

The Green Path to Satisfaction: Examining the Relationship of Nature Connectedness and Resilience with Life Satisfaction among Youth

Prof. Vishva Chaudhary¹, Himanshi Chhatwani², Kriti Shandilya³

¹*Department of Psychology*

Central University of Haryana, Mahendragarh (Haryana)

²*Department of Psychology*

University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.)

³*Department of Psychology*

University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship of nature connectedness and resilience with life satisfaction among youth in India. Sample of 143 youth (aged 18-24) was surveyed using the Connectedness to Nature Scale, Brief Resilience Scale, and Satisfaction with Life Scale. Findings suggested that nature connectedness and resilience, were positively correlated with life satisfaction and collectively significantly predicted 33% of the variance. Resilience had a stronger predictive value compared to nature connectedness. The results contribute to understanding how psychological and environmental factors interact to promote well-being, offering insights for mental health interventions aimed at improving life satisfaction through resilience-building and nature engagement.

Introduction

Youth is often considered the most vibrant and dynamic phase of life, marked by growth, self-discovery, and the pursuit of aspirations. It generally refers to the period of life between adolescence and adulthood, often characterized by significant physical, emotional, and social development. While the specific age range can vary by context and organization, it is commonly defined as individuals aged 15-24 years. The World Health Organization defines 'youth' as individuals aged 15-24 years. Also, the United Nations characterizes youth as those in the 15-24 age bracket.

In recent years, the growing field of positive psychology has sparked increased scholarly interest in the study of life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction is described as “a cognitive evaluation process where individuals gauge the quality of their lives based on their personal set of standards” (Pavot & Diener, 1993). For example, people with greater overall life satisfaction tend to experience more positive life outcomes, such as financial and academic success, higher self-esteem, greater self-efficacy, improved mental and physical well-being, stronger relations, as well as longer life span. Conversely, people with lower life satisfaction often exhibit higher levels of anxiety and depression, as well as frequent emotional and behavioral difficulties. Therefore, life satisfaction serves as a significant positive predictor of individuals' mental and social well-being.

While, independent impacts of nature connectedness and resilience on life satisfaction have been extensively studied in previous researches, their combined influence and potential

interactions remain under explored. Understanding how these constructs synergistically contribute to enhancing life satisfaction holds significant implications for promoting mental health and resilience across diverse populations.

Several models have been proposed to better understand life satisfaction. One such model is the top-down approach, which emphasizes dispositional factors, such as personality traits, in influencing life satisfaction (Ho, Cheung & Cheung, 2008). Resilience, as a key personality trait, also plays a crucial role in this framework, as it shapes how individuals perceive and respond to life's challenges. Resilience is commonly thought to positively impact life satisfaction, making it a key factor in enhancing well-being.

Another perspective is bottom-up model, which suggests that one's life satisfaction is primarily determined by external life conditions and situations (Ho, Cheung & Cheung, 2008). In this view, satisfaction arises from major life domains like career, health, relationships, education, and income, and the overall level of life satisfaction is the sum of these individual satisfactions. This perspective can also consider how individuals' relationships with their natural environment impact their overall life satisfaction. The positive experiences and emotional well-being derived from nature and outdoor activities can also contribute to one's overall sense of life satisfaction. There is growing evidence that experiences in nature enhance well-being, including subjective well-being, which encompasses both emotional responses and cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction.

Nature Connectedness

Mayer and Frantz (2004) define nature connectedness as “an individual trait that fosters emotional bonds with the natural environment”.

The word nature relatedness is proposed by Nisbet et al. (2009), who define it as “a highly stable property across all contexts and periods of time”. Nature is vital for the survival and well-being of humankind. It offers essential resources that enable us to adapt and thrive. People tend to experience more positive emotions in areas rich in greenery, water features, and scenic landscapes. The significance of nature goes beyond providing resources for sustainable living; it also plays a vital role in our overall health.

Nature is not a luxury but a necessity for optimal physical and mental functioning. Numerous studies have concluded that nature connectedness is a core psychological need.

Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory (1995, as cited in Koay and Dillon, 2020) proposes that “humans naturally respond more positively to natural environments than to urban ones due to the cognitive restorative effects that nature provides”. Later studies also found that individuals moving to greener areas experienced improved well-being, highlighting nature's restorative impact.

The Psycho-physiological Stress Reduction Framework (Ulrich, 1983, as cited in Koay and Dillon, 2020) suggests that “interacting with natural environments can help alleviate stress by diminishing negative emotions and increasing positive ones”. Furthermore, research by Berman et al. (2005, as cited in Koay and Dillon, 2020) indicated that “both, exposure to nature and a sense of connection to it contribute to improved emotional well-being and increased happiness”. Additionally, horticultural activities like gardening have been shown to enhance wellness and boost self-esteem.

People who visited various natural spaces reported higher life satisfaction. Having nature views at home or work also boosted life satisfaction. The positive impact of time spent in nature was stronger for those with a strong connection to nature, especially if they spent over an hour weekly in natural spaces (Chia-chen Chang ,et.al, 2020).

Resilience

In recent years, resilience has become a prominent focus in the field of positive psychology. It is characterized as a stable psychological trait that helps individuals maintain and foster healthy development despite facing stress and challenges. It is the capacity to successfully adapt when encountering difficulties, trauma, loss, threats, or other major hardships.

Resilience is often described as capability to effectively rebound from stressful experiences, adapt flexibly to changing circumstances, experience positive growth in response to challenges such as hardship, trauma, and difficulty. Ann Masten (2001, p. 228) describes resilience as a set of phenomena marked by positive outcomes despite facing significant threats to one's ability to adapt or develop. Ryff and Singer (2003a, p. 20) define resilience as the ability to maintain, regain, or enhance mental or physical well-being after encountering challenges.

Over the past decades, resilience has emerged as a key component in psychological well-being research. Resilience is the ability to sustain balance and stability during extremely challenging circumstances. Additionally, resilience is described as the ability to thrive despite the normal ups and downs experienced throughout life. Further, resilience is a mental process that develops in reaction to significant stress, enabling individuals to function in a healthy manner.

Numerous researchers suggest that individuals are more resilient, are able to sustain happiness despite hardships, pursue and achieve goals, and lead meaningful lives (Wang & Wang, 2013).

Resilience serving as a safeguard for overall standard of life, can also contribute to higher life satisfaction. Several researchers have found that resilience anticipates greater life satisfaction in successful as well as unsuccessful students. Increased personal strengths, such as resilience, were linked to higher life satisfaction and fewer emotional disturbances.

Several studies highlight critical role of resilience in life satisfaction. Yuan Guo (2017) confirmed a positive relationship between resilience and social support, noting that social support affects life satisfaction both directly and indirectly through resilience. Resilience partially influences the connection between mindfulness and life satisfaction, emphasizing its importance in enhancing well-being (Badri Bajaj and Neerja Pande, 2015).

In light of the growing concerns regarding mental health among youth, the present study seeks to investigate intricate relationship of nature connectedness and resilience with life satisfaction. Understanding these connections is vital, as increasing urbanization and technology usage can lead to disconnection from nature, potentially diminishing overall well-being and life satisfaction. By examining how resilience may enhance life satisfaction, this study also seeks to contribute valuable insights into mental health and well-being strategies. Ultimately, the findings could inform interventions that promote both environmental engagement and psychological resilience, fostering a more fulfilling life for youth. Through this study, the researchers hope to highlight some benefits of resilience and being connected to nature for mental health and overall life satisfaction. This will hopefully inspire young people to be more resilient and to get back in touch with nature.

Materials and Methods

The study involved a sample of 143 youth aged 18-24 from various states in India, selected through convenient sampling. Data was collected via a questionnaire distributed through Google Forms.

Several standardized tools were utilized for data collection, including a Sociodemographic Data Sheet created by the researcher to assess demographic information,

‘Connectedness to Nature Scale’ (CNS) developed by Mayer and Frantz to assess connection with nature, the ‘Brief Resilience Scale’ (BRS) developed by Smith et al. to assess individuals' resilience, and the ‘Satisfaction with Life Scale’ (SWLS) by Diener et al. to assess overall life satisfaction.

A Google Form was developed to include demographic questions along with items from the CNS, BRS, and SWLS. Participants were informed of the study's purpose through a cover letter, and the survey link was disseminated, encouraging further sharing. Respondents provided consent and completed the survey.

Data analysis employed a correlational research design and utilized inferential statistics, particularly multiple regression analysis, to assess the predictive relationships of nature connectedness and resilience with life satisfaction among youth, utilizing SPSS version 29 for computation.

Results

Table 1: Correlations

Variable	Resilience	Nature Connectedness	Life Satisfaction
Resilience	1	.242	.544
Nature Connectedness	.242	1	.299
Life Satisfaction	.544	.299	1

Table 2: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	268.439	2	134.219	33.884	< .001
Residual	554.554	140	3.961		
Total	822.993	142			

Table 3: Coefficients

Model	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.982		3.903	< .001
Resilience	.068	.501	7.014	< .001
Nature Connectedness	.045	.178	2.486	.014

Note: $p < 0.05$

Table 1 indicated resilience exhibits a stronger relationship with life satisfaction ($r = .544$) whereas nature connectedness had a moderate relationship with life satisfaction ($r = .299$).

Multiple regression analysis indicated that resilience and nature connectedness collectively explained 33% variance in life satisfaction, $F(2, 140) = 33.884$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .33$. Both resilience ($\beta = .501$, $t = 7.014$, $p < .001$) and nature connectedness ($\beta = .178$, $t = 2.486$, $p = .014$) positively predicted life satisfaction. The standardized coefficients (β values) indicated that resilience was the stronger predictor of life satisfaction compared to nature connectedness.

Discussion

The present research intended to examine the relationship of nature connectedness and resilience with life satisfaction among youth. Findings support hypothesized relationships, showing that both resilience and nature connectedness are positively related to life satisfaction, with resilience having a stronger predictive value. These results align with previous research, highlighting the importance of resilience as a psychological asset that allows individuals to maintain well-being in the face of difficulties (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Cohn et al., 2009).

The significant positive relationship between resilience and life satisfaction reinforces the notion that youth who exhibit greater resilience are more prepared to confront challenges, adapt to stressful situations, and maintain greater satisfaction in life (Ong et al., 2006). These findings are consistent with prior studies suggesting that resilience functions as a protective factor that enhances overall life satisfaction (Abolghasemi & Varaniyab, 2010).

Nature connectedness also emerged as an important, though less strong predictor of life satisfaction. This result suggests that a deeper emotional connection to the natural environment can contribute to greater life satisfaction. Previous studies have shown that engaging with nature can reduce stress and promote positive emotional states, contributing to overall well-being (Mayer, 2009). The moderate correlation between nature connectedness and resilience observed, suggests people who feel more connected to nature may exhibit higher resilience, as natural environments often provide restorative benefits that help individuals cope with stress and adversity (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

Overall, the findings of this study highlight the significance of cultivating resilience and nature connectedness to enhance life satisfaction in youth. Educational programs aimed at developing coping skills and promoting nature-based activities could play a crucial role in improving the well-being of young individuals. Further research is needed to explore additional factors that might influence life satisfaction and the potential mechanisms through which resilience and nature connectedness contribute to psychological well-being. This suggests that youth who feel more connected to nature or possess greater resilience report higher levels of life satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship of nature connectedness and resilience with life satisfaction among youth. Findings reveal that both resilience and nature connectedness are positively associated with life satisfaction, resilience being the stronger predictor. These results emphasize the significance of cultivating resilience in youth to enhance their well-being, while also encouraging greater engagement with nature to support mental health and life satisfaction.

However, one limitation of the study is the restricted generalizability of the findings due to the sample being drawn from a specific age range (18-24) and geographic area. Future studies should aim to include a more varied sample in terms of age, cultural backgrounds to improve the applicability of the findings to a broader population.

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