



Investigation of ego resiliency of preschool children according to opinions of mother, father, and teacher*

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate ego resiliency of preschool children according to opinions of mother, father, and teacher. Resiliency is the elasticity of an element, and the ability of an element to recover to its original state. Resiliency as protective mechanisms or specifications enables a successful adaptation during development, regardless of high risk factors experienced. The population of the study comprised of 5-6 year-old children, attending the kindergartens of primary schools governed by the Ministry of National Education, located in the city centre of Denizli. The Children's Ego Resiliency Scales (Mother-Father-Teacher Forms) were completed by 150 mothers, fathers and 25 kindergarten teachers for 150 children. Eisenberg and colleagues adapted Block's Q-Sort method in 1996 to develop the Children's Ego Resiliency Scale, which is a measuring instrument that identifies the resiliency level of children. The 12-item scale is used to assess the resiliency level of preschool-primary school children. Evaluation of the scale is scored between 1 and 9; where 1 is "not at all descriptive of resiliency" and 9 is "most descriptive of resiliency." The scale has no sub-scale. A high score obtained from the scale indicates that children in the study group have a high resiliency level. The adaptation of the scale into Turkish was conducted by Önder and Gülay-Ogelman in 2011. A positively significant relation was determined between the opinions of mothers, fathers, and teachers regarding the ego resiliency levels of children. A significant difference was determined between three ego resiliency levels of children, which were obtained according to information received from three different people.

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1. Introduction

Psychological resiliency signifies remaining strong in the face of negative experiences (Karairmak, 2006). Psychological resiliency is the process in which the person is adapted to present negative condition with the interaction of protective factors and risk factors when exposed to a negative condition (such as divorce, terror, natural disasters, poverty, dysfunctional family order, change of city, indigence) (Gizir and Aydın, 2006; Karairmak, 2006). Resiliency is a personal trait and strength. It is the strength of adaptation and recovering when faced with stressful situations (Henderson and Milstein, 1996; Norman, 2000). Some children and adolescents are able "to remain standing" and maintain effective interactions with their surroundings, regardless of various problems. In

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general, these types of individuals do not give up and recover quickly when faced with stressful situations; in fact, they become stronger after experiencing problems and adverse surrounding conditions (Öğülmüş, 2001). There are two main terms related to resiliency; risk factors, and protective factors. Risk factors are elements that create or trigger stress, which individuals can confront with. Risk factors, for children in particular, are socio-economic variables (low socio-economic background, poverty, etc), family variables (negative parental attitude, being separated from family or a single parent, losing a parent, ill parents, parents' educational level, genetic conditions, child abuse/neglect, and being homeless) and negative life experiences (terror, immigration, war, natural disasters, etc) (Greene, 2002, Masten et al., 1990; Masten, 2001; Reed-Victor and Stronge, 2002; Werner and Smith, 2001). As seen by the risk factors listed, they can be categorised under two groups; personal (intrinsic) and environmental (extrinsic) risk factors. Personal risk factors: Lack of self-esteem, lack of self-control, aggressive personality structure, attachment style etc. Environmental risk factors: Family and community factors. Protective factors are attitudes and skills that reduce the effect of risk factors. Like risk factors, protective factors are also categorised under two groups; personal (intrinsic) and environmental (extrinsic) (Greene and Conrad, 2002; Stein, 2006; Werner and Smith, 1992). Personal (intrinsic) protective factors are cognitive (intelligence, creativeness, high success motivation, problem solving skills, academic skills etc.), social (social awareness, sense of humor, social skills, social competency, verbal skills), and emotional (positive mood, self esteem, self-respect, self-control, self-confidence, empathy, emotional competency etc.) characteristics and temperament (Haynes, 2005; Martinek and Hellison, 1997; Werner and Smith, 1992). Environmental factors for children are family, social surroundings, and society-related factors. With regards to family, the elements that protect children from the adverse effects of risky situations are warmth, closeness, attention, democracy, understanding, and love-filled approaches towards children. Social surroundings include peers, teachers, and the school environment (Reed-Victor and Stronge, 2002; Werner and Smith, 2001).

There are a very limited number of studies on the resiliency levels of young children in Turkey. The present studies are observed to be generally about primary school, secondary school, high school, and university students (Gizir 2004; Gürgan 2006; Kararimak, 2006; Özcan 2005; Terzi, 2006, 2008). Studies on the resiliency levels of children in the preschool period, which is the most important period of life and during which the development is utterly rapid, should be increased and extended. From this point of view, the purpose of the study is to examine the ego resiliency levels of preschool children according to the opinions of mother, father, and teacher and to compare these opinions. On the other hand, the sub-goals of the study are as follows:

- Is there a significant relation between the opinions of mother-father-teacher regarding the ego resiliency levels of young children?
- Is there a significant difference between the opinions of mother-father-teacher regarding the ego resiliency levels of young children?

In line with these purpose and sub-goals, it is thought to reveal how the resiliency levels of young children are perceived by different adults in the immediate environment.

Besides, low socio-economic level was taken as a risk factor in terms of resiliency in this study. In the resources (Kararimak, 2006; Terzi, 2006); while high socio-economic level is indicated as a protective factor, low socio-economic level is stated as a risk factor.

Method

A relational survey method was used in this study.

1.1. Participants

The population of the study comprised of 5-6 year-old children, attending the kindergartens of primary schools governed by the Ministry of National Education, located in the city centre of Denizli. Among 150 children in the sample group, 75 (50.0%) were female and 75 (50.0%) were male. The sample group comprised of children who belonged to families with low socio-economic levels in the city centre and showed a normal development. While selecting those children, a list was received from the Provincial Directorate of National Education in Denizli

concerning the kindergartens of primary schools where children with low socio-economic levels attended. 10 schools were selected among schools on the list by lot and a permission note was obtained concerning those schools. When the schools were visited with the permission notes, two schools rejected to participate in the study. Eleven kindergartens of the remaining eight schools were included in the study. It was determined that mothers of all children in the sample group were housewives. On the other hand, 90% of fathers were workers and 10% were retirees. Parents of children lived together.

2.2. Instruments

A personal information form and the Children's Ego Resiliency Scale were used to gather data.

The Personal Information Form comprised of questions regarding demographic information about the children and their parents. The Personal Information Form was formed by researchers.

Children's Ego Resiliency Scale

Eisenberg and colleagues adapted Block's Q-Sort method in 1996 to develop the Children's Ego Resiliency Scale, which is a measuring instrument that identifies the resiliency level of children. The 12-item scale is used to assess the resiliency level of preschool-primary school children. Evaluation of the scale is scored between 1 and 9; where 1 is "not at all descriptive of resiliency" and 9 is "most descriptive of resiliency." The scale has no sub-scale. While the lowest score to be obtained from the scale is 12, the highest score is 108. A high score obtained from the scale indicates that children in the study group have a high resiliency level. Items of the scale measure the resiliency properties of children in various situations, their reactions and behaviours when faced with difficult stressful situations. For example: "When under stress, he/she gives up and backs off". Every item expresses reactions given towards different stressful situations, as the scale has no sub-scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the Teacher Version of the original scale form is .87, and .65 for the Mother-Father form. The test-retest reliability of the Teacher Version of the original scale form is .87, and .75 for the Mother-Father form (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie et al., 1997). The adaptation of the scale into Turkish was conducted by Önder and Gülay-Ogelman in 2011. Within the scope of this study, the cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was determined as .80 in the mother form, .82 in the father form and .87 in the teacher form.

1.3. Procedure

As stated previously, before collecting data, the permission was requested from the Provincial Directorate of National Education in Denizli in order to get in touch with the schools. Kindergarten teachers, fathers, and mothers were informed about the study. They completed the Personal Information Form and the Children's Ego Resiliency Scale. Data collection process lasted for approximately 2 months in the spring term of the school year 2012-2013.

1.4. Data Analysis

A SPSS 16.0 statistical package programme was used to conduct data analysis. The technique of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used in the data analysis in order to examine the relation between the Ego Resiliency scores of children, in terms of the opinions of mother-father-teacher. Besides, the technique of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also used for Related Samples in order to reveal whether the opinions of mother-father-teacher differentiated or not.

2. Results

Table 1. Relation between the opinions of mother-father-teacher regarding the ego resiliency levels of preschool children

| Forms | Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Mother Form) | Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Father Form) | Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Teacher Form) |
|--|---|---|--|
| Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Mother Form) | -- | .923* | .235* |
| Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Father Form) | .923* | -- | .314* |
| Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Teacher Form) | .235* | .314* | -- |

* p < .001

As is seen in Table1, a positively significant relation was determined between the mean scores regarding the ego resiliency levels of preschool children, which were determined according to the opinions of mother-father-teacher. There was a high and positively significant relation between the opinions of mothers and fathers. As the ego resiliency mean scores of children increased according to the opinions of mothers or fathers, the ego resiliency mean scores increased according to the opinions of fathers or mothers, as well. Likewise, as the ego resiliency mean scores decreased according to the opinions of mothers or fathers, the ego resiliency mean scores decreased according to the opinions of fathers or mothers, as well. There was a low and positively significant relation between the opinions of mothers and fathers. And there was a moderate-level and positively significant relation between the opinions of fathers and teachers.

Table 2. The means and the standard deviations of the ego resiliency levels belonging to the mother, father, and teacher forms

| Forms | N | Mean | S |
|--|-----|-------|-------|
| Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Mother Form) | 150 | 72.59 | 12.18 |
| Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Father Form) | 150 | 71.25 | 12.90 |
| Children's Ego Resiliency Scale (Teacher Form) | 150 | 68.02 | 8.07 |

Table 3. The ANOVA results of the mean scores of the mother, father, and teacher forms

| Source of Variance | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p | Significant Difference |
|--------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|------|------------------------|
| Between subjects | 38786.92 | 149 | 260.315 | | | |
| Measurement | 1653.071 | 2 | 826.536 | 13.856* | .000 | 2-1, 2-3, 3-1 |
| Error | 17776.262 | 298 | 59.652 | | | |
| Total | 58216,253 | 449 | | | | |

* p < .001 1. Mother form 2. Father form 3. Teacher form

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the opinions of mother-father-teacher. While the highest mean score was observed in the opinions of mothers, the lowest mean score was observed in the opinions of teachers.

Table 3 illustrates a significant difference between the ego resiliency mean scores of children according to the opinions of mother, father, and teacher [F (2,298) = 13.856; p < .001]. Mean scores based on the opinions of fathers ($\chi = 71.25$), and teachers ($\chi = 68.02$) were lower than the mean score based on the opinions of mothers ($\chi = 72.59$).

4. Discussion

This study examined the ego resiliency levels of preschool children according to the opinions of mothers, fathers, and teachers. A positively significant relation was determined between the opinions of mothers, fathers, and teachers regarding the ego resiliency levels of children. A significant difference was determined between three ego resiliency levels of children, which were obtained according to information received from three different people. While mothers' opinions had the highest mean score, teachers' opinions had the lowest mean score. The fact that mother mean scores were the highest could be associated with two conditions: Firstly, since mothers in the study were mainly housewives, they are able to take greater responsibilities in the care and even the education of children compared to fathers. Thus, mothers are able to know children better than fathers and teachers. Secondly, it could be thought that mothers have stronger and more intense emotional bonds with their children, which is caused by motherhood. This might make us think that mothers may be less realistic while evaluating the traits of their children. Factors like spending a lot of time with children, taking greater responsibilities concerning children and being unable to make an objective evaluation due to emotional bonds with children might make us think that mothers could give high scores regarding the ego resiliency levels of their children. Similarly, preschool teachers may have failed to precisely know all children in their classes especially in terms of ego resiliency. Thus, the lowest mean scores regarding the ego resiliency levels of children may have been caused by teachers. In addition to this, it could be thought that teachers will be able to assess children better and more objectively and realistically with the help of their teacher identity. All these factors are considered to explain why the ego resiliency levels of children differentiated according to the opinions of mothers, fathers, and teachers. When ego resiliency levels of children are determined by using the observation method, this will enable us to determine which scores are more realistic. Results of the study show that there is a positive relationship between the views of parents and teachers in terms of the ego resiliency scores of children, which indicates that even if the views of parents-teachers differ, they may be influenced by each other. The interrelation between the views of parents regarding the ego resiliency levels of their children is an expected condition within the family life. The interaction of parents such as the interrelation of their views also with the preschool teacher, family involvement studies and their communication while taking the children to school and picking up them from school could be explained through elements that increase the communication.

This study has some limitations. According to limitations and results, the following points could be paid attention in future studies:

As well as collecting information from different people with broader sample groups, it is possible to conduct studies using techniques such as observation. It is required to conduct studies involving different variables (gender, mood, social position, variables concerning families etc) that might affect the ego resiliency levels of children. There are a very limited number of scales aimed at determining the resiliency levels of preschool children in Turkey. It is required to develop relevant scales and/or conduct scale validity-reliability studies. In studies aimed at young children, it is important to collect information from multiple resources instead of only receiving the opinions of teachers or parents. The study emphasises that information obtained from different resources with the same variable might change. Thus, multiple resources should be preferred in studies. It is required to develop projects and training programs and extend the practices to increase the ego resiliency levels of young children. It is required to enhance studies on ego resiliency levels of young children. It is required to organise trainings, seminars, and conferences for parents at preschool education institutions in order to give an idea about what to do to support the ego resiliency levels of their children. It is required to provide in-service trainings for preschool teachers in order to give an idea about what to do to support the ego resiliency levels of their children. It is suggested to prepare reference books and training programs that might help teachers regarding the subject, and support the spread of books and programs. Preservice preschool teachers should be enabled to conduct studies supporting the ego resiliency in children. It is also suggested to allow relevant practical studies in lessons such as the teaching practice and school experience, and perform various studies regarding children, who face with risk factors (natural disasters, poverty, loss of parents, disability etc) that are important in the development of resiliency, and their families. Additionally, Early Intervention Programs for these families and children should be developed and extended. Longitudinal studies that

follow the ego resiliency levels of young children should be conducted. Furthermore, information should be collected from multiple resources instead of only from teachers or parents in studies conducted on young children.

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