

Personal Growth, Resilience and Burden of Care among Single Parents

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This study was intended to examine the relationship between personal growth, resilience, and burden of care among single parents and role of resilience as mediator between personal growth and burden of care. 100 single parents (M=37, F=63) took part in this study. For data compilation, the personal growth initiative scale-II, brief resilience scale, and burden scale of family caregivers were used. The results demonstrated that personal growth has a substantial positive correlation with resilience and negative correlation with burden of care. Furthermore, resilience significantly mediated the relationship between personal growth and burden of care. Findings evidenced that there are no significant gender differences. The present study will be useful in creating awareness among single parents to manage their stressors effectively .

Keywords: single parents, personal growth, resilience,

In the 20th Century many changes took place, and it was one of the major and drastic change to see the breakdown of traditional family system as the result, a single parent took care of the children rather than both. In the end, single parent families have increased considerably in numbers all over the world and Pakistan has been no exception. Despite having strong cultural values regarding family system, togetherness, relational understanding, collectivism and unity, single families are increasing in Pakistan (6%) (Waseem et al., 2020). Being a single parent and to fulfill all the requirements and necessities is a hard thing to do especially when you do not have enough resources to fulfill the responsibilities that are intended for two people (Azuka-Obieke, 2013). Whatever a person grows up to be in the society, it is based on the environment and learning in the household during childhood. However, because of uncertainty of life, sometimes this responsibility is left to a single parent e.g., divorce, denied parenthood, rape, separation or death of one spouse (Thwala,2011; Falana, Bada & Ayodele,2012).

Among all the other challenges, facing stigmatization, coping with loss and facing financial issues increases the burden on a single parent and effects them in all aspects of life including their emotional and physical wellbeing (Maurya, Parasar & Sharma,2015). Single-parent families are often stigmatized and negatively identified as broken and divergent and single parents are often known as those who cannot handle pressures as they are already burdened and thought to be the one who will only maintain a negative approach to life because of their loss as they are unable to make positive

change in their own lives and make a comeback after their traumatic experience or by willingly choosing to be the single parent (Kjellstrand & Harper, 2012).

An ability to bring about a positive change in one's life after a traumatic experience is known as personal growth of an individual. This phenomenon can be expressed in three important domains including self-awareness, interpersonal relations, and philosophy of life (Tedeschi et al., 2018). As per the model presented by Schaefer and Moos (1992), a person's growth is affected by individual's resources including both internal and external such as personality factors, coping skills, interpersonal equations, and availability of support (emotional and financial). Although the advancement to being a parent is believed to be a joyous event or happening as that of any other life progression, but it comes with higher level of stress, responsibilities, and new challenges (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). It is no wonder that people report more personal growth after the birth of their child (Sawyer & Ayers, 2009; Taubman, 2012). For such transition parent gets general support by the partner who shares parenting duties, a significant personality missing in the case of single parent families and thus they face many challenges due to life's uncertain stressful situation and cannot maintain their balance for healthy functioning (Figueiredo et al., 2008).

It is extremely vital for single parents to maintain an equilibrium state of healthy functioning and manage stressful situations effectively even after crisis situations. This capability is known as Resilience (Smith et al., 2008; Manne et al., 2015). It is considered as a very important concept, having significant role in research and clinical interventions in the field of psychology (Block & Kremen, 1996; Luthar, Cicchetti, Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001; Fredrickson, 2001). As per Wagnild (2011), resilient people are those who are ambitious, who possess the desire to keep going regardless of the circumstances, they can identify their strengths and weaknesses and can efficiently attain and overcome adversity which is very difficult for a single parent to have considering the challenges they face on daily basis.

Research has shown that the current major social issue is single parents trying to be resilient enough to maintain a stable balance in their family life. The plight is that they struggle to overcome all these barriers of low-income, coping with mental and physical stress, health issues etc. (Archer-Banks, & Behar-Horenstein, 2012). Resilience studies exhibit that low socioeconomic factor and single parenting are the two major contributing factors having negative impacts on the families and children and single parenting increases the burden and challenges of one parent to fulfill the responsibilities of two parents (Tsoi & Bryant, 2015). A few studies have found that people who are more resilient exhibit a superior mental and physical performance, identify support from surroundings and cope effectively with any difficulty (Jonker & Greeff, 2009; O'Rourke et al., 2010). Resilience research have also predicted lower levels of caregiving burden i.e., more resilience will result in less burden of care (Cassidy et al., 2013; Scott, 2013).

Burden of care can be described as the aggregation of stress and challenges come across by caregivers during their process of care facility (Tsai, 2003). Burden of care is a challenging task for single parents because they are often the sole earners in their families or the only responsible one who can manage and balance all the stresses (emotional, physical, and financial) of caring for their families. It is expected that single

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parent families mostly experience crucial social and economic difficulty than two-parent families (McQuillan 1990; Holden & Smock 1991; Lipman et al., 1997). Additionally, single parent families also must alleviate the stressors of their work and family life while living on the boundaries of poverty (Avison 1995; Lukemeyer et al., 2000). The level of burden of care for a single parent with no sufficient coping abilities is higher as compared to two parent families with sufficient coping abilities.

Burden of care was first investigated in caregivers of chronic illness patients, and it was assumed to be a closely related construct to caregiving. When it comes to health issues in Pakistani society, mothers are the major carers. When a dreadful tragedy occurs, such as a child being diagnosed with a chronic illness, their responsibilities become threefold. They must not only commit a large portion of their time to addressing the sickness, but also manage other aspects of their family and/or job lives. There is a lot of expectation in such a situation, and there is sometimes help available, whether emotional, social, or financial, as well as support from family and friends. The concept of a joint family is particularly prevalent in Pakistan, and as a result, the presence of a joint family is common. A true or perceived support system is likely to play a significant part in the life of the caregiver (Israr & Ahmed., 2019).

According to Stress Process Model, caregiving is stressful as it includes five different domains i.e., demographic stressors, primary and secondary stressors, appraisal, and mediator/moderator (Pearlin et al., 1981). Primary stressors in this context are an individual's state or condition, leading to secondary stressors such as financial issues and family conflict etc. furthermore, appraisal is a caregiver's own subjective evaluation of their role (Sorensen et al., 2006). Some research shows that female caregivers are more affected by the burden of caregiving because they are less resilient as compared to their male counterparts (Cassidy, Giles, & McLaughlin, 2013, Scott, 2013, Zauszniewski et al., 2008). Furthermore, the approach to handle this burden is different in both males and females. Female caregivers may adapt emotion-focused coping strategy while male caregivers will rather choose problem-focused coping (Cherry et al., 2013).

Single parenting increases the challenges and problems for both the parent and their children, some people can cope with these challenges effectively, but some cannot lead to negative influences. Reports from earlier studies show that the gender of caregivers has been constantly reported as a major forecaster of burden of care (Chou et al., 2011; Hsiao, 2010; Zauszniewski et al., 2008), however this does not specify the relationship among these variables and how resilience plays a buffering role in personal growth and burden of care among single parents. Hence, our study aimed to assess the severity of burden of care and its association with personal growth and resilience among single parents. By recognizing the relationship of these variables, psychological health experts can improve efficient intervention programs to help these parents overcome their stressors.

Previous research established that raising a child is a difficult responsibility, and such responsibilities become more challenging when performed alone (mother or father alone). This leads to more issues, stressors, challenges, hardships, and extraordinary demands on both the single parent and their children (Bronnimann., 2008). Thus, resulting in feeling pressure to fulfill the responsibilities by handling every arising issue and managing the burdens.

With all the aforementioned issues in view, the current study aims to investigate certain challenges faced by single parents such as personal growth, resilience, and burden of care, as well as how these challenges are related to one another, whether resilience can act as a mediator between personal growth and burden of care, and whether there are any significant gender differences among single parents when dealing with these issues.

Method

Hypotheses

1. There is a negative relationship between personal growth, resilience, and burden of care among single parents.
2. Personal growth and resilience negatively predict burden of care among single parents.
3. Resilience mediates the relationship of personal growth and burden of care among single parents.
4. Male single parents are more resilient and able to handle burden of care as compared to female single parents.

Operational Definitions

Personal Growth Personal growth stands for conscious and effective participation in the growth process in areas that are important to the individual (Robitschek et al., 1998).

Resilience Resilience has been defined as the ability to bounce back or recover from stress, as well as endurance to sickness, adaptation, and thriving (Smith, et al., 2008).

Burden of Care Burden of care defines the aggregate of stress and challenges encountered by caregivers during their process of care provision (Graessel et al., 2014).

Participants

Purposive sampling method was used to collect data as this provides particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable to answer our research questions. Sample included 100 single parents (M=37, F=63) from different regions of Punjab, Pakistan (Attock, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Wah & Taxila). Ages of the participants ranges from 18 years and above. The educational requirement was matric.

Instruments

Demographic Data Sheet It has been used to acquire information about respondent's various demographics, such as age, gender, marital status, number of children, education, socioeconomic status, and monthly income, among single parents who are either divorced, separated or widowed.

Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II The improved PGIS-II (Robitschek et al., 2012) is a measure of complicated personal growth initiative processes. It is a 16-item scale with four subscales: readiness for change, plan-fulness, resource use, and intentional behavior. It's a six-point Likert scale, with 0 denoting strong disagreement, 1 denoting disagreement slightly, 2 denoting disagreement a little, 3 denoting agreement a little, 4 denoting agreement substantially, and 5 denoting agreements firmly. More responses on 0 indicate low personal progress, whereas more responses on 5 indicate high personal growth.

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Resilience The Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al.,2008) is a tool for assessing people's perceived ability to recover from stress. It's a six-item scale with items that are both positively and negatively written. Items 1,3, and 5 are positive in nature, whereas 2,4, and 6 are negative in nature. It's a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting strongly disagree, 2 denoting disagree, 3 denoting neutral, 4 denoting agree, 5 denoting strongly agree for items 1, 3 and 5, and 1 denoting strongly agree, 2 denoting agree, 3 denoting neutral, 4 denoting disagree, 5 denoting strongly disagree for items 2,4 and 6. The BRS score ranges from 1 (poor resilience) to 5 (great resilience) (high resilience).

Burden Scale for Family Caregivers The Burden Scale for Family Caregivers (Graessel et al., 2014) is a tool for assessing the burden of family caregivers. It is 28-item scale. It's a four-point Likert scale, with 0 indicating strong agreement, 1 indicating agreement, 2 indicating disagreement, and 3 indicating extreme disagreement. The items are graded on a scale of zero to three (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The point value varies from 0 to 84. Greater caregiver burden is indicated by higher scores.

Procedure

First, respondents gave their informed consent. The information was gathered from 100 single parents in Punjab province, Pakistan. Single parents were given questionnaires on an individual basis, and they were instructed on how to complete them. It has been confirmed that all of the data acquired will be kept confidential.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis of data. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) is used to analyze the relationship between personal growth, resilience, and burden of caring among single parents. The independent sample t-test was employed to investigate gender differences. Mediation analysis was also utilized to analyze resilience as a mediator between personal growth and burden of care.

Results

Table 1

Alpha reliabilities, Mean and Standard Deviation of Personal growth, Resilience and Burden of Care (N=100)

Variables	K	α	M	S. D	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Potential	Actual		
Personal Growth	16	.96	23.55	15.817	0-80	4-74	1.62	1.79
Resilience	06	.75	12.92	2.95	1-30	6-22	.133	1.67
Burden of Care	28	.51	44.80	4.06	0-84	33-54	-.43	.15

Table 1 shows the values of mean, range, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and alpha reliabilities of subscales and scales. The value of skewness & kurtosis shows that data is normally distributed and alpha reliabilities of scale confirm the adequate inter-item consistencies.

Table 2

Correlation analysis of personal growth, resilience and burden of care among single parents (N=100)

Variables	1	2	3
1.Personal Growth	-	.498**	-.261**
2.Resilience		-	.056
3. Burden of care			-

p**<0.01

The results of the correlation analysis indicated that personal growth showed positive correlation with resilience signifying that people having high personal growth will be more resilient or will develop more adaptive ways that enabled them to experience less burden of care and more personal growth. However, personal growth showed a significantly negative relationship with burden of care representing that people are more likely to feel burden of care when their personal growth is less.

Table 3

Simple Mediation of the effect of Resilience between Personal growth and Burden of care among single parents (N=100)

Predictors	Group Identification			
	Model 2			
		95% CI		
	Model 1 B	B	LL	UL
Constant	46.38	-7098	47.97	47.79
Personal growth	-.0672	.0251	-.1169	-.0175
Resilience		.3407	.0396	.6418
Indirect effect- PGIS BRS→BSFC →		.0317	.0025	.0746
R ²	.0683	.1144		
□R ²		.5686		
F	7.1882	6.2647		
□F		0.9235		

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; UL = Upper Limit; LL = Lower Limit; PGIS= Personal Growth; BRS= Resilience; BSFC= Burden of care

The results in Table 3 show that resilience mediates the relationship between personal growth and burden of care. Indirect effect was found to be significant. Hence, hypothesis that resilience mediates the relationship of personal growth and burden of care among single parents, is confirmed.

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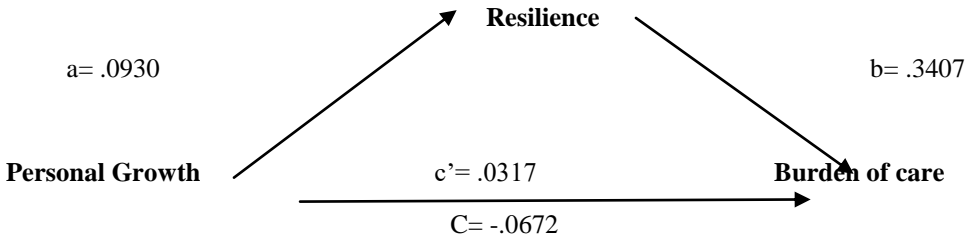


Figure: Mediating Role of Resilience on personal growth and burden of care (N=100)

Table 4: T-test of Gender Based Comparison for personal growth, resilience and burden of care among single parents (N=100)

Variables	Male=37		Female=63		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	S. D	M	S. D			LB	UB	
Personal growth	23.57	13.03	23.54	17.34	.008	.99	-	6.56	0.00
Resilience	13.30	2.87	12.70	2.99	.97	.33	-6.1	1.81	0.20
Burden of Care	45.59	4.40	44.33	3.81	1.50	.13	-.39	2.92	0.30

Table 3 is showing the scores of the T-test’s gender base comparison that whether the males are showing high scores, or females have high scores. As the result shows that there are no significant differences between males and females in personal growth, resilience, and burden of care among single parents. Male single parents, on the other hand, were shown to be more resilient (M=13.30) and capable of handling their caregiving responsibilities (M=45.59) than female single parents (Resilience M= 12.70, Burden of care= 44.33).

Discussion

It is obvious that parenthood is the time of life when stress and challenges are very common, without even taking into consideration the number of parents in the households (Umberton and Gove., 1989). With the child caregiving burden, the other personal time demands also increases in parents because of their increased childcare and household management responsibilities (Berk & Berk., 1979).

Such normal pressure increases in single parents as in most of the single parent households every responsibility, be it earning or child rearing single handedly. Children of single parent families rarely have any other elder individual who appears to be the supplemental support for them in fulfilling the demands of their single parents (Wright., 1989).

Therefore, the current study was aimed to study these challenges faced by single parents. Thus, this study explored the relationship between personal growth, resilience, and burden of care among single parents. Results of the study revealed that there is a

significant positive relationship between personal growth and resilience following the previous research showing that families with strong ability of coherence adapt more easily after a crisis and achieve good level of reorganization and growth (Greef & Fillis., 2009) while personal growth shows negative relationship with burden of care which is consistent with the earlier research findings showed that parents' caregiving experiences impacted them both positively and badly, with continued stress and personal growth (Young, Shakes Peer-Finch, Obst., 2019).

It was hypothesized that personal growth and resilience will negatively predict burden of care, which is consistent with a previous study that looked at the role of the personal growth initiative in predicting posttraumatic growth and posttraumatic stress and found that personal growth was found to be a negative predictor of posttraumatic stress (Shigemoto, Ashton & Robitschek., 2016).

Personal growth and resilience were found to be negative predictors of burden of care in a prior study that looked at the function of the PGIS initiative in predicting posttraumatic growth and posttraumatic stress and discovered that PGIS was a negative predictor of posttraumatic stress. The results indicated that resilience partially mediates the relationship among study variables (Faircloth.,2017).

It was hypothesized that there will be significant gender differences in single parent's resilience, personal growth and burden of care which was in accordance with the previous studies of single mothers stating that mothers tend to feel more pressure and more stress as compared to the fathers because for mother earning and managing household requirements becomes a difficult task to accomplish with them not being affected by these stressors. Women without men in their lives may face major challenges as single mothers, while their children are exposed to a variety of social difficulties, such as youngsters who run away from home, incarceration, a lack of education, and malnutrition (Sterrett, Jones, Kincaid., 2009). Being a mother and a father at the same time takes a lot of time and energy, and it can lead to some awkward circumstances. Single mothers have a higher level of stress than other parents. (Cheung, Suk-ching., 1997). But current study findings reported no significant gender differences in single parents' personal growth, resilience and burden of care which are in congruence with the previous findings of no significant differences when psychological well-being and adjustment of single parents was studied (Tarar et al., 2021). Similarly, when resilience was tested in a different arena by assessing post-traumatic stress among survivors of Bacha Khan University Charsadda, Pakistan, both male and female students reported being highly resilient, with no significant differences in their resilient capacities (Zaman & Munib., 2020).

Conclusion

On the findings of the present study, it may be concluded that single parents having personal growth are more resilient. Low personal growth leads to issues in handling burden of care. Single parents with more burden of care will face difficulties managing their burden and being able to handle stress associated with caregiving. Due to a various issue, single parents are unable to properly care for their children and fulfill all their required responsibilities.

Limitations and Suggestions

The current study included single parents who volunteered to participate; nevertheless, the random sample technique may yield different results. The results cannot be applied to the entire population of single parents due to time constraints and a small sample size. The future investigation should be undertaken with a big sample size to allow for generalization of the results and longitudinal study may yield more strong results.

Given the nature of the variables in this study, a longitudinal study might be more effective in examining the intensity of variables among single parents over time. Other variables, such as parental emotional difficulties and parental behavior with their children, could also be evaluated, as the current study was unable to incorporate all of these dimensions.

The present study did not take an equivalent balance of male and female single parents. To have more insight about gender differences in single parents, future researchers may take into account a potential and proper ratio of both males and females. In the present study, significant sociodemographic factors were not explored. It is recommended to investigate their impact on single parents.

Implication of Present Study

In Pakistan's current circumstances, the rising prevalence of economic troubles, single parenting, and the weight of care have become a social threat. It is critical to raise awareness among single parents through seminars or workshops, and to educate them on how to manage their life pressures associated with caregiving responsibilities, as well as how to improve the lives of themselves and their children. In light of Pakistan, it is necessary to develop and implement effective strategies and practices that will assist them in growing and managing their challenges. As a result, the current study has a wide range of implications for single parents, practitioners, and researchers, allowing them to create appropriate conflict resolution treatments.

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