growth. Parents can obtain timely information about their children in their interactions with them, and they can understand whether their children are experiencing setbacks or difficulties, and they can provide positive guidance and experience sharing for their children at the first time, which is important for cultivating resilience in children. In addition, the supportive relationships formed among family members play a greater role for individuals than general social support.

For some parents with abusive behaviors or bad habits, it is more necessary to provide professional social work concepts and methods. Social workers carry out parenting services to change parents' improper educational concepts, [10] 77 discipline their children in a scientific and appropriate way, pay attention to their children's mental health condition, and communicate more. At the same time, publicity and education on youth custody and domestic violence prevention are carried out for families with more serious problems. Prevent abuse from occurring through external supervision and intervention by professional social workers. Guide parents to do their duty, improve family functions, and promote the establishment of harmonious family relationships.

3.3 Improve the quality of school and community environment and build a good social support mechanism.

Schools and communities are of great significance to adolescent socialization. At the school level, the pressure of schoolwork and interpersonal relationships have an important impact on the psychological development of adolescents. Schools should pay attention to students who are lagging behind in their academic performance, understand the reasons why they are lagging behind, identify whether they are being bullied on campus, and correct the bad behavior in a timely manner. In addition, schools should set up special campus social work stations, and social workers should offer courses to improve students' self-awareness, interpersonal communication, stress management, and emotional coordination skills, to equip students with the skills to cope with adversity or frustration, and to make school a protective environment for the healthy growth of youth. . In addition, teachers should provide more encouragement and support to students with low levels of resilience in order to enhance their self-efficacy, provide timely intervention and feedback to parents and authorities when necessary.

At the community level, communities should improve their collective effectiveness and increase the exchange of activities among residents. Rectify community disorder, create a safe and comfortable internal environment, screen families with violence and other problems, and promptly refer the situation to public security authorities. For some adolescents with special backgrounds in the community, more social workers with professional abilities should be recruited to provide them with necessary support, fully explore the resources of the individual adolescents themselves and their surroundings, help them improve their resilience, build a good social support mechanism, and enable them to better cope with the external environment.

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