



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-IMAGE, EMOTIONAL MATURITY, STRESS AND RESILIENCE IN ADOLESCENTS

MIHAELA, STOMFF^a, EMEL, BALTA^a

^a*Hyperion University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
Department of Psychology*

Abstract

This research was done to demonstrate the relationships between self-image, emotional maturity, stress and resilience in adolescents, starting from the premise that adolescence is a very delicate period in the life of each individual and in which the main personality traits are formed.

The research benefited from an important personal contribution, namely the preparation of a questionnaire, both in Romanian and in Turkish, to be sent online to the subjects participating in the study. The questionnaire was composed of several sections and collected answers to a group of 73 adolescents, of Romanian and Turkish nationality, who answered the online form in about three weeks, both to the forms in Romanian and to those in Turkish.

The research was concluded by highlighting the validation / invalidation of each hypothesis in the field, and the originality was defined by the fact that it is a unique work in terms of bringing together teenagers of different nationalities, but with the same problems of adolescence and in the same study.

Keywords: *self-image, emotional maturity, stress, resilience, adolescents.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is specific to the second decade of human life. This is the period of intense transformations on all levels, both physically and mentally, respectively socially. All these changes make adolescence the transition from childhood to youth. The exact location of adolescence is between 14-25 years and consists of three stages: preadolescence, adolescence proper and prolonged or late adolescence. In the work "The Adolescent and his world", Irene M. Josselyn claims that the development of the individual is not staged, but rather it can be said to be continuous, a fluid process. This aspect being observable at all ages. That is why the author condemned the division of adolescence into the three stages of which it is formed. (Irene M. Josselyn, 1963).

Corresponding author: Mihaela Stomff; Emel Balta

E-mail address: stomff@yahoo.com; balta.emel.eb@gmail.com

The word adolescent comes from the root of the verb "adolescence", which is used in Latin with the meaning of growing and maturing. This coming word does not inherently show a state but a process (Yavuzer, 1993).

Since long ago, when youth was full of great confusions and storms, many opinions have been put forth. Socrates states that young people like luxury, have bad behavior and despise authority; Plato defining it as spiritual intoxication; and Aristotle spoke about the variability of young people, saying that young people are like irrational, impulsive, overwhelming, uncritical creatures (Dancey & Travers, 1996).

These statements in which adults defined teenagers two thousand five hundred years ago show us that they are not very different from today. Of course, what is known about teenagers today is quite different from what was said two thousand years ago. Especially since the 1900s, adolescent studies began to grow rapidly. The first scientific study on the period of adolescence was published by G. Stanley Hall "Adolescence" in 1904 (Ekşi, 1990).

Hall was influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution. According to Hall, adolescence is rebirth and involves repeating the troubles of humanity in the first transition to civilization for each individual. With some reactions during adolescence, stress is expressed as a result of value conflict. That is why Hall defines the period of adolescence as the period of "storm and stress". This conflict is experienced again by every adolescent (Kulaksızoğlu, 1998; Özbay and Öztürk, 1992; Ekşi, 1990).

And Rutter also argues that adolescence is a stressful and stormy time (1976). According to this point of view, the adolescent lives in his own world, which is not reflected on the outside, being observed by parents or teachers, experiencing emotional disturbances and social doubts, along with these experiencing difficulties in academic and social fields (Quoted in Çuhadaroğlu et al., 2004).

Self-concept is a very important, dynamic process that continues throughout life in adolescence. As the process of adolescence and young adulthood begins, individuals experience changes in sexual, moral, physical, emotional, and social aspects. The process of adolescence is one of the most important processes for individuals to become an adult. In this process, individuals enter into the process of achieving economic, emotional, social and personal independence. But this process means struggle for teenagers because the process brings some problems with it. Sometimes individuals can easily cope with problems with the support of their families and peers; some individuals also have low self-esteem by not being able to find ways to cope with problems.

Adolescence is the period when young people define themselves better. During this period, young people begin to reevaluate and approve of themselves. If the individual positions himself as valuable during this period, this indicates that the young person has high self-esteem. But the opposite individual; if he/she is facing adjustment problems, depression, various complications or more mental and psychological problems like suicide, this indicates that he/she has low self-esteem. Adolescents with high self-esteem are included in society having a healthier mental and psychological development (Yıldız and Çapar, 2010: 105-106).

According to the studies carried out, it is accepted that the support given to adolescents by their parents contributes to the development of self-esteem of adolescents (Önder and Gülay, 2007: 24). The attachment relationships of father and son are particularly important for the development of self-esteem and of mental health (Wilkinson, 2006: 85). In this period of adolescence, the connection between parents, the type of authority established and the environment offered to the individual who passes from adolescence to youth is very important (Bettelheim, 1998: 12).

It is important for the child to feel loved and approved by the parents. Teenagers who are loved by their parents, can talk to their families about all problems, spend time, share their problems, participate in decision-making, do not interfere with the choice of friendships, speak up when their requests are not accepted, respect your life private, respect their feelings and thoughts and provide them with an appropriate environment to express them, parents who do not discriminate between girls and boys, parents who express their opinions clearly, through all this it was found that their self-esteem score is higher than the others (Erbil et al., 2006: 7). At the same time, it has been shown that family education level and income level have significant effects on self-esteem and that the perception of being rejected by parents is associated with both depression and low self-esteem in adolescents (Robertson & Simons, 1989: 126).

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. OBJECTIVE

This research was conducted in order to demonstrate the relationships between self-image, emotional maturity, stress and resilience in adolescents, starting from their premise that adolescence is the very delicate period in the life of each individual and in which the main personality traits are formed.

The main objective of the research is to highlight the existence of correlations between emotional maturity, the level of stress and the level of resilience within the group of adolescents with a good self-image (mental comfort), as well as within the group of adolescents who do not have an image self-esteem (psychological discomfort), as well as differences in the level of resilience, emotional maturity, stress level depending on gender and nationality.

2.2. HYPOTHESES

The research is focused on the following hypotheses that were issued to be analyzed:

H1: We hypothesize that there are significant correlations between self-image, emotional maturity, stress and resilience.

H2: We hypothesize that there are differences in the level of resilience between groups with different self-esteem.

H3: We hypothesize that there are differences in stress levels between groups with different self-esteem.

H4: We hypothesize that there are differences in the level of emotional maturity between groups with different self-image self-esteem.

H5: We estimate that there are differences in the level of resilience, emotional maturity and stress level between groups of different genders.

H6: We estimate that there are differences in the level of resilience, emotional maturity and stress level between groups of different nationality.

3. METHOD

3.1 THE PARTICIPANTS

A group of 73 teenagers participated in the research, 40,9% female and 12,4% male, aged between 14 and 18 years, the average age being 16.25 years.

Composition of the batch from the point of view of nationality: 19,7% subjects are of Romanian nationality and 33,6% of Turkish nationality.

The composition of the group in terms of parents' income: 10,9% respondents, have parents with income below 1500 lei; 15,3% respondents, have parents with income between 1500-3000 lei; 5,8% respondents, have parents with income between 3000-4000 lei; 21,2% respondents have parents with income over 4000 lei.

3.2 THE INSTRUMENT

The research carried out in order to demonstrate the relationships between self-image, emotional maturity, stress and resilience in adolescents was based on a formulation that includes the following questionnaires:

1. Self-assessment questionnaire of self-image. The questionnaire combines the conclusions and observations of C. Rogers on the dimension of personality and more specifically on the conflict between the actual self and the ideal self, a conflict with major implications for self-esteem.

2. The test for assessing the level of resilience. This is a test designed by Al Siebert (2005) to assess the level of psychological resilience.

3. Friedmann emotional maturity scale. The Friedman Emotional Maturity Scale (1997) assesses the degree of emotional maturity in terms of emotional balance and emotional imbalance.

4. Questionnaire DASS 21-R. Anxiety scales cannot distinguish anxiety from depression well enough. If the future status of these two clinical entities is uncertain, it is good that from a practical point of view they can be measured distinctly. The most used scales in the clinic, such as the STAI scale, the Beck scale or the Hamilton scale, fail to do this, especially because they contain items that are common to the two clinical categories (Beuke et al. 2003). To solve this situation, Lovibond and Lovibond (1995 and 1995b) build the "Depression,

Anxiety and Stress Scale" with the aim of discriminating anxiety from depression and the somatic expression of stress.

DASS-21R (Lovibond and Lovibond) is a set of three self-assessment scales, built to assess negative emotional states in the sphere of depression, anxiety and stress.

3.3PROCEDURE

The answers were collected from a group of 73 teenagers, who answered the online form in about three weeks, both for the Romanian and Turkish language forms. The data collected through both forms were combined (translated into Romanian) and the resulting database was coded to be processed in the PSPP statistical program.

We mention that the participating teenagers have taken note of the provisions of the GDPR Law, regarding the agreement of confidentiality of data.

4. RESULTS

For each of the 6 working hypotheses of the research, statistical tests were performed in order to validate or invalidate them.

Hypothesis no. 1: We hypothesize that there are significant correlations between self-image, emotional maturity, stress, and resilience.

We find that self-image correlates positively and significantly with emotional maturity ($r=0.23$, $p=0.048$) and resilience ($r=0.45$, $p=0.000$). The correlation of self-image with stress is significant and negative ($r=-0.39$, $p=0.001$).

We note the significant negative correlation of emotional maturity with stress ($p=0.0001$), which means that when the degree of emotional maturity increases, the level of stress in adolescents decreases.

In conclusion, the hypothesis was validated.

Hypothesis no. 2: We hypothesize that there are differences in the level of resilience between groups with different self-esteem.

The test indicates that statistical significance was achieved for the studied groups ($p = 0.000$). The mean of resilience for the group of low self-image respondents is 67.22. The resilience mean for the "strong self-image" group of respondents is 79.51.

Hypothesis 2 is confirmed and the conclusion is that in terms of resilience, there are differences between the group of respondents with a weak self-image and the group of respondents with a strong self-image. The group of respondents with a strong self-image turns out to have a higher average level of resilience.

Hypothesis no. 3: We hypothesize that there are differences in stress levels between groups with different self-esteem.

The test indicates that statistical significance was obtained for the studied groups ($p = 0.034$). The mean level of stress for the group of respondents "poor self-image" is 12.59. The mean level of stress for the group of respondents "strong self-image" is 9.68.

Hypothesis 3 is thus confirmed and the conclusion is that in terms of stress level, there are differences between the group of respondents with a weak self-image and the group of respondents with a "strong self-image". The group of respondents with a strong self-image is found to have a lower average level of stress.

Hypothesis no. 4: We hypothesize that there are differences in the level of emotional maturity between groups with different self-image self-esteem.

The test indicates that for the studied groups statistical significance was obtained ($p = 0.032$). The average stress level for the group of low self-image respondents is 16.97. The mean stress level for the strong self-image respondents group is 18.27.

Hypothesis 4 is thus confirmed and the conclusion is that from the point of view of the level of emotional maturity there are differences between the group of respondents with a weak self-image and the group of respondents with a strong self-image. The group of strong self-image respondents is found to have a higher average level of emotional maturity.

Hypothesis no. 5: We estimate that there are differences in the level of resilience, emotional maturity and stress level according to gender.

The test indicates that statistical significance was obtained for the studied groups ($p = 0.000$ for all variables).

Hypothesis 5 is fully confirmed and the conclusion is that from the point of view of resilience, emotional maturity and stress level, there are differences between the group of female respondents and the group of male respondents as follows:

- The group of male respondents turns out to have a higher average level of resilience (mean = 88.06).
- The group of female respondents turns out to have a higher average level of emotional maturity (average = 18.89) and a higher average level of stress (average = 11.36).

Hypothesis no. 6: We estimate that there are differences in the level of resilience, emotional maturity and stress level between groups of different nationality.

The test indicates that statistical significance was achieved for the studied groups ($p < 0.05$ for all variables).

Hypothesis 6 is fully confirmed and the conclusion is that from the point of view of resilience, emotional maturity and stress level, there are differences between the group of respondents of Romanian nationality and the group of respondents of Turkish nationality as follows:

- The group of respondents of Turkish nationality turns out to have a higher average level of resilience (mean = 82.33) but also a higher average level of stress (mean = 15.74).

- The group of respondents of Romanian nationality turns out to have a higher average level of emotional maturity (mean = 17.96)

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research represents a correlational study, carried out in order to demonstrate the relationships between self-image, emotional maturity, stress and resilience in adolescents, starting from their premise that adolescence is the very delicate period in the life of each individual and in which the main traits of personality, and the main objective of the research was to highlight the existence of correlations between emotional maturity, the level of stress and the level of resilience within the group of adolescents with a good self-image (mental comfort), as well as within the group of adolescents who they do not have a good self-image (mental discomfort).

The objective of the research is to highlight, on the one hand, the existing correlations between emotional maturity, stress, resilience and self-image, and on the other hand, to notice whether there are differences in the level of resilience, emotional maturity, stress level according to gender, and nationality and self-esteem.

From a psychological point of view, in this context, it is explained that when the degree of emotional maturity increases, the level of stress decreases in adolescents with a good self-image (mental comfort). The teenager is more aware of his own person, part of the internal conflict is reduced and thus the stress is definitely reduced. Emotional disorders are no longer so intense when emotional maturity increases, and the result of the reduction of emotional disorders exactly induces the reduction of the stressor factor and implicitly of the effect produced, thus reducing the occurrence and intensity of stress.

Under these conditions, it can be estimated that the level of image/self-esteem is also closely related to the degree of resilience. A high level of self-esteem indicates that the adolescent is not so affected by external factors in terms of his response to that factor, while the adolescent with low self-esteem is more sensitive to all external factors, such as stressors, which disturbs them and affects their well-being. It can thus be concluded that from the point of view of resilience, the adolescent with high self-esteem will face external challenges more easily, will not feel the stress so acutely and will recover more easily after certain unfavorable events. On the other hand, adolescents with lower self-esteem will be strongly affected by unfavorable events, they do not trust that they will face them, the stress felt will be amplified and the ability to recover from less pleasant events will be lower.

The stress and coping model proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggests that a potential stressor (eg, external event) causes people to go through two cognitive appraisal processes. While primary appraisal focuses on the nature

(positive, negative, or neutral) and respective level of threat an event presents, secondary appraisal determines whether available coping skills and resources are sufficient to overcome the stressor. Individuals with low self-esteem may lack the resources to regulate environmental stressors (Schneiderman et al., 2005). Teenagers with low self-esteem feel any negative event more strongly, especially in light of the fact that they do not feel able to face challenges of various kinds. Therefore, any event or attitude towards them that exceeds their power to cope, will become a major stressor and which, along with the insecurity they constantly feel, will amplify the stress felt by these teenagers. Recent studies (G. Fink, 2007) show significant correlations between low (unstable) self-esteem, negative emotions and stress. People with low self-esteem experience more stressful situations and, in this way, more easily develop states of anxiety, depression or, in chronic situations, lose the functions of the immune system. At the opposite pole, high self-esteem is associated with functional coping mechanisms. They help to decrease perceived threats and experienced stress, with the chances of psychological or physical harm being significantly diminished.

The present study shows a positive relationship between emotional maturity and good self-image. This finding is consistent with the other available literature. Lourdes Rey et al. (2010), Country & Chester (2005), found a direct association of emotional intelligence and adolescent life satisfaction with good self-image and self-esteem. The possible reason for a strong relationship between emotional maturity and self-esteem may be that emotionally intelligent people are likely to experience a higher level of psychological well-being and a lower level of emotional deficit than people, who possess a level low emotional intelligence.

Longitudinal research on resilience supports gender roles and the association of gender with resilience. Contrary to our results, in most resilience studies, women tend to be more resilient to stress compared to men. We explain these results by the fact that boys have a greater capacity to be more rational and respond more objectively to life's challenges, while the female gender is more emotional and is more affected. Nor can we omit the role of resilience in the family which has a major impact. The obtained results can be described by the fact that the intensity of the impact of critical life events negatively affects the level of resilience. Similar results have been obtained by other researchers. Thus, Liu, Wang, & Lü (2012) in the study on the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, showed that emotional intelligence is positively associated with life satisfaction, and resilience mediates alongside positive affects the relationship of these variables. The most suitable ways to reduce stress and its consequences would be by increasing the level of resilience.

The results obtained show us that in the group of respondents of Turkish nationality we find a higher average level of resilience but also a higher average level of stress, and respondents of Romanian nationality would have a higher average level of emotional maturity. The obtained results can be interpreted through the prism of the fact that the group of Romanian nationality acquired a higher degree of emotional maturity due to the fact that they grew up among peers of the same nationality, while the teenagers of Turkish ethnicity grew up in a

predominantly Romanian environment. This also influences the level of stress, which is higher. On the other hand, Turkish teenagers may have been forced to move several times in their lives, with their parents, and thus faced more challenges and have had more life experiences, starting with adapting to new environments, which increased their resilience. In addition to the effects that community and culture have on resilience in individuals, there is growing interest in resilience as a characteristic of entire communities and cultural groups. Cultural resilience, viewed as the ability of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disruption and reorganize while undergoing change, so as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctiveness is common (Healy, 2006), designates the role that culture can play as a resource for individual resilience.

A general conclusion would be that, in this period of great changes in the individual's life, which is adolescence, strengthening self-esteem and therefore achieving a good, appropriate self-image that ensures psychological comfort is very important, so much for balancing the adolescent and reducing the stress inherent in this period, as well as for the development of an emotional maturity necessary for the transition to adulthood. Our work sought to demonstrate that emotional maturity is related to subjective well-being, that resilience is associated with well-being outcomes such as life satisfaction, self-concept, and engagement; and that stress is related to low self-image/esteem. Thus, subjective well-being, self-esteem, life satisfaction or self-concept could be potential mediators acting between emotional maturity and perceived stress.

Received at: 02.03.2024, Accepted for publication on: 27.04.2024

REFERENCES

- Bettelheim, B. (1987). *A good enough parent: The Guide to Bringing Up Your Child*. G.B.: Thames & Hudson.
- Dacey, J.S., Travers, J.F. (1996). *Human development*. Third edition. Chicago: Benchmark Publishers.
- Ekşi, A. (1990). *Çocuk, genç, Ana Babalar*. Yenişehir, Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi.
- Erbil, Ö. N., Divan, Ö. Z., Önder, Ö. P. (2006). Ergenlerin benlik saygısına ailelerinin tutum ve davranışlarının etkisi. *Aile Ve Toplum, Eğitim-Kültür Ve Araştırma Dergisi*, 3(10), 7-15., 10(10), 7-16. <https://doi.org/10.21560/spcd.78124>.
- Friedman, E.H., Treadwell, M.M., Beal, E.W. (1997). *A failure of nerve: Leadership in the age of the quick fix* (pp. 89- 183). New York: Church Publishing.
- Josselyn, I.M. (1976). *The adolescent and his world*. New York: Family Service Association of America.
- Kulaksızoğlu, A. (1998). *Ergenlik Psikolojisi*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- Lazarus, R.S., Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.

Lovibond, P. F., Lovibond, S. H. (1995). The structure of negative emotional states: Comparison of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) with the Beck Depression and Anxiety Inventories. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 33(3), 335–343. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967\(94\)00075-U](https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967(94)00075-U).

Lovibond, S. H., Lovibond, P. F. (1995). *Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS--21, DASS--42)* [Database record]. APA PsycTests. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t01004-000>.

Önder, A., Gülay, H. (2007). *Annelerin kabul red düzeyi ile çocuklarının empati becerisi arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi* 22 (2), (pp. 22 -30) . Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi.

Özbay, H., Öztürk, E. (1992). *Gençlik*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık A.Ş.

Robertson, J.F., Simons, R.L. (1989). Family factors, self-esteem, and adolescent depression, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51(1), pp. 125–138. doi:10.2307/352374.

Nolen-Hoeksema, S., Cannon, T.D., Widiger, T.A. (2005) *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*. Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews.

Siebert, A. (2009). *Avantajlı reziliençe*. Bucureşti: Business Tech International Press. ISBN 973-8495-50-0.

Wilkinson, R.B. (2006). Age and sex differences in the influence of attachment relationships on Adolescent Psychological Health, *The Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 23(2), (pp. 87–104). doi:10.1017/s081651220002900x.

Yıldız, M., Çapar, B. (2010). Orta öğretim öğrencilerinde benlik saygısı ile dindarlık. *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 10/3 (Haziran 2010), 103-131.

Copyright: Submission of a manuscript implies that the work described has not except in the form of an abstract or as part of a published lecture, been published before (or thesis) and it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere; that when the manuscript is accepted for publication, the authors agree to automatic transfer of the copyright to the publisher.
