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Parents, caregivers and educators: The forgotten stakeholders in the discussion of resilience — an international perspective

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ABSTRACT

This editorial centers the discussion of resilience on a contextual approach focusing on parents, caregivers, and educators and how to best ensure good care and support for these key stakeholders in schools and local communities.

KEYWORDS

Resilience; contextual and systemic approach to resilience; parents; caregivers and educators; teacher resilience; parent resilience; international perspective; schools

Adopting a systemic perspective on understanding resilience and its mechanisms, instead of focusing exclusively on children's own (and real) contributions to thriving, we propose a wider contextual approach, focusing on important stakeholders in a child's life, namely, parents, other adult caregivers, and teachers. Within this approach, we also emphasize the importance of global perspectives on resilience (Asamsama et al., 2014) and highlight potential applications for practitioners in schools. This transactional, ecosystemic point of view implicitly implies recognition that the child is embedded in a wider system and thus affected by social and ecological factors and resources (Ungar, 2012) in both family and school systems.

Our aim in compiling these articles is to enhance understanding of the mechanisms and interventions that promote resilience among *parents or caregivers* and *teachers*. In a comprehensive review on promoting equity of outcomes in childhood, the 2019 report by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM, 2019) indicated that the single most important factor in promoting a child's resilience is a strong relationship with at least one adult caregiver, and this in turn rests on the well-being of the caregivers themselves. Accordingly, there is a need to bring, to the center of discussions, questions on *how best to ensure good care and support for key stakeholders in schools and local communities* (Luthar, Crossman, & Small, 2015). In this Special Issue, the guest editors sought to bring international perspectives on relevant issues in their educational systems, and are delighted to have important contributions from North America, Europe, and Africa.

Attending to what caregiving adults need, not just what they must do

There are decades of research studies describing various "do's and don'ts" for parents and educators working with children in at-risk circumstances, but relatively little focus on what parents and educators, themselves, might need. In recent years, this has shifted, such that there is explicit attention to the concept of resilience among parents. Broadening the focus of resilience research thus is critical, as adults who are tending children in at-risk settings are themselves challenged, and therefore clearly need external supports to maintain healthy, supportive everyday interactions (Luthar et al., 2015).

A central argument in this Special Issue is that educators are more likely to show resilience if they have the resources to deal with the stresses and strains that can be an inherent, ongoing part of the teaching profession. These adults must have access to necessary material resources, as well as support and caring (significant invisible resources) within the school system or local community. As a field, the main challenge ahead is going to be to ascertain how exactly these resources can be made accessible and sustained on an ongoing basis, to teachers, school psychologists, and administrators. The contents and strategies of effective interventions will undoubtedly depend on the cultural contexts and norms in which stakeholders and schools are embedded.

Articles in this special issue

In the first of six articles here, Twum-Antwi, Jefferies, and Ungar (2020) propose a new multisystemic model of

resilience that has significant implications for design of programs that promote well-being of parents and teachers. Theron and van Rensburg (2020) present findings from a study in the South African context, emphasizing the value of parental figures and their contribution to adolescents' resilience in both rural and urban settings. The article by Matsopoulos, Gavogiannaki, and Griva (2020) presents an innovative European resilience curriculum named RESCUR. Implemented in public school classrooms, the intervention has led to significant improvements in child outcomes.

With a direct focus on teachers' well-being, Luthar, Kumar, and Zillmer (2020) address risks for their burn-out in high-achieving schools, where students and adults alike face high everyday stress. In their critical review of interventions aiming to promote teacher resilience in school systems, O'Shaughnessy and Kangas-Dick (2020) highlight the need to provide contextual resources to support educators. Finally, Luthar and Mendes (2020) focus on the trauma-informed approach increasingly advocated in U.S. schools; discussing associated burdens on the teachers themselves, these authors provide potentially beneficial systemic changes.

Concluding comments

Articles in this Special Issue make it amply clear that schools globally must adopt a systemic, resource-focused perspective on fostering childhood resilience, with a concerted focus on the well-being of key stakeholders including parents and caregivers, as well as teachers and other school-based adults. There is a need for more research to illuminate processes most likely to promote resilience of these stakeholders in different cultural contexts and ecologies (Hatzichristou, Lianos, & Lampropoulou, 2017). We need to be actively involved in finding tangible ways to ensure that these adults receive not just essential material supports but also support and caring, taking into consideration the levels and types of risks they experience.

In the years ahead, school psychologists can play a major role in advocacy, using science toward encouraging administrators and policy makers to adopt systemic actions. It is crucial to consider questions such as, "Which protective factors and processes (for teachers or parents) 'count' the most; in which contexts can they be best activated, and how?" Over time, it will be useful to collect insights based on these questions, adopting a local, national, as well as international perspective. School psychologists have the skills and expertise to contribute substantively to resilience-focused consultation for teachers (Matsopoulos, 2017) and implementation of

resilience programs for parents and students, with the active engagement of all of them in the process.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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