RESILIENCE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN OF ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

Human development is a common phenomenon but positive development of youth is more socially valued for getting positive outcomes in them. Whoever born in this earth will grow, develop and sustain and become resistant and tolerant to the changing environment and surroundings, because adaptation to dynamism of environment is essential. But how today's children are developing is a point of concern, because of changing home and school environment where a child has to spend some decades of his/ her life. If a child gets good parental relationship or good school environment then it can generate some assets, such as feelings of confidence, security and self-efficacy. In most of the cases, in Indian context, children get good parental care and support what will boost up in their carrier. However, a large mass of children coming from lower socio-economic condition or disadvantaged and broken families of even elite communities unfortunately disturb the healthy functioning of childhood, their psychological pattern of thinking and positive educational outcomes. Notwithstanding the depressed conditions of such children, their self-correcting and self-regulating tendencies have created interest in Resilience researches and positive youth development scholars for positive traits and outcomes among young people. It is a coping technique acquires or inculcate by children to fight against any socially and academically emerged problems.

Understanding a child from their point of view is very important for their healthy development which must not be taken care of by parents and even by teachers in recent times. This paper will majorly discuss about the self-regulating technique of children i.e. resilience what they have developed in their life time because of some vulnerable conditions of life. The main discussions in the paper will focus on the life conditions and school conditions of children of Odisha in Bhubaneswar coming from lower socio-economic conditions to study in government primary school.

Keywords: Resilience, Self-efficacy, Self-regulation, Vulnerable and protective factors, Conflict resolution.

INTRODUCTION

In today's time whatever education is given in the name of modern education is more or less based on product model of learning whereas, growth model of learning is having higher value (Franklin, 1999). The uncertainties and stress of competitiveness and the associated meanings of globalization become the regular meanings applied in the context of education. Availing good education is really a point of concern for today's generation, because its meaning replaced with 'dominant' education where language of dominance to dominant ideologies is only being addressed in the classroom. What is actually its outcome and who will be the sufferer? The most unaware concept is its effect on small minds and their innocent childhood. It is not a very unknown fact that the large mass of children who are marginalized and first generation learners or coming from any deprived sections of the society are backed down due to poor performance in tests and unfamiliar use of language in classes leads to a failure in achieving UEE (PISA report 2012).

Malkova (1989) points out that anxieties triggered by the competitive environment of today's technocratic society ought to include certain concerns which cannot be allayed within a technocratic paradigm of educational reform; a paradigm that focuses on children's achievement on science and mathematics (As cited in Rastagi, 2009, p 156). Getting achievement in terms of knowledge is not a general concern today rather than in specific sense it is an outcome oriented service. The intensively competitive and highly insecure global situation is desperately coping up the real significance of education by overruling the small minds. The so called commissions which are made to give some new faces to the system of education, seen as an out product of over ruling party- is acting as an old wine in new bottle. Moreover, these concerns refer to the wider context of childhood, their mental-health and peace which become a perverse concept not only for politicians and educationists but also for parents and teachers.

In this context we can derive an idea of Prof. J. Kirshnamurti (1992); in a dialogue on education and world peace, he perceives the competitive and, highly individualistic and nationalistic education given today as a threat to peace at all levels-personal, social and global. Peace may be an important precondition for the reform of education in view of contradictions (Ibid: 157). The elements of competitive society directly or indirectly and intensively or extensively are affecting the child and his/ her childhood. It actually decides the meaning of 'quality' in the context of education. How childhood is growing up these days is really a matter of concern. Education signifies for many, a desperate means of coping with the intensely competitive, highly insure global situations. The education system, highly competitive in nature, with never ending demands and expectations of parents and society, affects the mental-health of child in many ways.

According to Carl Rogers (1959), for growth a person needs an environment where there is genuineness, acceptance and empathy within the caregivers. He believed that humans have one basic motive that is the tendency to self-actualize-i.e. to fulfill one's potential and achieve the highest level of 'human-beingness', like a flower what will grow to its full potential if the conditions are right, so people will flourish and reach to their potential, with good environment and high self-concept. But it will also happen that in adverse and unrewarding conditions, the high self-concept and self-efficacy helps an individual to achieve success. It is known as 'resilience' a conflict-resoluting and self-regulatory effort. "Resilience in an individual refers to successful adaptation despite of risk and adversity." It refers to a pattern what grows over time, characterized by good eventual adaptation despite developmental risk, acute stressors, or chronic adversities. In 1995, Gordon defined that "Resilience is the ability to thrive, mature, and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances. These circumstances may include biological abnormalities or environmental obstacles. Further, the adverse circumstances may be chronic and consistent or severe and infrequent. To thrive, mature, and increase competence, a person must draw upon all of his or her resources: biological, psychological, and environmental."

According to Synder (2011) 'resilience' is a naturally occurring coping technique come from personal and environmental resources that help children and adolescents to overcome life's many challenges (Synder et al., p 92). It helps children to bounce back during difficult times and struggles of life.

Psychologically resilience refers to an individual's capacity to withstand stressors and not manifest psychological dysfunctions, such as mental illness or persistent negative mood.

This is the mainstream psychological view of resilience, that is, resilience is defined in terms of a person's capacity to avoid psychopathology despite difficult circumstances. Psychological stressors or "risk factors" are often considered to be experiences of major acute or chronic stress such as death of someone else, chronic illness, sexual, physical or emotional abuse, fear, and unemployment and community violence, etc.

Shukla, et al (1999) in a project on 'resilience in street children' studied the following characteristics of resilient children:

- Ability to "bounce back" and "recover from almost anything"
- Have a "where there's a will, there's a way" attitude
- Tendency to see problems as opportunities
- Ability to "hang tough" which things are difficult

- Capacity for seeing small windows of opportunity and making the most of them
- Have deep-rooted faith in a system of meaning
- Have a healthy social support network
- Has the wherewithal to competently handle most different kinds of situations
- Has a wide comfort zone
- Able to recover from experiences in the panic zone or of a traumatic nature

Benard (1995) argued that resilient children usually have four attributes in common:

- *Social Competence*: Ability to elicit positive responses from others, thus establishing positive relationships with both adults and peers
- *Problem-solving skills*: Planning that facilitates seeing oneself in control and resourcefulness in seeking help from others
- *Autonomy*: A sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over one's environment, and
- *A sense of purpose and future*: Goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future. (as cited in Shukla,2001)

Werner and Smith (1992) explained how resilience has come to describe a person having a good track record of positive adaptation in the face of stress or disruptive change. Their longitudinal studies found that a high percentage of children from an "at risk" background needing intervention still became healthy, competent adults (Werner & Smith, 1992). Werner and Smith (1992) purported that a resilient child is one "who loves well, works well, plays well, and expects well" (p. 192).

Researchers increasingly view resilience not as a fixed attribute but as an alterable set of processes that can be fostered and cultivated (Masten, 2001; Pardon, Waxman & Huang, 1999). Researchers emphasize the interactive processes – between the individual and environment and between risk and protective factors – as the crucial underpinnings of developing resilience. Subsequently, ecological systems theory, articulated by Brofenbrenner (1989) functioned as a way to examine the interplay between individuals and their environments and the resulting impact upon the individual's development. Resilience is viewed as the outcome of interactions of two key sets of components: 1) individual attributes, and 2) external resources and supports upon which youth can draw. This process can be accurately represented as the interplay between individual traits and external factors such as family environment and peer and teacher attributes.

ACADEMIC RESILIENCE

Resilience refers to the capacity to recover from or adapt to difficult and challenging life circumstances (Benard, 1991). *Educational resilience* refers to the capacity to succeed in school despite exposure to personal and environmental adversities (Wang & Gordon, 1994). These characteristics include a wide array of optimism, internal affirmation, internal locus of control, intrinsic motivation, assertiveness, the ability to solve problems; perceived social support, and having goals and aspirations to name a few (Ungar, 2005). Accordingly, researchers and educators have sought to identify these character traits in order to foster its development in students placed at risk of school failure**.**

A number of other individual characteristics related to academic experiences have been examined to determine which are related to academic resilience, that is, academic persistence and high achievement and attainment in the face of obstacles. Low-income, minority students categorized as resilient by virtue of their positive academic outcomes were more academically engaged in class than those who had poor grades and failed to graduate. These resilient students were also more likely to work hard, do more homework, less likely to skip class, be late or get in trouble in class than their non-resilient peers (Finn & Rock, 1997, as cited in Snatos, 2012). Other forms of school engagement also predict positive outcomes. Students with low grades and educational expectations who participated in school activities were more likely to exhibit raised expectations and grades over time than those who did not take part in school-related activities (Catterall, 1998; ibid).

Students with high educational expectations are less likely to be off-track academically, that is to earn low grades, be held back a grade or be suspended or expelled (Crosnoe & Elder, 2004). School-related behaviors and educational aspirations expectations are significantly associated with students' academic performance (Chang & Le, 2005). Students who feel more comfortable in school have more positive outcomes than those who feel as if they do not belong. Among Mexican American high school students, those with high grades had a greater sense of belonging to their school than did students with failing grades (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). Factors and conditions at the family and school levels also serve as resources upon which young people can draw to overcome obstacles to academic achievement. At the family level, parents' attitudes and actions influence their children's academic outcomes. Analyses of British adolescents suggested that socially advantaged youth benefited most from protective factors such as their own aspirations, their parents' involvement and teachers' expectations (Schoon, Parsons & Sacker, 2004)

William & Bryan (2013) viewed resilience as a developmental process that can be fostered, then strategies for change can be directed toward practices, policies, and attitudes among professional educators' of African American students from low socioeconomic status. Henderson (2007) stated that resilience is being defined as a dynamic rather than a static concept, where school counselors, educators, families, and community members must foster educational resiliency in students by strengthening protective processes for students at critical moments in their lives.

The resilience researches working on two important entities or factors, one is **risk factor** and other one **protective factor**. According to Masten & Reed (2002) children may be called as competent, well adjusted, or normal, but they are not considered resilient until they deal with a significant risk and demonstrate the ability to overcome it. Resilience literature generally describes risk factors as conditions that increase the likelihood of a problem developing (Green & Conrad, 2002, as cited in Masten, 1994). In other words, **risk factors** are individual characteristics or contextual conditions of a group of people, especially children and youth, that increase the probability of an undesirable outcome, such as school failure, psychiatric illness, criminal involvement, vocational instability, and poor social relationships later in life (Masten, 1994; ibid).

Protective factors imply an ecological conceptualization of both internal and external resources that moderate or mediate the effects of risk or adversity and enhance good adaptation or competence (Masten, 1994). Similarly, Greene and Conrad (2002) defined protective factors as individual characteristics and environmental assets that buffer, interrupt, or even prevent risk.

Researchers have theorized that protective factors that promote positive school related and developmental outcomes for youth are rooted in environmental interactions among three systems: family, community, and school (Benard, 1991; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fraser et al., 2004; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). When protective factors are lacking within these systems, impacted students experience more vulnerability and are more likely to achieve negative academic results.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDY

- How the protective factors of school are acting as predictors of academic resilience in lower socio-economic children?
- How the risk factors of learners lead to academic resilience in lower socio economic children?
- How the academic resilience of LSE children is acting as a source of positive academic achievement.

METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken in three phases continued for the period of six months. In the first phase a comparative analysis of linguistic knowledge of English language [i.e. constituted of vocabulary, grammar and reading skill (Aykov and Marceouldis 2006, as cited in He 2008) because innate language faculty of a child leads to the communicative competency which is the speakers' internalize knowledge of both in grammatical rules of a language and of the vocabulary for appropriate use in social contexts] of LSE Oriya speaking children with their counterparts (coming form well to do family) is done by testing their knowledge on the basis of grammatical ability, reading comprehension and vocabulary in English as a second language learner. The questions are asked from their syllabus only. Here, LSE children are those Oriya speaking children whose family backgrounds are not well supportive whereas their counterparts are those who are having well economic and social support and exposed to modern world because of good living conditions. It is done with the view that language is acting as the tool of cognitive functioning and also helps in forming the social identity of children by enriching them with a coding system. The 'restricted codes' defined by Bernstein has different meaning in the context of these LSE children who learned English from their self-effort acting as a symbol of dominant identity. Though the nature of the study is mixed the questionnaires are close ended for testing their linguistic knowledge and a small scale co-relational study is carried out by using statistical tools such as S.D and T-Test.

The LSE children are coming from the same place where their counterparts but the difference lies only upon their economic and family conditions acting as a vulnerable factor. Mostly, the families of such children can serve as risk factors raising the vulnerability of family members. Most of their parents are doing no job or either laborers, doing hawkery, farming, and in some cases families are running by the support of mother's income having no father's responsibility. In this study Utkal University Campus school (Oriya medium government school) is taken as the sample where these LSE children are studying along with their counterparts who belong to the employees of RIE (Regional Institute of Education) and also the employees of Utkal University. An extensive interview and focus group discussions are carried out with both the LSE children and their counterparts to understand the difference of opinions regarding academic works and their self-worth of being involved in these works. The children are also covertly observed during the prolonged stay in the school setting while performing different activities of school. The interviews are qualitatively analyzed through the procedure of content analysis for comprehensive and intensive understanding of the setting. The academic resilience of LSE children are categorized under the dimensions of linguistic factors, classroom transactions related factors of teachers, children's specific coping and adjustment techniques.

The second phase of the study is related with the observations of the settings. It is carried out throughout both the school starting from play ground, classrooms, assembly hall and prayer grounds to capture some of the events and incidents of academic resilience in the form of classroom and different school activities associated with different responsibilities of school by LSE children. The observations are mostly done in order to find out the socio-cultural, linguistic and school related constructs in relation to academic resilience by going in and through both the formal and informal teaching learning sessions taking place in and outside the classroom and school.

The third phase of the study is consisted of several extensive discussions with the teachers of different subjects of the school regarding the ways of teaching in classrooms, use of teaching materials in classrooms, support of out of school learning and any special approaches of teaching what they have followed in their classroom and specially to know the life events of LSE children. The questionnaires made for them are mainly concentrated around the quarries related to both risk and protective factors associated to academic resilience of these LSE children.

Sample

In this study 60 LSE children and other 60 children as their counterparts (coming from well to do families) are taken as sample. The sample size is 120, the children of elementary classes studying in 6th and 7th grade. The children of LSE and their counterparts are grouped according to their parental jobs, family income status and economic conditions categorized through documents analysis related to such children and from the opinions of teachers and head master.

Insight gained from the study

Results indicate that schools which serve youth from high-risk backgrounds are most successful when: (a) curriculum is rigorous, future-focused, and aligned to standards and assessments which promote high expectations for student performance; (b) teachers are well-prepared; (c) counselors, administrators, and teachers develop collaborative partnerships to advocate for and to promote students and their academic success; (d) support and preventive services are provided; (f) school and classroom environments are safe and orderly; (g) data are used to improve curriculum and instruction and for defining the need and implementation of differential instruction; (h) school-based professionals and community leaders develop collaborative partnerships to analyze student needs; (i) goals are consistent and consistently understood; (j) new teachers are socialized into the high academic focus environment and assisted with instruction; (k) caring and supportive relationships among students and school-based professionals are formed; and (l) the focus is on academic achievement and not rule-following.

Factors associated with positive academic achievement

The academic resilience of LSE children would initiate them to voluntarily take part in different school and classroom activities than their counterparts, what as a result enhances their linguistic abilities. For example, in play ground while playing football I draw that how the learning of football is carried out over the course of these young children's career, when a assistance is given to these young novice players by their game teacher and simultaneously they learn several ways and tricks of playing football and side by side acquire the socially accepted words such as right turn, left turn, strong kick, penalty, etc and there meanings and a special language which is new to them.

In classroom situation the most interesting thing what I have observed in both the language and other classrooms is the children's ability of imitation, what they have directly or indirectly imitated from their teacher or more able ones. For example,

Teacher: (while entering into the classroom) Good morning children.

Students: Good mooring ma'am.

After explaining some parts of the lesson and also discussing previous things in the classroom teacher proceeds further.

Teacher: (while writing something on the board) all of you first open your book.

Student 1: (imitate the teacher) open the book.

Student 2 to student 3: Open the book doesn't you here.

Student 4: (playing a leading role) Hey! All of you open the book.

Here, the LSE children are simply imitating their teachers to learn the language of dominance through prompting and even sharing from known peers. All these come from their self-effort and self-worth because, resilient children as described by Garmezy as working and playing well and holding high expectations, have often been characterized using constructs such as locus of control, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and autonomy.
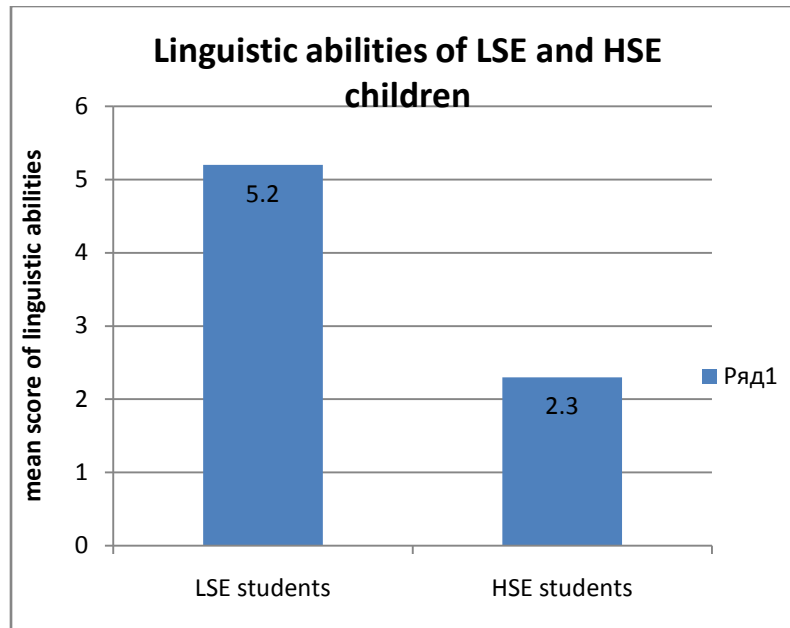
LSE = Lower socio economic children and HSE= Higher socio economic children.

In this study the classrooms are observed as the place in which students are given with an opportunity to respond, engaging in cooperative learning environment, having a participating role in setting goals, and providing a high expectation for student achievement. All of these characteristics help students to develop a sense of belongingness and involvement in classroom and also school activities. According to teacher's response the LSE students are more responsible, taking interest in classroom activities, more attentive than their counterparts and timely finished the tasks given in the school. However, it is due to their readiness for learning what actually helps them to overcome their poor economic conditions, unsupportive atmosphere of families, no support of parents and their empty stomachs because of not getting food on time, actually enhances their academic resilience. It has been predicted that these children are successfully adjusted in their life despite of several adversities.

Participatory activities done in the classroom allows LSE children to look into their own lives as well as the lives of their fellow children, and to find out for themselves the essence of learning from their life experiences. This leads to a discovery of themselves and to their bonding with fellow street children. This also establishes the fact that children are not passive receptacles of knowledge but are active searchers of knowledge.

Risk and protective factors

The unsatisfactory learning environment of families and poor economic conditions and all the other factors associated with it what hampers the LSE children's learning chances are acting as risk factors, challenges the

learners to discover themselves, make decisions for themselves, and define their roles in their communities and school too.

Here, the school's supportive environment, teachers, their ways of transactional techniques and bilingual methods used in the classroom acting as protective factors in the lives of LSE children. Teachers made the learning relevant, fun, and experiential, with lessons that connected curriculum to students' personal interests and lives; and extracurricular school activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, and social organizations) that rounded out children's school involvement and contributed to their academic success.

CONCLUSION

Schools that create a culture of high expectations for all students experience greater rates of academic success (Barley, Apthrop & Goodwin, 2007, Levin, 1988, Rutter, 1979). The school environments could act as an important protective factor that buffer children against the adverse effects of stress. More specifically, it observed that schools are focusing on academics, clear expectations and rules, and high levels of student involvement experienced higher rates of attendance and academic attainments and lower rates of delinquency and behavioral disturbances. It is revealed from this study that behavioral disturbances decreased over time in schools possessing a culture of high expectations and increased in schools that did not foster similar learning environments. The supportive environments like family or school is very much essential for the healthy growth of childhood what may be an important concern for today. The poor unsatisfactory family conditions and no parental support or even high parental expectations and having busy life schedules of metro-cultured parents, in both the conditions the childhood is hampering.   So it is the duty of both school, family and society that they empower students who are vulnerable or disenfranchised, school counselors and other school personnel must first recognize needs and then implement interventions that focus on strengths and assets within each student and family, and within the community as well.

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