

Chapter #10

SELECTED INTERNAL ASSETS, PERCEIVED EXTERNAL RESOURCES OF RESILIENCE AND LIFE SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Perceived external resources (PER) of resilience along with internal assets (IA) are key factors in life satisfaction especially when facing adversity. The aim of this study is to investigate the mediating role of IA (self-control and self-esteem) and PER (support and meaningful participation within home, school, community, and peers) between individual home adversity factors (conflict, antagonism and punishment with parents) and life satisfaction. 132 (53% female) early adolescents (mean age = 13.45; SD = 0.52) participated in the research. A parallel mediation model with multiple X-variables was used to analyze the data. The result regarding IA shows that the relationship between antagonism with parents and life satisfaction is mediated by self-control and self-esteem and the relationship between conflict with parents and life satisfaction is mediated by self-control. Regarding PER the mediation analysis showed an indirect effect of antagonism with parents on life satisfaction through home meaningful participation and school connectedness. In conclusion, antagonism and conflict with parents undermined IA and PER which led to a lower level of life satisfaction. Thus, home adversity effects broader social environment than expected and not only intervention in the home environment is recommended but also the promotion of other resilience factors.

Keywords: resilience, family adversity, adolescents, life satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a unique developmental period in comparison with adulthood, placing young people in the position of significant personal, social, and psychological pressure (Backes & Bonnie, 2019). To enhance positive youth development – avoid risk and promote well-being, numerous factors have been identified (Lerner, 2004). Among these, resilience has been described as one of the most important due to the theoretical and empirical closeness to positive youth development. Resilience is defined as “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development” (Masten, 2014, p.6). Due to the latest wave of resilience research which adopts a focus on other systems such as family, school, peers, as well as cultural and societal systems, resilience research has made a huge step towards individual-environment interaction and has become one of the strongest contributors in positive youth development (Masten, 2015).

Past research strongly suggests that young people from disadvantaged, dysfunctional or impaired home environments are at more risk for negative outcomes such as mental illnesses (Hughes, Ford, Davies, Homolova, & Bellis, 2018), substance use (Pilowsky,

Keyes, & Hasin, 2009) or low life satisfaction (Levin, Dallago, & Currie, 2012, Raboteg-Šarić, Brajša-Žganec, & Šakić, 2009). To grow into healthy, satisfied, and productive adult, adolescents have to learn to regulate their own emotions, create a relationship with others, set life goals and distinguish meaningful and productive activities according to their life goals (Backes & Bonnie, 2019). For that and many more developmental tasks, a healthy home environment is crucial. Research has shown that a direct effect of home adversity on life satisfaction is present when home adversity falls into the categories of abuse, neglect or parental factors (Hughes et al., 2018). However, the indirect effect of home adversity and life satisfaction through resilience factors is present when home adversity refers to relationship characteristics across parent-child personal relationships. Especially in adolescence, it is also important to distinguish the relationship with each of several members of an adolescent's social family network (e.g., mother, father, sibling, grandparent). This feature results in a matrix of "relationships by qualities" which enables us to compare the similarities and differences among various relationships and to evaluate how individual differences in relationship qualities are associated with other individual outcomes (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985).

Jeon, Lee, Kim, Kim, and Jeong (2021) have confirmed that a harsh-negative parenting style that is hostile and oppressive is associated with lower life satisfaction among adolescents, through self-control. Parenting behavior, which is low in warmth and hostile, has a profound impact on the child's development of self-control (Dallaire et al., 2006) and self-esteem (Perez-Fuentes et al., 2019). This is because parents' judgments or affect about the appropriateness of their children's behavior are delivered explicitly or implicitly to their children. The parent-child relationship and its association with different aspects of positive youth development mediated through various internal assets of resilience has been studied in research for quite some time. However, less is known about if this relationship is valid regarding external resources of resilience. Research shows that the supportive role of mothers can be more effective in providing opportunities for social competence performance in their adolescent daughters (Kazemi, Ardabili, & Solokian, 2010). Thus, it seems that perceived external resources of resilience are potential mediators regarding the relationship between adversity and positive youth development indicators.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to examine the mediating role of selected internal assets (self-control, self-esteem) and perceived external resources of resilience (peer support, home support, home meaningful participation, school support, school meaningful participation, school connectedness, community support and community meaningful participation) between individual home adversity factors (antagonism with mother, antagonism with father, conflict with mother, conflict with father, punishment from mother, punishment from father) and life satisfaction among young adolescence.

3. METHODS

3.1. Sample and Procedures

A design of this study is cross-sectional. Schoolchildren in the 7th grade at primary school in Slovakia were participants of a randomized control trial for evaluating the school-based prevention program Unplugged. The program Unplugged is a school-based universal prevention program created as a part of the Eu-DAP (European Drug Abuse Prevention) program. It is based on the combination of prevention methods which are

focused on personal and social skills development and the correction of normative beliefs regarding substance use. The selection of schools was conducted with the aim of obtaining a representative sample with respect to regional, town size characteristics. To meet the requirements of the project under which the Unplugged program had been implemented, it was necessary to include 12 schools in the experimental group and 12 schools in the control group.

Within the current study, the data from respondents who participated only in control group were analysed aimed deeper understanding of the natural processes withing the resilience factors. Ultimately, 132 (53% females) early adolescents (mean age = 13.45, SD = 0.52), participated in the research. The study obtained local university Ethics committee approval. Parents were informed about the study and could opt out if they disagreed with their child's participation.

3.2. Measures

The adolescents were asked to fill in a paper version of the questionnaire during one lesson in the presence of a trained research team member and without the presence of a teacher:

- Internal assets of resilience
 - Self-control: The Self-control scale (Finkenauer, Engels, & Baumeister, 2005) consists of 11 items (*"I have a hard time breaking a bad habit"*). Respondents could answer on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never, 5 = always). A higher score indicated a higher level of self-control after re-coding. The Cronbach's alpha of the whole scale was $\alpha=0.60$
 - Self-esteem: The Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1979) consists of 10 items (*"On the whole, I am satisfied with myself"*). Respondents could answer on 4-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). A higher score represented a higher level of self-esteem. The Cronbach's alpha of whole scale was: $\alpha=0.74$
- Perceived External resources of resilience were explored using the RYDM (Resilience and Youth Development Module) (Constantine, Benard, & Diaz, 1999) questionnaire with 4-point Likert-type responses (1= not true at all, 4 = very much true). Subscales regarding support contains 6 items each, subscales regarding meaningful participation contains 3 items each and School connectedness contains 5 items.
 - Home support (CA=0.81): *"At my home there is a parent that cares about my school"*
 - Home meaningful participation (CA=0.78): *"At home I participate in decision making with my family"*
 - School support (CA=0.87): *"At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who really cares about me"*
 - School meaningful participation (CA=0.72): *"At school I help decide things like class activities or rules"*
 - School connectedness (CA=0.79): *"I feel like I am part of this school"*
 - Community support (CA=0.95): *"Outside of my home and school, there is an adult who really cares about me"*
 - Community meaningful participation (CA=0.70) *"Outside of my home and school, I do these things: I am part of clubs, sports teams, church/temple, or other group activities"*
 - Peer support (CA=0.93): *"I have a friend about my own age who really cares about me"*

- Family adversity factors were explored using the NRI-SPV (The Network of Relationship Social Provision Version) (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) questionnaire with 5-point Likert-type responses (1= not at all or little, 5 = most of the time) separately for the mother (M) and father (F). Every subscales contains 3 items each.
 - conflict (M CA=0.77; F CA=0.76): “How much do you and this person get upset with or mad at each other?”
 - antagonism (M CA=0.70; F CA=0.69): “How much do you and this person hassle or nag one another?”
 - punishment (M CA=0.75; F CA=0.81): “How often does this person punish you?”
- Life satisfaction was measured by 6 items („How satisfied are you usually with...”) on 5-point scale (1 = not satisfied at all, 5 = very satisfied) regarding satisfaction with mother, father, friends, own appearance, financial situation and with yourself. A mean score of the items was calculated to obtain the average life satisfaction in various domains. This approach has previously been used and validated by Ng, Hubner, Maydeu-Olivares, and Hills (2018). A higher overall score indicates higher life satisfaction. The Cronbach’s alpha of the whole scale was: $\alpha=0.71$.

3.3. Statistical Analysis

All the data were analyzed using the statistical software package IBM SPSS Statistics, version 21 for Windows. Standard descriptive analyses (mean, standard deviation, median, theoretical range) were performed at the beginning, then a t-test was used to examine the gender differences in psychological variables. The mediation analyses were performed in the Hayes PROCESS tool (Hayes, 2017) as a parallel multiple mediator model with X-variables – Model number 4. Only significant mediation models will be presented in the paper.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Preliminary Results

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. There were significant gender differences within perceived peer support, with girls perceiving statistically higher peer support compared to boys.

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics of research variables.

	TR	Total Mean (SD)	Girls Mean (SD)	Boys Mean (SD)	t-test
Conflict with mother	1-5	1.86 (0.72)	1.84 (0.75)	1.90 (0.66)	0.427
Conflict with father	1-5	1.80 (0.68)	1.71 (0.65)	1.91 (0.70)	1.687
Antagonism with mother	1-5	1.78 (0.71)	1.78 (0.76)	1.77 (0.67)	-0.146
Antagonism with father	1-5	1.75 (0.70)	1.71(0.69)	1.80 (0.71)	0.744
Punishment from mother	1-5	2.29 (0.86)	2.21 (0.86)	2.38(0.86)	1.174

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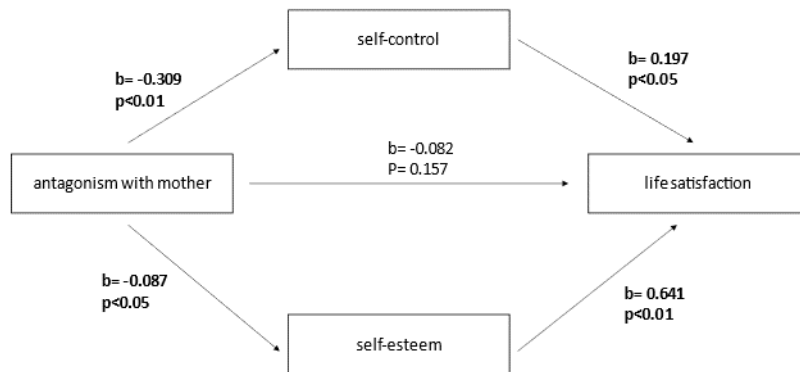
Punishment from father	1-5	2.19 (0.83)	2.07 (0.81)	2.33(0.84)	1.847
Peer Support	1-4	3.01 (0.86)	3.27 (0.75)	2.71 (0.88)	-3.888**
Home support	1-4	3.40 (0.57)	3.41 (0.54)	3.40 (0.61)	-0.113
Home Meaningful Participation	1-4	3.10 (0.71)	3.09 (0.75)	3.11 (0.66)	0.131
School Support	1-4	2.82 (0.70)	2.89 (0.67)	2.75 (0.73)	-1.136
School Meaningful Participation	1-4	2.55 (0.70)	2.63 (0.70)	2.46 (0.70)	-1.410
School Connectedness	1-4	3.77 (0.65)	3.74 (0.61)	3.79 (0.69)	0.425
Community Support	1-4	2.91 (0.89)	2.97 (0.90)	2.84 (0.88)	-0.853
Community Meaningful Participation	1-4	2.87 (0.86)	2.83 (0.87)	2.91 (0.86)	0.542
Life satisfaction	1-6	4.05 (0.57)	3.97 (0.55)	4.14 (0.59)	1.717

**p<0.01

4.2. Parallel Multiple Mediator Models with X - Variables

The first significant model shows that there was an indirect effect of antagonism with mother on life satisfaction through self-control: $b = -0.061$, BCa CI [-0.119, -0.011] and through self-esteem: $b = -0.056$, BCa CI [-0.101, -0.014] (Figure 1.).

Figure 1.
Parallel mediation model of selected internal assets of resilience in relationship between antagonism with mother and life satisfaction.



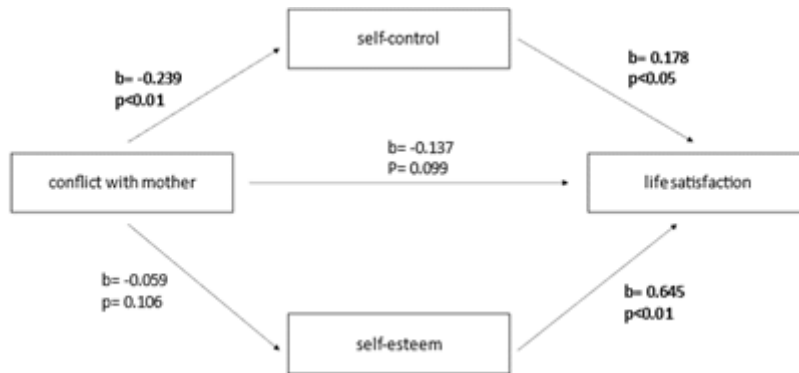
The second mediation analysis showed that there was a significant indirect effect of antagonism with father on life satisfaction through self-control: $b = -0.049$, BCa CI [-0.101, -0.013] and through self-esteem: $b = -0.047$, BCa CI [-0.099, -0.012] (Figure 2.).

Figure 2.
Parallel mediation model of selected internal assets of resilience in relationship between antagonism with father and life satisfaction.



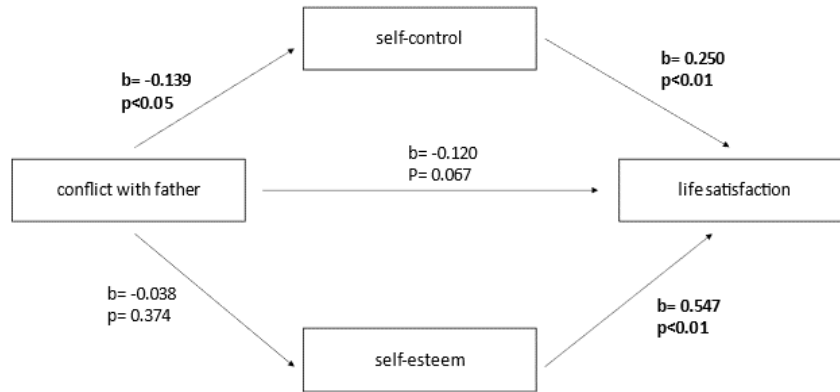
The next significant model represents an indirect effect of conflict with mother on life satisfaction through self-control: $b = -0.042$, BCa CI [-0.085, -0.005] (Figure 3.).

Figure 3.
Parallel mediation model of selected internal assets of resilience in relationship between conflict with mother and life satisfaction.



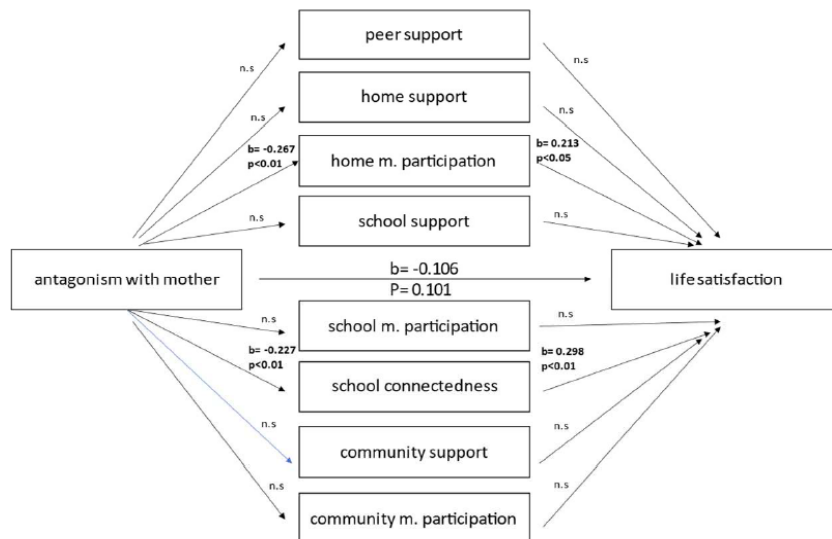
The next significant model showed that there was an indirect effect of conflict with the father on life satisfaction through self-control: $b = -0.034$, Bca CI [-0.079, -0.002] (Figure 4.)

Figure 4.
Parallel mediation model of selected internal assets of resilience in relationship between conflict with father and life satisfaction.



The mediation analysis regarding perceived external resources of resilience has shown indirect effect of antagonism with the mother on life satisfaction through perceived school connectedness: $b = -0.067$, BCa CI [-0.125, -0.017] and through perceived home meaningful participation: $b = -0.057$, BCa CI [-0.127, -0.003] (Figure 5.).

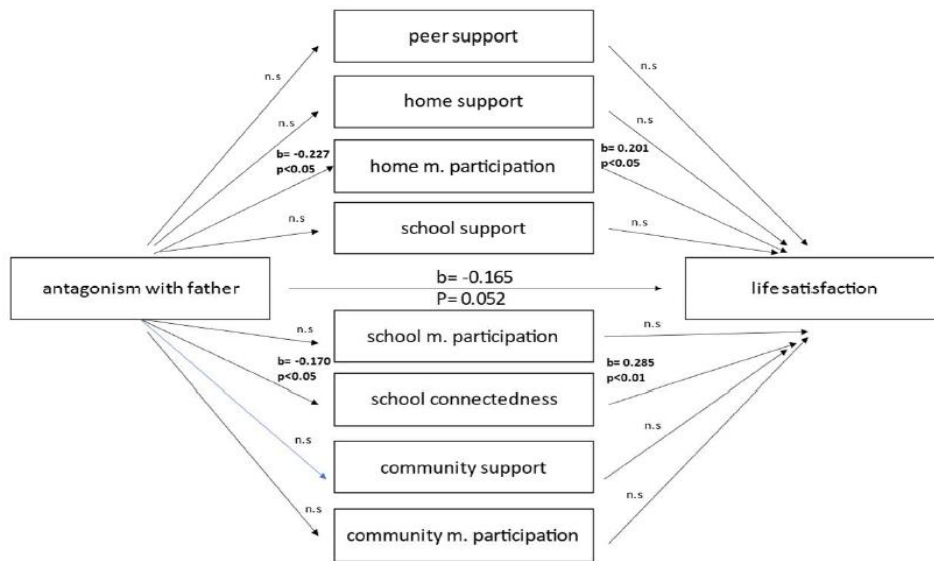
Figure 5.
Parallel mediation model of perceived external resources of resilience in relationship between antagonism with mother and life satisfaction (n.s.= non-significant association).



The second mediation model regarding external resources of resilience reveals that there was a significant indirect effect of antagonism with the father on life satisfaction through perceived school connectedness: $b = -0.048$, BCa CI [-0.104, -0.005] and perceived home meaningful participation: $b = -0.045$, BCa CI [-0.114, -0.006] (Figure 6).

Figure 6.

Parallel mediation model of perceived external resources of resilience in relationship between antagonism with father and life satisfaction (n.s.= non-significant association).



5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that primarily antagonism with the mother and father undermine the self-control of early adolescents that leads to a lower level of life satisfaction. Moreover, self-esteem was also identified as a mediator between antagonism with the mother and father and life satisfaction along with external resources of resilience such as home meaningful participation and school connectedness.

We have confirmed that home environment is a significant system to which an individual belongs and may cause a different trajectory of self-control and self-esteem when in disharmony. However, these associations between adverse home environment and self-concept characteristics are not that universal. Research has shown that the relationship between home adversity and self-control and self-esteem is not conclusive during adolescence. Some studies have reported robust cross-sectional and longitudinal associations between parenting and self-control and self-esteem throughout adolescence (Özdemir, Vazsonyi, & Çok, 2013). Others have reported only significant concurrent associations (Baardstu, Karevold, & Von Soest, 2017; Craig, 2016) while some have found significant associations for some parenting dimensions but not others (Vazsonyi, Jiskrova, Ksinan, & Blatny, 2016). We have confirmed that the dimensions of antagonism and conflict play a role in the lower level of self-control and self-esteem.

The antagonistic relationship in our research has become a strong predictor of self-esteem and self-control, leading to a lower level of life satisfaction. Regarding self-control, parenting may inspire children's negative feelings (e.g., negative verbal comments, controlling others through guilt) and lead children into suppressing displays of negative emotion in order to avoid provoking parental hostility or getting rid of misbehavior (Coplan, Hastings, Lagacé-Séguin, & Moulton, 2002). This deprives children of chances to practice self-regulation in a supportive context (Scaramella & Leve 2004). If there is limited regulatory support, adolescents do not experience support, responsiveness, boundaries, and consistent discipline. Parents who do not provide regulatory support to help youths solve problems may not be able to keep their children from experiencing overwhelming emotional extremes. In turn, these adolescents will not acquire effective strategies for regulating negative emotions and controlling undesirable behaviors (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007). Moreover, antagonistic, or harsh parenting practices also directly model dysregulated behaviors (Morris et al. 2007).

Regarding self-esteem, there is a longstanding belief that self-esteem emerges from relationships with others, suggesting that a person comes to view him or herself through the lens of others' opinions (i.e., reflected appraisals). For adolescents, this is primarily through the parents' lens. However, the adolescence is a time when either the parent-child relationship, the child's self-esteem, or both are changing. There are indications that parental influences might weaken as children progress through the adolescent period. For example, social relationships become less hierarchical throughout adolescence, with a greater focus on peers (Gaertner, Fite, & Colder, 2010). This suggests that parents might have a declining impact on the development of self-esteem during the adolescent years. However, there is no reason to believe that parenting is unimportant for self-esteem during adolescence. Parents' influence decreases but remain an important factor in adolescent development (Kung & Farrell, 2000) and parents are still viewed as important figures in the lives of adolescents.

Regarding external resources of resilience, there is not a lot of research focusing on the psychological mechanism of perceived external resources of resilience between individual home adversity factors and life satisfaction. However, past research suggests that factors linked to home and school are the most important predictors of various kinds of psychological and behavioral difficulties (Wills, Vaccaro, & Mcnamara, 1992; Catalano, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004). Abrinková, Orosová, Bacikova-Sleskova, Štefaňáková., and Gajdošová (2019) discovered that perceived external resources of resilience – school and home support and meaningful participation are associated with a lower prevalence of alcohol use among schoolchildren. Moreover, self-esteem and home meaningful participation were identified as protective factors towards alcohol use and cigarette smoking among pupils in the first grade at high school (Abrinková, Orosová, & Bacikova-Sleskova, 2020). Our results suggest that early adolescents do not only need exclusive support, as highlighted during childhood, but it is important for them to be engaged, to be a part of the decision-making process in the family and have a voice in a family, with a continuing trend to high school. This is in line with the UNICEF definition of meaningful participation where it is described as when adolescent girls and boys, either individually or collectively, form and express their views and influence matters that concern them (Cappa, Werntz, & Manuel, 2018). Participation opportunities and activities must be inclusive, giving adolescents of varying ages, family wealth levels, and physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities the chance to take part in decisions that affect their lives (Cappa et al., 2018). This broad definition can be applied at various levels of individual

environment and as revealed in our research, when schoolchildren are affected by antagonistic relationship with parents it may lead them to lower levels of life satisfaction.

The mediation effect of school connectedness implies that antagonistic parenting establishes patterns of relationship, which are then played out, maybe copied in other more proximal interpersonal contexts such as school. Thus, school may lose its position of important resource for adolescents. It seems that antagonism with parents predisposes individuals to difficulties in attaching to schools, which in turn affects life satisfaction. The Attachment Theory would predict such a mediation model through the internal working models of attachment.

The current results provide a more complex theoretical resilience model and highlight the importance of marshalling selected internal assets and external resources of resilience among adolescents. Often the home environment is the private sector of a family, less flexible for intervention, thus less prone to change. As was shown in our research, intervention in the home environment is not the only way to how to secure the healthy development of children. Another way is to focus on factors that carry out the burden of the relationship between family adversity factors and life satisfaction. These are self-esteem, self-control, school connectedness and home meaningful participation.

Among the limitations of this research is the questionnaire used. The data were obtained through self-reported questionnaires and thus it is not possible to generalize information and to anticipate real information regarding the perceived external resources of resilience. It is not possible to anticipate how the real environment surrounding the child is; only how it is perceived by the child. However, in this case it is not crucial to know how the real environment really is, rather how it is perceived by adolescents. It is precisely the shift in the perception of possible support and meaningful participation in the environment that can be achieved through perception and attitude change over the slight modification of environment (Szalay et al., 2006). Another limitation of this research is the small research sample thus, any generalization of the results to the whole population should be carried out carefully.

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