

## A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF RESILIENCE AMONG STUDENTS IN A MALAYSIA PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** Resilience is defined as an individual's capacity to respond, to behave appropriately in the face of adversity, to succeed despite the appearance of negative, and to considerably surpass objectives in the face of negativity. In this context, determining the level of resiliency of undergraduate students is vital. The purpose of this research is to find out how resilient students are. A total of 108 respondents (78 females and 30 males) from a Malaysian public university took part in the survey. The data was gathered using the Resilience Scale, which was translated into Malay. On the basis of the observed variables, descriptive analysis and independent T-Tests were performed. The findings found a significant difference in resilience between male and female students, with female students having a higher level of resilience than male students. There is no difference in the level of resilience between first-generation and non-first-generation students.

**Keywords:** *Resilience, Gender, First-Generation students, University*

### INTRODUCTION

Resilience has gotten increased attention as a human concept during the last decade, particularly in the psychology area. (Friborg et al., 2006). Resilience is derived from the Latin word *resilio*, which means "to bounce back." Some academics describe resilience as a bulwark that comprises external assets as well as internal personality qualities that help people cope with adversity (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006). Furthermore, rather than being something that one "just has," many academics see resilience as a construct that is influenced by a variety of variables. (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006). Resilience is also thought to serve as a mediator between risk factors and unfavorable consequences (Everall, Altrows & Paulson, 2006; Wight, Botticello & Aneshensel, 2005).

The ability of metals to withstand tremendous pressure and reconstruct to their original shape once the pressure has been removed is known as resilience in scientific inquiry. Rutter (2007) defined resilience in behavioral sciences as "the situation in which certain persons have a relatively good output while surviving crucial contact that might result in significant repercussions." Bonanno (2004) mentioned resilience has been by some researchers as a sense of well-being after being exposed to either distress or loss, as well as people's ability to bounce back without succumbing to the pressures and unwanted contact, or the ability to return to a previous level of operation after disruption (Lazarus, 1993).

Resilience has long been recognized as a motivating factor. According to Richardson (2002), resilience is a person's inner power that motivates them to seek wisdom, integrate altruism, attain self-actualization, and be one with spirituality. According to Guillian (2007), resilience is defined as an individual's capacity to respond, to behave appropriately in the face of adversity, to succeed despite the appearance of negative, and to considerably surpass objectives in the face of negativity. In conclusion, despite the fact that the term "resilience" has been defined in a variety of ways, it was basically a mix of an individual's personal qualities (resources) and life circumstances (protective factors).

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Most previous research has focused on resilience in combination with other factors, but research focused exclusively on resilience is relatively few, particularly in Malaysia. Most people are aware with the concept of resilience, but many are unaware of the true significance of incorporating it into one's growth process. There is tremendous interest in resilience, just as there is worry about the negative effects of trauma exposure (Steven et al., 2014). Malaysia, as we all know, is a multicultural country with a diverse historical heritage. Do the Malaysian

university students aware about their resiliency? What is their level of resilience? As the COVID-19 Pandemic spreads across the globe, higher education students have faced challenges as a result of having online classes. This has raised serious concerns among students in higher education about developing resilience and being able to compete with the virus while juggling their studies and other responsibilities. As a result, the researcher decided to conduct this study in order to learn more about university students' resilience.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Wagnild and Young's Theory*

The resilience theory of Wagnild and Young was adopted in the present study. Wagnild (2011) created the Resilience Core, which includes five fundamental qualities of resilience: meaningful living (Purpose), perseverance, serenity, self-reliance, and existential aloneness (Coming Home to Yourself). A meaningful life is defined as one's recognition of the existence of a higher purpose in life. It then goes on to say that there is always a compelling cause to live. Perseverance is the act of remaining determined in the face of hardship, setbacks, and failure. Balance and harmony are the definitions of equanimity. Self-reliance is defined as having faith and trust in oneself, as well as an understanding of and belief in one's own abilities. Existential aloneness (Coming Home to Yourself) refers to the realization that everyone is different and that, while certain interactions may be shared, others are better experienced alone.

Each individual has the capacity for responding to adversity with resilience differently (Wagnild & Young, 1990). In other words, individuals are greatly varied in the way that they are affected when encounter the similar obstacles in life. To summarize, the typology outlines the collective features that exist in persons who have been exposed to both short and extended periods of bad experiences in order to survive again (Wagnild & Young, 2009). The strength of one's Resilience Core determines how well one responds (Wagnild, 2011).

### *Resilience and Gender*

Many research have looked at the impact of gender on resilience, but there has been no unanimity among them. Male students were found to have more resilience in the studies of (Sürücü & Bacanlı, 2010; Erdogan, Ozdogan & Erdogan, 2015), whereas female students were found to have higher resilience in the study of Önder and Gülay (2008). However, in certain cases, the relationship between gender and resilience was not observed.

The difference was in favour of male students on all measures of resilience in the study of Erdogan, Ozdogan, and Erdogan (2015). When compared to female students, male students display greater resilience in the face of adversity and hardship. One of the possible explanations for these findings is the influence of societal gender role.

Furthermore, in the Asian culture, women are expected to be more responsible than men in a variety of areas, such as domestic tasks, child care, and honour defence. Another factor could be that women are generally more emotional than men, thus they are more likely to be affected more deeply by distressing situations.

### *Resilience and First-Generation*

A first-generation student is someone who has never had a parent or legal guardian who has earned a bachelor's degree. First-generation students exhibited a higher level of resilience than non-first-generation students, according to Alvarado, Spataru, and Woodbury (2017). According to previous study, first-generation students are exposed to stressful situations and other factors that may assist them be better prepared to deal with pressures during their college years. (Alvarado et al., 2017).

First-generation college students may face more stress throughout their life and may need to create more motivational strategies. All of these factors are linked to the development of resources including resilience and emotional intelligence in order to cope with stressful experiences that necessitate emotion management, such as a lack of awareness of university resources, limited adult or parental guidance, the need to be a caregiver to a family member, pressure related to a sense of obligation to others/family, and a lack of strong ties to one's community. Even before enrolling in college, first-generation college students may acquire resilience. As a result, first-generation college students may be able to adjust to the changes that come with college life.

## OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### *Research Objectives*

The objectives of the study are as shown below:

1. To determine the level of resilience among students in a public university.
2. To study the difference in resilience between male and female among students in a public university.
3. To examine the difference in resilience between first generation students and non-first generation students in a public university.

### *Research Questions*

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions:

1. What is the level of resilience among students in a public university?
2. Is there a significant difference in resilience between male and female students in a public university?
3. Is there a significant difference in resilience between first generation students and non-first generation students in a public university?

## METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional design is used in this research. This design refers to a study that surveys the sample at one explicit point in time without finding the reasons behind. Simultaneously, this study is in a form of descriptive research. It is a type of research technique that represent the attributes of population and circumstances that is being studied.

Researcher carries out a survey by distributing a set of questionnaires to selected samples at one time. This is to find out on the resilience level and its relationship towards other demographic factors such as gender and first-generation students. The sample selected in this study is university students at a public university in Malaysia.

### *Instrument*

An instrument in the form of a questionnaire was used in this study for the purpose of gathering data. This questionnaire was divided into two parts which are the demography and the Resilience Scale.

*Demography.* This section are related to the samples' background of the respondent which was participants' demographic.

*Resilience Scale.* The objective of this scale is to assess a person's ability to bounce back from stress or hardship. We used only three of the original six items, as suggested by earlier research (Chmitorz et al., 2018). "I have a hard time making it through stressful events", "It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens" and "I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life" are the three items. Participants in the study were asked to react to these three items using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (strongly agree). All three negative items were recoded into positives for the purposes of this study. The higher the score indicates higher level of resilience.

### *Reliability of Brief Resilience Scale*

For the reliability of the Resilience Scale, Fung (2020) reported that in a current review is high with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ( $\alpha = .71$ ) in her study. In the present study, the internal consistency was .81 in the total score for the Resilience Scale for the three items.

### *Sample*

A total of 108 students from a public university made up the study's sample. The samples for this study consist of a total of 30 undergraduate males and 78 females. The participants' average age is 22.18 years old. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 27, with the youngest being 20 years old and the oldest being 27 years old. There are 38 students who are first generation student, while there are 78 students who are not first generation. A first-generation student is has never had a parent or legal guardian who has earned a bachelor's degree.

*Statistical Analysis*

Data analysis was carried out in order to acquire the study's results based on the questionnaire's level of mattering scale among the respondents. The data collected in this study was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows computer software. The forms of statistical analysis used in the data analysis process include descriptive and inferential analysis (mean, median, standard deviation, and T-Test).

**ANALYSIS DATA AND FINDINGS**

A total of 108 respondents were gathered from a public university in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for this study. The demographical analysis data is analysed as a percentage (%) and frequency. The results reflect the frequency and percentage of the 108 people who took part in the study. Female respondents accounted for around three times the number of male respondents, according to the findings. Males account for 27.8% of the total 108 participants, while females account for 72.2 percent. In this study, the mean or average age of the respondents ( $n = 108$ ) is 22.18 years old, with a mode age of 21 years old. In this survey, the youngest responder is 20 years old and the oldest is 27 years old.

*Level of Resilience among University Students*

To study the research question 1, descriptive analysis was done. It showed that the mean score for the level of resilience among students in a public university is 9.19 with standard deviation of 2.71 and it ranged from 3 to 15 in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics of Level of Resilience*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Resilience	108	3.00	15.00	9.19	2.71
Valid N	108				

The level of resilience for the respondents were actually quite high as it came with a mean of 9.19 out of 15. This also demonstrated that students at a public university have an adequate level of resiliency when confronted with challenges.

*Level of Resilience by Gender*

To see any difference in resilience between males and females among students in a public university, T-test is ran using SPSS. Table 2 showed the mean and standard deviation between genders among students in a public university whereas Table 3 is the result of the independent sample test for resilience between genders among students in a public university.

Table 2  
*Group Statistics of resilience between male and female among students in a public university*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Resilience	Male	30	8.83	3.39	.62
	Female	78	9.32	2.41	.27

Null Hypothesis is created as shown as below:

$H_0$ : There is no significance difference in resilience between male and female among students in a public university

Table 3

*Independent Samples Test for resilience between male and female among students in a public university*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
									Lower	Upper
Total Social Support	Equal variances assumed	4.08	.046	-.83	106	.406	-.48718	.58395	-1.6449	.67056
	Equal variances not assumed			-.72	40.805	.476	-.48718	.67739	-1.8554	.88103

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference ( $t = -.834$ ,  $df = 106$ , two-tailed  $p = .046$ ) in resilience between male ( $M = 8.83$ ,  $SD = 3.39$ ) and female ( $M = 9.32$ ,  $SD = 2.41$ ). With a  $p$  value of 0.05, the significant result is 0.046, which is less than the  $p$  value specified. When there is a significant difference between male and female in a public university, the null hypothesis is rejected. Female students exhibited a higher level of resilience than male students, as can be observed.

#### *Level of Resilience by First-Generation Students*

To see if there is any difference in resilience between the first generation students and non-first generation students in a public university, T-test is ran using SPSS. Table 4 showed the mean and standard deviation between the first generation students and non-first generation students in a public university.

Table 4

*Group Statistics of resilience between first generation and non-first generation students in a public university*

	Are you a "first generation" student in your family?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	No	Yes				
Total Resilience			70	9.53	2.53	.30
			37	8.54	3.00	.49

Table 5

*Independent Samples Test for resilience between first generation and non-first generation students in a public university.*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
									Lower	Upper
Total Social Support	Equal variances assumed	.908	.343	1.801	105	.075	.98803	.54850	-.09954	2.07560
	Equal variances not assumed			1.710	63.526	.092	.98803	.57795	-.16673	2.14279

Null Hypothesis is created as shown as below:

$H_0$ : There is no significance difference in resilience between the first generation students and non-first generation students in a public university.

From Table 5, it is shown that there is no significance difference ( $t = 1.801$ ,  $df = 105$ , two-tailed  $p = .343$ ) in resilience between first generation students ( $M = 8.54$ ,  $SD = 3.00$ ) and non-first generation students ( $M = 9.53$ ,  $SD = 2.53$ ) in a public university. With the value of  $p < 0.05$ , the result of the significance is 0.343 which is larger

than the p value set. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted because there is no significance difference between first generation students and non-first generation students in a public university.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, the level of resilience among students a public university were quite high. This also demonstrated that students at a public university have an adequate level of resiliency when confronted with challenges. Having higher level of resiliency indicated people more likely to bounce back from stresses and unwanted contact, or to return to a former level of operation after a disruption (Lazarus, 1993). Students who have a high level of resilience will be able to cope better with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced them to spend the majority of their time at home doing assignments.

The second finding from this study showed that the female students had a higher mean score of resilience than the male students in a public university. There was a significance difference between the male and female students in a public university. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. On the other hand, there was no significance difference between the first generation and non-first generation among students in a public university. Therefore, the hypothesis for the first generation and non-first generation was accepted.

This finding is in line with the findings of Önder and Gülay (2008), who discovered that female students are more resilient than male students. Women are supposed to be more responsible than men in a variety of areas, such as domestic work and child care, as is the scenario in Asian society. Another aspect could be that women are more emotional than men, thus they are more prone to be deeply impacted by difficult situations. However, since all of the students' classes were conducted online, men might be more emotional than before, while females remained the same. Male students may also share household chores with other family members, strengthening their resiliency to deal with a variety of tasks on a daily basis.

Moreover, there's no significance difference between the first generation and non-first generation among students in a public university, its not consistent with the finding of Alvarado et al. (2017), which showed that First-generation students exhibited a higher level of resilience than non-first-generation students. The study's sample size is only 108 participants, and non-first-generation students outnumber first-generation students by two to one. One constraint that may result in no difference between the two groups is a lack of sufficient sample size. Furthermore, people in Asian culture do not exhibit emotions and have a mentality of perceiving themselves as invincible. This could be one of the causes contributing to their invulnerability, as there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The level of resilience among students at a public institution was examined in this study. Since this research is a first step in improving student resilience, more study is warranted.

Firstly, a future study may expand the sample of university students to include other public universities in Malaysia, rather than just one. Furthermore, the sample size of the male and female subcategories in this study could be enlarged to ensure the reliability of gender differences in emotional intelligence levels.

Second, the researcher employed cross-sectional data. Researchers could integrate longitudinal designs in the future to test causal inferences and better understand how these factors and their associations develop over time. In future studies, a qualitative or experimental study approach is advised to reduce the social desirable manner for respondents to answer the questionnaire. The variables of resilience were studied by the researchers. Future studies should continue to investigate other social and contextual aspects, as well as other variables. Resilience and career adaptability, for example, or resilience and mental health.

In essence, this chapter went over the research findings in further depth. In addition, earlier resilience research was briefly addressed in order to determine the consistency and discrepancy between previous study and present research. Finally, the suggestions made and presented in this part can be used as a reference by future researchers in order to acquire more thorough and precise resilience study results.



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