

# Resilience, Optimism and Social Support among International Students

Fatemeh Sabouripour<sup>1</sup> & Samsilah Bte Roslan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

Correspondence: Samsilah Bte Roslan, Putra Science Park, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, 43400, Malaysia.  
Tel: 60-38-947-1291. E-mail: samsilah@upm.edu.my

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## Abstract

This study focuses on the examination of the relationship between resilience, optimism and social support among international students. International students who are studying as foreign students tend to experience greater stress and anxiety during their study. They need to adjust to the new environment and overcome challenges. The resilience level of students is very important as it can help them adjust their life pressures and stresses. The current study aims to look at the levels and patterns of resilience, optimism and social support among international students. The instruments used were Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) for resilience, Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) for optimism and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) for social support. A total of 291 international students were involved in the study. The findings revealed a significant difference in the resiliency level across races, with African students scoring higher than others. The regression analysis employed showed that optimism ( $B = .593$ ) and social support ( $B = .204$ ) are significant predictors of resilience.

**Keywords:** resilience, optimism, social support, race, gender, international students

## 1. Introduction

Naturally, a person's mental system might be able to decrease the effects of migration on mental and physical health. Recent studies not only show that it is difficult to eliminate all college stressors, but they also focus on examining how students cope with the challenges (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). It has been suggested that how well an individual copes with a transition is related to how much an individual is resilient (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). According to Friberg, Hjemdal, Rosenvinge, and Martinussen (2003) resilience has a great significance on adjusting adequately to life stressors. Psychological resilience is defined as the individual's capability in coping with stress and adversity, which may see the individual returning to an earlier state of normalcy with no indications of negative effects (Masten, 2009). Resilience can be better explained as the opportunity and capacity of individuals to find psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that will provide for their well-being, and their prospect and ability alone or with others, to benefit from these resources and in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008). There is a direct relationship between resilience and levels of stress; in other words, higher resilience scores predict lower levels of stress (Hjemdal, Vogel, Solem, Hagen, & Stiles, 2011).

In line with this, Walker et al. (2006) showed some conceptual differences in resilience pertaining to university students in their higher education. They point to the association of resilience and the determination to carry on even when confronted by adversity. Resilience is proven to play a significant role in coping with stressors and therefore in improving performance. While there is an abundance of research in the literature with a focus on the relationship among influencing factors on college adjustment, there is relatively less research on the relationship among such factors on students' own resilience. Previous literature stated that students who are resilient are able to manage the challenges that they face during transition to a university in a foreign country and they are academically successful (Compas, Wagner, Slavin, & Vannatta, 1986; Gall, Evans, & Bellerose, 2000). Resilient students deal with some difficulties such as loneliness and separation, language, immigration status, discrimination, and financial concerns (Reynoso, 2008). In the context of Asia, Chan (2000) revealed that Asian students with high level of resilience, get significantly less impact from negative events compared to students with low level of resilience. They are also more motivated and have higher self-confidence both academically and socially (Chan, 2000). In addition, a study in Malaysia by Lee (2011) revealed that people who have low levels of resilience will fail to cope with stressful situations. The implication is that highly resilient youths will

fare better in facing challenges than those with low resilience. It is also indicated that those with resilience are better able to employ active social coping strategies (Li, 2008; Yi-Frazier et al., 2010).

Furthermore, it has been empirically proven that there are variations in resilience from one student to another, thus suggesting that it is a variable depending on the influence of several factors. This means that the variations in resilience must be the result of some internal and external factors that are protective and related to the level of resilience in people (Troy & Mauss, 2011). Review of previous study revealed that optimism (a mental tendency that construes situation as being best) and social support (existence of some people, including friends and family who care and support in times of need) are two dominant factors influencing the level of resilience (Bonanno, 2004; Dawson & Pooley, 2013; Rutter, 2006; Soenens et al., 2007; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007).

In addition, past studies have suggested the influence of race and gender on resilience (Harris, 2004). Clauss-Ehlers, Yang, and Chen (2006) revealed that robust race identities predicted resilience in responding to stress, pointing to the possible significance of cultural resilience in coping for some ethnic communities.

Studies that examine the relationship between optimism, social support and resilience are lacking in Malaysia, although there are studies that examine these variables separately (Lee, 2011; Tam & Lim, 2009). Accordingly, gaps to be investigated in this research relate to the lack of quantitative description of resilience as a product of other variables. Furthermore, there is a need to understand the concept of resilience and the possible predictors among international students, particularly in Malaysia. What is important is for this research to seek empirical evidence of the roles of optimism and social support in predicting resilience as they are skills which can be enhanced, taught and learned (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Fresco, Moore, Walt, & Craighead, 2009; Meevissen, Peters, & Alberts, 2011).

The specific research objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1) To explore the level and patterns of resilience across race among international students.
- 2) To explore the level and patterns of resilience across gender among international students.
- 3) To investigate the relationship between optimism and resilience.
- 4) To investigate the relationship between social support and resilience.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study a research framework was established.

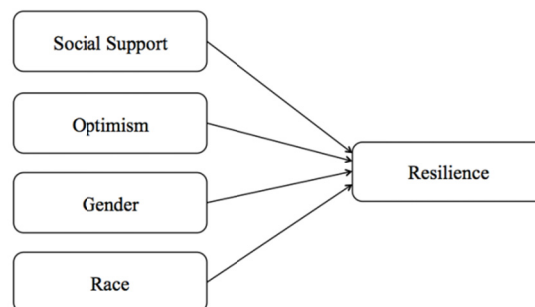


Figure 1. The relationship between social support, optimism, gender and race with resilience

## 1.1 Literature Review

### 1.1.1 Resilience

Resilience is the capability to bounce back from misfortune. In other word, resilience refers to an ability to cope with challenging issues. Uri Bronfenbrenner developed ecological system theory and he believed that there is a need to understand persons' development into their environment. An ecological model of factors affecting resiliency demonstrates that resiliency is a function of a network of bi-directional effects which embraces the organic factors ( gender, temperament, intelligence) and individual's internal world of thoughts and feelings (problem-solving and analysis skills, optimism and autonom), his or her family, school and the immediate neighborhood, and eventually the wider world, where factors such as national mental health strategies, the global economic climate, culture, and the media come into play (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Originally, resilience was conceptualized as a personality trait; however, in recent years, it has been more often taught as a series of protective factors, which a person can draw upon in difficult times. An antecedent to resiliency, moreover, is previous experience of adversity, while the most notable result of resiliency is having good coping skills to

manage repeated adversity in life (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007). The concept of resilience has been inspected in various fields of psychology, including developmental psychology, trauma recovery, formative psychology and the study of competence under stress. In the view of Tugade and Fredrickson (2007), resilience implies the ability to effectively cope with and adapt to adversity. Zautra, Hall, and Murray (2010) posit that the best definition of resilience is that it is the ability to adapt successfully to difficult and hostile situations, at the same time they point to the significance of personal characteristics which play a major role in determining how successful a human will be in adapting to the adverse circumstance.

### 1.1.2 Optimism and Resilience

In this study optimism is defined as an inherent tendency to expect favorable future results and it is related to making positive evaluations of the circumstances, and taking the time to actively engage coping strategies in dealing with stress (Carver & Scheier, 2003). Also, it is an attitude of hope that good things can occur in one's life and it seems to be a personal difference variable that represents the degree of people's generalized positive expectations for their future (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). General life optimism is connected to positive moods, achievement, popularity, perseverance, effective problem solving, good health and confidence (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010). Also, being optimistic can have an influential and positive impact on the individual's capability to adapt to stressors. From a resilience point of view, optimism has been found to be linked to psychological well-being when confronted with adversity, better physical health, and adaptive coping mechanism (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010).

Past literature has indicated the importance of being optimistic in enhancing resilience; optimism has also been proven to be the most crucial factor, cognitively, among adolescents, in their capability to cope with stress (Tusaie-Mumford, 2001). Generally, it appears that resilience is a reflection of the intention to be optimistic in the face of challenges Rutter (2006); this means that in situations of stress optimism complements resilience (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Additionally, it has been proposed that being optimistic will help individuals cope with the move to university (Soenens et al., 2007). Also, optimism is positively associated with: academic achievement, well-being, effortful control (self-regulation), academic performance, social and academic adjustment, autonomous motivation (self-determination), persistence and choice of coping strategies (Lekes, Gingras, Philippe, Koestner, & Fang, 2010; Ratelle, Larose, Guay, & Sénécal, 2005; Soenens et al., 2007). Tusaie and Patterson (2006) studied three different forms of optimism partly to try and understand the concepts that help to maximize resilience. Their findings indicated that optimism was a crucial cognitive factor in the moderation and reduction of stress. This is primarily because trait optimism is defined as a constant and generalized expectation that there will be positive outcomes (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994). A study on urban minorities with limited opportunities revealed that optimism characterized resilience among a group of high school students pursuing a college preparation career academy (Conchas & Clark, 2002). In general, it appears that conceptually, resilience involves a desire to be optimistic when facing adversity (Rutter, 2006). This implies that resilience is accompanied by optimism in the face of stress and therefore optimism plays an important role in an individual's capability to adapt to stress (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010). When confronted with a challenge, those who are optimistic are still able to show resilience, even though progress may be slow and difficult (Snyder, Feldman, Shorey, & Rand, 2002). Hence, it is proposed that:

H1: There is a relationship between resilience and optimism among international students.

### 1.1.3 Social Support and Resilience

Social support is defined by Hale, Hannum, and Espelage (2005) in several areas, encompassing emotional support, informational assistance, intimacy, comfort and physical kindness. Hale et al. (2005) defined perceived social support as having somebody to suggest help, when such assistance is needed. Social support can come from the emotional history of family, friends and one's equals. It can also be forthcoming as a result of interacting with one's social circle, including with professionals and even with the environment (Greenberger, Chen, Tally, & Dong, 2000). In fact, social support is a meta-concept which encompasses different dimensions of perceived and functionally realized social exchange, such as satisfaction with the quality and quantity of support, feeling cared for, respected and being connected in one's social network (Chronister, Johnson, & Berven, 2006). Smaller social networks, fewer close relationships, and lower perceived adequacy of social support have been linked to psychological distress and especially depressive symptoms and psychological health (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001). In order to remain physically and mentally healthy, students must have strong social support, which generally can strengthen resilience to encounter stress (Faith, Douglas & Eleni, 2007). Burcusa and Iacono (2007) argued that social support not only protects individuals against depression, but also has been placed within related resilience.

Social support is positively associated with promoting psychological well-being, intrinsic motivation, social and school bonding, school adjustment, self-esteem, choice of coping strategies, self-reliance, academic achievement and contributes to resilience (Bernardon, Babb, Hakim-Larson, & Gragg, 2011). Wilks and Spivey (2010) revealed that social support systems have a quite considerable positive impact on resilience. The findings of the study indicate that friend-related social support minimized the negative association between academic stress and resilience. The interaction between friend support and academic stress impacted positively on resilience among students (Wilks & Spivey, 2010).

Social support has been proposed as a resource to effectively manage stress and cope successfully among social work students via its relationship to construct from several empirical measures, such as measures on stress, anxiety, and self-efficacy (Dziegielewski, Turnage, & Roest-Marti, 2004; Greenberger et al., 2000). Typically, social support comes from two main areas, family and friends, and work colleagues or supervisors (Taylor & Friedman, 2007). As such, a supportive relationship with a teacher, other family members, and peers had a direct relation to increased levels of educational resilience. These conclusions have been proven to be true of various studied groups. Dent and Cameron (2003) discovered that youth with resilience exhibited a sense of belonging and connectedness of individuals, groups, and institutions more frequently than their counterparts who were non-resilient. Such resilient youths also showed stronger feelings of independence and personal involvement when talking about their lives, and were perfectly clear and positive about what they planned to do in the future, compared to the youths who were non-resilient. Then, it is assumed that:

H2: There is a relationship between resilience and social support among international students.

#### 1.1.4 Resilience, Gender and Race

With reference to demographic variables, Clauss-Ehlers, Yang, and Chen (2006) found that race and gender identities have significantly linked with level of resilience in difficult situations. Also, this research investigated how stress and resilience were related between a various groups of women in college. Furthermore, gender may have a crucial impact on how pessimistic or optimistic coping strategies and resilience develops (Dweck & Reppucci, 1973). Fergusson, Horwood, and Swain-Campbell (2003) stated that females showed greater resilience to externalizing responses (alcohol dependence, antisocial personality disorder, and participation in criminal activities), while males showed greater resilience to internalizing responses (depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, and ideation).

It can be seen that various studies on gender-based resilience continue to show mixed results. For example, DuMont, Widom, and Czaja (2007) have concluded that females show greater resilience while other studies found greater resilience in males (Tusaie, Puskar, & Sereika, 2007). Moreover, a study by Weidong et al. (2012) among 600 college students indicated that resilience had significant differences between male and female students. Also, some researchers have investigated gender differences in risk and resilience factors, and they revealed females are more resilient than males and also females are less exposed to risky behaviors than males (Wright & Masten, 2005).

Besides, an investigation of psychosocial resilience among adolescents showed males to be more resilient than females (Tusaie et al., 2007). DuMont et al. (2007) investigated the factors that predicted resilience in children who had experienced abuse and neglect and the findings revealed that female adolescents in early adulthood showed greater resilience. And also DuMont et al. (2007) investigated abused and neglected African American adolescents and found that they exhibited greater resilience than their white counterparts. Wilson, Hurtt, Shaw, Dishion, and Gardner (2009) in an eight-year longitudinal study of African Americans, Whites, and Hispanics in three United States regions discovered African Americans show greater resilience compared to their White and Hispanic colleagues, considering that they were exposed to risks such as frequent mobility, low-income, hazardous neighborhoods, substance abuse by parents, single mother homes, etc. In summary, it would be concluded:

H3: There is a difference in the resilience level across race among international students.

H4: There is a difference in the resilience level across gender among international students.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participant

The sample consisted of 291 international students of University Putra Malaysia. The participants were selected using multistage sampling. In the first stage, cluster random sampling is used whereby one faculty is randomly selected from the 5 clusters in UPM. The next stage is proportionate stratified random sampling in which students are randomly sampled from each faculty according to the ratio of the total students in the five faculties.

As stated in Table 1, 51.9% of respondents were male and 48.1% were female. Majority of the students were single (68.4%) and the rest married (31.6%). Middle-Easterners make up 40.5% of the sample, Asians and Africans constitute 24.1% and 35.4% respectively. More than half of the respondents (66%) were in the age group of 26-29, 21% in the age group of 22-25 and the rest of them (13%) were in the age group of 30 and older. Large numbers of students (48.5%) were supported by their families, 26.8% spent their personal saving, 18.6% of them received a scholarship, and 3.4% worked full-time, the 2.7% of respondents worked part-time.

Table 1. Sample profile

Variables (n=291)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	151	51.9
Female	140	48.1
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	199	68.4
Married	92	31.6
<b>Race</b>		
Middle- east	188	40.5
Asian	70	24.1
African	103	35.4
<b>Age</b>		
22-25	61	21.0
26-29	192	66.0
30<	38	13.0
<b>Finance</b>		
Work part- time	8	2.7
Work full- time	10	3.4
Family	141	48.5
Scholarship	54	18.6
Personal saving	78	26.8

## 2.2 Research Instrument

**Demographic variables:** Participants in this study first completed a short demographic form that collected their gender, age, race and marital status. Previous studies showed the relation of these variables with resilience. However, the focus of this study was on international students; so, race and gender were used as a demographic variable.

**Resilience:** Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was utilized to assess resilience scale. The CD-RISC is a 25-item scale which aims to determine the ability to deal effectively with stress and adversity. Examples of items are: "I am able to adapt when changes occur," "I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships," and "I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger". The CD-RISC in the present study demonstrated a reliable measurement (Cronbach alpha 0.924) in assessing resilience.

**Optimism:** Optimism was assessed by using the Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) of Scheier and Carver 1985, this scale is a 7-item assessment of individual differences of optimism, which is comprised of optimistic statements ("In uncertain times, I usually expect the best", "I'm always optimistic about my future", "Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad") (Shorey et al., 2007). The study demonstrated clear factor structure and good internal consistency reliability coefficient 0.921.

**Social support:** Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was adopted to measure social support level (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). The MSPSS is a 12-item scale by which perceived social support from three various sources, namely family, friends, and a significant other will be assessed. Sample items consist of "There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows" "My family really tries to help me" and "I can talk about my problems with my friends." Current study obviously showed an internal consistency reliability coefficient 0.818.

## 2.3 Research Design and Data Analysis

The study conducted a correlation design to make comparisons between variables. Descriptive statistics used in this study were frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Furthermore, linear regression was

employed to ascertain the intensity and direction of the relationship among the variables of resilience, optimism and social support. Also, one-way ANOVA was used to compare the mean differences of races and resilience. Moreover, independent t-test was conducted to determine differences in resilience level across gender. All analysis was performed with SPSS 20. Also, for all variables 5-point Likert-type scale was used (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

As preliminary analyses descriptive statistics, reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha coefficients), and bivariate zero-order correlations in all the study variables are presented in Table 2. The cumulative mean of the items was 3.82 with a standard deviation of 0.49. The overall mean of optimism factors was 3.7 with a standard deviation of 0.61. The overall mean of the social support was 3.81 with a standard deviation of 0.74.

Pearson correlation was utilized to investigate the relationship between optimism, social support and resilience among international students. As stated in Table 2, the result illustrates a significant positive and strong relationship between optimism, social support and resilience ( $r = .706, p < .01, r = .523, p < .01$ ). In regards to checking assumption of normality, linearity, outliers, multicollinearity and homogeneity of variance preliminary testing has been performed to ensure no serious violation. Skewness and Kurtosis less than  $\pm 2$  indicated normal distribution of data (Lomax & Schumacker, 2012). According to table 2, skewness and kurtosis are less than  $\pm 2$ . Moreover, multicollinearity assumption is a threat when there is a high inter correlation between variables  $> .9$  or collinearity statistics show  $1 < \text{Tolerance}$  and  $10 < \text{VIF}$  (Creswell, 2009). As stated by correlation test result and collinearity statistics test, there was no violation regarding multicollinearity and linearity assumptions and overall study meets the assumptions.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, reliability and Pearson Correlation between research variables

Item	Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
1	Resilience	3.82	0.49	-0.66	1.11	0.92		
2	Optimism	3.7	0.61	-0.68	0.25	.71***	0.92	
3	Social support	3.81	0.74	-0.63	0.34	.53***	.55***	0.82

Note. \*\*\* Sig. at the 0.001 level (2-tailed) Values on the diagonal are Cronbach's alphas  $> 0.7$  (Cronbach, 1951, Hair et al., 2010), Skewness and kurtosis  $< 2$ .

### 3. Results

An independent sample t-test was employed to compare the resilience score for male and female. Based on results in Table 3, there was no significant difference in the level of resilience across gender among the students. According to the result of independent t-test, the mean value of the male is mean=96.88 with SD=12.44 and mean value for female students were mean=94.52 with SD=12.31. The differences in the means were about 2.36 with small effect size (eta squared=.004).

Table 3. Results of independent sample t-test for examining the difference between resilience and gender

Gender	N	M	SD	Mean difference	Df	T	P
Male	151	96.88	12.44	2.36	289	1.625	$P > 0.05$
Female	140	94.52	12.31				

According to Table 4, the one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the differences between three race groups (group 1: Middle-east, group 2: Asian, group 3: African) and level of resilience. The results alluded that there was a statistically significant difference between races with  $F(2,288) = 6.55$  and  $p < .05$  regarding the level of resilience. The actual difference in mean scores between groups was quite large. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was 0.43.

Table 4. Result of one-way ANOVA: comparison of differences between resilience and race

Race	Mean	S.D.	F	P
Middle-east	92.66	12.1	6.55	.002
Asian	97.1	9.25		
African	98.34	13.99		
Total	95.74	12.42		

Note. Sig. at 0.01 levels

According to Table 5, the Welch test was conducted to identify the significant differences between pair groups. Tamhane Post Hoc test revealed a significant difference between Middle-Easterners with Asian and African. It should be concluded that Middle-Easterners gain the lowest level of resilience compared to Asian and African students. And, the African gain highest level of resilience to compare other groups.

Table 5. Tamhane Post Hoc test of resilience and race multiple comparisons

Race		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Middle-east	Asian	-4.43	1.56	.015*
	African	-5.67	1.76	.005**
Asian	African	-1.23	1.76	.863
	Middle-east	4.43	1.56	.015*
African	Asian	1.23	1.76	.863
	Middle-east	5.67	1.76	.005*

Note. Sig. at the \* 0.05, \*\*0.01 level

According to table 6, R square value indicated that two- predictor explained about 52.8% of the variance in resilience. Based on the ANOVA table, the model fit data with  $f=160.98$  and  $p<.001$ . It is concluded that there was linear regression coefficient between resilience and the two predictors. Additionally, the standardized beta value revealed that there was a high contribution of optimism with  $B=.593$  and social support with  $B=.204$  in predicting the resilience. Relatively, this contribution is higher on optimism compared to social support.

Table 6. The result of linear regression analysis

Variables	B	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	36.506		11.853	.000
Social support	.285	.204	4.199	.000
Optimism	1.705	.593	12.207	.000
R	.727			
R <sup>2</sup>	.528			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.525			
F-Statistics	160.986			

Note. Significant at 0.01 level

#### 4. Discussion

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between optimism, social support and resilience among international students of UPM, and to identify differences in demographic factors (gender and race) across the dependent variable (resilience) among students. Also, some interesting findings emerge as follows.

Firstly, the findings revealed a strong positive relationship between resilience and optimism and also high contribution of optimism in predicting resilience among students. It seems optimism and resilience appear to accompany each other in unfavorable situations. In fact, there is an interactive association among optimism and resilience. Previous literature well supported the findings, which argued that optimism reflects persons' positive attitude towards unfavorable condition and therefore assumed optimism as an important feature of resilience and there is a strong association among resilience and optimism among students (Carver et al., 2010; Dawson & Pooley, 2013). A clear understanding of all results demonstrated students should try to enhance their optimism level by applying some changes in their lifestyles. Students can improve their knowledge about what can change their attitudes and which factors influence on their optimistic view. In fact, indirectly, they are going to increase their resilience and ability to overcome adversity and challenges.

Secondly, the findings of the current study showed a moderate relationship between resilience and social support. It means international students' resiliency is affected by friends, family, their relatives and special person in their life, such as their owner, neighbors, supervisor, lecturers, who support them financially and mentally. This finding may give an inducement to the students to find more friends and attend the community to find more groups and have contact with more people. This result is consistent with previous literature. According to Weidong et al. (2012) and Dawson and Pooley (2013) resilience was positively related with social support among students. Moreover, Wilks and Spivey (2010) indicated that social support systems applied significant, positive impact with each other and with resilience.

Thirdly, the findings of study displayed clear differences in the level of resilience across different races (Middle-Easterner, African, and Asian). Also, the findings demonstrated that the mean of African is significantly different with Asian and Middle-Easterners. One direction to understand this finding is by thinking of civilization as an adaptive mechanism that facilitates groups of persons (different cultures) to develop policies to deal with adversities. College students seem to take their indications from their culture and combine these special strategies in their own resilience approaches to cope with challenging situations. Some research indicates a significant relationship between race and resilience as well. Based on research of Weaver (2009) it was revealed that cultural/ethnic identity and resilience have a positive significant relationship with each other. Moreover, in the study of Campbell-Sills, Cohan, and Stein (2006) some significant relationship between ethnicity and resiliency were found. Furthermore, Ziaian, de Anstiss, Antoniou, Baghurst, and Sawyer (2012) revealed that the high level of resilience among south Africans is mostly related to their spiritual beliefs. In fact, the results of studies illustrated, firstly, cultural differences which include values, religion and spiritual beliefs and environmental factors that have an important effect on shaping people's perspective about life's issues, and second, their influence in shaping person's ability to manage trouble and deal with adversities in their lifespan.

At the end, the result has not shown any differences in the resilience level across gender among international students. As mentioned in the literature review, the findings of this study is contrary to a few studies by Bonanno, Galea, Bucciarelli, and Vlahov (2007) and Weidong et al. (2012). However, the same results were achieved by Johnson (2011) on relationship between gender and resilience among college students. Then, it is supposed that different result could be obtained in different circumstances. Also, It seems there are some environmental factors in psychological stream which have a strong effect on the relationship at the level of resilience across gender, such as financial support, poverty, age group, and marital status. These factors could be considered in further studies. A numbers of studies also gained the similar results. The findings of their studies showed that there was no difference in the level of resilience across gender among students. For instance, in addition, a study of Splan, Brooks, Porr, and Broyles (2011) on 100 adults clearly indicated that gender differences were not significant and there was no effect of gender on level of resilience.

### **5. Limitations and Future Research Direction**

Although this research makes contributions to many fields as they linked to the educational field, numbers of limitations have been declared. Also, a certain recommendation should be occupied in deliberation in the case with further research. The current research has margin to a number of factors. A number of protective factors and risk factors could be considered in further researches to open a new window in psychological field such as self-efficacy, coping strategies, hope, intimacy, poverty, family environment, and some more specific health index, like depression in mental health and psychological well-being and also an array of demographic factors which has an effect on resilience level. It might be able to discover a better model describing the link between resilience and other variables, especially among international students. Moreover, in order to have a deeper understanding of the resilience concept, further qualitative research should be conducted for assessing the interaction of different factors among students. Therefore, cross sectional studies cannot allocate cause-and-effect relationship between variables. In future studies, it is suggested that researcher use longitudinal study to reveal cause-and-effect relationship among variables. Further, in this study, the larger sample size was predicted to be more beneficial, although the study represents significant result.

### **6. Practical Implications**

The results of the study could be helpful for educational psychologist, counselor, educators, educational researchers and curriculum developers to organize some programs to enhance coping and resilience level of students, which has a direct effect on students' performance and educational level. Overall, the conception of resilience has important implications in the field of educational psychology in five main functions: assessment, intervention, consultation, research, and training. In addition, the findings of the study might also provide social and psychological researchers and students with some features of personality and behaviors among individuals that need to be searched further. Information and concepts gained from this study could help students to manage and deal with their challenges.

Evidently, the findings of current research have significant policy implications for all universities to meet accountability demands for improving academic performance. As suggested in the recent studies, the variables used in this research can be learned and taught as a skill. Consequently, the office of international students or anyone in charge of international affairs in university or organization has a responsibility to establish policies for the purpose of promoting students' adaptability to cope with adversity and difficulties they faced and enhance their well-being. In this regards, they can hold workshops and seminars to make them more familiar with ways to



increase their resilience and coping. Also, these facilities help them to find better solutions to confront with obstacles in new circumstances. The findings of this study is also hoped to be helpful to draw attention of the involved parties to organize some plan to increase the level of education and performance. New standards, curriculum, teaching methods, and other types of practices that focus directly on academics would be effective to help international students.

It is needed that educators, counselor and professionals note the evidence from present research and use it to enhance resilience development program among international students. Also the result can serve as resource materials for researchers, scientists, and university authorities who are interested to investigate issues in psychology such as resiliency, optimism, social support, and international students' experiments. Consequently, the results will assist as previous and supplementary evidence to reach a new outcome.

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