



The Effects of Buddhist Psychological Factors on the Resilience of Adolescents in Bangkok

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Abstract

The aims of this research were to 1) investigate the concept of resilience in regard to the western psychological paradigm and Buddhism 2) examine the statistical significance of on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok and 3) predict the effects of Buddhist psychological factors on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok.

This research is mixed methods Research. The first stage of the research is qualitative research which aims to collect the variables and then design the instruments in the quantitative research in the second stage. 12 key-informants were selected by using purposive sampling. The sample population consists of 495 adolescents in Bangkok by purposive sampling. The instrument of research was a tripartite questionnaire of which the three parts were: 1) a part eliciting data concerning demographical characteristics; 2) a part used to assemble data concerning Buddhist Psychological factors; and 3) a part utilized for ascertaining resilience. Using techniques of descriptive statistics, the researcher analyzed the data collected in terms of percentage, mean and standard deviation. The techniques of t test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in addition to Person's product moment correlation coefficient method and multiple regression analysis were also employed by the researcher.

It was discovered that most influential factors on the resilience of adolescents in the Buddhist perspectives are *Yoniso-manasikāra* (Wise Reflection) (15.79%), *Paratoghosa* (the Words of Others) (15.79%) , *Sati* (Mindfulness) (10.52%), and *Viriya* (Effort) (10.52%).

In the perspectives of modern psychologists, the influential factors on the resilience of adolescents Parent-child bonding (9.09%) and Emotional-Regulation (9.09%). The inclusion of the Buddhist psychological factors can predict the level of resilience displayed by the adolescents in Bangkok under study at 70 % at the statistically significant level of .001 ($p < .001$).

Keywords: Resilience, Buddhist Psychological factors, Adolescents

Introduction

Adolescence is a bright and beautiful stage of life. However, the period of adolescence is most susceptible to adaptation problems. It is a time of transition involving multi-dimensional changes: biological, psychological (including cognitive) and social. Biologically, adolescents are experiencing pubertal changes, changes in brain structure and sexual interest, as a start. Psychologically, adolescents' cognitive capacities are maturing. Finally, adolescents are experiencing social changes through school and other transitions and roles they are assumed to play in family, community and school (National Research Council, 2002, p.46).

Global research shows that during adolescence, physical and mental health care are often neglected. A research study by The Children's Society revealed that neglected teenagers are likely to be unhappier with their lives, to feel that no-one around them cares, to doubt their capabilities and to be pessimistic about the future (Phil Raws, 2016, p.3). World Health Organization states that adolescent suicidal behaviors have been increasing over recent decades in many regions of the world (Herbert Hendin, 2002, pp 7-13.). As a major mental health problem worldwide, adolescent suicidal behaviors are the third leading cause of death among American youth aged 15 to 24 years (Elizabeth Arias et al., 2001, pp.1-86), and one of the leading causes of death among Thai adolescents (Manote Lotrakul, 2006, pp.90-95). According to the Public Health Ministry of Thailand, the suicide rate over the past decade classified by age group revealed that approximately 140 to 270 Thai youth aged between 10 and 19 years old commit suicide every year (Department of Mental Health, 2017). In Bangkok, 11.4% of 7th to 12th grade students were found to have seriously considered attempting suicide, while 11.5% had made a plan to attempt suicide and 9.3% had attempted suicide (Patcharin Nintachan, 2007, p.194). Poor care during the early years of adolescence will inevitably lead to poor outcome for individuals and for society in general (Phil Raws, 2016, p.4).

To overcome adversities, children draw from three sources of resilience features labelled: I have, I am, I can (Edith Grotberg, 1995, p.9). It is the capacity to rise above difficult circumstances. Resilience is commonly defined as an ability to recover from setbacks, the quality of bouncing back. Resilience is uneven. A person might be highly resilient in one aspect of life and need much higher levels of support in another (Ginsburg and Jablow, 2015, p.4). It is important to give priority to the development of adolescent growth to prevent physical and mental health problems, and to solve other problems that may occur. Adolescence is the period where they need a source of care and guidance that

facilitate proper understanding to overcome adversities and be strengthened by (or even transformed by) the challenges of life to make the transition to successful adulthood.

A previous studies of hospital patients and people who experience trauma states that the core teachings of Buddhism offer each practitioner a path to resilience (Julia Aegerter, 2012, p. 21). Peres et al. (2007) reviewed research on religiousness and resilience. The result showed that one of the factors which has been investigated relative to resilience is religious or spiritual aspect. D.A. Pardini et al. (2000) examined the potential value of religious faith and spirituality in the lives of individuals suffering from a variety of acute and chronic illnesses. The results indicated that among recovering individuals, higher levels of religious faith and spirituality were associated with a more optimistic life orientation, greater perceived social support, higher resilience to stress, and lower levels of anxiety.

To date, there has been little research into resilience concerning influential factors in religious faith and spirituality that enables resilience. Resilience is important because as positive psychology explains it is the human capacity to face, overcome, and be strengthened by (or even transformed by) the challenges of life. For this reason, this research attempts to study the effects of the Buddhist Psychological factors from the qualitative method and later through a quantitative measurement through Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) to prove the significance of those influential factors that help promote resilience among adolescents. The objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1) to investigate the concept of resilience in regard to the western psychological paradigm and Buddhism
- 2) to examine the statistical significance of demographical factors on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok and
- 3) to predict the effects of Buddhist psychological factors on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research is mixed methods Research. It consists of both qualitative research and quantitative research. The first stage of the research is qualitative research which aims to collect the variables and then design the instruments in the quantitative research in the second stage.

Qualitative Research

In the early stage of the study, the research covers sources of data from both literature review and in-depth interviews. The concept of resilience in regard to the western psychological paradigm will be investigated through the literature review and in-depth interviews. 12 key-informants were selected by using purposive sampling (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2006, p.222). The key-informants are experts who are highly knowledgeable about or involved with Buddhism, psychology, resilience and adolescents. In-depth interviews will be conducted with two groups of key-informants including six salient Buddhist scholars: meditation masters, professor of Religious Studies, a director of Buddhist Studies, and a Pāli and Buddhist Studies lecturer and six modern psychologists: a psychotherapist, clinical psychologists, psychology lecturers, and a medical doctor who is expertise in adolescents. The goal is to obtain new and relevant data as well as to carry out an exploration of the definition of Resilience from the Buddhist perspectives and the factors in Buddhism that enables resilience in adolescents. The influential factors in Buddhism on resilience of adolescents obtained from the in-depth interviews will be further investigated through the primary sources of English translations of Tipiṭaka, the secondary sources of commentaries, textbooks, research works, and Buddhist journals. This is to survey the viewpoint from the related literatures in detailed explanation for clearer comprehension.

Quantitative Research

In the second stage of the study, the data collection from the in-depth interviews from the former stage will be used to develop a questionnaire as the tool to collect quantitative data from adolescents in Bangkok.

Population and Samples

The sampling group consists of 495 adolescents aged 11-19 years old in Bangkok by purposive random sampling.

Research Instrument

The sample population consists of 495 adolescents in Bangkok by purposive sampling. The instrument of research is a tripartite questionnaire of which the three parts are: 1) a part eliciting data concerning demographical characteristics; 2) a part used to assemble data concerning Buddhist psychological factors; 3) a part utilized for ascertaining resilience. Using techniques of descriptive statistics, the researcher analyzed the data collected in terms of percentages, means and standard deviations. The influential statistics used for hypothesis testing include t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in addition to

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient method and multiple regression analysis were also employed to this research.

Data Collection

1. The 7 permission letters from the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC) along with the links and QR code for the online questionnaires were sent to six schools and one university in Bangkok in order to inform the research objectives and request for data collection.

2. Regularly contacted with the responsible teachers or lecturers who were in charged of distributing the online questionnaire links and QR codes to the students in classes.

3. The answers from 495 respondents were automatically saved and collected in the google responses sheets with the timestamp.

Data Analysis

1. Descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, were used to assess the demographic data of the adolescents, including gender, age, level of education.

2. Descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, were used to assess Buddhist psychological factors on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok. T-test, F-test (One-Way Anova) and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to examine the statistical significance of the Influential Factors in Buddhism in relation to the resilience of the adolescents in Bangkok

3. Multiple regression analysis was used to predict and propose a model of Buddhist psychological factors on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok.

4. The significant level was set at .05 for all statistical analyses.

Results

Analysis Results of Qualitative Research Method

The first objective of this study was to investigate the concept of resilience in regard to the western psychological paradigm and Buddhism. The findings results are listed as follows:

1. The Concept of Resilience in regard to the Western Psychological Paradigm

"Resilience" in regard to the western psychological paradigm can be summarized as the ability to cope effectively with difficult circumstances and adversity in life. It is

the ability to easily and quickly bounce back to a person's baseline emotional state after negative experiences. Being flexible, elastic and imperfect with regard to body, speech and mind which includes the inherent capacity of bending and stretching in order to constantly balance cognition and emotion toward a dynamic ever-changing intrapersonal and interpersonal equilibrium.

The influential factors on "Resilience" of adolescents in Western Psychological Paradigm include Self and no-self, Attention, the Three Klesas, Mindfulness, Pain and suffering, Impermanence – as-it-is, Causality, Everyday mind, Childhood experiences, Significant elder's (parents, teachers) responses to these experiences, and Cultural norms about competition, co-operation, success, quality of life, Bio psychological factors - Genetic factors, Interpersonal and social dimensions - learned and acculturated factors, Parent-child bounding, Parents as role models, Emotional Regulation, Self-Esteem, Learning, Growth mindset, Optimism, Emotional Regulation, and Stable relationship with an adult during childhood. The sources of resilience, in the concepts of adolescents' resilience in Grotberg's theory, are from provided external supports (I have); developed inner strengths (I am); and acquired interpersonal and problem solving skills (I can).

The research findings indicated that two influential factors in western psychology paradigm on the resilience of adolescents in which most modern psychologists agree on are Parent-child bounding (9.09%) and Emotional Regulation. (9.09%). Therefore, these influential factors were used to create a questionnaire to collect quantitative data in order to examine the statistical significance and their effects on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok in the second part of the study.

2. The Concept of Resilience in Buddhism

"Resilience" in Buddhist perspectives can be summarized as the ability to remain emotionally stable and balanced, being flexible according to causes and conditions by having mental flexibility and looking at things the way they are and having metta or loving-kindness towards oneself. It also refers to an ability to handle difficulties, being more realistic about the circumstances. It is the capability to strive and overcome the defilements and impurities that are already within oneself to revive to the normal human mind, which is originally pure.

The influential factors in Buddhism on the "Resilience" of adolescents are Panca bala (The five spiritual power), Paratogosa (The Words of Others), Yoniso-manasikāra (Wise Reflection), Sammā diṭṭhi (Right view), Sati (Mindfulness), Saddha (Faith), Viriya (Effort), Kalyānamitta (having good friend; good company; friendship with the lovely; favorable

social environment), Sikkhā (The Threefold Training), Samma- padhāna (the Four Right Exertions), Samma vayama (Right effort), Adhiṭṭhāna (Self-determination), and Pahāna (eradication; abandonment; the cause of suffering is to be eradicated).

The research findings indicated that four influential factors in Buddhism on the resilience of adolescents in which most Buddhist scholars agree on are Paratogosa (The Words of Others) (15.79%), Yoniso-manasikāra (Wise Reflection) (15.79%), Sati (Mindfulness) (10.52%), and Viriya (Effort) (10.52%). Therefore, these influential factors were used to create a questionnaire to collect quantitative data in order to examine the statistical significance and their effects on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok in the second part of the study.

Analysis Results of Qualitative Research Method

Hypothesis 1: Adolescents in Bangkok with different demographical factors have different level of Resilience

1. Hypothesis results of gender and resilience level of adolescents in Bangkok

The results revealed that female adolescents in Bangkok (n=334) have high level of resilience ($\bar{X} = 4.04$, S.D. = 0.54). Similarly, male adolescents in Bangkok (n=161) also have high level of resilience ($\bar{X} = 4.03$, S.D. = 0.61). The results indicated that both female and male adolescents in Bangkok have the same level of resilience. It can be concluded that there was no significance difference between gender and resilience level of adolescents in Bangkok at the statistically significant level of .05 ($p < .05$).

Table 1: Hypothesis Results of Gender and the Resilience Level of Adolescents in Bangkok

	Number	\bar{X}	S.D.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	161	4.03	0.61	-.171	.864
Female	334	4.04	0.54		
Total	495				

2. Hypothesis results of age and resilience

The results revealed that early adolescents (11 through 13 years of age) in Bangkok (n=110) have high level of resilience ($\bar{X} = 3.96$, S.D. = 0.66). Middle adolescents (14 through 16 years of age) in Bangkok (n=202) have high level of resilience ($\bar{X} = 4.06$, S.D.= 0.55).

Late adolescents (17 through 19 years of age) in Bangkok (n=183) have high level of resilience (\bar{X} = 4.06, S.D. = 0.52).

The results indicated that adolescents in Bangkok with different age groups have the same level of resilience. It can be concluded that there was no significance difference between age and resilience level of adolescents in Bangkok at the statistically significant level of .05 ($p < .05$).

Table 2: Hypothesis of Age and the Resilience Level of Adolescents in Bangkok

Source of variance	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	2	.916	.458	1.445	.237
Within Groups	492	155.989	.317		
Total	242	156.905			

Hypothesis 2: Buddhist psychological factors are positively related to the resilience of addolescent in Bangkok

Correlation between Buddhist Psychological Factors and Resilience of Addolescent in Bangkok

To explore the relationship between the Buddhist psychological factors, namely *Yoniso-manasikāra* or wise reflection, *Paratoghosa* or the words of others, *Sati* or mindfulness, *Viriya* or effort, Parent-child bonding, Emotional-Regulation and resilience of addolescent in Bangkok, the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was performed.

The results from Table 2 revealed that *Yoniso-manasikāra* or wise reflection was positively related to resilience of addolescent in Bangkok at a moderate level ($r = .604$, $p < .01$). *Paratoghosa* or the words of others was positively related to resilience of addolescent in Bangkok at a moderate level ($r = .681$, $p < .01$). *Sati* or mindfulness was positively related to resilience of addolescent in Bangkok at a moderate level ($r = .641$, $p < .01$). *Viriya* or effort was positively related to resilience of addolescent in Bangkok at a moderate level ($r = .660$, $p < .01$). Parent-child bonding was positively related to resilience of addolescent in Bangkok at a low level ($r = .461$, $p < .01$). Finally, Emotional-Regulation was positively related to resilience of addolescent in Bangkok at a moderate level ($r = .539$, $p < .01$).

Table 3: Correlation between Buddhist psychological factors and resilience of adolescents in Bangkok (n=495)

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D.	x_1	x_2	x_3	x_4	x_5	x_6	Y
$x_1 = Yoniso-manasikāra$	3.86	.57	-	.451**	.678**	.571**	.250**	.526**	.604**
$x_2 = Paratoghosa$	3.89	.71		-	.495**	.481**	.390**	.391**	.681**
$x_3 = Sati$	3.90	.60			-	.596**	.329**	.528**	.641**
$x_4 = Viriya$	3.95	.64				-	.212**	.389**	.660**
$x_5 = \text{Parent-child bonding}$	3.78	.74					-	.241**	.461**
$x_6 = \text{Emotional-Regulation}$	3.84	.63						-	.539**
Y = Resilience of adolescent in Bangkok	4.04	.56							-

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p < .01$)

Hypothesis 3: Buddhist psychological factors can predict the level of Resilience of adolescents in Bangkok.

Multiple Regression coefficient between Buddhist psychological factors and resilience of addolescent in Bangkok

To predict the effects of the Buddhist psychological factors on the resilience of the adolescents in Bangkok, multiple regression was used as the statistics to examine the effect of *Yoniso-manasikāra* or wise reflection, *Paratoghosa* or the words of others, *Sati* or mindfulness, *Viriya* or effort, Parent-child bonding and Emotional-Regulation as shown in Table 4.6.

It was discovered that *Paratoghosa* or the words of others was entered in the first step. The result indicated that *Paratoghosa* has an estimate effect on the level of resilience of adolescent in Bangkok at 46.40% of variance at the statistically significant level of .001 ($p < .001$). The rest is the influence of other factors besides this.

Viriya or effort was entered in the second step. The result indicated that *Viriya* has an estimate effect on the level of resilience of adolescent in Bangkok at 43.60% of variance at the statistically significant level of .001 ($p < .001$). The rest is the influence of other factors besides this.

Sati or mindfulness was entered in the third. The result indicated that *Sati* has an estimate effect on the level of resilience of adolescent in Bangkok at 41.20% of variance at the statistically significant level of .001 ($p < .001$). The rest is the influence of other factors besides this.

Yoniso-manasikāra or wise reflection was entered in the fourth step. The result indicated that *Yoniso-manasikāra* has an estimate effect on the level of resilience of adolescent in Bangkok at 36.50% of variance at the statistically significant level of .001 ($p < .001$). The rest is the influence of other factors besides this.

Emotional-Regulation was entered in the fifth step. The result indicated that Emotional-Regulation has an estimate effect on the level of resilience of adolescent in Bangkok at 29.10% of variance at the statistically significant level of .001 ($p < .001$). The rest is the influence of other factors besides this.

Finally, Parent-child bonding was entered in the sixth step. The result indicated that Parent-child bonding has an estimate effect on the level of resilience of adolescent in Bangkok at 21.30% of variance at the statistically significant level of .001 ($p < .001$). The rest is the influence of other factors besides this.

The results showed that the Buddhist psychological factors in the aspect of *Paratoghosa* or the words of others was found to be the most influential factor in correlated prediction of the level of adolescents' resilience in Bangkok followed by *Viriya* or effort, *Sati* or mindfulness, *Yoniso-manasikāra* or wise reflection, Emotional-Regulation and finally, Parent-child bonding.

Table 4: Multiple Regression coefficient between Buddhist psychological factors and resilience of adolescents in Bangkok

Variables	Regression					<i>t</i>	Sig.
	R	R ²	B	SE _b	Beta		
<i>Yoniso-manasikāra</i>	.604	.365	.106	.036	.107	2.938	.003**
<i>Paratoghosa</i>	.681	.464	.250	.025	.317	10.137	.000**
<i>Sati</i>	.641	.412	.087	.037	.092	2.352	.019**
<i>Viriya</i>	.660	.436	.263	.029	.297	8.924	.000**
Parent-child bonding	.461	.213	.139	.021	.183	6.646	.000**
Emotional-Regulation	.539	.291	.131	.028	.146	4.627	.000**
Constant			.247	.119	-	2.081	.038**
R = .247 R ² = .698 Adjusted R ² = .694 F = 188.138 Sig = .000**							

The inclusion of the Buddhist psychological factors, namely *Yoniso-manasikāra* or wise reflection, *Paratoghosa* or the words of others, *Sati* or mindfulness, *Viriya* or effort, Parent-child bonding and Emotional-Regulation were predictive of the level of resilience displayed by the adolescents in Bangkok under study at 70 % at the statistically significant level of .001 ($p < .001$). The rest is the influence of other factors besides this.

The multiple regression equation to predict the effects of Buddhist psychological factors on the resilience of adolescents in Bangkok were established as below.

Formula

$$\hat{Y} = .247 + .106 X_1 + .250 X_2 + .087 X_3 + .263 X_4 + .139 X_5 + .131 X_6$$

Where \hat{Y} = Resilience of adolescents in Bangkok

X_1 = *Yoniso-manasikāra* or wise reflection

X_2 = *Paratoghosa* or the words of others

X_3 = *Sati* or mindfulness

X_4 = *Viriya* or effort

X_5 = Parent-child bonding

X_6 = Emotional-Regulation

Discussion

The finding results indicated that adopting these Buddhist psychological factors can boost adolescents' ability to cope with crises or challenges in life when they occur. They will be in a better position to manage setbacks, challenges, and adversity. Adolescents will have a greater chance of overcoming obstacles and achieving goals by applying these influential factors that enable resilience. Adolescents who are resilient are better able to avoid risky behaviors than are other adolescents. The ones who are resilient also find ways to reduce the negative effects of stress on their lives. Resilience behaviours and skills can be learned and taught. It involves developing both external and internal resources of individuals that will allow them to recover from traumatic or stressful events in life. Developing resilience can help adolescents cope adaptively and bounce back after changes, challenges, setbacks, disappointments, and failures during the transitional stages. Each contributing factor can be described as follows:

In terms of The Words of Others (Paratoghosa), it involves receiving or good advice and information from the close ones (e.g. family, friends, teachers, parents), listening to the advice of good role models or the person they like via social media, having friends who encourage them when being in a difficult situation, talking to the people they trust to feel empowered, encouraged in order to restore back to the original state when feeling distressed, disappointed, frustrated or failed from something.

In the aspect of Wise Reflection (Yoniso-manasikāra) based on the findings of the current study, the levels of adolescents can be enhanced by means of the three methods of reflecting. The first method is the method of reflecting in accord with the Four Noble Truths (reflection used to solve problems). This method involves acknowledging their own suffering when facing them, knowing the cause of the problem and how to solve it in their ways. This second method is the method of reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages of things, and on the escape from them. This method involves solving the problem by considering the advantages and the disadvantages of the solution, looking for more than one solutions and being capable of making the correct decision based on the right thing. The last method is the method of reflection by dwelling in the present moment. This method involves being aware of the importance of mindfulness and living in the present moment in life and for solving problems, making decision on the basis of reality rather than fantasy, performing wholesome deeds at the present time, having believed that accepting the painful truth rather than deceiving themselves will facilitate the growth of their mental strength.

In terms of Mindfulness (Sati), it involves being mindful when facing difficulties, being able to control themselves, doing things with mindfulness, being able to realize negative outcomes and reject to those unwholesome deeds when persuaded to do activities that will result in a bad result later.

Speaking of Effort (Viriya), it involves constantly doing things and making effort until reaching the goal, keep trying and not giving up, being indefatigable to the obstacles that come through life. In terms of Parent-child bonding, it involves having parents who speak to them with a warm and friendly voice, appear to understand their problems and worries, make them feel better when being upset, let them do those things they liked doing, and dress in any way they pleased. Moreover, the parents must not make adolescents feel they are unwanted or invade their privacy. In the aspect of Emotion Regulation, it involves two emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The reappraisal factor refers to how individuals redefine an emotionally eliciting situation such that its emotional impact is modified. The suppression factor refer to how often individuals regulate emotions by inhibiting emotional expression.

To summarise, many changes and vulnerabilities affect adolescents at this life stage. Moving from primary school to high-school, high-school to university, and personal attributes may favor risky behaviors that often lead to mental health problems. Resilience means doing well in the face of adversity. Adolescents who are resilient ‘bounce back’ from difficult experiences and, as a result, are less likely to experience mental health problems. Adolescents have great difficulties, yet it should be remembered that despite the adversities they can draw many resources from external supports and resources, internal and personal strengths as well as social and interpersonal skills. Adolescents who have high level of Buddhist psychological factors appear to have high level of resilience. Therefore, the results from this study indicate that Buddhist psychological factors can be applied to promote and improve resilience in adolescents.

The unique contribution of the current study lies in the discovery that Buddhist psychological factors can be useful in improving the adolescents mental health concerning the promotion of resilience during their transitional stages. The research evidence is now at a point where we can no longer ignore the role of these factors in fostering resilience in adolescents. Supporting young people’s health and wellbeing is an investment that results in considerable economic benefit.

For further research herein can be made as follows;

1. The Effects of Buddhist Psychological Factors Training Program on the Resilience of Adolescents
2. Development and Testing of the Influential Factors in Buddhism on Resilience Scale for Adolescents
3. The Effects of the Influential Factors in Buddhism on the Resilience - Enhancing Program in Adolescents

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