Correlates of Resilience Development among Juvenile Delinquents

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Abstract: The process of resilience development enables individuals to balance between risk and protective factors present in one's environment that shapes who they become. The objective of this research is to determine the relationships that exist between self-esteem, family adaptability, family cohesion and resilience of juvenile delinquents. A total of 134 juvenile delinquents from two juvenile delinquent schools in Malaysia took part in this survey by responding to the Resilience Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales II. Majority of the participants were Malays ranging between 13 to 20 years. Results showed self-esteem, family cohesion and family adaptability have significant correlations with resilience and personal competence. However, only self-esteem and family cohesion have significant correlations with acceptance of self. Self-esteem was a significant predictor of resilience and self-esteem, family cohesion and family adaptability accounted for 15.1 % of the variance in resilience scores. It is recommended that future research on juvenile delinquents should include a character building or motivational compartment to help increase self-esteem levels as well as a family bonding counselling session to encourage close knit families.

Key words: Self-esteem · Family adaptability · Family cohesion · Resilience · Juvenile Delinquents

INTRODUCTION

Rates of crime in Malaysia have been on the rise with cases of juvenile crime increasing steadily from 2002 to 2010. Up to August 2010, the police have recorded a total of 860 violent crimes by juvenile offenders. The issue that seems to be the most worrying would be the average amount of cases caught per day, which used to be 8 in 2002 has more than doubled to 17 in 2009 and reached 12 in the end of the 3rd quarter of 2010 [1]. Most adolescents, especially those who are faced with many risky situations, are vulnerable to participate in risky behaviours [2] within an individual's environment [3, 4]. Resilience is defined as the ability to positively adapt and cope successfully, during or after experiencing stressful or risky situations, enabling them to recover to the baseline they originally begin from [2, 5-8]. It is a personal resource that may not be possessed or be able to be developed if a person solely relies on their willpower alone, as it is developed through interactions of an individual with its social environments, brought about by one's life changing circumstances [4, 3].

Generally, an environment consists of the individual, their family, school and community. All these environments are connected and hence, they influence each other by the social relationships formed and its qualities. Therefore, the presence of possible risk and protective factors in each individual's environment cannot be denied. Risk factors may increase an individual's vulnerability in some instances. The role of protective factors is to balance out the risk factors, which leads an individual to positive adaptive behaviour, which is better known as resilience [9-11]. It was reported that women have lower levels of resilience compared to men [12]. The same finding was obtained proving that gender differs significantly in the variable of resilience [13].

One variable that relates to resilience is self-esteem, especially during the adolescent years, as the identity formation of an individual reaches its peak during this stage. Self-esteem describes the discrepancies in an individual's evaluation of their self image (who they actually are) and their ideal self (who they want to be) [14, 15]. It was also reported that males have, significantly, slightly higher scores than that of females [16].

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In addition to the individual factors, the processes that occur within a family would relate to and affect adolescents. Most juvenile offenders come from low to moderate social economic status, broken homes or dysfunctional families and do not have strong relationships with their parents. Family cohesion is defined as 'the emotional bonding that couples and family members have towards one another' [17]. It shows how families balance their separateness versus togetherness. Family adaptability refers to the amount of flexibility that exists or is displayed in a family. It refers to the capability of the family system to change when the situation arises for such an occasion to take place.

In considering the effects of gender, it was discovered that males have a higher mean in measuring family cohesion compared to females [18]. A study reported a contrasting result that females have higher levels of family cohesion compared to males [19]. Another study discovered that gender yields no significant results with family adaptability as a dependant variable [20]. A similar study also reported no significant differences among both boys and girls on the family adaptability variable [21].

Participants with fewer social problems were associated with a remitting pattern of aggressive behaviours [22]. It also states that participants with lower self-esteem were associated with an escalating pattern of aggressive behaviour. Adolescent's aggression were associated with more social problems, family expressiveness, physical discipline, and negative control but less family cohesion. More maternal psychopathology, social problems and family conflict significantly predicts delinquent behaviour. Aggression was predicted by similar reasons to the above with an addition of having lower global self-esteem.

Many researchers have successfully found links between self-esteem, family cohesion, family adaptability and resilience. Result was obtained that showed that self-esteem was significantly associated and correlated with resilience [23]. Another study proves that there was a moderated positive correlation that exists between resilience and self-esteem [24]. It was reported that there exists a significant positive correlation between resiliency and family cohesion [13]. In addition, previous findings showed that the relationship between total resilience and family adaptability is one that is statistically significant [25].

There are many factors that contribute to the prediction of resilience. In a linear regression used to predict resilience, self-esteem significantly associated with resilience [23]. Gender was found to predict resilience where gender, income level and education level accounts for 11.3% of the variance in resilience [12]. For public high school students, the variables of family satisfaction, family cohesion, self-esteem and academic self concept significantly predicts resiliency [13].

This research seeks to discover the relationship between self-esteem, family adaptability, family cohesion and resilience. The objective of this research is to determine the link that exists between resilience, self-esteem, family adaptability and family cohesion of juvenile delinquents.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Participants: The research was carried out in two schools for juvenile delinquents; boys' juvenile delinquent school and girls' juvenile delinquent school. Using a purposive sampling, a total of 134 adolescents between ages 13 to 20 studying in these juvenile delinquent schools (44 males and 90 females; 84.3% Malay, 6.0% Chinese, 9.0 % Indian and 0.7% others) participated in this study.

Instruments: The participants were asked to answer a four-part questionnaire which comprised of

- Demographic information consisting questions on gender, age, ethnic groups and education level.
- The Resilience Scale is a 25-item questionnaire which [26]. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of these studies ranges from .73 to .91, which indicated an acceptable and moderately high reliability [27]. The Resilience Scale showed to have significant associations with variables such as morale, self-esteem, life satisfaction, depression and perceived stress [27]. These studies indicated the support on the construct validity of the Resilience Scale.
- The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale [28] is a 10-item scale that is answered using a four point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to test an individuals' global level of self esteem through statements of self-worth and self-acceptance. The Cronbach alpha value was reported in the range of 0.77 to 0.88 in a Malaysian sample [29]. The test-retest correlations were within the range of 0.82 to 0.88. The scale also showed an internal consistency value of 0.67. The convergent validity of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was

significantly related to extraversion at $r = .21$, $p < .05$; neuroticism at $r = -.43$, $p < .001$; and model of self at $r = .25$, $p < .01$ [30]. In measuring the discriminant validity of the measure, it was not significantly positively related to openness at $r = .12$ and not significantly negatively related to model of other at $r = -.05$.

- The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale is a 30-item scale measuring family adaptability, family cohesion and also type of families [31]. Participants would respond to a likert scale which ranges from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always) to describe how often a particular behaviour takes place in their family. For the cohesion scale, the authors have reported a good internal validity of $r = .87$ and a high reliability value of $r = .83$. Similarly, for the adaptability scale, the authors also reported a good internal validity of $r = .78$ and a high reliability value of .80. The content validity was analyzed using group differences and results reported significant differences between the scores of normal and problematic students ($t = 4.34$, $p < 0.01$), where the mean scores of normal students were higher (96.85) compared to problematic behaviour students (74.10) [32, 17]. The correlation between the global wellness scale of SFI and the cohesion scale of FACES II was $r = .93$ at a significance level of $p < .01$ [32].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1: There are significant relationships between self-esteem, family cohesion, family adaptability and resilience and its dimensions among juvenile delinquents.

The relationship between self-esteem, family cohesion, family adaptability and resilience was investigated using a Pearson correlation. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Results in Table 1 showed that there was a weak, significant negative correlation between self-esteem and resilience, $r = -0.29$, $p < 0.01$ with lower scores of self-esteem associated with higher scores of resilience.

This result that showed juvenile delinquents having lower self-esteem leading to higher resilience was consistent with previous studies [24]. The period of adolescence involves an upsurge of instinctual drives causing individuals to perform many impulsivity or sensation seeking activities out of curiosity. As suggested by Erik Erikson's stages of personal identity

Table 1: Correlations among variables

	SE	FC	FA	R	AS	PC	SE
FC	-.386**						
FA	-.267**	.664**					
R	-.293**	.343**	.270**				
AS	-.230**	.268**	.138	.852**			
PC	-.292**	.342**	.308**	.961**	.676**		

** $p < .01$

SE = Self - Esteem, FC = Family Cohesion, FA = Family Adaptability, R = Resilience, AS = Acceptance of Self, PC = Personal Competence

development, an adolescent's identity is formed through achievements. Accomplishments are used as a base to develop one's identity as they become part of a positive and lasting effect [33-36].

However, every individual and their environment are subject to a vast range of differences. Individual differences can be explained through their culture and subculture they were raised in and the effects it has on their temperament and personality [37]. As much of accomplishment a juvenile delinquent can experience in relation to the negative or unhealthy activities performed, deep within them, either subconsciously or unconsciously, the sense of guilt of having done something not appropriate to their age or to society still exists.

Results in Table 1 also showed that there was a moderate, significant positive correlation between family cohesion and resilience, $r = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$, with high scores of family cohesion associated with higher scores of resilience. There was also a weak, significant positive correlation between family adaptability and resilience, $r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$, with high scores of family adaptability associated with higher scores of resilience. This result was consistent with past findings [13, 18] for family cohesion and family adaptability [25].

Both individual and environmental factors can be responsible for the development of resilience in an individual [37]. Family support and care and the way people view themselves and the relationships surrounding is a vital contributing factor [34, 35]. It is also known that individuals who have good parental relationships would have higher levels of self-esteem [38]. Another method of forming identities is through identification or modelling where adolescents identify people who appeal to them and end up becoming more like them. In a way, it can be said that a person's identity is a partial synthesis of various people's identities, with the end result being something that is desired by the individual themselves [33-36].

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis between self-esteem, family cohesion, family adaptability and resilience

Model	B	SE	Beta	T
Constant	104.625	13.766	-	7.600**
Self - Esteem	-1.057	.492	-.188	-2.147*
Family Cohesion	.447	.228	.222	1.965
Family Adaptability	.193	.289	.072	.670

** p <.000   * p <.05

The relationship between self-esteem, family cohesion, family adaptability and the two dimensions of resilience, acceptance of self and personal competence, was also tested. There was a weak, significant negative correlation between self-esteem and resilience, $r = - 0.23$, $p < 0.01$. Results also showed that there was a weak, significant positive correlation between family cohesion and acceptance of self, $r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$. There was also a weak, positive correlation between family adaptability and acceptance of self, $r = 0.14$, $p > .05$.

The relationship between self-esteem, family cohesion, family adaptability and personal competence are also shown in Table 1. There was a weak, significant negative correlation between self-esteem and personal competence, $r = - 0.29$, $p < 0.01$. Results also showed that there was a moderate, significant positive correlation between family cohesion and personal competence, $r = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$. There was also a moderate, positive correlation between family adaptability and personal competence, $r = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$. In relation to the current sample of participants, as juvenile delinquents are known to have been involved with any particular unlawful activity more than once or some even repetitively, they develop a sense of achievement when their unlawful behaviours are successfully carried out. This increases their acceptance of themselves, for who they are, as a capable individual in performing those types of activities. Hence, they rate their personal competency levels as high.

Hypothesis 2: Self-esteem, family cohesion and family adaptability significantly predicted resilience among juvenile delinquents.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the contribution of self-esteem, family cohesion and family adaptability towards resilience. The results are shown in Table 2.

The regression model showed that self-esteem, family cohesion and family adaptability predicted significantly resilience with 15.1% variance, $R^2 = 0.15$, Adjusted R = 0.13, F (3, 130) = 7.69, $p < .000$. Only self-esteem was a significant predictor with Beta = -.188,

$t = -2.147$, $p < 0.05$. Family cohesion and family adaptability however did not predict significantly resilience with Beta =.22, $t = 1.965$, $p > .05$ for family cohesion and Beta =.072, $t =.670$, $p > .05$ for family adaptability. The linear equation that can be formulated is:

$$Y = 104.625 - 1.057 \text{ (Self-Esteem)}$$

The result that showed self-esteem as the strongest predictor of resilience was also supported by [24]. It means that having lower self-esteem predict higher resilience among juvenile delinquents. These adolescents get involved in juvenile delinquency which makes them have low self-esteem but at the same time, these juvenile acts over time increase their resilience in getting through life.

CONCLUSION

From this, it can be clearly seen that there is a strong link between resilience and self-esteem. Self-esteem was the strongest predictor of resilience in this research. It also can be concluded that family factors such as family adaptability and family cohesion contribute in significantly predicted resilience. However, as suggested by the research, these factors did not significantly predict resilience.

It is recommended that future research on juvenile delinquents should include a character building or motivational compartment to help increase self - esteem levels as well as a family bonding counselling session to encourage close knit families. Hence, this enables the comparisons (before and after) in the level of self - esteem, family cohesion, family adaptability and resilience. In addition to that, it is important that the families of juvenile delinquents pay more attention to their children and sustain a balanced level of closeness and flexibility within the system, enabling children to feel comfortable and at ease in their own homes knowing that they have supportive parents who nurture them with good values to refrain their participation in delinquent activities.

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