



A study of optimism and resilience among chronically ill female patients

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Abstract

Patients with chronic illness develop psychological distress, anxiety issues, stress and eventually their quality of life and satisfaction with life deteriorates. Such patients need to be resilient enough to fight with such adversity and stressors and be optimistic in their approach towards life. The current investigation was designed to study the interrelationship between resilience and optimism among chronically ill patients. The sample for the current investigation consisted of 40 chronically ill female patients in the age group of 30-40 years from the hospitals of the tricity of Panchkula, Mohali and Chandigarh. For this purpose, Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994) and Resilience Scale (Wagnild, 2009) were administered to the sample. Inter-correlational analysis was used for statistical analysis. Results were discussed in terms of its implications.

Keywords: chronically ill patients, females, resilience, optimism

Introduction

A chronic illness is a human health condition or disease that is persistent or otherwise long-lasting in its effects or a disease that comes with time. According to a report from the WHO (World Health Organization 2005), chronic illness has been a major challenge for healthcare systems. People diagnosed with chronic illnesses usually cannot expect to regain their health in the near future. This fact makes the illness hard to cope with psychologically. A certain amount of ongoing hopelessness and depression are normal responses to the experience of chronic illness. Living with a chronic illness is complex. Chronic pain and disability have the potential to darken a person's outlook on life. Anyone subject to the harsh rule of a chronic illness is likely to experience a certain level of ongoing fear and frustration.

Resilience

Resilience refers to the process of overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure, coping successfully with traumatic experiences, and avoiding the negative trajectories associated with risks. The basic element for resilience is that there should be risk and protective factors available which can get an optimistic result or can decrease negative result. "Resilience is the human ability to adapt in the face of tragedy, trauma, adversity, hardship, and ongoing significant life stressors." (Newman, 2005) [5]. Resilience is important because it is the human capacity to face, overcome and be strengthened by or even transformed by the adversities of life. Everyone faces adversities; no one is exempt. Resilience is an individuals' ability to adapt when faced with adversity (Robottom *et al.* 2012) [7].

Much of the literature, on resilience has emphasized the avoidance of negative outcomes (e.g.; psychological, social, emotional or physical problems), rather than the presence of the positive outcomes. Being resilient does not mean, that an

individual will "bounce back" and return to the same position after experiencing difficulties, but it does not mean that equilibrium will be re-established. Resilient persons experience the same difficulties and stressors as everyone else; they are not immune or hardened to stress, but they have cleared how to deal with life unavoidable difficulties and this ability helps them to cope better with their chronic illness.

Optimism

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) [10], "one dispositional trait that appears to mediate between external events and a person's interpretation of them is optimism." Optimism appears to be an individual difference variable that reflects the extent to which people hold generalized favorable expectancies for their future (Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom, 2010) [4]. Optimism has a major role to play in adaptation to stressful conditions. When confronting a challenge, optimists show more resilience, even if progress is difficult and slow (Synder and Lopez, 2002) [3, 11]. Optimistic individuals have better mental and physical health (Affleck, Tennen & Apter, 2002; Peterson & Bosio, 2002; Scheier, Carver & Bridges 2002) [6]. Optimistics are less likely than pessimists to suffer from depression. They experience less anxiety in adjusting to new life. And they take better care of themselves by not involving in smoking, drugs or alcohol, and by maintaining a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and follow their doctors advice in screening for and treating illness. Studies suggest that the cumulative effects of an optimistic attitude toward life may increase longevity.

Hypothesis

1. It is expected that there will be a positive relationship between optimism and resilience in chronically ill female patients.

Methodology

Sample

The sample for the current investigation comprised of 40 chronically ill female patients in the age group of the sample was 30-40 years. The sample was collected from the hospitals of tricity of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali.

Test and Tools

For this purpose, Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994) ^[8] and Resilience Scale (Wagnild, 2009) ^[14] were administered to the sample.

Statistical Analysis

Keeping in mind the purpose of the current investigation which was to study the interrelationship between optimism and resilience in chronically ill female patients; inter - correlational analysis was used.

Results

Table 1: Shows the correlation coefficient between optimism and resilience among chronically ill female patients (N = 40)

Optimism and Resilience	0.44**
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**significant at 0.01 level (df =38)

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to study the interrelationship between optimism and resilience in chronically ill female patients. Hypothesis 1 stated that there will be a positive relationship between optimism and resilience .Significant results were found as the correlation coefficient comes out to be 0.44 which is significant at 0.01 level. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is accepted. The findings of this study are in line with the hypothesis stated above. Seligman (1992) ^[9] identified certain personality traits that contributed to resilience -optimism, sense of adventure, courage, self-understanding, humor, a capacity to work hard, and an ability to endure and find outlets for emotions. Individuals with high optimism tend to be resilient individuals (Bonanno, 2005) ^[2]. According to Robottom *et al.* (2012) ^[7], higher resilience has been associated with less depression. Findings imply that resilience was also associated with more optimist personality traits (Robottom *et al.*, 2012) ^[7]. Yu and Zhang (2007) ^[15] argue that optimism reflects individuals' positive attitude towards adverse situations and therefore considers optimism as an important aspect of resilience. On the other hand, there seems to be a causal relationship between resilience and optimism.

Optimism and resilience seems to accompany each other in adverse events. It means that there is an interactive relationship between these two variables; resilience results in optimism and optimism leads to resilience. These results are consistent with the studies of Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom (2010) ^[4] and Tusaie-Mumford (2001) ^[12]. Both optimism and resilience enhance the psychological well being of the chronically ill patients and resulting in a better mental health.

Conclusion

A chronically ill patient undergoes lot of mental health issues.

In such state of adversity, only being optimistic can lessen the suffering. Resilience plays a crucial role in chronically ill patients. Effective strategies need to be implemented so that the chronically ill patients become hopeful, optimistic and develop the ability to bounce back even after knowing the consequences of their fatal disease.

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