

# Mediating Effects of Resilience on Teachers' Positive Thinking

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## ABSTRACT

The present study was performed to investigate the relationship between resilience and positive thinking of male and female teachers in Jahrom city. The statistical population included 150 teachers (94 females and 56 males) in Jahrom in 2019. Among them, 108 teachers were selected by cluster sampling. Data was collected through Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor and Davidson, 2003) and Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire-Positive (Ingram and Wisnicki, 1989). The validity and reliability of these questionnaires were confirmed via content validity and Cronbach's alpha, respectively. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multivariate regression were simultaneously performed to analyze the data. It was manifested that two components of resilience including trust in individual instincts and spiritual influences could directly predict changes in positive thinking.

## Keywords

Resilience, Positive Thinking, Teachers

## Introduction

Various needs of modern life, rapid socio-cultural alterations, changing family structure, extensive and complex network of human communication, and the breadth of influx and information resources have faced individuals with many challenges which could be coped with only if they are armed with psychosocial capabilities. Lack of emotional, psychological, and social skills makes people vulnerable and exposes them to a variety of psychological, social, and behavioral disorders (1). An effective teacher can be the source of transformations. Society needs teachers with a desirable cultural, economic and social condition to properly perform their duties without worries. On the other hand, an optimized level of resilience helps to strengthen teachers' efficiency and positive attitudes (2).

Resilience is defined in the social sciences as the process of acting and reacting to adversity. Camphor defines resilience as a way to measure a person's ability to deal with stressors and factors that threaten his mental health (3). Previous theories of resilience have emphasized characteristics associated with positive outcomes in dealing with life's adversities, and have pointed to external protective factors, including efficient schools and workplaces, as well as relationships with supportive adults as resilience promoters. However, the current theories consider resilience as a multidimensional subject consisted of natural variables like temperament and personality combined with specific skills that allow individuals to effectively cope with stressful life events. Therefore, resilience is not merely passive resistance to injury or threatening conditions, since a resilient person is an active participant and builder of his environment. Resilient people can maintain their mental and physical health and they recover easily from stressful events (4). Resilience is very important in education for three main reasons. First, it affects the teacher's expectations of students

because he/she is a model of resilient behavior (5). Second, teaching is a difficult complex profession and requires the teacher to deal rationally with the ambiguities and difficulties encountered in the classroom, and this requires a resilient style of behavior. Also, the teacher must both manage his stress and perform his professional duties well (6, 7). Third, resilience is defined as the ability to solve problems, retrieve possible solutions, and act boldly in the face of issues. Teachers' resilience is related to influential internal and external support factors, and this affects their standard of living and professional development (8). Ahmadi et al. (2017) reported that life skills and positive thinking training increased the positive index of psychological adjustment (resilience) (9). Evaz Aghaei and Kouroshnia (2016) stated that teaching positive thinking reinforced the resilience of mothers with mentally retarded children (10, 11). In the study of Mahdavi et al. (2015), the direct significant relationship between resilience and thinking style showed that people's thinking style affected their resilience (12). Frederickson (2001) concluded that the experience of positive emotions, which is emphasized by positive psychology, often strengthened adaptation and resilience to face life problems and lead to optimistic thinking (13). It should be reminded that positive psychology does not seek to create a good life for people, but tries to recognize issues that increase the value of living. The helping role of optimistic and positive attitude in the recovery of mental health after facing losses and failures, and negative influences of pessimism have been reported in many studies (14, 15). Our thoughts are increasingly affecting our emotional problems. Negative thoughts are common in negative moods and depression, while positive thoughts play a role in and happy feelings. Negative attitudes lead to using inappropriate coping strategies, facing obstacles and mental disorders, as well as suffering from low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, and similar mental health

threats (16). Naimi et al. (2016) concluded that positive thinking based on religious teachings improved resilience and made relative changes in job preferences (17). The study of Kurd Mirza and Nikzadeh (2011) manifested the effectiveness of two positive interventions and cognitive narratological intervention in increasing the resilience in addicts (18). Therefore, the need for the development of positive thinking, resilience, and happiness as factors affecting psychological well-being is more noticeable (19, 20, and 21). Given the importance of positive thinking on teachers' performance and its impact on several components of mental health, it is helpful to design strategies and models to effectively strengthen resilience, increase adaptive behaviors, and combat many health threats, which finally, leads to making important steps toward preventive actions. Therefore the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between resilience and positive thinking of male and female teachers in Jahrom to find if these two variables are significantly correlated.

## Methodology

This is a descriptive-correlational study aimed to pursue the relationship between positive thinking and resilience in teachers of Jahrom city. The statistical population included 150 teachers (94 females and 56 males) in Jahrom in 2019. Among high schools in District 1 of Jahrom, 5 schools were chosen and 108 teachers of the tenth and twelfth-grade classes were selected based on the Georgian and Morgan (1970) sampling table and by clustering sampling method. Data was collected by distributing questionnaires 1 and 2. After coordinating with the officials of the Jahrom Education Department for clarifying the research objectives and obtaining the necessary license, the authors referred to the high schools to receive the principals' approvals and finally, they met several teachers. In this session, the duration and benefits of participating in the research were explained and the teachers were assured about the confidentiality of their information. At the final stage, teachers completed the questionnaires.

Resilience was measured by Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (C-D RISC, 2003). They developed C-D RISC reviewing research sources (1979-1999) on resilience. C-D

RS has 25 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting greater resilience (21). Developers of C-D RISC examined its validity by factor analysis and convergent/divergent validity, and its reliability by test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha in different groups, and reported all the results as significant (22). Besharat et al. also confirmed the validity and reliability of this scale (23). Additionally, a positive significant correlation between C-D RISC and Cubasa Hardness Scale, a negative significant correlation between it and Sheehan's Vulnerability to Stress Scale indicates the simultaneous validity of C-D RISC. Shojaei et al., (2012) computed Cronbach's alpha of C-D RISC as 0.93, which was completely consistent with the reliability reported by its developers. The reliability of this scale is shown by Cronbach's alpha as 0.89 and the correlation coefficient of each score with the total score is between 0.41 and 0.64. Findings confirm the high reliability and validity of C-D RISC (24). Positive thinking was assessed with Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire-Positive (ATQ-P; Ingram and Wisnicki, 1989). ATQ-P contains 30 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale. The minimum and maximum scores are 30 and 150, respectively, and the mean score is 90. The higher the score on ATQ-P, the higher the level of positive thinking is. Its reliability through Cronbach's alpha and bisection method was 0.94 and 0.95, respectively (25). Data analysis was presented in two descriptive and inferential statistics sections. In the former section, mean and standard deviation indices were used. Also, the Pearson correlation test and multivariate regression in SPSS 24 were performed to test the hypotheses.

## Results

Most of the participants were male ( $n=58$ , 53.7%), those aged 24 to 36 years ( $n=45$ , 41.7%), and married ( $n=77$ , 71.3%). Also, those with a post-diploma degree had the lowest ( $n=14$ , 13%) and with a bachelor's degree had the highest frequency ( $n=70$ , 64.8%). Most of the participants had 1 to 10 years of work history ( $n=73$ , 67.6%) while those with that of 11 to 20 ( $n=12$ , 12%) years were the least.

**Table 1.** Frequency, minimum score, maximum score, the mean and standard deviation of the research variables

Variable	min	max	mean	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
Resilience – total score	19	94	59.38	14.993	-0.164	-0.220
Personal competence	6	32	20.40	5.966	-0.588	-0.096
Trust in personal instincts	2	26	14.91	4.894	-0.106	-0.271
Positive acceptance of change and secure relationships	4	20	12.90	3.488	-0.520	-0.189
Control	0	12	6/67	2/676	-0.291	-0.244
Spiritual influences	1	8	4.51	1.677	-0.664	0.026
Happiness – total score	37	85	63.61	9.298	-0.124	-0.018
Life satisfaction	20	40	28.09	4.819	-0.624	0.259

Self-satisfaction	4	16	9.88	2.903	-0.550	0.082-
Self-respect	8	19	13.03	2.648	-0.468	0.224
Positive mood	0	11	5.56	2.342	0.303	-0.499
Positive energy	3	12	7.06	1.823	-0.115	0.029
Positive thinking	84	112	96.52	5.976	-0.038	0.252

The results of Table 1 show that Positive thinking had the maximum average (96.52) and Spiritual influences had the minimum average (4.51). Also, the variables were calculated and evaluated in terms of normal distribution at  $p = 0.05$  with 95% confidence. Given the values in kurtosis and skewness columns, the variables are in the range of  $\pm 1.96$  which confirms their normal distribution.

Resilience and Positive thinking were significantly and directly correlated ( $r = 0.538^{**}$ ;  $p = 0.01$ ). In other words, the higher the Resilience, the stronger the Positive thinking was. Also, a direct significant relationship was found between Resilience and Positive thinking ( $p = 0.01$ ). This reveals that Positive thinking increases in accordance with these components.

**Table 2.** Statistical characteristics of regression coefficients between resilience and positive thinking components

Model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SD	$\beta$		
Fixed value	82.725	2.043		40.499	0.001
Personal competence	0.052	0.131	0.052	0.396	0.693
Trust in personal distinct	0.402	0.147	0.329	2.740	0.007
Positive acceptance of change and secure relationships	0.129	0.184	0.075	0.700	0.485
Control	0.037	0.214	0.017	0.174	0.862
Spiritual influences	1.072	0.303	0.301	3.532	0.001
R = 0.603 $R^2 = 0.364$ $R^2_{adj} = 0.333$ F = 11.669   Sig. = 0.00					

As Table 2 manifests, Trust in personal instincts ( $\beta = 0.329$ ; 33%,  $p = 0.01$ ) and Spiritual influences ( $\beta = 0.301$ ; 30%,  $p = 0.01$ ) could predict Positive thinking by changes occurred in per unit increase in the standard deviation. In this analysis, the correlation coefficient between the independent and dependent variables was  $R = 0.603$ , and in general,  $R^2 = 0.364$ , meaning that 36% of the variance of Positive thinking could be explained by the independent variables.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this research are consistent with those of Evaz Aghaei and Kouroshnia (2016), Donaldson et al. (2014), and Frederickson (2001) (5, 10, 13). In social sciences, the ability to perform this common magic is often called flexibility or resilience. Impressive confront with challenges that human beings face in the modern world including rapid socio-cultural alterations, changing family structure, extensive and complex network of human communication, and the breadth of influx and information resources glorifies the need to acquire psychosocial skills. Campehh (2006) believes people are vulnerable to a variety of psychological, social, and behavioral disorders due to a lack of emotional, psychological, and social skills (26). Resilience variables help improve teachers' efficiency, positive attitudes, thinking, and beliefs. Connor defined resilience as a way to measure individuals' ability to cope

with stressors and mental health threats (21), while Berkes (2007) considers resilience as the ability to adjust to and control environmental conditions (27). Former theories of resilience highly value factors related to positive outcomes in dealing with life's adversities, and have recognized several external protective factors, including efficient schools and workplaces, and benefiting from supportive adults to be useful for promoting resilience. Resilience, then, is not simply a passive resistance to injury or threatening conditions; rather, the resilient person is an active participant who shapes his environment. According to Malek Mohammadi et al. (2016), people adopt personal beliefs that enable them to exercise control over their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. What people think, believe, and feel affects their behavior (28). Maintaining mental and physical health and forsaking stressful events are the characteristics of resilient people (29, 30). Therefore, according to the findings, it can be concluded that strengthening teachers' resilience helps maintain calm and flexibility in the face of obstacles, avoiding using erosive strategies, and retaining optimism and positive emotions in times of difficulty. Such teachers deal more effectively with difficult situations, turn failure into positive energy with sufficient coherence, and ultimately, their positive thinking improves. Therefore, it is suggested to improve psychological toughness and mental health to increase teachers' positive thinking. Also, given the discovered

relationship between resilience and positive thinking, holding training workshops for strengthening these characteristics seems to be useful for teachers. Given the importance of resilience and its effects on positive thinking, it is recommended that school principals officials in The Ministry of Education more seriously attend to different dimensions of teachers' positive thinking. Implementing strategic planning to maintain and strengthen teachers' resilience and positive thinking may improve their efficiency. In the present study, the relationship between resilience and positive thinking was considered, while other variables, like social support, and lifestyle, and personality traits may be associated with positive thinking. Hence, it is suggested to investigate these variables in future studies.

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