Predictors of Hopelessness among Youth Living in Slums of Bengaluru City

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ABSTRACT

Background: Hopelessness is more than just a feeling. It is a mental state in which one finds life empty and the future to be meaningless. It can derail one's life altogether. Youth, including those living in slums, have the potential to rise and win over their challenges. However, the feeling of hopelessness can be a significant barrier to break. **Objectives:** To determine whether there are any differences between demographic and socio-economic variables (independent variable) on more than one continuous dependent variable: resilience and hopelessness score (one-way MANOVA) and to identify the significant predictors of hopelessness among youth living in two slums in Bengaluru city. **Methodology:** A total of 285 youth living in two slums in Bengaluru city were chosen using simple random sampling. The Beck Hopelessness Scale was used to measure hopelessness among the respondents. Step-wise multiple regression analysis was used to identify the significant predictors of hopelessness among the respondents. Moreover, the unstandardised and standardised regression path analysis was done. **Results:** The results indicate that lack of education is the biggest significant predictor of hopelessness among the youth living in slums, having about 32 per cent influence (cause) on feelings of hopelessness. **Conclusion:** The lack of education seems to be a major reason for hopelessness among youth living in slums in the present study.

Keywords: Youth, hopelessness, mental health, slums

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study: In recent decades, there has been a significant amount of debate about the age group which can be considered as youth. The United Nations (2019) considers those who are between the ages of 15-24 years to be youth and has estimated that the youth constitute 16 per cent of the global population which is a significant number of people. Youth in India constitute 34.8 per cent of the total population (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation-GOI, 2017). Although there is not an accurate estimate of the number of youth living in slums, it is undoubtedly a significant number since India is not a developed nation as of today. Hopelessness, which is a loss of faith in one's life and one's future, has also been found to be a core feature of depression (Beck et al., 1974). One may ask as to why it is so important to measure hopelessness and detail the factors that cause it. It's because hopelessness has been identified as a risk factor for suicide attempts among youth (Mustanski and Liu, 2013). In India, suicide among youth is a major area of concern. In fact, according to the World Health Organization (2019), youth in India are the most vulnerable group as far as suicide is concerned. In this scenario, it is important to discover the factors that determine hopelessness among youth, especially those living in slums who are often kept at the margins of society.

Review of literature: To gain a deeper understanding of the problem at hand and to get acquainted with the existing knowledge on this subject, the researchers examined existing studies on this matter. Pharris et al (1997) found that for girls, being able to enjoy school, attention and care from members of the family, and other factors helped reduce hopelessness.

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Although there were no protective factors against hopelessness that were discovered for boys in their study, enjoyment of school and strong academic performance, among other factors were found to help protect the boys from suicide. Joiner (2001) in his study pointed out that negative attributional style was a risk factor for hopelessness among youth. Gibb et al (2001) in their study reported that emotional maltreatment during childhood was related to hopelessness among youth. Boland et al (2005) identified three important disruptive factors that predicted hopelessness among youth. They were- change in mother figure, exposure to violence, and stress. Taliferro et al. (2009) reported that youth who engaged in some physical activity every week were less likely to feel hopeless. Stoddard at al. (2011) in their study discovered that youth who had established a strong connection with their mother at an early age were less likely to feel hopeless. Stewart et al. (2011) discovered that there was a perfect link between feeling hopeless and drinking among youth in their study. Based on an examination of existing literature related to this particular topic, a research gap has been identified. It can be stated that there is a dearth of studies on hopelessness among slum youth, especially in developing nations such as India where the proportion of youth population is at its all-time high. Moreover, there is a need to identify the predictors of hopelessness among such youth who have significantly different living conditions compared to youth in general. To fill this research gap, the present study was undertaken.

Objectives:

(i) To study the resilience, hopelessness and its correlates with demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the youth living in slums in Bengaluru city
(ii) To determine whether there are any differences between demographic and socio-economic variables on resilience and hopelessness score
(iii) To identify the significant predictors of hopelessness among the youths and to portray the findings diagrammatically through a path diagram.

Hypothesis: There will be no statistically significant relationship between the background characteristics and hopelessness score of the youths.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design: A descriptive research design was adopted to describe the significant predictors of hopelessness. The present research is also cross-sectional in nature since data were collected at only one point in time to assess the socio-demographic characteristics and the study dimensions. It is proposed that when resilience is treated as a dependent variable, the background characteristics of the respondents will be treated as independent variables. On the other hand, when hopelessness score is treated as a dependent variable, background characteristics and resilience score of the sample respondents will be treated as independent variables.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria: The city of Bengaluru was selected for the research as the researchers are familiar with the city. Youth aged 15-29 years living in two selected slums have been included in the study. The study was restricted to two slums due to the constraints of time and money.

Sampling: The researchers purposefully selected Bengaluru City as one of the researchers was well acquainted with the city. Bengaluru city has a total of 198 wards. Using the lottery method, the researchers selected ward number 42 which has four slums - Sanjaygandhi Nagar, Kaveri Nagar, Nilagiri Thoppu and Coolie Nagar. Once again using the lottery method, the researchers selected Snajaygandhi Nagar and Nilagiri Thoppu for the present study. Through a benchmark survey, it was found that there were 498 youth aged 15-29 years (Government of India., 2014) in these two areas. Hence, these 498 youth constitute the

universe of the present study and the 285 youth who were then selected using tippet number table from the 498 youth, constitute the sample in the present study.

Ethical considerations: The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and oral consent was obtained from them before collecting the data. Hence, all the respondents in the present study willingly participated in the present study.

Methods of data collection: The data were collected through face to face interview with the respondents. An average of five respondents was interviewed per day during the period of March-May, 2017. The average time spent on each respondent was approximately an hour.

Tools: To collect data related to the socio-economic and demographic background of the respondents, a self-prepared interview schedule was used. To assess the feelings of hopelessness among the respondents, the hopelessness scale developed by Beck et al. (1974) was employed. It has three sub-components and a total of 20 items. Item number 1, 5, 6, 10, 13, 15, and 19 cover the first factor - 'feelings about the future'. Item number 2,3,9,11,12,16,17 and 20 cover the second factor - 'loss of motivation' and item number 4,7,8,14, and 18 cover the third factor - 'future expectation ' The score ranges from 0 to 20. A higher score is indicative of high hopelessness. The reliability of the scale was found to be 0.605. To measure resilience among the respondents, the 25 items *Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003)* was employed. It has a total of four factors – hardiness, optimism, resourcefulness, and purposefulness. The total score ranges from 0-100. A higher score means higher resilience. The reliability value of the scale was found to be 0.917.

Statistical analysis: The collected data was analysed using SPSS-AMOS- 24 (IBM Corp, 2017). Histogram and p-p plots were used to check the linearity and normality of residuals. The distribution of the residuals was found to be normal. This can be observed in diagram 1 (histogram), diagram 2 (p-p plots), and diagram 3 (scatter plots).

Diagram 1: Histogram of regression standardised residual

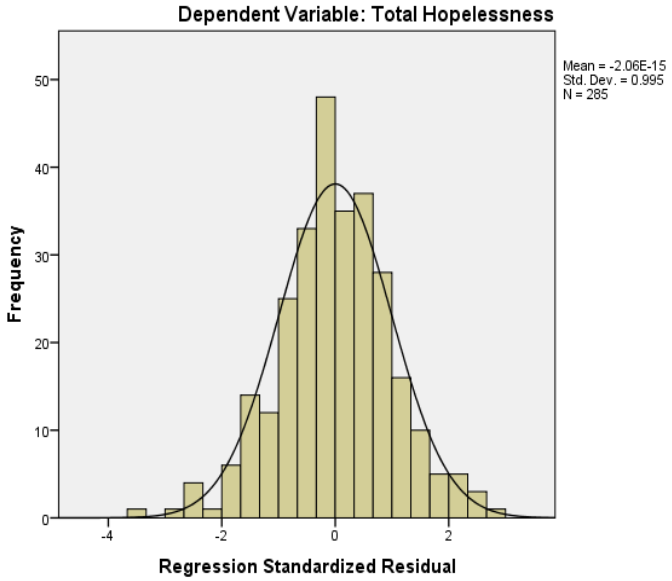
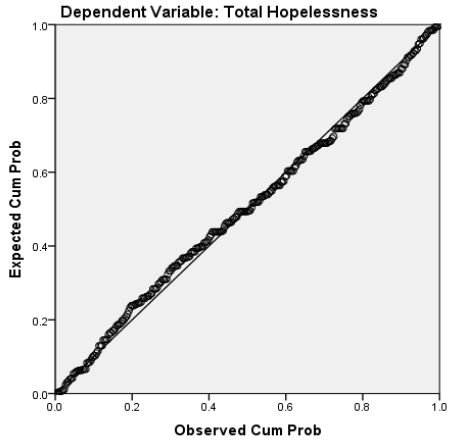
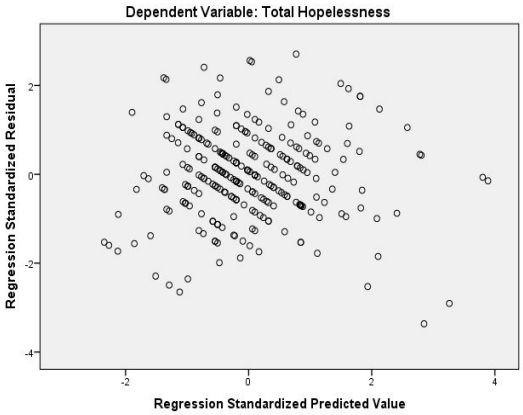


Diagram 2: Normal P-P plot of regression standardised residual



From diagram 2 it can be said that the data points are all almost close to the ideal line (Field, 2016).

Diagram 3: Scatter plots of regression standardised residual



From diagram 3, it can be inferred that in general, there is a low negative correlation between the regression residuals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background characteristics of the sample respondents: With regard to the background characteristics of the respondents, it can be stated that those who were in the age group of 15-19 years constitute the single largest majority of the total respondents. The average age of the respondent was 20.7 years. Majority of the respondents were found to be male, unmarried, followers of Hinduism and belonging to scheduled caste. With regard to the nature of the family, it was discovered that majority of the respondents lived in medium-sized and nuclear families. Majority of the respondents had studied up to high school/higher secondary school, having completed an average of 9.41 years of education. It was also found that majority of the respondents were unemployed/not working as a result of which the majority also did not have an income of their own. Most of the respondents' families had a monthly family income of Rs. 10,001-20,000 and monthly expenditure of Rs. 10,000 or less. The mean income of the respondents' families was found to be Rs. 18,926.84. A little more than half of the respondents lived in tiled houses with two rooms as well as inbuilt toilets and water supply. Majority of the respondents had access to mass media such as television and newspaper. Due to the proliferation of technology, almost all of the families had a minimum of one mobile

phone at home. All of the respondents had an electricity supply at home. Majority of the respondents lived in houses that were owned by them or their parents. Finally, the majority of respondents do not consume alcohol.

Level of Resilience and Hopelessness: The respondents have been classified into low and high categories based on the mean score of the subject dimensions. The mean score of resilience was 61.96 with a score range of 36-90, and that of hopelessness was 11.81, with a score range of 11-20. It was also found that majority of the respondents scored 'low' on resilience (56.1%) and 'high' on hopelessness (56.8%), scales.

One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA): One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (One way MANOVA) is a statistical tool used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the independent variable (category variable) on more than one continuous dependent variable. In the present section, age group, sex, marital status, religion, social standing, education, drop out status, occupation, family income, size and type of family, and ownership and type of houses of the respondents (youth living in slums) were used as *independent variables* while resilience and hopelessness scores were used as the *dependent variables*. The result shows that there are statistically significant differences in resilience and hopelessness among youth living in slums based on their age group ($F(4,256)= 13.173$, $p<0.001$; Wilks' Λ =.836, partial η^2 = 0. 086); Gender ($F(2, 282)= 8.214$, $p<0.001$; Hotelling's Trace =.058, partial η^2 = 0. .055); Marital Status ($F(4,562)=22.368$, $p<0.001$; Wilks' Λ =.836, partial η^2 = 0.137); Religion ($F(4,562)= 11.786$,$p<0.001$; Wilks' Λ =.851, partial η^2 = 0.077); Education ($F(8, 558)= 20.047$,$p<0.001$; Wilk's Λ=0.603, partial η^2 =0.05); Drop out status ($F(2, 282)= 23.526$,$p<0.001$;Hotelling's Trace=0.167, partial η^2 = 0.143; Occupation ($F(3,273)= 5.140$,$p<0.001$; Wilks' Λ =.898, partial η^2 = 0. 052); Family Income ($F(4, 562)= 18.682$,$p<0.001$; Wilks' Λ =0.779, partial η^2 = 0.117); Size of family ($F(4, 562)= 13.454$,$p<0.001$; Wilk's Λ=0.833, partial η^2 =0.087); Type of family ($F(2,282)= 7.838$,$p<0.001$; Wilk's Λ=0.833, partial η^2 =0.053), and Ownership of house ($F(2, 282)= 3.474^b$,$p<0.01$; Wilk's Λ=0.952, partial η^2 =.024). Whereas there was no statistically significant difference in Social standing ($F (6, 560) = .759$, $p>0.05$; Wilk's Λ=0. .984, partial η^2 =0.008), and Type of House ($F (2, 282) =1.274$, $p> 0.05$; Hotelling's Trace =0. 009, partial η^2 =0.009).

Correlation between the background characteristics and hopelessness score

From the results displayed in table 1, it can be inferred that there is a positive correlation at a very high level ($p<0.001$) between hopelessness score of the respondents and their age and age at marriage and a positive correlation between hopelessness score of the respondents and years of drinking at a moderately high level ($p<0.1$). Meaning- as the age, age at marriage, and years of drinking increases so do the respondents' hopelessness score. On the other hand, a negative correlation was discovered between the hopelessness score of the respondents and their education, monthly family income and monthly family expenditure at a very high level ($p<0.001$) and between their hopelessness score and number of family members at a high level ($p<0.01$) has been also been observed. Meaning, as the number of years of education, amount of monthly family income, expenditure, and family size increases, the hopelessness score of the respondents' decreases.

Table -1: Zero-order correlation between the hopelessness score and the background characteristics of the youth living in Slums

Variables	AGE	BO	AAM	REDU	RMI	MFI	MFE	NFM	YDK	HOP
AGE	1									
BO	0.063	1								
AAM	***.642	0.102	1							
REDU	**-.186	*-.138	***-.287	1						
RMI	***.513	-0.001	0.116	***-.200	1					
MFI	*-.131	**.156	***-.314	-0.048	***.227	1				
MFE	*-.131	**.164	***-.299	-0.05	**.169	***.932	1			
NFM	***-.312	*.133	***-.336	-0.048	*-.134	***.552	***.588	1		
YDK	***.366	-0.024	***.160	***-.229	***.391	0.005	0.015	-0.086	1	
HOP	***.322	0.111	***.409	***-.567	0.105	***-.248	***-.226	**-.201	**.163	1

Note: BO-birth order, AAM-age at marriage, REDU- respondent's education, RMI-respondent's monthly income, MFI-monthly family income, MFE-monthly family expenditure, NFM-number of family members, YDK-years of drinking, HOP-Hopelessness score

Regression Analysis – Predicting hopelessness

Table 2- displaying the results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis

Model	Predictors	R	R^2 x 100	ΔR^2 x 100	b	SE b	β	t	p
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
		Dependent Variable : Hopelessness							
1	(Constant)				17.884	0.547		32.683	.000
	R.Education	.567	32.2%	32.2%	-0.645	0.056	-0.567	-11.589	.000
2	(Constant)				23.733	0.890		26.666	.000
	R.Education	.667	44.5%		-0.614	0.051	-0.540	-12.145	.000
	Resilience			12.3%	-0.099	0.013	-0.352	-7.915	.000
3	(Constant)				22.120	1.071		20.646	.000
	R.Education	.677	45.9%		-0.575	0.052	-0.506	-11.025	.000
	Resilience				-0.083	0.014	-0.296	-6.057	.000
	Age at marriage			1.3%	0.047	0.018	0.134	2.644	.009

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was carried out to find out the significant predictors of hopelessness among the respondents. The results are displayed in table 2

The model number can be seen in **column 1**. The predictor variables, i.e., constant (hopelessness), education, monthly family income, and age can be observed in **column 2.** R, which represents the correlation between the predicted and observed values can be seen in **column 3**. R square, a measure that indicates the closeness of the data with the regression line is seen in **column 4.** The improvement in the R square when is next predictor is included is called R square change. This can be observed in **column 5.** The relative importance of the independent variable is represented by the unstandardized beta (b) weight. This can be seen in **column 6**. **Column 7** shows the standard error of B**.** A more refined picture of the importance of the predictors is observed through the standardised beta (β) weight in **column 8**

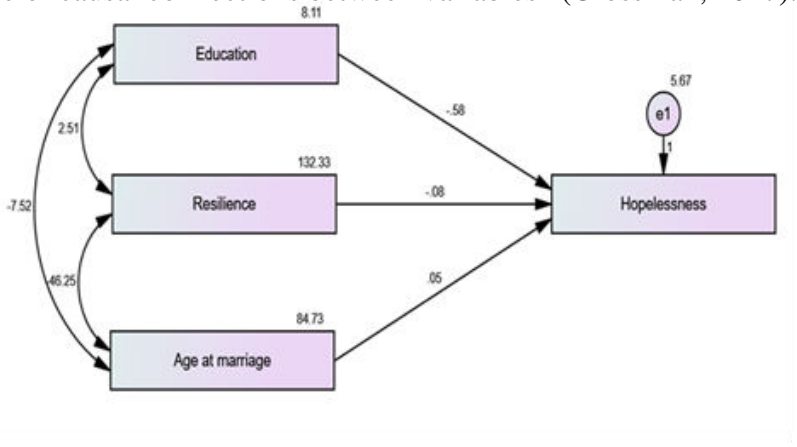
Finally, the Critical Ratio also known as t value can be observed in **column 9.Column 10** shows the p-value.

The results in table 2 indicate that the education of the respondents has 32.2 per cent influence on the hopelessness score of the respondents (see column 5). The resilience of the respondents has 12.3 per cent influence and the age at marriage has 1.3 per cent influence on hopelessness experienced by the respondents. Hence, on the whole, the three significant predictors, i.e., education, family income, and age, together have a total of 45.9 per cent influence on the hopelessness of the respondents, with education being the single largest significant predictor of the same (see column 4).

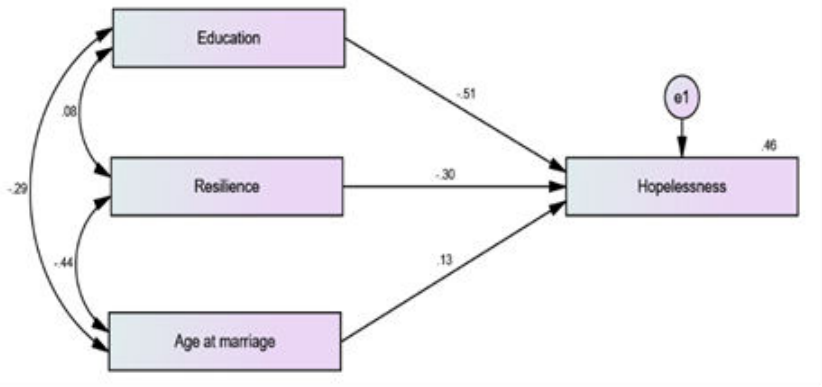
From the unstandardized beta (b) weight (see column 6) it can be inferred that when the education of the respondent goes up by one year, the hopelessness score reduces by 0.575 units. Similarly, when the resilience score of the respondents increases by one unit, the hopelessness score of the respondent decreases by 0.083 units. Finally, when the respondents' age at marriage increases by one year, the hopelessness score decreases by 0.047 units.

Regression path analysis using structural equation modelling

"Path analysis is a form of multiple regression statistical analysis used to evaluate causal models by examining the relationships between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables. Using this method one can estimate both the magnitude and significance of causal connections between variables" (Crossman, 2017).



Regression Path Diagram: 1- Graphic output for Un-standardised Estimates (b)



Regression Path Diagram: 2- Graphic output for Standardised Estimates (β)

Table - 3: Regression Path Analysis on Hopelessness score among Slum Youth

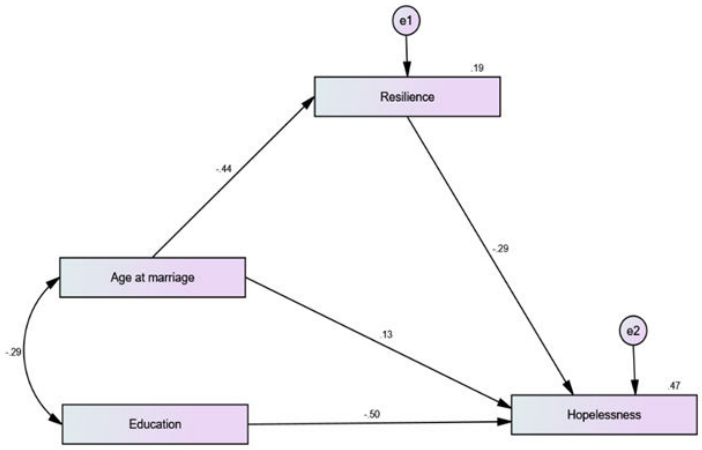
S. N	Variables						
	b weights			Estimates	S.E. b	C.R / t.	p
	(1)			(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1	Hopeless	<---	Edu	-.575	0.052	-11.084	.000
	Hopeless	<---	Agema	.047	0.018	2.658	.008
	Hopeless	<---	Res	-.083	0.014	-6.089	.000
2	**Co-variances**						
	Agema	<--->	Res	-46.245	6.856	-6.745	.000
	Edu	<--->	Res	2.509	1.950	1.287	.198
	Edu	<--->	Agema	-7.523	1.618	-4.649	.000
3	**Variances**						
	Edu			8.109	0.681	11.916	.000
	Agema			84.733	7.111	11.916	.000
	Res			132.328	11.105	11.916	.000
	e1			5.671	0.476	11.916	.000
4	**βWeights**				(Coefficient)		
	Hopeless	<---	Edu	-.506	When Education goes up by 1 standard deviation, hopelessness goes down by .506 standard deviations		
	Hopeless	<---	Agema	.134	When age at marriage goes up by 1 standard deviation, hopelessness goes up by 0.134standard deviations		
	Hopeless	<---	Res	-.296	When resilience goes up by 1 standard deviation, hopelessness score goes down by .296 standard deviations		
5	**Correlations**						
	Agema	<--->	Res	-.437	Correlation between age at marriage & resilience -0 .437		
	Edu	<--->	Res	.077	Correlation between education & resilience is 0.077		
	Edu	<--->	Agema	-.287	Correlation between education & age at marriage is -0.287		
6	**Squared Multiple Correlation Estimate**				**Error Variance**		
	R^2		Hopeless	0.459 or 46%	The error variance of hopelessness score is 54%		

Path Diagrams 1 and 2 are diagrammatic representations of the results of the unstandardised and standardised regression path analysis. Here, hopelessness was considered as the dependent variable while education, resilience, and age at marriage were considered to be the independent variables. However, the results also indicated that the model was not a perfect fit. This motivated the researchers to consider the possibility that the nature of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables could be something other than what was assumed. In panel 2 of table 3 and path diagram 1, information related to the *co-variances* between the independent variables can be observed. As far as the *standardised beta coefficients (*β) are concerned, the results in panel 9 of table 2 indicate them. Details about the *correlations* between the pairs of variables can be observed in panel 5 of table 2 and also in path diagram 2. From the said table, it can be stated that the three significant predictors-education, resilience, and age at marriage together account for about 46 per cent of the hopelessness score of the respondents in the present study. Hence, the cause of the remaining 54 per cent of the variance is unknown.

Model Fit Summary

Based on the conceptual model and the following structural model were developed with the sample data. The resulting structural model is presented in Path Diagram 3

Path Diagram- 3 - Graphic output for Modified Standardised Estimates



Path diagrams 3 indicate the revised /modified standardised graphic output. In this model both resilience and hopelessness, scores act as dependent variables. When resilience is treated as the dependent variable, age at marriage is treated as an independent variable. On the other hand, when hopelessness is treated as the dependent variable, age at marriage, education and resilience are treated as independent variables. $\chi^2 = 0.911$, df = 1, p = 0.340, RMSEA: it is equal to 0.000 (< 0.05 is acceptable), GFI: 0.998 (> 0.95 is acceptable) and it is concluded that the present model is supported by the sample data (Bian, 2011).

Limitations: The researchers have assumed that all slums have similar characteristics. This may be true for most slums in India. However, it may not be true in the case of all slums all over the world. The present study included two slums and only a decent sample size due to the constraints of time. Moreover, only those youth who were aged 15-29 were included in the study.

CONCLUSION

Form the results, it can be inferred that the single largest majority of the total respondents were in the age group of 15-19 years and had studied up to 9th standard, on average. The majorities, hailed from medium-sized nuclear families, were unemployed and did not have an income of their own. With regard to the level of resilience and hopelessness of the respondents, it was found that the majority of the total respondents had a low level of resilience and a high level of hopelessness. The results of the multivariate analysis of variance show that age, sex, marital status, religion, education, occupation, size of the family, type of family and ownership of home determine the hopelessness and resilience of the respondents at a statistically significant level. The correlation analysis revealed that there was a positive correlation at a very high level between hopelessness score of the respondents and their age and age at marriage and a positive correlation between hopelessness score of the respondents and years of drinking at a moderately high level. A negative correlation was discovered between the hopelessness score of the respondents and their education, monthly family income and monthly family expenditure at a very high level and between their hopelessness score and number of family members at a high level. Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis as well as its diagrammatic representation through the path analysis, it is apparent that education plays a very important role in the mental health (including resilience) of youth living in the slums, in the present study. A troubling finding is a fact the researchers observed a significant number of the respondents dropping out of school. By dropping out of school and thereby discontinuing their education, the respondents put themselves at the risk of harbouring feelings of hopelessness. Another aspect observed by the researchers during data collection was the prevalence of consumption of alcohol by youth

in the slums and the tolerant attitude towards drinking in general. It was also observed that this maladaptive behaviour of drinking at a young age encourages the youth to skip or drop out of school. Eventually, instead of being educated, a significant majority of the respondents were found to seek employment in low paying jobs with little or no opportunities for career growth or financial progress. Hence, it is suggested that there could be awareness programmes conducted in slums with similar characteristics with regard to the importance of education to ensure that at least the next generation of youth in slums are not victims of the lack of education but rather the beneficiaries of education.

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Declaration of Interest: None.

Ethical Clearance: taken by the doctoral research committee.

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