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The Relationship between Resilience and Need for Social Approval in University Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between resilience and need for social approval of university students. In the study, the relation of resilience with gender, age, perceived income level and romantic relationship status variables, and also, whether the need for social approval predicted resilience were examined. The research was carried out with the correlational survey model, which is one of the quantitative research methods. "The Need for Social Approval Scale", "The Resilience Scale-Short Form" and "The Risk Factors Identification List" were used in the study. The participants consist of a total of 408 people who have marked at least one risk factor. Descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, Anova test, correlation and regression analysis technique were used in the analysis of the data. According to the findings, a moderate negative correlation was found between students' need for social approval and resilience. In addition, it was seen that while resilience differs significantly according to age and having a romantic relationship, resilience is predicted by the need for social approval.

Key Words

Need for social approval • Resilience • University students

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In the adventure of life, each individual has to struggle with many problems. Some individuals give up and yield to negative feelings after adversities they face, while others manage to feel good again by strongly hugging life. The positive psychology trend, which has aroused increasing interest in current studies, focuses on positive experiences and positive individual characteristics as well as highlighting the importance of well-being and optimum functionality (Lee Duckworth et al., 2005). The issue of resilience is an important concept that is addressed within positive psychology.

Masten et al., (1990) define the concept of resilience as the process, capacity, or outcome of a successful adaptation, although there are situations that challenge or threaten the individual. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) cited resilience as the ability to hold on to life and lead a meaningful life after being exposed to difficulties. Resilience is also described as the ability to withstand any disruption and bounce back within a reasonable time (Aven, 2011). In another definition, resilience is considered as the process of effectively overcoming, re-adapting and managing the sources of stress or trauma of the individual, and it is stated that resilience is a facilitating factor for individuals to adapt and bounce back in the face of distressing situations (Windle, 2011).

In today's world, individuals are exposed to many difficulties such as crime and accidents, natural disasters, socially uncomfortable situations and financial problems. Resilience plays a key role in the process of adapting and overcoming adverse events and difficulties individuals face (Oshio et al., 2003). Definitions that explain the concept of resilience focus on three main contents: risk factors, protective factors and positive results (Işik et al., 2019). Resilience can be fully revealed when individuals face disturbances and difficulties. These difficulties are adversities and risks, including adaptation difficulties throughout life or internal and external negative life events related to mental disorders (Hu et al., 2015). Risk factors that will trigger difficulties in individual's family and community interaction may include genetic, biological, psychosocial and demographic conditions (Terzi, 2008). Supporting factors like social milieu and family, especially in childhood and adolescence, are of great importance in the development of resilience (Karairmak, 2007). There is a decrease in the resilience of individuals who are excluded by others (Traş et al., 2019a).

The need for social approval is an element about the individual's attaching importance to the expectations and judgments of other people and acting for harmony in their interactions with others (Karaşar & Ögülmüş, 2016a). Individuals, who feel the need for social approval, are those who are concerned about preventing others from disapproving them and act towards presenting themselves positively with the desire to create a positive impression (Jellison & Gentry, 1978). People in need of approval are very interested in what others think of themselves and avoid being perceived as socially unpleasant (Grams & Rogers, 1990).

In addition to the personality and attitude evaluations, cultural demands in the environment, in which individuals live, are also effective in differentiating the need for social approval. People with high social approval needs want to present themselves positively by acting in accordance with social demands and become sensitive to the expectations of others to be culturally approved (Strickland & Crowne, 1962). The attributions for social approval in individuals can give different results in relation to the attributions for self-esteem. In the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory, self-development is affected by social and environmental factors, and personal will is linked to environmental adaptation (Bandura, 2001). According to MacDonald et al. (2003), considering the interpersonal self-theories that include the concept of global self-esteem, high self-esteem includes more than one's belief regarding s/he has positive characteristics. Interpersonal theories suggest that

social feedback directed to the individual is very important in terms of self-esteem. It was pointed out that the self-esteem of the person can be attributed to the perceptions of admissibility towards other people, and self-assessments can vary depending on the individual's belief that a particular feature is important for social approval. Considering the cultural texture of our country, the need for social approval can be seen as an important factor in terms of interpersonal competence level, as behaviors towards rapport are prioritized in relationships with other individuals (Baytemiret al., 2017). Self-esteem of people seeking social approval is shaped by the state of praise, appreciation and approval offered by other people (Ak et al., 2020).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that many studies have been carried out in the national and foreign literature about resilience. When these studies are examined, it draws attention that there is a negative relationship between resilience and stress (Ong et al., 2006; Yağmur&Türkmen, 2017; Bitsika et al., 2013) between resilience and depression (Moreira et al., 2015; Wermelinger Avila et al., 2017; Gitoet al., 2013), between resilience and post-traumatic stress disorder (Mealeret al., 2012; Sakarya&Güneş, 2013; Bibi et al., 2018); between resilience and anxiety (Hjemdalet al., 2011; Skrove et al., 2013; Carvalho et al., 2016); and there is a positive relationship between resilience and well-being (Sagone& De Caroli, 2014; Kirmaniet al., 2015; Çetinkaya&Bulut, 2019); and between resilience and life satisfaction (Achour& Nor, 2014; Rani &Midha, 2014; Çeliket al., 2017).

Purpose of The Study

The dynamics that stimulate resilience is an interesting issue that is tried to be answered in current researches (Kararmak&Siviş-Çetinkaya, 2011). Considering the information in the literature, no study explaining the relationship between resilience and the need for social approval has been found. The nature of the need for social approval and the resilience can be nurtured both by the individual's personality and the interaction with the environment and culture. While individuals with high social approval needs behave according to the expectations and demands of others (Karaşar&Öğülmüş, 2016a), resilient individuals can act more autonomously (Ernas, 2017). Considering this perspective, clarifying the relationship between resilience and the need for social approval is considered important in terms of filling the gap in the literature. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between resilience and need for social approval of university students. In addition, the relationship between resilience and some variables will be examined.

In line with this purpose, the research aimed to answer the following basic questions:

1. Does the resilience of university students differ significantly according to gender?
2. Does the resilience of university students differ significantly according to age?
3. Does the resilience of university students differ significantly according to perceived income level?
4. Does the resilience of university students differ significantly according to their romantic relationship status?
5. Is there a significant relationship between resilience and need for social approval in university students?
6. Does the need for social approval of university students significantly predict the resilience?

Method

Research Design

This research was carried out according to the relational screening model. In the screening model, it is aimed to depict a situation that happened in the past or is still ongoing today, without changing it. The person, object or event that is the subject of the research is tried to be described in its own conditions and as it is (Karasar, 2015).

Study Group

The participants of this research consist of 408 students who continue their education life in a public university in Konya. Out of 408 people in total, 72.1% of the students were women, 27.9% were men; 61.1% were between the ages of 18-21, and 38.9% were between the ages of 22-30. 3.2% of the students were in preparatory class, 29.4% were 1st grade, 6.1% were 2nd grade, 18.6% were 3rd grade, 33.1% were 4th grade, and % 9.6 of them were graduates.

Research Instruments and Processes

The research data was collected by using Personal Information Form, The Need for Social Approval Scale developed by Karasar&Öğülmüş (2016a), The Resilience Scale-Short Form developed by Işiket al. (2019) and The Risk Factors Identification List developed by Terzi (2008).

The Need for Social Approval Scale:

The Need for Social Approval Scale developed by Karasar&Öğülmüş (2016a) was used in the study. This 5-point Likert type scale consists of 25 items and three sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions of the scale are called sensitivity to others' judgments, leaving a positive impression and social withdrawal, and the need for social approval increases as the score obtained from the scale increases. Internal consistency coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the scale vary between .80 and .83. The pretest-posttest reliability and internal consistency coefficient of the scale was .90. It was stated that The Need for Social Approval Scale has a good structural validity and the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was .91. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient calculated for this study was found as .93.

The Resilience Scale-Short Form:

The Resilience Scale (RS) - Short Form was developed by Işiket al. (2019), by recruiting the items in the long version adapted to the Turkish culture. For this purpose, exploratory factor analysis based on varimax rotation and principal components analysis was performed for the data collected from 211 people. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, a 10-item one-dimensional scale with an item factor load varying between .65 and .85 was obtained. Regarding the criterion validity of the scale, the researchers determined a positive relationship between the total scores of the scale and positive emotion scores, and a negative and significant relationship between the negative emotion and depression scores. In the second stage, the data collected from 346 people were analyzed with Confirmatory Factor Analysis and the fit indexes of the scale were found to be in the range of acceptable values. While the internal consistency coefficient of the scale, which contains a single-factor structure, was $Cronbach\ \alpha = .91$, the correlation coefficient was .83 as a result of the test repeat reliability. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient calculated for this study was found as .89.

The Risk Factors Identification List:

Resilience is considered as an effective coping method involving the effort to maintain and restore internal and external balance through human activities, including thought and action under a significant threat (Lutharet al., 2000). In order for the resilience to be activated, the individual needs to struggle with certain difficulties. In order to examine whether this activation has risk factors, The Risk Factors Identification List consisting of 30 items was designed by Terzi (2008).

Personal Information Form:

In the Personal Information Form created by the researchers, there are questions in order to obtain information about the gender, age, perceived income level and romantic relationship status of university students.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the SPSS (20) package program. As the first process, data collection tools were distributed to 459 university students. The responses of 51 individuals who did not make any markings on any factor in the Risk Factor Determination List (Terzi, 2008) were removed from the data set. The participants who were in the study group and included in the analysis consisted of a total of 408 people, aged between 18 and 30, as 294 (72.1%) women and 114 (27.9%) men.

Outlier extraction was done by examining Mahalanobis Distance, Cook's Distance, and Leverage values. Mahalanobis Distance, Cook's Distance, and Leverage values are examined to extract outliers (Seçer, 2015). After extracting the outliers, skewness and kurtosis values were examined to determine whether the data set has a normal distribution. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients can be assumed to meet the normality of the distribution if they are between the scale of -1 and +1 (Hair et al., 2013). The skewness and kurtosis values regarding the data distribution are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Skewness and Kurtosis Values of Variables

	Skewness	Kurtosis
The Resilience Scale	-.570	.273
The Need for Social Approval Scale	-.151	-.269

Findings

Table 2

Results of t-test Regarding the Comparison of Resilience according to Gender

Gender	n	\bar{X}	Sd	t	p	η^2
Women	294	52.43	9.55	-1.712	.088	.18
Men	114	54.23	9.40			

* $p < .05$

Whether university students' resilience differs according to gender was analyzed with independent samples t-test, and the results are given in Table 2. It was revealed that resilience of the students did not differ significantly according to gender ($t(409) = -1.172, p > .05$).

Table 3

Results of t-test Regarding the Comparison of Resilience According to Age

Age	n	\bar{X}	Sd	t	p	η^2
18-21	249	52.10	9.41	-2.228	.026	.22
22 and above	159	54.25	9.61			

* $p < .05$

Whether resilience differs significantly according to age was analyzed with independent samples t-test, and the results are given in Table 3. It was revealed that the students' average scores of resilience differed significantly according to age ($t(406) = -2,228, p < .05$), and students aged 22 and above had higher resilience.

Table 4

Average and Standard Deviation Values of Resilience According to Perceived Income Level

Perceived Income Level	N	\bar{X}	Sd
Low	68	5.18	.97
Medium	313	5.30	.93
High	27	5.39	1.12

* $p < .05$

Average and standard deviation values of total scores of resilience according to perceived income level of university students are shown in Table 4. Whether there is a difference between the averages in terms of perceived income variable was examined by ANOVA test and the results are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Anova Results on Comparison of Resilience According to Perceived Income Level

	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	F	p	η^2
Between-groups	1.08	2	.542	.594	.55	.003
Within-groups	369.32	405	.912			
Total	370.40	407				

* $p < .05$

In the analysis conducted on whether the participants' resilience levels show a significant difference in terms of perceived income level, it was found that the resilience did not differ significantly according to perceived income level ($F(2, 405) = .594, p > 0.05$).

Table 6

T-test Results on Comparison of Resilience According to Romantic Relationship Status

Romantic Relationship Status	n	\bar{X}	Sd	t	p	η^2
Yes, I have a relationship	145	55.47	8.97	4.060	.000	.42
No, I don't have a relationship	263	51.54	9.57			

* $p < .05$

Whether there is a difference between the resilience of university students according to the romantic relationship status was analyzed with independent samples t-test, and the results are given in Table 6. It is seen that resilience differs according to romantic relationship status ($t(406) = 4.060, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$), and that students with romantic relationship have higher resilience.

Table 7

Correlations between Resilience and Need for Social Approval

	Need for Social Approval
1. Resilience	-.316**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The results of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation regarding whether there is a significant relationship between the resilience and the need for social approval of the university students are presented in Table 7. When we look at Table 7, it is seen that there is a moderate negative significant relationship ($r = -.316, p < .01$) between resilience and need for social approval.

Table 8

Regression Analysis Results Regarding the Prediction of Resilience by Need for Social Approval

Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Coefficient	64.964	1.846		35.188	.000
Need for Social Approval	-.167	.025	-.316	-6.713	

R = .31, R² = .10, F (1.406) = 45.068, p <.001

* p<.05, ** p<.001

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that the need for social approval predicts resilience significantly (R = .31, R² = .10, F = 45.068, p <.001) and explains 10% of the total variance related to resilience. When standardized coefficient β and t values are examined, it can be said that the need for social approval is a significant predictor of resilience.

Discussion

In the study, it was seen that there was no significant difference between the students' resilience and gender. When the studies on gender and resilience are examined, it is seen that there are publications supporting this finding (Craparo et al., 2018; Rew et al., 2001), but there are also publications that show differentiation by gender (Boardman et al., 2008; Masood et al., 2016; Stratta et al., 2013). In the study where Boardman et al. (2008) examine the contribution of genetic structure and social environment to the resilience of twin individuals, it is stated that the resilience is equally inherited in men and women, but it can differ by gender according to social surroundings mastery and self-acceptance. While there is no hereditary difference in resilience in both women and men in terms of genetics, the advantageous effect in the social environment has been observed to have a higher contribution to resilience in men than women. Masood et al. (2016) stated in their study that women have a lower level of resilience than men and women experience more psychological unrest. Stratta et al. (2013) likewise stated that there is a differentiation in favor of men among women and men who experience earthquake disaster, and that men can operate a protective resilience mechanism due to the fact that they have the ability to cope with problem-solving without an emotional focus. The outliers in the literature on the level of gender and resilience may be due to cultural factors and the differentiation of parental attitudes that individuals encounter while being raised. In the study conducted by Akça (2012) on young adults, resilience does not differ by gender, whereas the high resilience of adults who express the perceived mother's attitude in a way that supports autonomy can be given as an example to abovementioned situation.

Research findings revealed that students aged 22 and above were significantly higher in resilience than students aged 18-21. When the studies in the literature are analyzed, it is seen that there are significant differences in some studies in terms of the effect of age variable on resilience, and in others, there is no difference (Gooding et al., 2012; Diehl & Hay, 2010; Windle et al., 2008; Ong et al., 2009; McCoy, 2001). According to the results of his research, McCoy (2001) revealed that individuals with higher resilience are older than those with lower levels. He stated that the fact that older individuals have more life experiences compared to younger individuals, encounter more stressors and successfully solve the negative events that happened in the

past can bring them to an advantageous position in obtaining resilience. [Ong et al. \(2009\)](#) think that individual differences in the level of resilience can be an important way of understanding the stress of daily life in advanced adulthood, and this supports the findings of our research. [Gooding et al. \(2012\)](#), on the other hand, explain that adults with advanced age are more resilient in terms of emotion regulation and problem-solving skills, and that depression, which also includes emotional dysfunction in young people, has negative reflections on resilience, and this can contribute to understanding of differentiations in age dynamics. That resilience increases as the age progresses can be explained by the fact that individuals can easily deal with negativities as they have experiences in the life process ([Aydın & Egemberdiyeva, 2018](#)). In this study, the resilience of the individuals aged 22 and above can be explained by the fact that the resilience increases as the age increases.

There are overlapping and contradictory studies in the literature regarding the finding that there is no significant difference between resilience and perceived income, which is another variable in the study ([Traş et al., 2019b](#); [Sarıkaya, 2019](#); [Wells, 2012](#); [Perna et al., 2012](#); [Hardy et al., 2004](#); [Todd & Worell, 2000](#)). In the study of [Sarıkaya \(2019\)](#) with university students, there was no difference between resilience and income status. In the study of [Wells \(2012\)](#), while individuals with low incomes have higher resilience, on the contrary, [Hardy et al. \(2004\)](#) stated that individuals with an annual income of \$ 25,000 or more have higher resilience than those with low income. [Perna et al. \(2012\)](#) studied resilience and health behavior on older individuals with low and high socio-economic income. In this study, it was revealed that, without the effect of socio-economic level on resilience, resilient individuals have high fruit and vegetable consumption and exhibit moderate physical activity. [Todd & Worell \(2000\)](#) stated that there are individuals who can live positive and productive lives despite the low income and intensive working pace in the study in which they examine the resilience of poor women. In this study, it was revealed that the resilience of poor individuals was affected by supportive or weak social ties, and by their social comparison and low or high self-efficacy levels. Although people with low income struggle with troubles for many years, they can exhibit a more resilient attitude towards life difficulties. This can be explained by the fact that resilience increases with supportive social environment interaction and is related to personality traits.

There was a significant difference between the resilience and romantic relationships of university students. There are many studies in the literature that support this finding. In their study with teacher candidates, [Traş et al. \(2019b\)](#) stated that the resilience significantly changes with the presence of someone special. [Moore & Leung \(2002\)](#) reported that secure attachment to a partner in young adults supports subjective well-being, and that individuals who are securely attached can provide successful social support by establishing more qualified relationships in a romantic sense. [Öztürk \(2019\)](#) stated that individuals with romantic relationships have higher levels of communication and establishing relationships, which are the sub-dimensions of cognitive emotion regulation, compared to those who do not have a relationship. In the study carried out by [Islam \(2016\)](#), there were positive relationships between resilience and fear of romantic relationships, and a positive relationship between satisfaction, self-confidence, assertiveness and internal control. [Eryılmaz & Ercan \(2010\)](#) reported that there is a positive relationship between initiating a romantic intimacy and problem-oriented coping and seeking social support. In the study conducted by [Yakıcı & Traş \(2018\)](#), it was observed that the resilience decreases as the loneliness increases in individuals. The comforting effect of the need to love and belong to someone in a romantic relationship, the advantage of having quality communication and social support, may also have contributed positively to resilience by functioning as a protective factor. The positive feedback and compliments

that the partners point towards each other in a romantic relationship affect self-esteem (Marigold et al., 2007). As self-esteem increases in individuals, an increase in resilience is observed (Traş& Aydın, 2019).

According to the research findings, there was a negative relationship between the need for social approval and resilience. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there is no study that directly addresses the need for social approval and resilience. Alternatively, parallel studies were conducted on the need for approval, the schema of approval seeking which takes place in other-directedness sub-dimension, which is one of the early maladaptive schemas, the fear of negative evaluation, and social desirability. Craparo et al. (2018) reported that in their study on coping, attachment styles, resilience and alexithymia, there was a positive relationship between resilience and self-confidence, and a negative one between resilience and need for approval. In their study, Khadem et al. (2017) stated that resilience had a moderate effect on the relationship between anxiety and depression and the other-directedness schema domain. In his research with adults, Tanyeri (2016) stated that there were negative relationships between the other-directedness sub-dimension of early maladaptive schemas and resilience. In Alagöz (2019)'s study on need for social approval of individuality adjustment, focus control and expression of emotions, reverse relations were observed between autonomous individuality and sensitivity to other's judgments, social withdrawal, and leaving a positive impression. Individuals with high social approval needs are anxious to be perceived as socially incompatible and can avoid revealing their identity. These individuals, who are attracted to approval, can develop an addictive personality pattern by suppressing their subjective feelings and thoughts. Individuals who have high resilience can display their autonomous identity by activating their own inner powers if they are not approved. Ernas (2017)'s research, which reveals positive relationships between autonomy and resilience also supports this explanation. In the study of Traş et al. (2013) on university students, the positive relationship between self-esteem and social self-efficacy and resilience strengthens this finding. Individuals, who feel the need for social approval intensely, may not be able to balance emotionally in the face of negative evaluations because they live as focused on social likability. As a matter of fact, as the need for social approval increases, mental problems such as interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, phobic anxiety appear (Karaşar & Öğülmüş, 2016b). Leipold&Greve (2009) stated that resilience creates a conceptual bridge between coping with difficulties and development, and stated that according to their resilience level, individuals avoid the conditions with negative consequences or recover by coping. It is thought that as anxiety and stress management will also be strong in individuals with high resilience, they will be able to cope more easily with the troubled emotional state of being unable to get social approval.

Results and Recommendations:

New research can be conducted on gender roles and resilience to clarify the biopsychosocial basis of resilience. In addition, studies revealing resilience, interpersonal competence and psychological symptoms of individuals with different socio-economic levels can be carried out. Relationships between the need for social approval and resilience can be examined with different populations in the country and abroad and cultural differences can be revealed. Training programs that increase resilience by reducing the need for social approval can contribute to subjective well-being of individuals.

Ethic

All procedures in this study involving human participants were carried out in accordance with the ethical standards of Necmettin Erbakan University Research Ethics Committee with file number 2021/06 and the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki.

Author Contributions

This article was written with the joint contributions of three authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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