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## Resilience and family functioning among young adults in Malaysia

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study aimed at examining the relationship between Malaysian young adults' resilience and their family functioning. A total of 169 participants, ranging from 18 to 30 years of age, completed the survey questionnaires. An electronic mailed questionnaire which consisted of a demographic survey, the 14-Item Resilience Scale (RS-14), and the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale IV (FACES IV) were sent to students from two higher education institutions in Malaysia. Overall results revealed that young adults reported moderate low resilience level, and their family functioning was healthy. There was no significant relationship between young adults' resilience and family functioning. Result also showed that there was a significant difference between Malaysian, Chinese, and Indian young adults on resilience, but in terms of their family functioning, there was no significant difference. Future directions in research based on the limitations of current study and implications for counseling were discussed.

**Keywords:** Resilience; Family Functioning; Family; Young Adults; Ethnicity

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The study of resilience and family functioning have gained considerable attention among positive psychologists and counseling researchers around the globe (Ref). The term resilience has been variously defined. Rutter (1987) defined it as the protective mechanism to successfully overcoming adversity whereas Lazarus (1993) used a metaphor for the ability of a person to bounce back from the stressful experience to define the term. Resilience is often referred as a personality trait in the beginning of the years. However, over the past decades, resilience has been redefined as a dynamic and modifiable process in shaping resiliency (Luthar et al., 2000). Recently, Wagnild, the scholar who has designed the first instrument to measure resilience directly in 1993, defined resilience as the characteristics that could be practiced and strengthened to enable a person to bounce back, learn, and grow from life's difficulties (Wagnild, 2009).

Researching resilience has become an emerging trend in mental health promotion and psychosocial programs (Kobau et al., 2011; Henley, 2010), especially with the rise of suicide rate worldwide among the young adults (WHO, 2013). As reported by National Suicide Registry Malaysia (NSRM, 2009), younger people aged 20-29 years had a higher risk of suicidal behavior. Research also

demonstrates that suicidal behaviors are highly related to resilience (Everall, Altrous & Paulson, 2006; Roy, Sarchiapone & Carli, 2007; Galligan, Barnett, Brennan & Israel, 2010). However, there is a lack of local research in this area, especially in investigating resilience among the vulnerable young adults in the specific cultural context of Malaysia.

For years, empirical evidence suggests that family is one of the important external factors (Holmes, 2006; Landau, 2007; Ungar, 2010; Carr, 2012) that contributes to the development of resilience. However, the relationship between resilience and family has not been thoroughly studied in the past. Most past studies were limited to examine the family relationship. Minimal attention has been directed toward investigating how a family should function, specifically in the context of a multicultural society like Malaysia. As such, the present study is intended to study the resilience and family functioning among the young adults in Malaysia.

### 2 RESILIENCE AND FAMILY FUNCTIONING

Wright, Masten, and Narayan (2013) revealed that the study of resilience has been developed in four major waves of research. These waves include

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