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Review article

## Resiliency and Culture: An Interdisciplinary Approach

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**Abstract.** In recent years, the topics of psychosocial resiliency and cultural competency have been on the forefronts of many academic disciplines and human-care services. This article explores the meaning, nature, and function of resiliency and provides an overview of its foundational role and integrative place in the fields of psychology, pedagogy, physiology, psychotherapy, spirituality, and community. All these explorations and discussions are presented from a sociocultural and interdisciplinary perspective. Most areas of learning and spheres of knowledge could further be advanced if they continue to incorporate cultural resiliency into their basic training approaches and ongoing skillful apprenticeships. This article emphasizes that the essence and manifestation of resiliency is rooted, not only in individual traits or abilities, but also in the capital resources already stored in the larger community – in its cultural wealth and generational wisdom. Resiliency is both an innate capacity, with various dispositions that is dormant within people and groups, and a skill that is gradually learned, intentionally established, and consistently built-up and developed. Then, it will be readily applied as a way-of-life, natural tendency, refined asset, and potential drive or passion for higher-functioning and livelihood, especially in time of adversity, misfortune, and calamity. This article encourages the practice of cross-cultural competence and cross-disciplinary growth. It promotes multi-academic learning and collaboration in order to foster a comprehensive resiliency-training and a dependable approach for survival-coping. Also, this article encourages an enduring social awareness, a continuous emotional empowerment, and a relational respect coupled with cultural humility.

**Key words:** resiliency, culture, psychology, community, coping, interdisciplinary studies, acculturation, survival, intercultural adaptation, adversity, hope, spirituality, strength, wisdom

### Introduction

Resiliency is a fascinating topic and an intriguing subject of study. Although it has been examined from various sides and explored from several perspectives, it remains an ever fresh, evolving, and flowing theme. Resiliency is more than a mere concept or an isolated construct. It is a contour of ideas and a conversion of meanings. It is more than a single perception or one personality trait; rather it is a vibrant phenomenon. In addition, resiliency is not a rigid variable or a linear force but somewhat as a circular-motion capability, a multi-dimensional energy,

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and a multi-faceted faculty. Although much is known about resiliency, it still has deep and rich connotations, almost like a hidden pearl or a mystery within the human nature, which has been waiting to be unearthed, admired, and prized.

Virtually, human culture and resiliency are intertwined, interactive, and interdependent. The creative and dynamic energy of resiliency is shaped and nurtured by the cultural variation and traditional heritage of people and, in turn, it shapes their psychosocial parameters and influences their cultural capitals and mediators. Thus, resiliency remains an unfolding and attractive topic for further consideration, investigation, and conceptualization (see also Abi-Hashem, 2011a, 2019; Bonanno, 2004; Khukhlaev et al., 2020; Masten, 2015; Southwick et al., 2014; Ungar, 2008; 2013).

According to Southwick et al. (2014), resiliency is a complex construct that may be defined differently, depending on its various contexts – individuals, groups, agencies, societies, or cultures. It is important to “specify whether resilience is being viewed as a trait, a process, or an outcome... Determinants of resilience include a host of biological, psychological, social and cultural factors that interact with one another...” (Southwick et al., 2014. P. 1). Therefore, resiliency is a function of growth, change, and development. “However, in reality, resilience more likely exists on a continuum that may be present to differing degrees across multiple domains of life” (Ibid.).

Similarly, the concept of *culture* is not static but dynamic, not rigid but vibrant, not fixed or frozen but flexible and fluid in time. Actually, there are over 150 definitions of culture found in the literature and it can run from the very simple to the very complex (Cohen, 2009). No single definition can capture the full essence or meaning of culture. Mostly, culture can be understood as a way of feeling, thinking, acting, sharing, knowing, expressing, and relating. It involves languages, ideas, values, symbols, faiths, customs, and traditions. In my opinion, cultures are better felt than defined and are better experienced than explained. They are multi-faceted like a mosaic or a tapestry, meaningfully holding all the intricate pieces together and connecting the rich foundations of the past, present, and future. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that mainly *culture is a design of life*.

Recently, the collaboration among various fields of knowledge and areas of specialties has increased and become more popular, taking the form of interdisciplinary-multidisciplinary studies. This is a welcome trend after long decades of endless branching out of the general academies unto sub-fields, sub-divisions, and super-specializations, particularly in North America. Such a new trend, of returning to the roots and sharing the insights and knowledge of the original scholarly traditions (as mother disciplines), seems like a journey of *returning to the fountains*. Evidently, psychology has its roots in sociology and anthropology – and before that in philosophy and theology. Therefore, this journey is like going back from the branches to the stem, from the detailed scenes to the global picture of reality, which is evidently *larger than the sum of parts*, and returning to the main sources of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (Abi-Hashem, 1998).

### **Resiliency and Psychology**

Resiliency is the capacity to recover decently well after a major struggle, serious trial, or sudden crisis. It could involve restoration and bouncing back, followed

by a measure of emotional growth, and then advancing toward previously set goals, even in the midst of a persisting challenge. Resiliency, then, is “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress” (APA, 2012. P. 1). It is the ability to return to the original form, shape, and function after being significantly bent, stretched, and pressed.

Weathering the storms, tolerating ambiguity, riding turbulent waves, and remaining resourceful are all marks of a resilient person, an entity, or a system. Pooley and Cohen (2010) defined resiliency as “the potential to exhibit resourcefulness by using available internal and external recourses in response to different contextual and developmental challenges” (Pooley, Cohen, 2010. P. 30). Masten (2015) described resiliency as typically arising from ordinary human capabilities rather than extraordinary ones, reflecting learned talents that resist a sharp fall or decline, even though the surrounding situations and circumstances may be deteriorating. Additionally, the following terms describe *resiliency* and its many potentials within people and groups as a manifestation of the human spirit: hardiness, elasticity, toughness, flexibility, resurgence, invulnerability, tenacity, pliability, mastery, robustness (Abi-Hashem, 2011a).

According to Sandberg and Grant (2017), resiliency is the strength and the speed with which we respond to adversity. It does not mean rejecting negative feelings or unpleasant thoughts. At times, there are some misconceptions about how we view or react to common setbacks, struggles, and sufferings. The authors listed three cognitive positions that can cause us hindrances and can delay our recovery: personalization – the tendency to think that it is all our fault. Permanence – the perception that this situation will never end but will last forever. Pervasiveness – the belief that adversity shall spread widely and affect all areas of our livelihood. “When we are suffering, we tend to project it out indefinitely” (Sandberg, Grant, 2017. P. 21). However, it would be helpful to remind ourselves that we did face and endure a lot of disappointments and hardships in the past, and somehow, we managed to survive up till now! The authors emphasized that resiliency is actually a skill that we learn and gradually build up, as energy reserve, so that it will be readily available to us when a challenging crisis, a durable need, or a strong calamity arises again (see also Abi-Hashem, 2001; Meichenbaum, 1994).

Interestingly, for Bonanno (2004) resiliency is more common than usually perceived or traditionally reported. He asserted that many people, who are exposed to loss or potential traumatic-events at some point in their lives, continue to show minor disruptions (not severe), along with other positive emotional experiences. Bonanno challenged the negative assumptions about the victim-sufferer-survivor mentality “by reviewing evidence that resilience represents a distinct trajectory from the process of recovery, that resilience in the face of loss or potential trauma is more common than is often believed, and that there are multiple and sometimes unexpected pathways to resilience” (Bonanno, 2004. P. 20).

The amount and degree of resiliency available and stored within an organism, group, or system is not stagnant or predetermined. It is rather quite fluid and lively. It fluctuates with the needs, tasks, challenges, and trials depending on a number of internal and external factors; like the circumstances surrounding the event, the pre-existing and operational conditions, the available tangible resources, a meaningful

support-team and connectivity, and the nature, predisposition, and innate faculties of that entity, group, or organism.

Yates and Masten (2004) attempted to find a framework for “fostering the future” by exploring the relationship between the science of resiliency and the practice of positive psychology. The authors encouraged a complementary appreciation for resiliency’s theory, research, and application as well as the refinement of its conceptualization(s). They provided suggestions for surmounting the obstacles facing the building of mutually-reciprocal relationship between the study of resiliency and the practice of positive psychology. Conceptualizing resiliency from a developmental psychology model, the authors emphasized that resiliency is rather an ordinary adaptation that happens despite extraordinary circumstances.

Thus, resiliency is the driving force behind all the steps and phases of life journey, leading to a healthy coping, enduring, managing, regrouping, mobilizing, surviving, rallying, regulating, thriving, and eventually blossoming and flourishing. That process can be a one-time event or experience, lifting the person or group to a higher-level of functioning, or a gradual course over a long period of time, or a repeated cycle-pattern that occurs each time people face a major struggle, hardship, or adversity.

### **Resiliency and Pedagogy**

How best to describe resiliency in teaching-learning settings and academia? How to design an educational curriculum to enhance positive changes and increase personal internal-external strengths and scholastic communal-resiliency? Does the learning environment and the teaching style have anything to do with building fortitude? In this section we will consider the role of pedagogical institutions not only in educating the intellect or mind, but also in shaping the worldview, posture, character, and maturity of the learners so they can develop deeper, strive further, and grow wiser.

Recently, the trend of *positive education* is gaining momentum and a great deal of enthusiasm, making its way into school campuses. It is inspired by and overlapping with another new and broader trend, called *positive psychology*. Educational psychology has been encouraged to enhance and focus more on the students’ talents and strengths rather than on their weaknesses, deficiencies, and vulnerabilities. That is similar to the new approaches happening in coaching, consulting, counseling, psychotherapy, and psychiatry. However, we need to be careful and differentiate between creating “positive learning experiences” for students of all ages, as simply promoting mere emotional comfort, intellectual easiness, or enjoyable class activities (emphasizing feeling-good and happiness), and the traditional, hard-working, conducive, memory-stretching, and rigorous learning programs. These two aspirations have been, at times, at odds or mixed-confused with each other, as having equal values or leading to the same desired pedagogical objectives.

Therefore, the question remains, what is really the primary aim of the learning process and the educational environment? Is it for students to always be comfortable, positively affirmed, engaging in elective activities, and feeling contented and well-accepted regardless of their performance or to be challenged to grow and stretched further, produce higher results, and fulfill their potentials? These metho-

dological approaches should be carefully incorporated, prioritized, integrated, synchronized, and harmonized, so that a single paradigm or approach is not over-emphasized or under-sacrificed at the expense of the other. Virtually, successful learning efforts are manifested in a sustainable-retainable body of knowledge, a structured-disciplined disposition, an internalized skill-creation, and a personality-character formation (Day, Gu, 2013; Cefai et al., 2014; Kristjánsson, 2013; Niesel, Griebel, 2005; Seligman et al., 2009).

Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has increasingly been “characterised by ethnic and cultural diversity reflecting global flows of international students and domestic multiculturalism... the diversity of the student body on university campuses provides a rich source of lived experience in cultural boundary-crossing that could be harnessed as a resource in promoting intercultural understanding and, in turn, developing graduates as global citizens” (Caruana, 2014. P. 1).

Genuine pedagogical support for learners should be provided during all academic stages and school transitions, on the individual-personal level, on the interactive-interpersonal level, and on the contextual-cultural level. According to Niesel and Griebel (2005), transitions have been defined as phases of life that are related to developmental demands; which in turn are socially regulated and do require intensified and accelerated learning and could also include periods of heightened vulnerabilities. Under normal settings, transitions can generate positive developments and growth. But under unfavorable or adverse settings, transitions may cause disorientation, problematic behavior, and emotional disturbance. Therefore, schools need to find ways to foster “resiliency through strengthening protective factors” in order to equip students with coping and “competencies that heighten the probability of resiliency and their ability to survive psychologically, if adverse circumstances should occur” (Niesel, Griebel, 2005. P. 5).

Eventually, the ultimate goal of any educational system is to produce skilled people, life learners, competent survivors, integrated human beings, and robustly seasoned and prudent prospects. That is the end result of any real, effective, and sustainable pedagogical endeavor. It takes time, effort, skill, and dedication to cultivate such qualities in the teaching-learning environment, which leads us to discuss the ability of transforming information building, data collecting, and years of schooling into *knowledge*, as a truly desired talent and trophy. Furthermore, educators need to encourage and guide their pupils and trainees, of all ages, to transform that body of *knowledge* into a distilled *insight*, and then that *insight* into a treasured *wisdom*.

Indeed, gaining understanding and acquiring wisdom should be the ultimate goal, high prize, and anticipated virtue of all studying, learning, and professional training experiences (cf. Beimorghi et al., 2019; Blockley, 2015; Guorong, 2002). Similarly, and according to Awbrey and Scott, (1994), the philosopher Nicholas Maxwell argued that universities today are founded on a certain philosophy of knowledge that narrowly focuses on solving the technical problems of specialized academic disciplines. The foundation of a university should rather be manifested in “a new type of inquiry that would have as its aim the improvement of not only knowledge but personal and global wisdom” (Awbrey, Scott, 1994. P. 161).

To some degree, many schools and training institutions are now realizing the importance of not only developing skills and techniques in order to build

a *career* but also developing personal traits and qualities in order to build a *character*. Actually, wisdom relies heavily on life experience, accumulated discernment, broad perspective, and common sense. It is the ability to utilize any information, event, or given situation to draw sound conclusions, balanced attitudes, and meaningful decisions. Modeling, coaching, mentoring, and leading by examples are ways being increasingly implemented in the academy at many educational institutions to encourage personal growth, facilitate character formation, and impart sound morality and thoughtful understanding. Ultimately, these faculties can also be the basic foundation of an authentic strength, long-term fortitude, and genuine resiliency (Abi-Hashem, 1999a, 2011a; Cefai et al., 2014; Harris, 2016; Kristjánsson, 2013; Sternberg, 2001).

### **Resiliency and Physiology**

How do the body and the mind interact? Are some aspects of our physical health and wellbeing also culturally oriented in nature? How can a community increase its group health resiliency and resistance immunity? Do social norms and cultural mediators have anything to do with neuroscience?

Those are core questions that reveal the fundamental spheres of our purpose and function, as a whole, and highlight the major differences between the Eastern and Western views of human nature. Generally speaking, for the Far East mentality, the whole is basically larger than the sum of its parts, since our faculties do overlap and operate in harmony. That is true of understanding the wealthy literature of knowledge, which ought not be fragmented or endlessly branching out into sub-disciplines (as mostly is the case in the West), but remains cohesive, collaborative, and complimentary. Thus, with the attempt of focusing on separate details, segments, or faculties, it is very important not to lose sight of the big picture and global overview (Abi-Hashem, 1998, 2014a).

Positive insights from behavioral medicine, handling life crises constructively, healthy coping with acute stressors, and practicing beneficial lifestyle habits have been well documented to strengthen the immune system, maintain healthy bodily functions, and enhance the whole organism survival (cf. Bandura, 1998). *Physiological resiliency* has been studied through different venues. Hawkley et al. (2005) explored the intensity of stress reactions on the efficacy of restorative processes that fortify the human body and eventually replenish physiological reserves. The authors examined “the net impact of human frailties and strengths on physiological resilience and health during the aging process” (Hawkley et al., 2005. P. 115).

Evidently, there is a connection among neurobiological vulnerability, plasticity, and resiliency. According to Karatsoreos and McEwen (2013), our brain is constantly adjusting to environmental changes, detecting stimuli, integrating information, engaging physiological responses, and rearranging our internal states. The authors explored what resilience means in a neurobiological context and observed that the ability to adapt to stressors “by ‘bending’ but not ‘breaking’ can be considered as ‘resilience’... this process of stability through change is termed ‘allostasis’, and serves as a mechanism by which an organism can adapt to a changing environment to function optimally, and ultimately ensure survival” (Karatsoreos, McEwen, 2013. P. 1).

Resiliency training might actually change the wiring of our human brain. Tabibnia and Radecki (2018) reviewed the neuroscience of emotions and the cognitive-behavioral strategies that cultivate resiliency. They concluded that, with the right kind of coaching, these pathways could lead to better health and endurance. Similarly, Amen (2015) emphasized that our general health, including mental-emotional wellbeing, is tightly connected to and largely depends on the actual condition of our brain. He asserted that a weak, underused, relatively inflamed or partly damaged brain could eventually begin to repair and restore itself with proper care; consequently, restoring other bodily and physiological functions, and ultimately fulfilling the potential of the brain itself.

The nature and impact of stress vary among individuals, families, groups, and societies. Chronic and cumulative stressors are crippling to our minds and disturbing to our physical health and relationships. They trigger the secretion of high levels of damaging hormones, like *cortisol*, as our bodies cope with and respond to such severe and prolonged stress (Feder et al., 2010; Mayo Clinic, 2019). The field of psychoneuroimmunology, which began in the early 1980s, attempted to focus on the integration of the immune system and central nervous system with other physiological activities. It emphasized that the psycho-behavioral processes and the immunological functions mutually affect, modulate, inform, and alter each other, due to the multi-directional communication pathways shared among them (Abi-Hashem, 1999b; Feder et al., 2010).

Generally speaking, the notions of health, wellness, strength, and prosperity are culturally based, as are the notions of illness, disease, and pathology. What is unhealthy, abnormal, and clinical in one place, or among certain groups of indigenous people, may very well be normal and natural in another place. Therefore, practitioners and helping professionals need to be very careful not to quickly use medical classifications and psychological diagnostic criteria, which are developed elsewhere (mostly in the global West), to diagnose features, signs, behaviors, or symptoms of another local minority or a population in a faraway location. In many places around the world, people's cultural mediators, socio-spiritual values, broader worldviews, and realistic expectations of what life can often shape their perspectives and attitudes and enable them to accommodate hardships, tolerate pain, and reconcile life's polarities to a greater extent. Similarly, various human experiences and emotional expressions, both the positive-pleasant and the negative-unpleasant, have been defined and moderated by the local norms, values, heritage, and culture. These in turn have mobilized the available internal resources of that group or society to support its members and empower themselves to hold on steadily and move forward expectantly (Abi-Hashem, 2011b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2019; Kim et al., 2006; Marsella, Pedersen, 2004).

### **Resiliency and Spirituality**

Existential views and beliefs, philosophical outlook and worldview, and spiritual faith and practices all have been instrumental to lift the morale and clarify the mindset of people who are struggling or suffering. Furthermore, religious faith and practice can buffer and protect the psycho-emotional wellbeing to a certain degree, against severe stressors, debilitating depressions, activating anxieties, and

down-spiraling despair (cf. Pargament, Cummings, 2010). Such common symptoms are usually triggered by hopelessness and helplessness, during-and-after major crises, losses, traumas, disasters, and tragedies.

Spiritual faith, religious traditions, and socio-normative rituals, whether practiced alone-individually or with others-collectively, have great resiliency benefits on the mind, psyche, mood, behavior, soul, body, attitude, and relational connectivity. They help keep a broader mental perspective, an adequate motivational energy, a transcendent view of reality (beyond the material realm), a closer bond with others and with nature, a calmer nervous system, a more peaceful posture of heart, and a confident ongoing attitude, all enhancing strength, endurance, fortitude, regulation, survival, and wellbeing (Abi-Hashem, 2001, 2011a, 2013, 2019; Kira et al., 2020; Koenig, 2008; Paine et al., 2015; Vanistendael, 2007).

Religious faith and spirituality can be a great resource for, not only coping with a crisis, but also for growing, striving, and flourishing in the midst of disasters and calamities. The derived *sense of hope* is enlightening and empowering. The camaraderie of like-minded friends and colleagues in the faith-community is a great source of integral social-support and genuine solidarity, so that they keep pressing on with their urgent tasks which are needed for group survival. Often, people take turns in strengthening and lifting up each other, especially when facing stressful pressures, as some group-members begin to fall under the heavy burden of struggles – which is a beautiful act of mutual-uplifting and solidarity (Abi-Hashem, 2001, 2013, 2014b, 2019; Bonanno, 2004; Ettun et al., 2014; Kira et al., 2020; Koenig, 2008)

Presently, numerous academic journals, books, courses, training seminars, professional associations, and research studies are being devoted to these essential themes. A large volume of literature is found in many contemporary disciplines like medicine, social sciences, education, psychology, and other humanities on the place, role, and impact of generic spirituality, in general, and religious faith, affiliation and practice, in particular. Some of these truths and realities were known to older disciplines, like philosophy, theology, and anthropology for centuries. Religiousness has been a close companion to humanity since the beginning. Of course, like other human endeavors, faith practices have been skewed or misused as a cover for unhealthy and disturbing behaviors, power struggles, and subtle ethnic-social-political conflicts. However, modern scholarship has been exploring and documenting the many benefits of religious faith and sound spirituality, in its many shapes, types, and forms on the human health and communal wellbeing – like meditation, intentional prayer, reading devotional materials, contemplative chanting, time in sacred places, reflection in nature, worshipping with others, observing religious feasts, joining in charity-acts and compassionate-care, methods of mindfulness, spiritual diary and journaling, and membership in an established church-group or faith-based-congregation (Pargament, Cummings, 2010).

Spiritual faith can generate a good dose of resiliency for struggling people since the human mind and psyche cannot dwell on *hope* and on *despair* at the same time, at least not for too long. Additionally, some people go through a crisis of faith during a loss, trial, or tragedy. That is a normal questioning due to the intensity and duration of certain hardships and traumatic-events. Fortunately, some educators and counselors are acquainted with or have basic training in religious, philo-



sophical, or theological studies, so they can relate to the faith dimension and experiential spirituality of other people. Otherwise, healthcare providers and helping-professionals can always refer struggling individuals and families, whose faith is very foundational to them, to pastors, chaplains, and faith-based centers – that are psychologically aware. There, they can find pastoral guidance and counseling, spiritual care and comfort, therapeutic follow-up, and adequate emotional support (Abi-Hashem, 2001, 2019; Ettun et al., 2014; Kira et al., 2020; Koenig 2008).

Virtually, religion and culture are intertwined in a close relationship. Religion is merely a cultural manifestation and a socio-communal system (cf. Geertz, 1973). So, actually, what is religious is also social; and what is social is also cultural; and what is cultural is also existential; and what is existential is also spiritual; and therefore, is psychological-emotional in nature. Tillich (1959) considered *culture* as a form of religion and *religion* as a substance of *culture*. He excluded their dualism or schism and existential separation by emphasizing clearly that, “every religious act, not only in organized religion, but in the most intimate movement of the soul, is culturally formed” (Tillich, 1959. P. 42).

### **Resiliency and Psychotherapy**

Counseling and psychotherapy are effective ways of helping struggling individuals, families, and groups to cope, survive, and strive and to face life more confidently. Therapy and clinical care usually help in bringing mental clarity, gaining skills, increasing emotional intelligence, and fostering existential awareness – all the while working on unresolved issues, past injuries, and obstacles toward growth. Psychotherapy along with coaching, mentoring, consulting, and caregiving are essential relational tools that help not only those struggling and overwhelmed, but others who desire to gain a deeper insight, practical skills, better self-discovery, and a higher level of functioning, with added motivation to achieve their goals and fulfill their potential.

Thus, resiliency-focused therapy can increase recovering, facilitate rebounding, promote enduring, and enhance flourishing. It can help people refocus on what is more important, appreciate their psychosocial assets, reclaim their personhood in dignity, and empower their healthy potential and natural faculties. In addition, therapy can be instrumental in preventing lapses, containing symptoms, and strengthening affected individuals, families, groups, and communities alike. Cross-cultural counseling is especially crucial during our times, granted that such psychotherapy is conducted with skillful awareness, practical knowledge, mutual understanding, cultural competency, and human sensitivity (Abi-Hashem, 2011b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Khukhlaev et al., 2020; Jordan, 2017; Kim et al., 2006).

Resiliency-informed counseling goes hand in hand with positive psychology (PP) and post-traumatic growth (PTG). It is basically progress-motivated and forward-oriented. Dwelling on the positive and cultivating hope have been emerging in the helping-professions as main themes of caregiving. They are supposed to mobilize the innate strength within individuals, families, and groups, even within communities. Optimism and confidence motivate people to move ahead, with courage and determination, above and beyond their obstacles, struggles, agonies, and defeats (Simon et al., 2005; Yates, Masten, 2004).

Such an approach should not be used at the expense of minimizing the obvious challenges, limitations, pains, decays, despairs, or shadows of life. Bright outlook and realistic hope are powerful forces to employ and incorporate in any human or therapeutic endeavor. In the Arabic language there are two words for hope, *Amal* and *Rajaa*. One portrays optimism for the immediate near future and the other projects hope for the far distant future. So, people support and encourage each other by installing these *hopeful dimensions* in order to energize their emotional mood, brighten their existential outlook, and enhance their inspirational motivation, both for the short-term and the long-term alike (Abi-Hashem, 2001).

In an insightful challenge, Bonanno (2004) stressed that some clinicians and mental-health professionals, at times, tend to interfere with the clients' natural ability to overcome and recover naturally, by labeling this tendency to *move-on* as defense, denial, or suppression. Therapists even tend to pathologize the desire of certain people-survivors who genuinely show signs of quick bouncing-back and did enough processing. They want to move forward rather than dwell much longer on the crisis, loss, trauma, grief, adversity, or devastation itself and its long-term mental-emotional effects or implications.

In many societies around the world, where modern psychiatric services and in-depth counseling and psychotherapy are not common or readily available, people naturally practice social-communal-familial habits and engage in supportive activities that equal in value and benefit to western generative therapies, which could easily and creatively be labeled as "natural therapy." In the Middle-East for example, a) people frequently spend time visiting, eating, and talking at length about life's affairs, joys, sorrows, and struggles, all of which provide a sense of free expression, bonding, and relief; b) women within the same neighborhoods meet every morning for strong Arabic-Turkish coffee to talk about their days, families, duties, aspirations, accomplishments, challenges, relationships, burdens, children, spouses, health, agonies, ...and to process and exchange ideas, show solidarity, and gain insights from each other (without realizing this is a type of a *group therapy*). Also, it is worth noting that cultural backgrounds, traditions, social lenses, and ethnic mediators greatly shape our human experiences and expressions of health and illness, joys and sorrows. Therefore, cultures significantly inform our psychological understanding, interpretation, intervention, and treatment of all our mental-emotional-communal struggles, syndromes, and disturbances (see also Buse et al., 2013).

Finally, a word about the need to encourage therapists, counselors, and clinical helpers to remain resilient themselves as they care for others. Developing balanced lifestyles and healthy self-care approaches are essential for helping-professionals in order for them to avoid unnecessary-unwelcomed symptoms of burnout, anxiety, depression, and depletion (Norcross, VandenBos, 2018; Skovholt, Trotter-Mathison, 2014). It is a skill and a virtue to care for ourselves – not to the degree of becoming impersonal, distant, or self-centered, as we care for others; especially if we are helping victims of severe tragedies, are serving under significant pressure for long time, or being positioned on the front lines, where exposure to substantial stressors, major conflicts, natural disasters, and hostile wars is inevitable.

## Resiliency and Community

How best can we define *community*? And how can we mobilize communal-resiliency? Actually, there are different types, formations, structures, and levels of community or communities. The concept is rather fluid, representing a dynamic entity, which is larger than the extended family and friends and yet smaller than the society at large. Community is more than a collection of individuals coming together to form a group or an assembly. It is a tight-knit, well-bonded company of people, enjoying close relationships and nurturing each other through generational support, integral networking, and mental-emotional-social continuity (cf. Kulig et al., 2013; Norris et al., 2008). At times, nations and countries display qualities and behaviors compatible to a small community; they even act and react, rejoice and grieve, fall and regroup, just like a family unit. Therefore, *communal-resiliency* is more than a superficial connection or a surface-relational association, which the present social media and digital devices provide plenty of this kind. Rather, it is a glue that holds all the collective pieces together with a *deep organic connectivity* that stands the test of time.

According to Lerch (2017), people's relationships embody their social capital and are at their richest in the local dwelling places, where there is a clear sense of historical roots, cultural heritage, and mutual experiences. "Resilience is the ability of a system – like a family, a country, or Earth's biosphere – to cope with short-term disruptions and adapt to long-term changes without losing its essential character" (Lerch, 2017. P. 1). A community is a connected settlement of inhabitants, bonded together in time and space, in heritage and memories, and in hope and aspirations. *Communal-resiliency* is the capacity to confront common challenges and crises, the courage to consistently rebound with a reliable come-back, the determination to maintain a healthy environment and bio-psycho-ecology, and the creativity to build and reconstruct a collective legacy for the foreseeable future. Quite often, the soil becomes part of the soul. This reality reflects the beauty of intimate relationships, not only among people themselves, but also between people and their land, which in turn becomes an integral part of their social identity, generational nostalgia, and national memory.

Some scholars devoted their research to highlight the vital role of community for people's global mental-health and emotional restoration (Ungar, 2012). Such research efforts focused on moving the emphasis from the micro entity to the macro ecology, from the individual-self, which is prevalent in Western societies, to the communal-self, where a larger group-identity is prevalent, well appreciated, and inherently enhanced. Consequently, this gives a true existential meaning to the one singular person. The logo "I, me, myself, mine" only becomes secondary to the primal priority of "we, us, ourselves, ours." Virtually, in relating well to the us/we that the I/me can have a true significance. Otherwise, the "I" will continue to float alone without any meaningful social-anthropological gravity or collective-communal orbiting. There is a need to transcend the isolated cell, one brain, single neuron, solo being, or human ego to a rich contextual capacity, stored in the psycho-social-tribal and intercultural existence of community; which is a step toward a more contextualized understanding of all human beings from all ages and backgrounds – including children, youth, adults, and elderly. Therefore, the psycho-

emotional life of people, coupled with sound cultural ecologies, contribute greatly to the healthy coping, sustainability, creativity, adaptability, and ultimately considerable resiliency (Kulig et al., 2013; Norris et al., 2008; Ungar, 2012; Wang et al., 2014).

Some communities and societies, when facing a significant pressure or tragedy, fare better than others. Elsass (1995) studied the psychology of cultural-resiliency by observing some community groups and indigenous tribes. He found that, when facing a danger or a threat of extinction, some groups or tribes survived well, and remarkably carried-on their traditional cultures intact, while others faded away and vanished. Elsass then asked a poignant question: Why does one society or community survive while others perish? Realizing there is no one easy answer, he stated, “The psychology of survival is best understood when it is examined in many different cultural contexts and in a broad variety of social situations” (Elsass, 1995. P. IX).

Another manifestation of resiliency is seen when people travel to resettle in another society or culture. The value of resiliency can then pertain to and be crucial for a successful uncomplicated cross-cultural adjustment and immigration survival. Depending on the reasons for migrating and on the pre-existing emotional conditions of the people prior to leaving their homeland, they will need a certain degree of resiliency and a sufficient survivor-power to achieve a healthy transition, an effective relocation, and a balanced intercultural functioning. While some people adapt/adjust well and rather quickly to the new setting and hosting society, others continue to struggle and remain detached and unintegrated for years to come.

*Acculturation-resiliency* is much needed, especially in this age of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when cultures, mentalities, social norms, and various backgrounds are interacting and mixing more than ever. Therefore, cultural-crossing requires a certain level of skills for the best possible *acclimatization-acculturation* outcome – which includes of the following psychosocial processes combined: *Adaptation, accommodation, and assimilation*. These phases and mediators are essential for an effective integration within the new environment and for a smooth navigation within the social-communal system of the hosting culture (cf. Abi-Hashem, 2011b, 2014a, 2015; Abi-Hashem, Brown, 2013; Khukhlaev et al., 2020; Sam, Berry, 2006).

Is there a relationship between resiliency and cultural competency? Apparently, they are related as there is an overlap and a dynamic connection between them. It is reasonable to suggest that *resiliency* is best described as *cultural competency in action*. That is true for the observer and observed, the care-giver and care-receiver, the educator and learner, the therapist and client, the local dweller and global traveler... In addition, resiliency is well displayed and clearly manifested, not through an isolated person standing alone, but in the collaboration of the assembly and in the beauty of community. Acquired wisdom, learned insights, problem solving, collective strength, and genuine solidarity are accumulated and freely shared within the community. Then, these in turn are transformed into life mastery-skills and handed down the generations through mentoring and apprenticeship. These human capitals will be a buffer zone to adversities and hardships, and eventually will enhance the recovery and welfare of all the community members.

Virtually, culture shapes the life of the community and, in turn, culture is shaped by the community. It is at once the cause and the effect, the process and the outcome.

Therefore, cultures and communities possess many integral aspects and elements, which greatly overlap and are deeply woven into their fabric, like the abstract and concrete, the local and historical, the moral and temporal, the tangible and symbolic – as together they represent the essential connectivity with a rich past and the existential continuity with a resilient future.

### Conclusion

Thus, we have explored the topic and concept of resiliency from different aspects and multi-disciplinary perspectives. We have found resiliency to be a powerful dynamic and a psycho-social-spiritual force that is embedded within the human nature and is stored within the vibrant community. We examined the intimate relationship between resiliency and culture, as both interact, overlap, and enhance each other in an inspiring, interdependent, and enriching way. We have highlighted the fact that resiliency is both an innate potential and a learned-shared skill; as we are born with its marker-ingredients and we can also develop its capacity by practicing survival, coping, enduring, and fortitude.

Resiliency can be passed from one generation to another, adding to the capital of resources stored within the community. We have found that it is a faculty-trait of individuals, families, and groups, and moreover, it is a *function of culture*, which is larger and broader than a local entity or a small unit. Resiliency is related to and generates from our historical roots, social heritage, normative values, existential outlook, global worldview, spiritual faith, and transcendent hope.

In closing, we can perceive resiliency as our positive and invigorating capacity. We may poetically describe its wonderful influence as inspirational, intentional, and motivational, for it continues to gracefully help us transform our – pain into purpose, hopelessness into hopefulness, intimidation into intuitiveness, crippling into creativity, devastation into determination, inner heartache into outward helpfulness, resigning into reframing, being scattered into being refocused, depletion into deployment, disillusionment into enlightenment, regression into reinvestment, perplexity into passion, retreating into re-envisioning, degenerating into regenerating, misery into mission, and finally, tragedy into treasure (see Abi-Hashem, 2011a; Ettun et al., 2014; Koenig, 2008; Yates, Masten, 2004).

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**Обзорная статья**

## **Резильентность и культура: междисциплинарный подход**

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**Аннотация.** В последние годы в число приоритетных направлений исследования целого ряда академических дисциплин и гуманитарных практик вошли проблемы психосоциальной резильентности и культурной компетентности. В данной статье с позиции социокультурного и междисциплинарного подходов рассматриваются сущность, природа и функции резильентности, обосновывается ее фундаментальная и интегративная роль в области психологии, педагогики, физиологии, психотерапии, а также в сфере духовности и общественной жизни. Показан большой потенциал культурной резильентности в развитии многих направлений обучения и областей знания, подчеркивается важность интеграции данного концепта в образовательные подходы и педагогические практики. Утверждается, что сущность и проявления резильентности связаны не только с чертами и способностями отдельного человека, но также с общими социальными ресурсами: культурным богатством общества, опытом и знаниями многих поколений. В рамках настоящего исследования резильентность рассматривается и как внут-

ренная предрасположенность, характерная для отдельной личности или социальной группы, и как навык, который постепенно усваивается, специально формируется, развивается в течение жизни человека и затем проявляется как образ жизни, как необходимый потенциал и естественное стремление личности к полноценному функционированию, в особенности в трудных, проблемных ситуациях. Подчеркивается значимость формирования и развития межкультурной компетентности, междисциплинарного обучения и сотрудничества, что будет способствовать формированию резильентности и усвоению личностью эффективных стратегий совладания (копинга) в критических ситуациях. Достижению этой цели также будет способствовать рост социальной сознательности, расширение эмоциональных возможностей, воспитание уважения к сложившимся социальным отношениям и культурным традициям.

**Ключевые слова:** резильентность, культура, психология, общество, копинг, междисциплинарный подход, межкультурная адаптация, жизненные трудности, надежда, духовность, сопротивляемость, мудрость

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