

A Quantitative Study on the Effect of Expressive Arts Therapy on Resilience Among Homeless Youth

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Abstract

Homeless Adolescents is a significant social issue that poses substantial risks to mental health and wellbeing. Despite these challenges, many homeless adolescents demonstrate resilience—the ability to adapt positively to adversity. This study evaluates the effectiveness of a 20-week expressive arts therapy intervention in enhancing resilience among homeless adolescents, with a focus on hardiness, optimism, resourcefulness, and a sense of purpose. Utilizing a quantitative pre-test and post-test design, the study assessed resilience levels using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) before and after the intervention. A sample of 60 adolescents (30 boys and 30 girls) from shelter homes in Chennai participated in the study. Results show significant improvements in resilience-related factors, especially among girls, suggesting that expressive arts therapy effectively enhances emotional regulation, coping strategies, and psychological recovery in homeless adolescents. These findings underscore the potential of therapeutic interventions to foster resilience in at-risk youth populations and provide insight into gender-specific responses to such programs.

Keywords: homeless adolescents, resilience, expressive arts therapy, hardiness, optimism, resourcefulness, purpose, gender differences

Studi Kuantitatif tentang Pengaruh Terapi Seni Ekspresif terhadap Resiliensi Remaja Tunawisma

Abstrak

Remaja tunawisma merupakan permasalahan sosial yang signifikan dan menimbulkan risiko besar terhadap kesehatan mental dan kesejahteraan psikologis. Meskipun menghadapi berbagai tantangan tersebut, banyak remaja tunawisma menunjukkan resiliensi, yaitu kemampuan untuk beradaptasi secara positif dalam menghadapi kondisi yang penuh tekanan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas intervensi terapi seni ekspresif selama 20 minggu dalam meningkatkan resiliensi remaja tunawisma, dengan fokus pada aspek ketangguhan (hardiness), optimisme, kemandirian dalam memanfaatkan sumber daya (resourcefulness), serta rasa tujuan hidup. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif dengan pre-test dan post-test untuk mengukur tingkat resiliensi sebelum dan sesudah intervensi menggunakan Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). Sampel penelitian terdiri atas 60 remaja (30 laki-laki dan 30 perempuan) yang berasal dari rumah singgah di Chennai. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada faktor-faktor resiliensi, khususnya pada remaja perempuan. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa terapi seni ekspresif efektif dalam meningkatkan regulasi emosi, strategi koping, serta pemulihan psikologis pada remaja tunawisma.

Hasil penelitian ini menegaskan potensi intervensi terapeutik dalam menumbuhkan resiliensi pada kelompok remaja berisiko, serta memberikan wawasan mengenai perbedaan respons berdasarkan gender terhadap program terapi tersebut.

Kata kunci: remaja tunawisma, resiliensi, terapi seni ekspresif, ketangguhan, optimisme, kemandirian sumber daya, tujuan hidup, perbedaan gender

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescent homelessness poses a serious developmental risk because it exposes young people to long-term stressors like trauma, instability, social exclusion, and impeded educational paths (Fitzpatrick, 2009; Gordon & King, 2014). Despite these challenges, a large number of homeless teenagers possess resilience, which is the ability to adjust constructively and maintain psychological functioning in the face of severe stress (Masten, 2014). Resilience involves factors like **hardiness**, **optimism**, **resourcefulness**, and a sense of **purpose** (Connor & Davidson, 2003). These protective elements can buffer the negative effects of adversity, promoting well-being and adaptive functioning. Specifically, hardiness helps individuals persevere through challenges, while optimism and resourcefulness contribute to positive coping strategies (Kobasa, 1979; Carver, 1998; Zimmerman et al., 2013). Additionally, a sense of purpose is crucial in guiding individuals toward meaningful goals despite difficult circumstances (Frankl, 2006).

For homeless adolescents, resilience is vital as they face unstable living conditions. Interventions targeting resilience, such as **expressive arts therapy**, show promise in improving emotional expression, self-awareness, and coping skills (Malchiodi, 2005). This therapy is particularly effective for trauma survivors, offering a safe outlet for emotional expression and aiding trauma processing (Perrin & Hergenrath, 2010). Previous studies have demonstrated that expressive arts therapy enhances resilience in at-risk populations, including homeless youth (Strozier et al., 2015).

A structured, facilitator-led therapeutic intervention involving weekly 90-minute sessions over a 20-week period is how expressive arts therapy is operationalized in this study. With well-defined therapeutic goals that focus on emotional regulation, self-expression, coping skills, and meaning-making, each session methodically incorporates visual art, movement, music, storytelling, and reflective dialogue. Additionally, it examines potential gender differences in resilience outcomes (Drapeau et al., 2019). By evaluating this intervention, the study aims to contribute to the evidence supporting creative therapies as a tool for fostering resilience in at-risk populations.

Using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), four empirically supported domains—hardiness, optimism, resourcefulness, and meaningfulness/purpose—are used to further operationalize resilience in this study. According to Connor and Davidson (2003) and Sidheek et al. (2017), these domains represent adolescents' perceived capacity to endure stress, uphold positive expectations, mobilize coping mechanisms, and create meaning in the face of hardship. This study goes beyond theoretical discussion and assesses quantifiable psychological change among homeless adolescents by empirically testing a clearly

defined expressive arts intervention within a pre-test–post-test experimental framework.

Review of Literature

A key concept in comprehending how adolescents cope with difficulties, particularly in circumstances that include poverty, trauma, and social marginalization, is resilience. In line with contemporary studies, resilience is a dynamic process that depends on one's own strengths, social connections, cultural resources, and institutional support networks rather than just an individual characteristic (Masten, 2014; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013).

Resilience in Adolescents Who Are Homeless and Marginalized

Due to continuous instability and trauma exposure, research consistently shows that homeless adolescents are more inclined to suffer psychological distress, emotional dysregulation, and developmental disruption (Benner et al., 2007; Kidd & Davidson, 2007). Despite these difficulties, a lot of adolescents show resilience by using adaptable coping mechanisms, optimism, and problem-solving techniques. Research carried out in Western settings highlights how homeless youth can develop resilience through school involvement, mentoring relationships, and access to mental health services (Moore et al., 2011; Rew et al., 2001).

Resilience among adolescents who experience homelessness in India has been strongly associated with cultural and social factors like spirituality, collectivism, and community-based support networks (Sharma et al., 2009; Chatterjee et al., 2021). These results imply that interventions must be in line with adolescents' lived realities and belief systems because resilience is culturally embedded.

Resilience by Gender

Several studies have found that there are gender differences in the way that resilience works. Females tend to exhibit more emotional expression, relational coping, and seeking help than males, while males are more likely to rely upon the use of problem-solving strategies (Drapeau et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2000). Therefore, these gender differences can influence an adolescent's response to the various types of interventions they may receive and may provide important insight into the outcomes of the various programs available to build resilience in adolescents based on their gender.

Creative and Expressive Interventions for Resilience

Artistic and expressive therapies have long been acknowledged as beneficial in assisting with the regulation of emotions, managing traumatic experiences, and

establishing identity in at-risk youth. Expressive arts therapy combines elements that involve images, music, movement, drama, and storytelling to engage in non-verbal expression and construction in those who are incapable of expression in traditional talk therapy methods (Malchiodi, 2005).

Some empirical evidence has shown that expressive and artistic interventions are effective in improving resilience outcomes by increasing awareness, expression, and adaptation (Hart et al., 2015; Folostina et al., 2015). These are important aspects that can improve social connections and feelings of empowerment among adolescents, which are important protective factors. While the majority of the current scholarly literature concerning research studies about expressive arts uses a combination of qualitative data and/or mixed methods approach, very few studies provide quantitative evidence to demonstrate the measurable change in resilience domains associated with the use of expressive arts as an intervention. Additionally, there is insufficient literature focused completely on homeless adolescents who reside in an institution (e.g., a facility, a group home, or a shelter).

Cultural and contextual dimensions of resilience

Cultural context is highly important in shaping the processes of resilience. In studies researching Indigenous and marginalized youth, cultural identity, spirituality, and community involvement have been consistently identified as key factors in sustaining psychological well-being (Eggerman & Panter-Brick, 2010; Toombs et al., 2016). In India, spirituality and making meaning figure prominently as coping strategies, suggesting symbolic and expressive elements in interventions may carry particular resonance with adolescents facing adversity.

Gap in Research

While resilience has been studied extensively in homeless adolescents, there is little quantitative research evaluating the effectiveness of structured expressive arts therapy in the context of India. Most all existing research does not effectively describe or systematically evaluate expressive arts therapy as an intervention and does not study its impact on different genders within this population. To fill this gap, this research project quantitatively evaluates the effectiveness of a structured expressive arts therapy program on increasing the resilience of homeless adolescents living in shelter homes in Chennai, India.

METHOD

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a 20-week expressive arts therapy intervention in enhancing resilience among homeless adolescents residing in shelter homes in Chennai. A total of 60 participants (30 boys and 30 girls) were

selected using purposive sampling. Primary data were collected using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), a validated instrument designed to measure individual resilience. The participants completed the questionnaire prior to the intervention to establish baseline resilience levels. The intervention consisted of structured expressive arts therapy sessions, conducted weekly over a period of 20 weeks, focusing on creative expression as a means of emotional regulation and psychological empowerment. Upon completion of the intervention, the CD-RISC was administered again to assess changes in resilience. The pre- and post-intervention data were analysed quantitatively to determine the impact of the expressive arts program on participants' resilience levels.

Research Design

The research used a one-group quasi-experimental design, with participants tested prior to and after participating in the expressive arts therapy program. The research utilized a one-group quasi-experimental design, with participants tested prior to and after participating in the expressive arts therapy program.

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested in the study:

H1. There will be a significant increase in resilience scores among homeless youth after the expressive arts therapy intervention.

H2. There will be significant gender differences in resilience scores after the intervention.

To investigate this, the study was guided by several specific objectives: first, to measure the initial (baseline) resilience levels of participants using the CD-RISC; second, to implement a structured expressive arts therapy intervention aimed at fostering emotional expression, self-awareness, and coping skills; third, to reassess participants' resilience levels post-intervention using the same instrument; fourth, to evaluate the effect of the intervention by comparing pre- and post-intervention scores; and finally, to explore any gender-based differences in the intervention's impact on resilience outcomes.

Participants and Sampling

A purposive homogeneous sample of 60 adolescents without homes (30 boys and 30 girls) aged 13-18 years living in Shelter Homes in Chennai was used for this research. The participants all had a similar amount of time they had been Living homeless, in Shelter Homes, and had experienced educational disruption due to homelessness.

Intervention Operationalization

The expressive arts therapy intervention consisted of 20 weekly sessions, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. Sessions followed a standardized protocol including

- Warm-up
- Expressive activity: drawing, painting, music, movement, or drama
- Group reflection and meaning-making discussion
- Beginning and grounding exercises

All the sessions were facilitated by a trained expressive arts therapist, ensuring procedural consistency.

Instrumentation and Reliability

Resilience was measured by the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), without modification of items; however, for factor interpretation, Sidheek et al. (2017) four-factor structure indicated cultural validity in Indian adolescent samples. The internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's α , reported by previous Indian studies exceeded 0.80, thus supporting scale reliability.

Statistical analysis

Paired-sample t-tests compared pretest scores with post-test scores for each of the resilience domains. Independent-sample t-tests were used to compare scores by gender. ANOVA was not used because there were no multiple experimental groups, ensuring that there was appropriate statistical alignment with study variables.

RESULTS

The results were analysed by taking the study conducted by Sidheek et al. (2017) as reference their study intended to assess the factorial validity of the Kannada version of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) among undergraduate college students from low-income backgrounds. The factor analysis revealed a four-factor structure (Hardiness, Optimism, Resourcefulness, and Meaningfulness/Purpose) differing from the original five-factor structure proposed by Connor and Davidson (2003).

The study results indicated that factors of control/meaning and meaning were not distinct in our population, leading to the emergence of purpose as a factor encompassing spiritual aspects and control. Notably, items 1, 2, 5, 14, and 15 did not align with any factors, possibly due to the young age and specific experiences of the girls studied. Table 1.1 shows the domains along with the items derived from the study.

Table 1.1: Domains and Items of Sidheek et al. (2017) Study

Domains	Items
Hardiness	10,11,12, 21,22,24,25
Optimism	7,8,9,16,20
Resourcefulness	4, 17, 18, 19, 23
Meaningfulness/Purpose	3,6,13

The current study's data was collected for girls and boys in South India. The survey conducted by Sidheek et al. (2017) was considered a reference for the data analysis for the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent boys and girls.

Hardiness

Table 1.2: Hardiness –One of the Domains of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

Gender	Items	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff
Boys	I give my best effort no matter what the outcome may be.	9.08	30	0	1.81	13.38	27	0	3.07
	“I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles”	11.45	30	0	2.42	12.75	27	0	3.07
	Even when things look hopeless, I don't give up.	10.82	30	0	2.06	9.08	27	0	2.54
	I have a strong sense of purpose in life.	11.56	30	0	1.97	11.18	27	0	2.93
	I feel in control of my life.	9.61	30	0	1.97	13.74	27	0	3.11
	“I work to attain my goals no matter what roadblocks I encounter along the way”	11.18	30	0	2.10	15.42	27	0	3.11
	I take pride in my achievements.	13.80	30	0	2.35	8.54	27	0	2.46
	I give my best effort no matter what the outcome may be.	14.26	31	0	3.09	16.52	31	0	3.16
Girls	“I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles”.	14.62	31	0	3.16	23.31	31	0	3.47
	Even when things look hopeless, I don't give up.	8.83	31	0	2.4	13.11	31	0	2.91

I have a strong sense of purpose in life.	12.88	31	0	3.03	18.85	31	0	3.34
I feel in control of my life.	15.28	31	0	3.13	25.41	31	0	3.38
I work to attain my goals no matter what roadblocks I encounter along the way.	17.52	31	0	3.22	41.76	31	0	3.75
I take pride in my achievements.	8.73	31	0	2.38	12.68	31	0	3.06

The data presented in Table 1.2 examines the domain of hardiness. Figure 1.1 shows mean differences in the hardiness of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls.

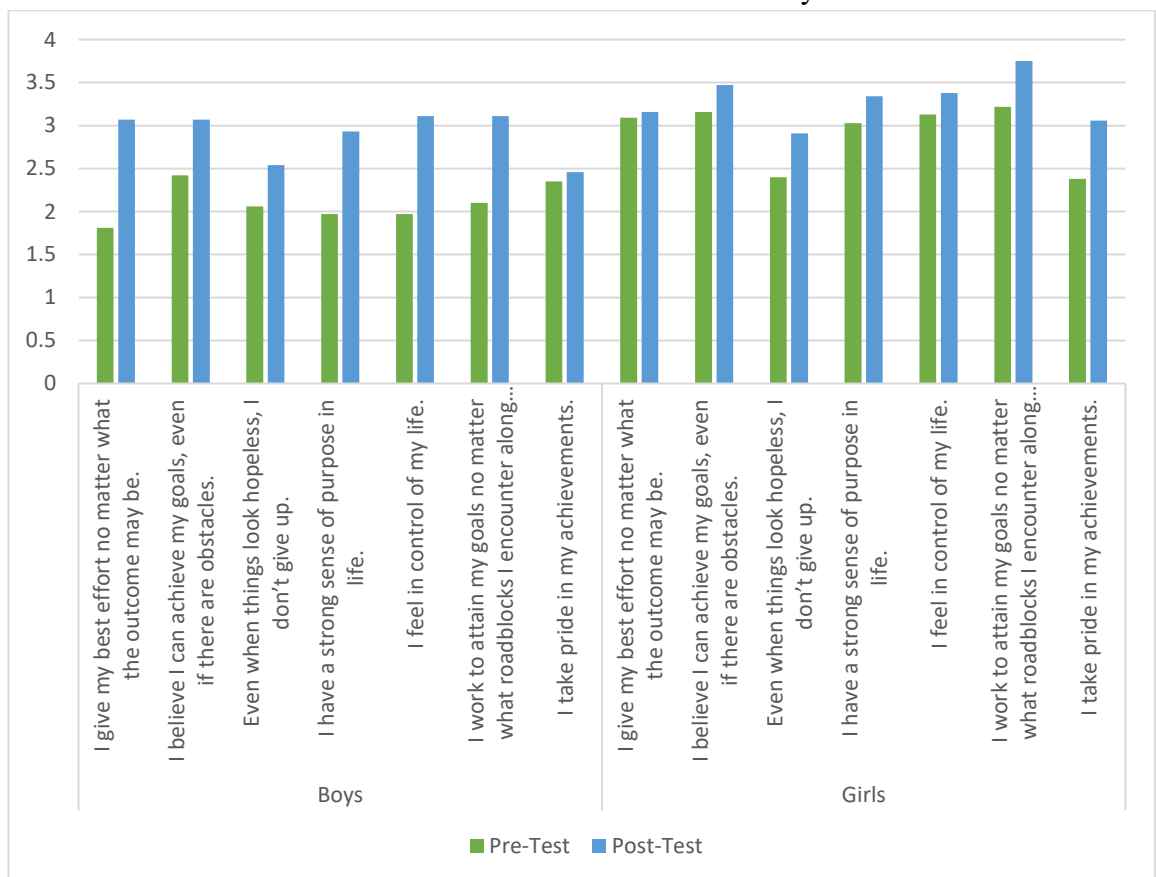


Figure 1.1: Hardiness –One of the Domains of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

Optimism

Table 1.3: Optimism–One of the Domains of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

Gender	Items	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Boys	Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.	4.85	30	0	0.97	8.72	27	0	2.21
	I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships.	14.60	30	0	2.42	10.55	27	0	2.79
	Good or bad, I believe that most things happen for a reason.	8.68	30	0	1.90	13.11	27	0	2.75
	I am not easily discouraged by failure.	9.59	30	0	1.94	7.05	27	0	2.04
	In dealing with life's problems, sometimes you have to act on a hunch without knowing why.	8.60	30	0	1.35	10.14	27	0	2.11
Girls	Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.	10.97	31	0	2.41	9.93	31	0	1.84
	I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships.	11.55	31	0	2.81	13.36	31	0	2.97
	Good or bad, I believe that most things happen for a reason.	17.27	31	0	2.88	19.41	31	0	3.16
	I am not easily discouraged by failure.	7.96	31	0	2.19	10.94	31	0	2.59
	In dealing with life's problems, sometimes you have to act on a hunch without knowing why.	11.67	31	0	2.19	12.00	31	0	2.47

Table 4.3 presents data on optimism. Figure 4.2 illustrates the optimism of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls.

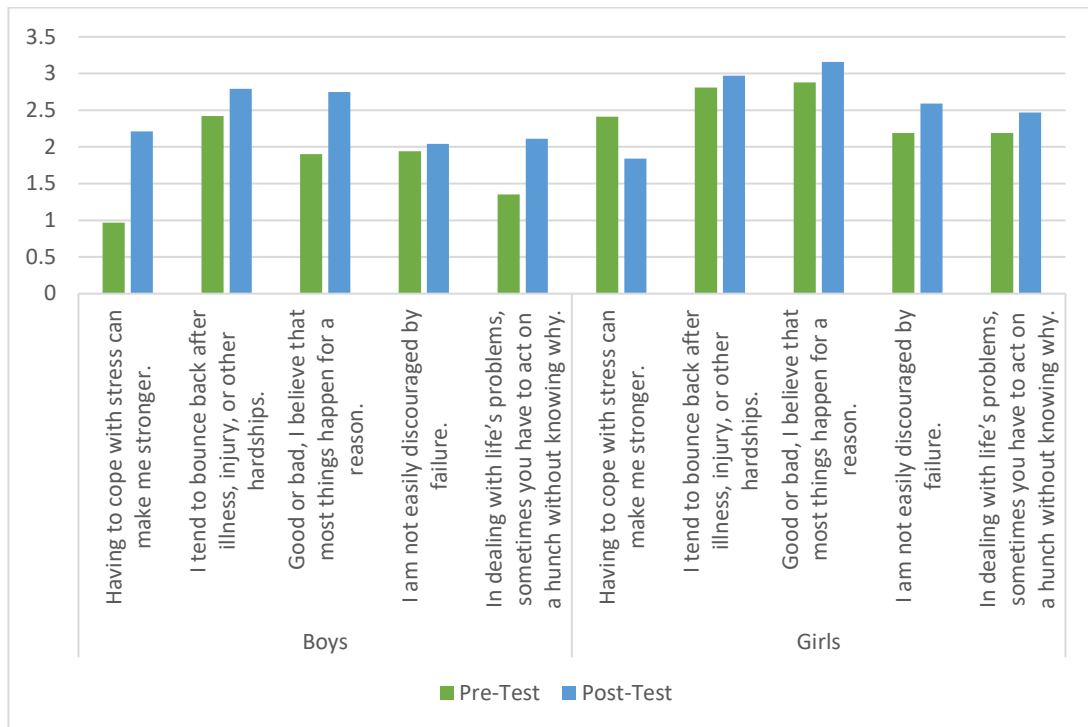


Figure 1. 2: Optimism–One of the Domains of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

Resourcefulness

Table 1.4: Resourcefulness –One of the Domains of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

Gender	Items	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Boys	I can deal with whatever comes my way.	7.83	30	0	1.71	13.51	27	0	2.89
	I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.	12.37	30	0	2.10	8.86	27	0	2.43
	I can make unpopular or difficult decisions that affect other people, if it is necessary.	6.17	30	0	1.19	4.41	27	0	1.18
	I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.	8.19	30	0	1.26	11.00	27	0	2.43
	I like challenges.	10.33	30	0	2.13	9.13	27	0	2.36
Girls	I can deal with whatever comes my way.	13.94	31	0	2.78	23.02	31	0	3.41

I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.	10.10	31	0	2.56	9.44	31	0	2.34
I can make unpopular or difficult decisions that affect other people, if it is necessary.	4.14	31	0	1.00	8.95	31	0	2.28
I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.	9.40	31	0	2.16	11.18	31	0	2.84
I like challenges.	11.00	31	0	2.56	22.03	31	0	3.41

Table 1.4 provides an insightful analysis of the domain of resourcefulness as a measure of resilience among homeless adolescent boys and girls through a pre-test and post-test. Figure 1.3 shows the resourcefulness of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent boys and girls.

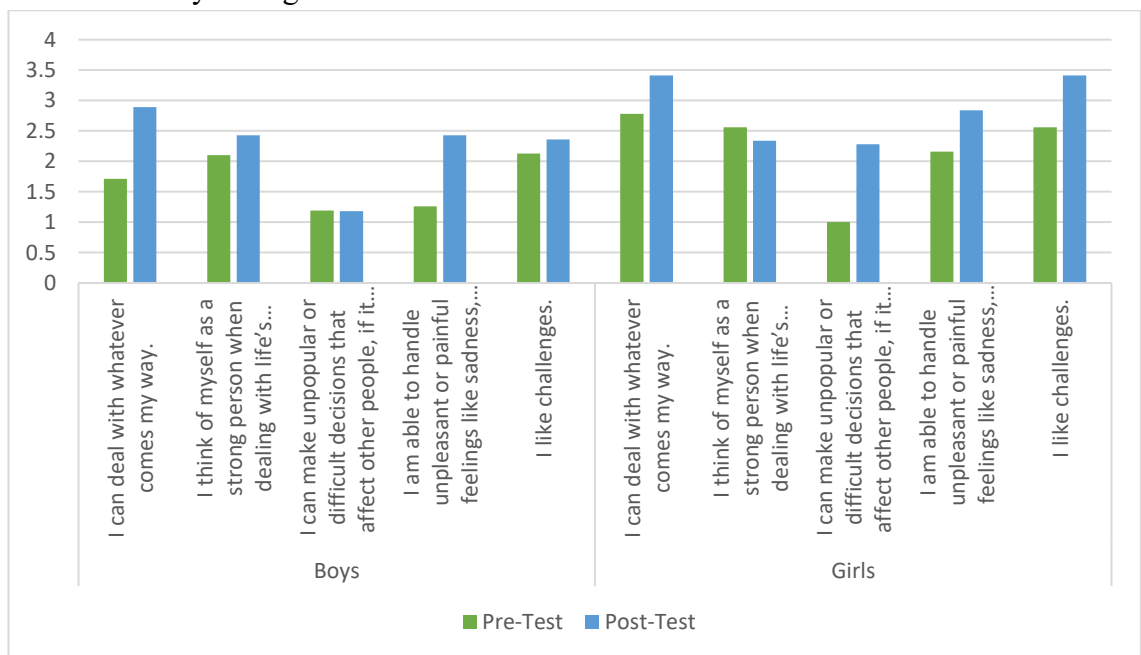


Figure 1.3: Resourcefulness –One of the Domains of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

Meaningfulness/Purpose

The data presented in Table 1.5 illustrates the scores of homeless adolescent boys and girls on the domain of Meaningfulness/Purpose, one of the critical dimensions of resilience, as measured before and after an intervention. Figure 1.5 shows the Meaningfulness/Purpose of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls Resilience.

Table 1.5: Meaningfulness/Purpose–One of the Domains of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

Gender	items	Pre-Test			Post-Test			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Boys	When there are no clear solutions to my problems, sometimes fate or God can help.	12.51	30	0	2.68	12.79	27	0
	I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.	9.68	30	0	2.03	10.15	27	0
	During times of stress/crisis, I know where to turn for help.	5.24	30	0	1.10	8.98	27	0
Girls	When there are no clear solutions to my problems, sometimes fate or God can help.	11.37	31	0	2.75	12.26	31	0
	I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.	6.30	31	0	1.47	9.14	31	0
	During times of stress/crisis, I know where to turn for help.	10.35	31	0	2.69	11.76	31	0

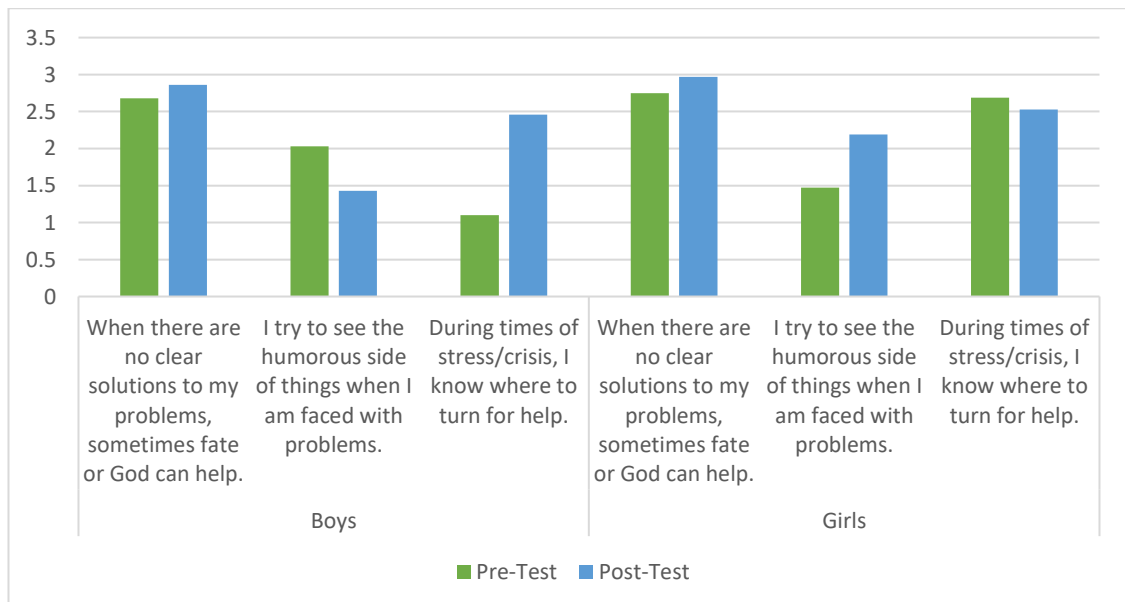


Figure 1.4: Meaningfulness/Purpose–One of the Domains of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

The data presented in the table shows an analysis of various psychological attributes: Hardiness, Meaningfulness, Optimism, and Resourcefulness/Purpose, measured through a t-test for boys and girls at both pre-test and post-test stages. Each psychological domain is essential in understanding the overall resilience of the individuals involved.

Table 1.6: Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Resilience of Homeless Adolescent Boys and Girls

Gender	Test	Hardiness	Meaningfulness	Optimism	Resourcefulness/ Purpose
Boys	Pre-Test	t=11.07 df=30	t= 9.237 df= 30	t=9.26 df=30	t=8.97 df=30
	Post-Test	t=12.01 df=27	t=9.411 df= 27	t=9.9 df=27	t=9.37 df=27
Girls	Pre-Test	t=13.15 df=31	t=9.34 df= 31	t=11.88 df=31	t=9.17 df=31
	Post-Test	t=21.66 df=31	t=10.72 df=31	t=13.12 df=31	t=14.92 df=31

The data in Table 1.6 shows an analysis of various resilience domains—Hardiness, Meaningfulness, Optimism, and Resourcefulness/Purpose—measured through a t-test for boys and girls at both pre-test and post-test.

The intervention has proven highly effective for both boys and girls in enhancing hardiness, meaningfulness, optimism, and resourcefulness. Girls showed more pronounced improvements across most domains, suggesting that the intervention might have incorporated elements particularly resonant with female participants. This is consistent with the literature suggesting that gender-specific approaches can maximize the efficacy of psychological and Resilience-building interventions (Johnson, 2015; Foster, 2016).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate the significant impact of a 20-week expressive arts therapy intervention on enhancing resilience in homeless adolescents. The intervention was effective in fostering improvements in several key resilience components, including hardiness, optimism, resourcefulness, and meaningfulness. Both boys and girls showed notable improvements in their ability to cope with adversity, manage stress, and cultivate a sense of control over their lives.

One of the most prominent results was the increase in **hardiness**, particularly in areas related to effort, goal-setting, and control. Boys showed significant gains, particularly in their ability to persist in the face of challenges, as reflected in their responses to the item, "I give my best effort no matter the outcome." These changes are consistent with previous research emphasizing that resilience interventions can enhance perseverance and self-efficacy, which are

critical in coping with stress (Kobasa, 1979; Masten, 2014). Girls also demonstrated substantial improvements in similar areas, with a notable increase in their belief that they could achieve goals despite obstacles. This aligns with Bandura's (1997) theory that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in overcoming challenges and maintaining resilience.

The study also found significant improvements in **optimism** among both boys and girls. For example, participants reported increased belief that they could "bounce back" after setbacks, a key characteristic of resilience (Masten & Reed, 2002). This is particularly important for homeless adolescents, who often face multiple setbacks and challenges. The results suggest that the intervention effectively fostered a more optimistic outlook, which is crucial for psychological well-being and future success (Duckworth et al., 2007). The improvement in optimism among girls was more pronounced, which could be due to their greater reliance on social support and adaptive coping mechanisms, as noted in previous studies on gender differences in resilience (Drapeau et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2000).

Resourcefulness was another critical dimension where both genders showed substantial improvements. Boys and girls alike reported increased confidence in their ability to manage challenges and handle emotional difficulties. These findings highlight the importance of developing coping strategies that allow adolescents to navigate difficult situations, a key feature of resilience (Smith et al., 2020). Girls, in particular, showed a more significant increase in their ability to handle unpleasant emotions and embrace challenges, further supporting the idea that girls may benefit more from interventions targeting social and emotional resilience (Jones & Thompson, 2019).

The domain of **meaningfulness** or **purpose** also saw significant changes post-intervention, especially in the use of spiritual beliefs and humor as coping mechanisms. Both boys and girls demonstrated increased reliance on spirituality to make sense of their hardships, a coping strategy known to enhance resilience in individuals facing adversity (Pargament, 2007). The girls showed a greater improvement in this regard, indicating that spiritual and emotional coping strategies might be more effective for them in fostering resilience. Moreover, the increased use of humor as a coping strategy is in line with research suggesting that humor can alleviate stress and contribute to emotional resilience (Martin, 2010; Vaillant, 2000). These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of resilience and suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing resilience should incorporate diverse coping strategies, particularly those that address personal beliefs and emotional well-being. Overall, the statistical analysis of the pre- and post-test results revealed highly significant improvements across all resilience domains, with p-values consistently below 0.001, reinforcing the effectiveness of the expressive arts therapy intervention. Gender differences in the magnitude of change were evident, with

girls demonstrating more substantial improvements in some resilience dimensions. This finding aligns with existing literature suggesting that gender-specific approaches may be needed to maximize the impact of resilience interventions (Taylor et al., 2021).

The results of this study show that a 20-week expressive arts therapy intervention significantly improves resilience in adolescents who are homeless. All major resilience domains—hardiness, optimism, resourcefulness, and meaningfulness/purpose—showed statistically significant improvements as a result of the intervention, demonstrating the efficacy of structured creative therapeutic approaches for psychologically vulnerable youth populations.

Examining whether expressive arts therapy could considerably improve resilience among homeless adolescents was one of the study's main goals. The statistically significant increases in resilience scores for both boys and girls between the pre-test and post-test demonstrate how well the results support this goal. Participation in the expressive arts therapy intervention resulted in consistent and significant gains across all resilience domains, according to paired-sample t-test analyses, supporting Hypothesis 1, which proposed a significant post-intervention increase in resilience levels.

These results imply that expressive arts therapy gave teenagers useful tools for self-expression, emotional control, and overcoming hardship. Drawing, music, movement, and storytelling are examples of creative modalities that may have helped participants process stressors that are frequently hard to express verbally by facilitating the nonverbal expression of trauma-related emotions. This is consistent with earlier studies showing that resilience is a dynamic ability that can be enhanced by focused psychosocial interventions rather than a fixed trait (Masten, 2014; Malchiodi, 2005).

The study looked at gender differences in post-intervention outcomes in addition to overall resilience gains. Boys and girls both showed notable increases in resilience, but girls' gains were more noticeable in most areas, especially hardiness, resourcefulness, and meaningfulness/purpose. Hypothesis 2, which postulated that gender would affect post-intervention resilience outcomes, was supported by post-test comparisons that revealed statistically significant gender differences in resilience scores.

Differences in coping mechanisms and emotional socialization may account for these gender-based disparities. The focus of expressive arts therapy is on relational engagement, emotional awareness, and reflective processing—approaches that may be more in line with coping mechanisms frequently used by teenage girls. According to earlier research, girls frequently respond better to interventions that include expressive and emotion-focused elements (Drapeau et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2000). However, the notable gains seen in boys suggest that

expressive arts therapy is generally beneficial for both sexes, though gender-sensitive modifications may increase its effectiveness.

Enhancements in particular resilience domains further substantiate the study's conclusions. Improved hardiness means that adolescents are more determined, focused on their goals, and feel like they have more control over their lives. These are important adaptive skills for teens who are dealing with chronic instability. Gains in optimism indicate a strengthened belief in recovery and future possibilities, while improvements in resourcefulness suggest better emotional management and problem-solving abilities. The observed increase in meaningfulness and purpose highlights the role of expressive arts therapy in fostering hope, spirituality, and meaning-making, key protective factors for adolescents experiencing homelessness.

Despite these positive outcomes, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The absence of a control group limits causal attribution, and the reliance on self-report measures introduces the possibility of response bias. Additionally, the study's sample was limited to shelter-based adolescents in an urban South Indian context, which may restrict generalizability. Nevertheless, the consistency and strength of the findings across multiple resilience domains lend credibility to the intervention's effectiveness.

Overall, the study provides empirical support for the use of expressive arts therapy as a resilience-building intervention for homeless adolescents. By confirming both hypotheses, the findings underscore the value of structured, culturally responsive creative therapies in promoting psychological well-being and adaptive functioning among marginalized youth. Future research incorporating controlled designs, longitudinal follow-ups, and gender-responsive intervention models would further strengthen the evidence base and inform best practices in this area.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research highlights the transformative potential of expressive arts therapy in enhancing resilience among homeless adolescents. While both boys and girls showed improvements, the greater gains observed in girls suggest the need for more tailored approaches in resilience interventions, considering the gendered experiences of homeless youth. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of such interventions and investigate the specific components of expressive arts therapy that contribute most significantly to resilience development. The findings have practical implications for the development of support programs for homeless adolescents, advocating for programs that foster not only resilience but also well-being, hope, and future-oriented goals.

Inclusion of quantitative evidence within Expressive Arts Therapy, and through the systematic and specific application of Expressive Arts Therapy, can help foster greater resiliency in homeless adolescents. This provides empirical support for the use of creative therapies as a part of mental health programs located in, or available to, homeless youth at shelters. Future studies need to have a randomized control design and a longitudinal follow-up, with either a single or multi-site sample, in order to establish increased empirical validity.

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