

The Child and Youth Resilience Measure: Findings from the Czech Republic

Research Site: North and Central Moravia, Czech Republic

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“I ended up here. I had to learn to obey, adapt, but I'm glad I'm here. And even though I worry about the future, I'll handle it. At least I have someone who loves me as I am.”



- Czech girl



Understanding Resilience Ecologically

Based on work conducted by researchers affiliated with the Resilience Research Centre, we now understand resilience ecologically. Resilience is defined as the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to resources that sustain well-being; the capacity of individuals' physical and social ecologies to provide those resources; and the capacity of individuals, their families, and communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways for resources to be shared.

The Child and Youth Resilience Measure*

The CYRM is designed as a screening tool to explore the resources (individual, relational, communal and cultural) available to individuals, that may bolster their resilience. The measure was designed as part of the International Resilience Project, of the Resilience Research Centre, in collaboration with 14 communities in 11 countries around the world.

*Liebenberg, L., Ungar, M., and Van de Vijver, F. R. R. (2012). Validation of the Child and Youth Resilience Measure-28 (CYRM-28) Among Canadian Youth with Complex Needs. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 22(2), 219-226.

For further information about the RRC, CYRM, and the ecological model of understanding resilience, feel free to visit us at our website <http://www.resilienceproject.org/> or email at RRC@dal.ca.

Context and Risk Factors

Czech Republic lies in the middle of Europe. It is a democratic, post-communist country. The total population is 10.5 million people. The adult literacy rate reaches 99.9 % and economic development is acceptable. The society, however, faces some political instability or increasing disruption of social values. In 2012 approximately 8,000 children lived in institutional care.

Moravia is the eastern part of the country and is divided into four areas. North and Central Moravia (where the research was conducted) has a total population of 1.97 million people and includes industrial, urban and rural areas. Despite an acceptable standard of living this region struggles with under-financing and unemployment problems (especially in the area of industry).

Youth in Czech Republic must generally deal with this disruption of social and moral values in the society, lack of parental care and rearing, the increasing rate of substance abuse (particularly alcohol and smoking), risk behavior (e.g. sexual), and slightly increasing frequency of other disruptive behavior (e.g. bullying, aggression, etc.).

Children in institutional care face social exclusion, absence of one stable care giving person, as well as negative experiences stemming from previous life events (such as neglect, violence, parental abuse etc.). These experiences might lead to the attachment problems, emotional problems, adjustment problems in later life, substance use, social and relationship problems, and so forth. Despite these risks, children (with the help of their closer surroundings) manage to cope surprisingly well with adverse circumstances and their development is much less disturbed than would be expected.

Research Participants

Two groups of youth from Czech Republic participated in the study. The first group consisted of 206 youth in institutional care (high-risk youth), of which 54% (111) were male and 46% (95) were female. The second group were 203 high school youth (low-risk youth), of which 40% (81) were male and 60% (122) were female. The average age of participants was 16 years, with ages ranging from 14 to 20 years. The average education level was grade 11 (high school grade 2), but education levels ranged from 9 to 15 (University grade 2). The communities of the participants saw the youth as coping well, based on culturally appropriate norms for behaviour.

Czech Republic CYRM Results¹

The results show some interesting findings. Total mean CYRM scores of youth in institutional care was 103.76 (SD = 14.21), which corresponds with approximately the 43rd percentile compared to norms for at-risk youth in Canada. In other words, youth from Czech Republic score just below the average. This pattern is also seen in the sub-scale scores which (38th percentile for Individual scale, 41st percentile for Relational scale and 47th percentile for Contextual scale). Scores in individual and relational scales are influenced partly by specifics of institutional care environment, secondly by adverse family circumstances (due to which these children get in the orphanage), which adversely affects in particular the personality and relational component. The highest score was given to the question 'Getting an education is important to me' (M = 4.49; SD = .971) reflecting the perceived importance of education as a means of coping with negative circumstances, finding and sustaining self-confidence and enhancing future opportunities. The lowest score was for the question 'I participate in organized religious activities' (M = 2.00; SD = 1.370). This response is understandable given that Czech society is significantly atheist.

Surprising results were seen in the scores of the low-risk youth. Their total mean score for the CYRM was 104.76 (SD = 12.88), which corresponds with the 44th percentile of Canadian at-risk youth norms. From this perspective, it seems that whereas at-risk youth show the expected results, the low-risk youth are doing quite poorly. These youth need additional supports as they too face significant risks. Also in sub-scales the scores are problematic (40th percentile for Individual scale, 54th percentile for Relational scale and 43rd percentile for Contextual scale), showing that mainly individual skills and contextual sources of resilience are lacking. While low-risk youth also scored lowest on the question 'I participate in organized religious activities' (M = 1.57; SD = 1.087), they scored highest on the question 'If I am hungry, there is enough to eat' (M = 4.78; SD = .539). These results suggest that while parents and primary caregivers are encouraged to ensure the primary physical needs of children, less attention is given to development of personal skills through community supports.

¹This study was supported by the Czech Science Foundation (grant number 13-19519P).

According to the qualitative data, what does resilience mean to youth in the Czech Republic?

Using the nine 'catalyst' questions, qualitative interviews were conducted with 2 boys and 3 girls considered by the community to be "doing well". These youth explained what they understood resilience means in institutional care. They emphasize several things: to be able to adapt to circumstances, not to lose faith in yourself and in the future, having a solid and supportive social network, to deal with the adversities they faced in their families, to get through these adversities and to realize that it wasn't their fault.

"I have long blamed myself that I did something wrong that my parents didn't love me. But then I realized that it was not my fault. And it does not mean that I can't have a good life. Although it's not the best and sometimes I miss my family, I want to try and achieve something."

"What is most important? Believing in yourself. And having friends and mates. It helps me a lot because I know that I will have them even when I leave and start living my own life."

"One has to adapt and obey here, but not forget himself. You have much less of "mine", but the more you appreciate it. And it taught me to share, help others and trust them that they help me too."

Mean scores and standard deviations of the CYRM

CYRM Scale	At-risk youth		Low risk youth	
	Mean of score sums	Standard deviation	Mean of score sums	Standard deviation
Individual	41.99	6.237	42.11	5.713
Personal Skills	18.60	3.327	18.91	2.713
Peer Support	7.35	1.976	7.99	1.585
Social Skills	16.03	2.631	15.21	2.561
Relational	26.41	5.323	28.32	4.791
Phys Care giving	8.56	1.600	9.30	1.111
Psych Care giving	17.85	4.275	19.02	4.030
Contextual	35.36	5.848	34.32	5.641
Spiritual	9.42	2.497	8.38	2.091
Educational	8.20	1.783	8.37	3.233
Cultural	17.74	3.367	17.58	2.959

Site Specific Questions	At-risk youth		Low-risk youth	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I can adapt to circumstances (even if they don't completely suit me).	3.32	.954	3.48	.901
I think that it matters, when I try.	4.31	.899	4.33	.691
I'm more open than withdrawn.	3.10	1.263	3.11	1.165
I trust my friends, mates, and people around me.	3.47	1.184	3.76	.852
I think that there is justice in society.	2.77	1.251	2.24	.891
I have someone who really loves me.	4.40	.941	4.43	.865
I believe I can assert myself (now and in the future).	3.60	1.062	3.55	.895
Romantic relationship is important part of life for me (even though I don't have any right now).	4.05	1.147	4.01	.990
I rely on my friends.	3.13	1.248	3.74	.936
I can rely on myself.	3.97	1.095	3.96	.979