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Psychosocial Determinants of Resilience among Young Adults in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to focus on a major attribute, resilience, with different psycho-social constructs including emotional intelligence, forgiveness, Locus of Control, and other constructs like parental income, birth order, and number of siblings. Moreover, gender differences were evaluated in emotional intelligence, forgiveness, and Locus of Control. This correlational research applied a purposive sampling approach, and the researchers filled out four self-report questionnaires with an informed consent, from 430 University students of Lahore, Pakistan. Based on 400 valid responses, the first step was to analyze data through SPSS-V25. Outcomes revealed that emotional intelligence and its components, forgiving tendencies including self and others, internal locus of control, birth order and number of sibling were significant predictors of resilience. Interestingly, no gender differences in resilience, self-forgiveness, internal locus of control, interpersonal skills, self-regard, assertiveness, flexibility, and problem-solving skills, were noticed. It is concluded that the current research studied a range of psychosocial factors of resilience in a meaningful way. The study suggests the educationists and health practitioners to identify the specific facets to provide specific interventions, aimed at enabling students to cope with the demands of everyday life through being resilient. However, the study holds a few limitations which should be considered in future studies.

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Introduction

The transition of teenage into adulthood is considered as a very challenging experience because young adults enter into a new educational system which demands to deal with various educational, social, cultural, and psychological changes. Such changes can have serious impact on psychological state of young adults. Under such circumstances, a resilient person can combat well with the problems coming in his/her way (Mujeeb & Zubair, 2012). Continuous investigations provided insights to the researchers to describe resilience as an individual's ability to handle and recover from setbacks and challenges (Artuch-Garde et al., 2017; Connor & Davidson, 2003; Prince-Embury & Saklofske, 2013; Wright et al., 2013). So, it was the need of the hour to study factors responsible for making youth resilient.

While looking at the theoretical background of psycho-social and cultural beliefs in determining resilience in adolescents, youth, and older adults, emotional intelligence (EI) is considered an important factor in making a person resilient. In the last three decades, Mayer and Salovey's (1995) and Goleman's (1995) description of EI refers to one's capabilities to be persistent and motivated in frustration, to have impulse control and delay gratification, and to handle distress and regulate one's mood to think rationally, being empathized and optimistic. Recently, Batool and Khalid (2011) also developed a tool in Pakistan to understand this phenomenon in cultural context.

There are ten components of EI, including, interpersonal skills (IS) referring to the ability to interact and communicate well with others. Self-regard (SR) refers to self-acceptance and understanding one's identity. Assertiveness is defined as an effective communication skill to convey one's point of view without hurting the feelings of people. Emotional self-awareness (ESA) refers to the manifestation of skills to understand one's emotions. Further, empathy refers to understanding of other's emotions while impulse control refers to the skills to effectively control feelings and emotions. Flexibility means to adjust and adapt to new situations and circumstances whereas problem solving refers to resolve daily life matters effectively. Moreover, stress tolerance (ST) refers to one's ability to control bad feelings and thoughts in unusual spheres. Finally, optimism means to be positive about life.

Forgiveness is also another important determinant of resilience (Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). Yamhure Thompson et al. (2005) defined forgiveness as freeing from a negative attachment to the source that has transgressed against a person. They focused on both self and forgiving others because whenever a person does not forgive others, he continues to have negative thoughts and agony which destroys his mental harmony and peace. There are few studies explaining relationship of forgiveness with resilience. For instance, Ghasemi et al. (2017) conducted an experimental study to establish the effect of forgiveness training on resilience among 40 veteran's wives in Isfahan, Iran. Pre and post test results showed an increased level of resilience and a decline in stress level of experimental group than control group after taking forgiving therapy.

While looking at few more important constructs, examining ILOC with resilience is vital because an ILOC positively influences an individual's capability to deal with setbacks. ILOC also assists in problem-solving and in the task's accomplishment (Kulshrestha & Sen, 2006). Levenson (1981) proposed that the locus of control is a multidimensional construct

by introducing a three-dimensional model including fate, luck, powerful others and ILOC. Levenson (1981) verified and justified the split of externality in 1974 and also justified by Roddenberry and Renk (2010).

The present study identified various factors that can work as a buffer for young adults to deal with day-to-day stressors by becoming resilient. So far the past researchers have not examined the psychological stressors, hence there exists a research gap. However, studies exist but they have discussed other variables. For instance, Wilson et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive study on 289 Canadian and 259 Italian University students and found that EI positively associated with resilience. Sarrionandia et al. (2018) recruited 698 American and Spanish university students with an average age of 20.3 years, revealed that EI negatively mediated between resilience and stress while EI had a positive association with resilience. American, Canadian, and Russian researchers found out EI predicts resilience (Cejudo et al., 2016; Magnano et al., 2016). Oshio et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis, over a sample of 15,609 people, belonging to different Western and Asian regions. Outcomes indicated an inverse relationship of resilience with neuroticism and narcissistic tendencies while a positive association with meticulousness and self-control. In Italy, Russia, Pakistan, and China, studies showed that resilience is associated with stable personality characteristics of adults than self-centered and egoistic approaches (Alessandri et al., 2016; Brelsford & Ciarrocchi, 2013; Liu et al., 2014; Zeb et al., 2013).

Soni (2016) conducted research on forgiveness and resilience by selecting female college students and found an association among these variables (see also, Ghasemi et al. (2017)). Further looking at literature of LOC with resilience, Fleming and Ledogar (2008) conducted a meta-analysis, indicating that, at individual level, Native Americans, Africans, and Asians' self-efficacy, self-disposition, sense of humor, hopefulness, and ILOC improve the resilience level. At family level, parental supportive attitudes, encouragement, cohesion, and availability of resources make a person resilient.

Another research also indicated that lack of happiness and satisfaction endorsed directly to external locus of control (ELOC) (April et al., 2012). In 2016, McGee and Peter stated that people with ILOC feel that they have an ability to control various unusual life events than individuals believe in ELOC. While relating gender, parental income, number of siblings and birth order with resilience, it has been seen that Pakistani, Turkish, and Indian researchers found that men were more resilient than women (Erdogan et al., 2015; Masood et al., 2016; Tantry & Puri-Singh, 2017). Further looking at parental income and family size with resilience, in Africa, USA, and India, researchers found that low socio- economic status make a person less resilient. However, participants with 1-4 siblings usually became more resilient due to receiving more privileges than those with large family size (Mojtabai et al., 2011; Prabhu & Shekhar, 2016).

Further, birth order is an important element of resilience because first child is given more responsibilities while middle squeezed out and last born pampered the most. So, resilience and positive mental growth are more associated with first born (Khodarahimi & Ogletree, 2011; Recchia & Howe, 2009; Sharma & Srimathi, 2014). In short, some researches elaborate EI with mental growth, happiness, and resilience but with forgiveness, ILOC, and demographics the literature is limited and not directly related with resilience but other constructs like psychological well-being.

Especially in Pakistan, there is less updated work available on it and all above-mentioned constructs are not discussed in an assembled way in different researches to show a clearer picture of factors determining resilience. So, in the current study, all these factors are discussed in detail.

Problem Statement

The population aged between 15 and 24 in Pakistan comprises 64% of the whole nation, thus accounting for more than two quarters of the population. Apart from major stressors, a lot of daily hassles are faced by young adults such as academic difficulties, conflicts or disagreement with teachers, parents, peers, and transition from one educational institution to another which might exert greater impact on mental health & well-being. So, it is important to look at the optimistic and constructive approaches to encourage young adults enrolled in different public and private universities. By keeping in mind this point of view, a new emerging construct in the field of psychology called "resilience," with different psychosocial constructs, was studied to find out why young adults try to escape from indulging in notorious activities. Identifying the specific facets comprising resilience supported an enhanced and more targeted approach to interventions, aimed at enabling students to cope with the demands of everyday life.

Considering all important factors derived from literature, the present study was designed to examine psychosocial determinants of resilience among young adults and also devote efforts to examine gender difference in EI, forgiveness, and LOC. Specifically, the objectives of the current research were to assess the psycho-social determinants of resilience among young adults; and to examine the gender differences in different personality traits of young adults. The current study is expected to provide directions to clinicians, health practitioners, educationists, psychologists, and counselors to develop resilience in youth to survive well in society.

Method

- *Research Design*

A correlational research design was used which suited the requirements of the study. Being quantitative in nature, the study included descriptive statistics through measuring Cronbach's alpha, and Normality Testing of study variables. Besides, multiple regression for psychosocial factors as predictors of resilience among youth was also a part of the research design.

- *Sampling*

The sample of the study comprised 400 University students of Lahore, Pakistan with an average age of 21.7$\pm$1.54 years, belonging to lower (33.5%), middle (34.8%), and upper class (34.8%). The sample size was determined by G power with α error (.05), and actual power (.95), and was thus calculated at the sample size of 217 participants for 19 predictors in regression model. For t. test, the estimated sample size was 176. So, a sample of 400 young adults in different birth order positions such as first (37.5%), middle (32.5%), and last born (30.0%), with an average parental income of 1, 28,650 PKR, was selected. Further, participants having 1-8 numbers of siblings were taken.

- *Data Collection Method*

The following instruments were used to collect data:

i. *Emotional intelligence scale.* An indigenous "Emotional Intelligence Scale" developed by Batool and Khalid (2011) was used. Researchers selected 1547 people from different cities of Pakistan and found the significant convergent validity and reliability of the scale, r=.68 and α=.95 respectively. The response format ranged from never (*1*), sometimes (*2*), often (*3*), and always (*4*). All dimensions of EI with significant alpha reliability were examined in the current study.

ii. *Heartland forgiveness scale (HFS).* Yamhure Thompson et al. (2005) developed forgiveness scale with three dimensions including self-forgiveness (6 items) forgiving others (6 items) and events that one cannot control (6 items). The scale was developed at the Kansas University for young adults and culture free with significant alpha reliability α= .86. Moreover, it is a seven point Likert type scale with response format ranging from 0 to 7. In the current study, two components of forgiveness i.e., self-forgiveness and forgiving others were studied.

iii. *Levenson multidimensional locus of control scales.* A 24-item multidimensional LOC scale was developed by Levenson (1974). The scale was divided into internal and external (powerful others and chance) LOC. ILOC consisted of 8 items, ELOC including powerful others and chance subscales comprised of 8 items each. It was a six point Likert scale with response pattern ranging from strongly agree (+*3*) to strongly disagree (-*3*). Further, it was also instructed to add 24 scores with each of the totals. LOC scale had significant alpha reliability in different countries like America and India (Arakeri & Sunagar, 2017; Krampen & Wieberg, 2010). So, it was culturally unbiased and we also found its significant reliability in the current study.

iv. *Connor Davidson resilience scale 10 (CD-RISC-10).* Campbell-Sills and Stein (2007) adapted CD-RISC-25 from Connor and Davidson in US. Factor analysis extracted 10 substantial items to measure resilience in normal population and also for traumatic population. The average score for US normal population was 31.8 with significant reliability. The response format ranged from 0 (*not true at all*) to 4 (*true nearly all the time*). Also, CD-RISC-10 had significant reliability in Pakistan like Bibi et al. (2018) reported high reliability (α = .95) in their study. So, scale was culturally unbiased and easy to administer.

- *Research procedure*

Following ethical procedures, permission was obtained from deans of educational institutions to get approval for data collection and consent was taken from participants assuring them of confidentiality. Participants were approached in their classes and were requested to fill the questionnaire based on their own opinions. They were also informed that they were free to leave the study at any time they wish. Then, participants were given four questionnaires and demographic information sheet to complete. Equal number of students of third (22.5%), fourth (22.5%), fifth (22.5%), and sixth year (22.5%), studying in spring semesters (2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th) while 10.0% were taken from MS/MPhil classes. Total 132 students from Islamic studies, 133 from Urdu and 135 from History subjects were taken. Participants did not report any difficulty in comprehending the language used in questionnaires. Total time of participation was 30 to 45 minutes. In the end, participants were thanked for participation.

- *Data Analysis*

The collected data processed in IBM SPSS 25.0 to generate results. Descriptive, multiple regression, and t-test was applied to evaluate the data.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's alpha, and Normality Testing of Study Variables

Variable	k	M	SD	a	S	K	Ranges	
							Potential	Actual
EI	56	36.71	6.01	.85	.11	.24	56-224	66-119
IS	8	16.13	5.02	.67	-.31	.22	8-32	8.0-32.0
S-R	6	16.59	2.72	.60	-.18	.11	6-24	6.0-24.0
A	5	19.76	3.57	.66	-.34	.15	5-20	5.0-20.0
E	7	15.73	3.07	.71	-.68	.06	7–28	5.0-20.0
ESA	5	14.07	2.54	.87	-.22	-.23	5–20	7.0-20.0
IC	5	13.16	2.63	.63	-.08	-.05	5–20	5.0-20.0
F	5	11.15	1.14	.65	-.34	.11	5—20	6.0---19.0
PS	5	14.12	2.13	.53	.10	.02	5---20	5.0---20.0
ST	5	13.16	3.01	.59	.15	.20	5---20	7.0---18.0
O	5	13.17	2.16	.66	-.03	.11	5---20	5.0---20.0
S-F	6	24.7	4.9	.59	-.3	2.2	6---42	3---40
F-O	6	21.7	8.1	.76	-.3	-.7	6---42	0----42
R	10	26.13	7.17	.62	-.2	-.1	0-40	0-39
ILOC	8+24	19.8	6.6	.66	-.3	.2	32-48	6-36
ELOC	16+48	29.6	14.0	.77	-.1	.0	64-96	12-72

Note. k= Number of items; M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; α= Alpha; S= skew ness; K= kurtosis; IS= interpersonal Skills; S-R= Self-Regard; A=Assertiveness; E=Empathy; ESA=Emotional Self-Awareness; IC= Impulse Control; F=Flexibility; PS= Problem Solving; ST= Stress Tolerance; O=Optimism; S-F=Self-Forgiveness; F-O=Forgiving Others; R=Resilience; ILOC=Internal Locus Of Control; ELOC=External Locus Of Control

Table 1 displays the alpha reliability of the scales that was significantly high for emotional intelligence subscales ranged from α= .53 to.87. Also, the skewness values were less than 1 and kurtosis values of the scales were less than 3. Thus, the values showed the normal distribution of data.

Table 2

Multiple regression for psychosocial factors as predictors of resilience among youth

Variable	95% Confidence interval		
	β	Lower bound	Upper Bound
Parental income	-.11*	-2.18	-.29
Number of siblings	-.32***	-6.60	-4.33
Birth order			
First born	.71***	13.33	19.15
Middle born	-.00	-1.84	1.67
Last born	-.03	-2.26	1.03
Emotional Intelligence	.45***	1.23	4.56
Interpersonal skills	.30***	.24	.15
Self-regard	.25***	.30	.13
Assertiveness	.17**	.10	.67
Empathy	.17**	.20	1.21
Emotional self-awareness	.19**	.12	.87
Impulse control	.33***	.30	1.14
Flexibility	.22**	.14	.62
Problem solving	.35***	.33	.51
Stress tolerance	.34***	.33	.51
Optimism	.31***	.71	1.54
Forgiveness	.25***	.02	3.01
Self-forgiveness	.34***	.32	1.36
Forgiving others	.20**	.09	.33
Locus of Control			
Internal LOC	.32***	.32	.50
External LOC	-.03	-.06	.02
R	.74***		
R^2	.55***		
ΔR^2	.53***		
F	33.70***		

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001***

Table 2 exhibits multiple regression analysis indicated that several variables like parental income, number of siblings, birth order, EI (subscales), forgiveness (subscales) and LOC (subscales) were added in the block, the model explained 53% of variance in dependent variable (resilience), F (2, 398) =33.70, p<.001 which was significantly high. Further, evaluation showed that parental income was an inverse predictor of resilience β= -.11, p<.05. Also, number of siblings, β= -.32, p<.001 and first-born participants, β= .71, p<.001 were significant predictors of resilience. It was also analyzed that EI, β= .45, p<.001, IS, β= .30, p<.001, SR, β= .25, p<.001, A, β= .17, p<.01, E, β= .17, p<.01, ESA, β= .19, p<.01, IC, β= .33, p<.001, F, β= .22, p<.01, PS, β= .35, p<.001, ST, β= .34, p<.001, O, β= .31, p<.001, self-forgiveness, β= .34, p<.001, forgiving others, β= .20, p<.01, and ILOC, β= .32, p<.001 were significantly predicting resilience whereas ELOC was not an anticipator of resilience among participants (β= -.03, p>.05).

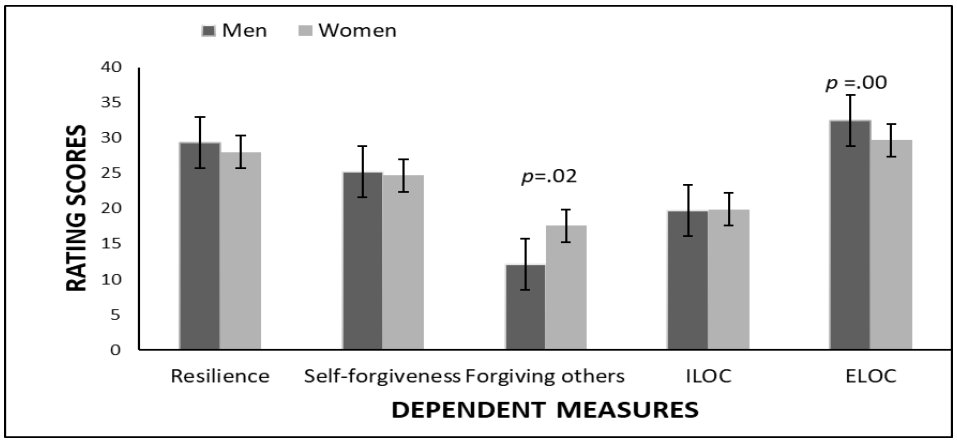

Figure 1. *Comparison of men and women in SF, FO, LOC, and Resilience*

Figure 1 shows that there were no significant differences in resilience level of men (*M*=29.49, *SD*=8.70) and women (*M*=28.04, *SD*=8.52), *t*(398)=1.68, *p*=.09. However, men (*M* =47.66, *SD*=9.79) found to be more forgiving than women (*M*=45.36, *SD*=9.86), *t*(398)= -2.34, *p*=.02. In case of ELOC, women (*M*=56.76, *SD*=13.24) were more likely to believe in fate/luck and influenced by powerful people than men (*M*=50.59, *SD*= 14.21), *t*(398)=- 4.49, *p*=.00. However, no significant differences were found between men and women in their belief of ILOC, *t*(398)= -.36, *p*=.71.

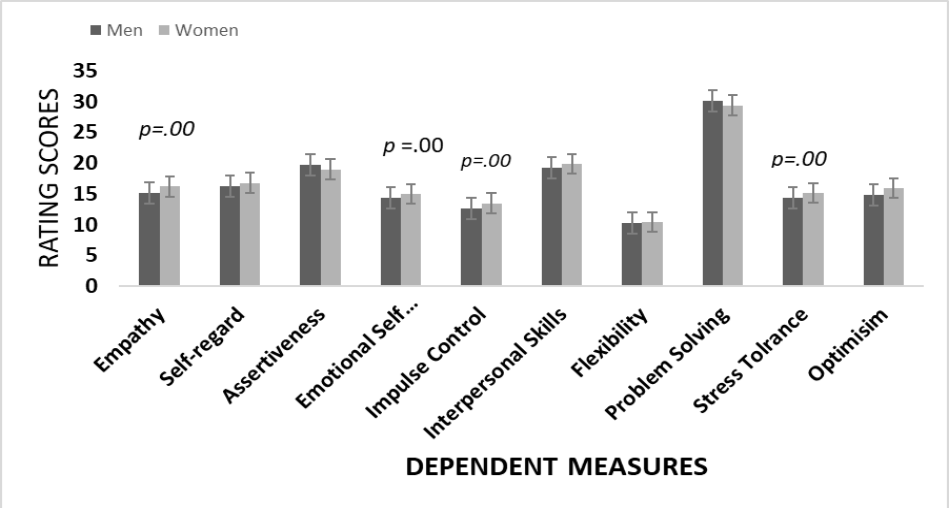

Figure 2. *Comparison of Men and Women in EI (subscales)*

In Figure 2 results showed women (*M*=14.36, *SD*=2.64) were more likely to have ESA than men (*M*=15.05, *SD*=2.39), *t*(398)= -2.71, *p*=.00. Women were also found to be more empathetic, *t*(398)=3.23, *p*=.00, had better impulse control, *t*(398)= -2.96, *p*=.00, and stress tolerance, *t*(398)= -3.08, *p*=.00 than men. However, there were insignificant gender differences in IS, SR, A, F, PS, and O.

Discussion

Results of the study showed that participants having less parental income were predicting more resilience than participants with high parental income. Contrarily, researches demonstrated that high parental income was associated with resilient capabilities of US, and African adults (Mojtabai et al., 2011; Prabhu & Shekhar, 2016). However, the results of current study are well supported by Werner's theory (2013) who found out poor children's remarkable abilities to strive back in adversity. It means, at times, adverse situations motivate a person to excel in life instead of giving up and losing hope. Especially, in Pakistani society, new trends are emerging gradually. For instance, Naeem (2018) found that school students from low socio-economic status were more resilient because deprived parents developed a more positive approach to educate their children to avoid inferiority complexes.

Further, results showed that participants with fewer siblings were more resilient. In USA, Obradović (2019) explained that fewer siblings get more chances to become resilient due to the availability of resources but another study did not find out any relationship of siblings with resilience because data taken from adults having sufficient family income (Ergüner-Tekinalp & Terzi, 2016). Further, results showed that first born were more resilient, other researchers also found that first child usually received more parental attention and were expected to be a role model for their siblings which resulted in increased resilience skills (Khodarahimi & Ogletree, 2011; Sharma & Srimathi, 2014; Zain et al., 2014). However, Lateef et al. (2018) was not in line with the findings of this research as it showed no association of birth order with resilience.

Results of multiple regression analysis provided important findings about how resilience might be inculcated among young adults. It was seen that EI and all its components, interpersonal skills, self-regard, assertiveness, empathy, ESA, problem solving, impulse control, stress tolerance, flexibility. and optimism predicted resilience. Researchers found that problem solving abilities help out in planning about effective strategies and in finding out the solutions of problems to escape from difficult circumstances (Hanewald, 2011). Coşkun et al. (2014) also found problem solving skills as one of the main components of resilience among university students in Istanbul, Turkey. While talking about interpersonal skills, Yeun and Woo (2018) introduced an intervention program to enhance the interpersonal skills of Korean adolescents by improving the resilience abilities and the therapy proved effective (see also, Kim (2012)). For self-regard, flexibility, assertiveness, empathy, and ESA, a few researches have been carried out on examining these factors of emotional intelligence with positive mental health of working people in Pakistan. Nasir et al. (2017) found that employees' assertiveness, self-acknowledged, flexible, and empathetic behaviors were associated with decreased level of stress and ostracism. Foreign researchers also found similar results (Sarrionandia et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2019). Moreover, EI is also learned through cultural norms. Pakistan is a collectivist society, where children develop abilities of mutual adoration, harmony, and care thus, becoming resilient (Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

Continuing this debate, a few researchers evaluated that resilience emerge from managing stress, self-forgiveness and forgiving others, and belief in self-efficacy (ILOC) (Ahangar, 2010; Hanewald, 2011). Burnette et al. (2014) conducted a meta-analysis and found that self-control (a component of EI) was significantly associated with self-

forgiveness and moderately related to forgiving others because people who are able to control their emotions, and keep relaxed during arguments, are more likely to forgive themselves against their transgressions. Self-forgiveness is also important because a person's daily functioning begins to affect if he is in a constant state of guilt and cannot come out of it. So, self-control, stress tolerance, optimism, and forgiveness align with cognitive neuroscience models and such abilities help in developing resilience (Heatherton & Wagner, 2011). However, Mary and Patra (2015) could not find out any relationship of forgiveness (self and others) and LOC with resilience.

Hence, EI, forgiving spirits, and ILOC were found as predicting factors of resilience. Many researchers have also found the associations among these personality traits (Cazan, 2016; Özbek et al., 2013; Saadat et al., 2012). A few Pakistani researchers also supported the current findings by indicating that forgiving, emotionally intelligent, and self-reliant people have better self-control and psychological well-being (Alam et al., 2016; A. A. Khan et al., 2012). Whereas, ELOC was not predicting resilience which is evident by many researchers that people who try to excel in life by being dependent on others and take short cuts to excel in life, cannot have better psychological health, self-control, and resilient skills (April et al., 2012; A. K. Khan et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2014; Zeb et al., 2013).

While looking at the gender differences, it was interesting to find out that self-forgiveness, resilience, self-regard, assertiveness, ILOC, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, flexibility, and optimism did not vary between men and women. These findings reflected new emerging trends in Pakistani culture as women are also working side by side with men in society. They are also having a prestigious status in home and well supported by their parents and there is much emphasis of moral well-being of boys as well. These findings were supported by a few Pakistani studies (Butt et al., 2013; Delavande & Zafar, 2019). Foreign researchers also found similar results (Anasuri & Anthony, 2018; Bezek, 2010) but a few studies are not aligned with our findings (Sarwar et al., 2010; Shekhar & Kumar, 2014; Zaidi & Mohsin, 2013). However, women were found more empathetic, emotionally self-aware, who believed in ELOC and also more likely believed in forgiving others more than men. These findings are aligned with many researches (Beranuy et al., 2009; Jamali et al., 2008; Luebbers et al., 2007).

Conclusion

The present study examined the factors that young adults confronted while dealing with day-to-day stressors in order to build resilience. The focus was on the psychological stressors, which previous studies had not examined, hence there existed a research gap. The present study identified factors that contributed, in a meaningful way, to build resilience in young adults. The study did not notice any gender differences in examining these variables, which is a good sign of less gender discrimination in Pakistani society. However, identifying the specific facets comprising resilience supported an enhanced and more targeted approach to interventions, aimed at enabling students to cope with the challenges of life.

It is expected that the current study would spread awareness among clinicians, health practitioners, psychologists, and educationists that they should focus on all these constructs to assist the youth to become resilient. Along all these implications and recommendations, the study also had some limitations like participants who underwent

any trauma were not included in this study. Another flaw was that results can be generalized within Lahore city but not for other cities of Pakistan. A cross-cultural and experimentation-based study was not conducted to apply to geographically diverse population. So, it is suggested that in future studies, such limitations should be overcome.

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This manuscript is not sent anywhere else for publication and it is my own original work derived from my PhD dissertation.

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