



Role of Critical Existential Thinking in Resilience of Parents of Specially-Abled Child

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ROLE OF CRITICAL EXISTENTIAL THINKING IN RESILIENCE OF PARENTS OF SPECIALLY-ABLED CHILD ABSTRACT Role of critical existential thinking in resilience of parents' of specially- abled children. It was hypothesized that parents high on critical existential thinking would be more resilient than parents low on critical existential thinking.

Abstract

The topic of the research is role of critical existential thinking in resilience of parents' of specially- abled children. It was hypothesized that parents high on critical existential thinking would be more resilient than parents low on critical existential thinking. Final random samples of parents with high critical existential thinking ($n = 60$) and those with low critical existential thinking ($n = 60$) were studied for their resilience. The finding confirmed the research hypothesis.

Key Words

Resilience, Critical Existential Thinking

Introduction

Disability can be defined as a condition or function that is judged considerably impaired compared to the normal standard of a person or a group.

Ample evidence suggests that caring for a child with a disability is stressful (Philip & Duckworth, 1982; Blacher, 1984; Behr, 1990; and Stoneman & Berman, 1993). The myriad of challenges faced by the family includes steering through educational, medical, and behavioural services; financial hardships, and emotional aspects of having a child with a disability (Patterson, 2005; and Turnbull et al., 2006). Many studies (Seltzer et al., 2001; Baker et al., 2003; Saloviita et al., 2003, Rao & Beidel, 2009; and Allen et al., 2013) showed that parents of disabled children were more stressed than parents of normal children.

Researches earlier to 1980 highly

emphasized on inevitable family dysfunction and pathological reactions by family members due to having a child with disability (Olshansky, 1962). However, these studies were criticized for both methodological flaws and biased expectations of negative impacts on the family, and positive impacts were frequently dismissed as denial or as an attempt by parents to alleviate their guilt. It was expected that there would be positive effects of the presence of specially abled child on family members which can be referred as resilience.

Ungar et al. (2007) state that resilience is better understood as the opportunity and capacity of individuals to navigate for these resources in culturally meaningful ways. Zautra et al. (2007) assert that resilience is an effective coping mechanism which works when individuals are under stress, for example, the presence of a specially-abled child in the family. According to them adults showed following pattern of resilience:

- (i) Good outcomes regardless of high-risk status,
- (ii) Constraint competence under stress,
- (iii) Recovery from trauma, and
- (iv) Using challenges for growth that makes future hardships more tolerable.

There are factors which can navigate effects of critical life situations. Werner (1995) differentiated three contexts for protective factors i.e., personal attributes, the family, and the community. Spiritual intelligence has gained a lot of attention of researchers in regard to its positive impact as a protective factor.

Critical existential thinking has been considered as an important component of spiritual intelligence. It is defined as “the capacity to understand the nature of existence, reality, the universe, space, time, death, and other existential or metaphysical issues”. Nasel (2004) described this capacity as “deliberation of existential issues and questions of ultimate concern, for example, death, and afterlife, and inquiry into the meaning and origin of life”.

Halama & Strizenec (2004) “proposed four potential components of an existential intelligence: the ability to perceive adequate value and meaning in concrete situations, the ability to form adequate hierarchies of values and goals; the ability to manage and assess goal achievement; and the ability to influence and help others in finding purpose and meaning in life”. Maddi (1967) asserts that “critical existential thinking is highly valuable in the resolution of the existential neurosis (the belief that one’s life is meaningless), and the existential crisis or vacuum (a state of intense psychological discomfort regarding questions about existence)”. Dillinger (2003) showed that critical existential thinking is helpful in midlife crises. Various researches suggest that resolving the existential crisis helped in the resolution of the larger crisis by strengthening the will of the individual and cultivating hardiness or existential courage leading to greater resilience (Welwood, 1982; Gerwood, 1998; Goddard, 2004; and Maddi, 2004).

Problem and Hypothesis

The only problem of the research pertained to role of critical existential thinking in resilience of parents of specially-abled child.

It was hypothesized that parents of specially-abled child with high critical existence thinking would excel those with low critical existence thinking in regard to their resilience.

Mehodology

Sample

Final random samples of 60 parents of specially-abled child with high critical existential thinking

and 60 parents of specially-abled child with low critical existential thinking were selected from a larger incidental population of 300 parents.

Tools

Critical Existential Thinking Scale (Ajawani et al., 2009) and Stress Resistance Scale (Ajawani & Varwandkar, 2010) were used to assess critical existential thinking and resilience level of parents, respectively.

Procedure

A larger incidental group of parents (n = 300) were contacted through schools in Raipur city and were, initially, administered critical existential scale. On the basis of Q_1 and Q_3 statistics parents with low critical existential thinking (below Q_1) and those with high critical existential thinking (above Q_3) were sorted out and 60 parents of low critical existential thinking and 60 parents of high critical existential thinking were selected randomly.

These finally selected random samples of parents (n = 120) were administered a stress resistance scale to seek resilience scores which served the basis of further statistical computations.

Result and Discussion

Table 1 : Average Resilience Scores of Parents of High and of Low Critical Existential Thinking and Obtained Statistics

Parents' Group	N	M	Σx^2	Obtained t value	Level of Significance
High Critical Existential Thinking	60	12.26	2981.50	2.60	P<.01
Low Critical Existential Thinking	60	08.96	2690.18		

(Source : Primary Data)

It is clear from Table 1 that average resilience scores of parents of specially-abled child with high critical existential thinking (M = 12.26) is higher than parents of specially-abled child with low critical existential thinking (M = 8.96). The obtained t ratio (t = 2.60) for this difference was significant at .01 level of confidence for 118 degrees of freedom and provided ample statistical ground to retain the research hypothesis in favour of parents of specially-abled child with high critical existential thinking in regard to their resilience.

Critical existential thinking refers to thinking about one's existence i.e., the capacity of a person to critically contemplate the nature of existence, reality, the universe, space, time, death, and other existential or metaphysical issues. Potential relationship has been observed between existential thinking and I.Q. (Scriven & Paul, 1992; Garo, 2006; and Shearer, 2006). High I.Q. can be viewed as an important contributor to one's resiliency as it helps a person to examine the stress situations logically protecting him from inappropriate responses which otherwise can prove stress-provoking. In fact, it is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating informations which in turn helps a person to prepare him to deal with stressful situations without being perturbed by them remaining stress-free, and thus resilient.

Conclusion

The finding of the present research is in consonance with those of Booth (1973), Welwood (1982), Hilpert (1987), Gregoire (1993), Gerwood (1998), Goddard (2004), and Maddi (2004) who observed that overcoming the existential crisis aids in the resolution of the larger crisis within which it occurs by strengthening the will of the individual and cultivating hardiness of existential courage.

Hence, it seems that critical existential thinking can serve as multifaceted source of adaptation,

coping, problem-solving, and abstract reasoning, particularly in crisis of an existential nature thereby increasing resiliency and thus decreasing the adverse effects of stress in an individual's life.

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