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Youth playfulness and inter/intrapersonal resilience

Playfulness o ludicidad en los jóvenes y la resiliencia interpersonal e intrapersonal

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Abstract

There is an increasing number of studies that examine playfulness as a personality trait in young people and adults. However, compared childhood, the importance and role of play in adulthood are still not entirely clear. Conversely, it is looking for sources of resilience of young people and adults. Therefore, researchers are looking for sources of resilience in young people and adults. Therefore, the tasks of this research are to examine the playfulness of young people, investigate the inter/intrapersonal resilience of young people, and explore the connection between playfulness and inter/intrapersonal resilience in young people. Two hundred young people aged 19 to 29 participated in the research. The results indicate that young people achieved a moderately high score on the playfulness scale (AS=99.39, possible max=133), with significant differences in the scores on the Fun-seeking motivation subscale in relation to financial situation and gender. When it comes to inter/intrapersonal resilience there are also significant differences in related to financial situation and gender. Finally, the study shows a significant correlation between playfulness and inter/intrapersonal resilience (p=.00, Pearson coefficient.410**). Our study suggests the need for further research into potential ways to enhance young people's playfulness in order to improve lives and wellbeing.

Keywords: playfulness, resilience, youth, intrapersonal, interpersonal

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Resumen

Existe un número creciente de estudios que examinan la ludicidad como un rasgo de personalidad en jóvenes y adultos. Sin embargo, en comparación con la infancia, la importancia y el rol del juego en la adultez aún no están del todo claros. Por otro lado, se busca encontrar fuentes de resiliencia en jóvenes y adultos. Por lo tanto, esta investigación se propone examinar la ludicidad en los jóvenes, investigar la resiliencia inter/intrapersonal y explorar la conexión entre la ludicidad y la resiliencia inter/ intrapersonal en este grupo. En la investigación participaron doscientos jóvenes de entre 19 y 29 años. Los resultados indican que los jóvenes obtuvieron una puntuación moderadamente alta en la escala de ludicidad (AS=99.39, máximo posible=133), con diferencias significativas en las puntuaciones de la subescala de motivación para la diversión en relación con la situación financiera y el género. En cuanto a la resiliencia inter/intrapersonal, también existen diferencias significativas relacionadas con la situación financiera y el género. Finalmente, el estudio muestra una correlación significativa entre la ludicidad y la resiliencia inter/intrapersonal (p=.00, coeficiente de Pearson.410**). Nuestro estudio sugiere la necesidad de continuar investigando posibles formas de mejorar la ludicidad de los jóvenes para mejorar sus vidas y su hienestar

Palabras clave: ludicidad, resiliencia, juventud, intrapersonal, interpersonal

INTRODUCTION

The importance of play in human development has long been recognized, and recent research suggests that some individuals are naturally more playful than others, and this inclination is rooted in their personality (Barnett, 2007; Clifford, Paulk, Lin, Cadwallader, Lubbers, & Frazier, 2024; Proyer, Gander, Brauer & Chick, 2000). Playfulness is often described as "the predisposition to frame (or reframe) a situation in such a way as to provide oneself (and possibly others) with amusement, humour, and/or entertainment" (Barnett, 2007, p. 955). Play encompasses its behavioural manifestations. While children's playfulness has been reliably measured and identified, more recent efforts have recognized and measured playfulness in adults.

Playfulness is defined as a disposition characterized by creativity, curiosity, pleasure, humour, and spontaneity (Guitard, Ferland & Dutil, 2005). It also includes a tendency to have fun, a propensity to approach activities with a sense of frivolity for one's own enjoyment, and a tendency to take pleasure in and engage in activities (Lubbers, Cadwallader, Lin, Clifford, & Frazier, 2023). According to Barnett (2007), playful individuals are often outgoing, unconstrained, witty, and dynamic. In each of these descriptions, playfulness emerges as a consistent personality trait. Research has linked playfulness in adults to intrinsic motivation, creativity, spontaneity (Barnett, 2007), positive attitudes toward the workplace, job satisfaction, and academic success (Proyer, 2011).

Playfulness is recognized as an individual difference characteristic that positively influences individuals' leisure experiences (Barnett, 2011). The function of playfulness may evolve over the life span and different life stages (Qian & Yarnal, 2011). Playfulness can be influenced by demographic factors such as age and gender (Proyer & Ruch, 2011; Qian & Yarnal, 2011), environmental enrichment (Yarnal, Chick, & Dattilo, 2006), and social connections (Caldwell & Witt, 2011). Barnett (2007) noted that while the underlying characteristics of adult playfulness remain consistent, there were variations in four of her fifteen descriptors. Females scored higher on cheeriness, friendliness, and humorousness, while males scored higher on jokes and teases. In four of his five factors, Proyer (2014) found gender disparities, with men scoring higher than women on whimsicality and intellectuality, and women scoring lower on creative loving and impulsivity (while scoring the same on cheerfulness and engagement).

Hart and Holmes (2022) investigated the relationship between adult playfulness and emotional intelligence. Their findings revealed a strong positive correlation between playfulness and emotional intelligence as a temperamental disposition. Engaging in playful behaviors helps adults enhance their ability to manage, express, and regulate emotions, which are key components of emotional intelligence.

Resilience represents the personal qualities that enable individuals to thrive despite adversity. It can be seen as a measure of one's ability to cope with stress and is a potential target for treating anxiety, depression, and stress reactions (Graziani, Kunkle, & Shih, 2022). Regarded as a personal strength, resilience contributes to positive functioning and optimal development while preventing negative emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Researchers emphasize that resilience is not solely a characteristic of an individual's internal psychological processes but can also stem from their social and psychological environment, including factors at the individual, family, community, and cultural levels (Waller, 2001).

Intrapersonal resilience is one type of resilience that has been linked to enhanced health and wellbeing, either directly or via reducing the effects of negative experiences. An important component of therapies aimed at preventing detrimental mental health outcomes like depression, anxiety, and other stress-related reactions is intrapersonal resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003). According to empirical research, lower levels of depression are associated with better levels of resilience in terms of mastery, relatedness, and emotional reactivity (Moore & Woodcock, 2017). Intrapersonal resilience can also be seen as a personality trait that affects how we perceive stress and the emotional consequences it causes, such as our ability to control how it affects us.

Along with interpersonal factors including social support and other facets of the social environment, intrapersonal resilience has been suggested to have a role in fostering and maintaining resilience in the face of adversity (Lee, Sudom, & Zamorski, 2013). Social support, defined as a person's impression of general support or particular helpful behaviours

from people in their social network, is one example of an interpersonal source of resilience that can improve personal functioning and shield people from unfavourable consequences. Social support has been proven to have a direct impact on mental health outcomes as a source of interpersonal resilience (Lakey & Orehek, 2011).

Resilience is a result of healthy development over a person's lifetime (Strurgeon & Zautra, 2010). However, the process of developing resilience varies from person to person (Windle, 2011). Some individuals can overcome disease, maintain and grow their resources, and improve their health over their lives, while others may not. Gender plays a significant role in how individuals cope with stressful life circumstances. Research indicates that men and women develop resilience through different pathways. There isn't one approach that's more important than the other; rather, males and females employ distinct and often unexpected strategies (Bonanno, 2008).

Several authors including Chang, Qian and Yarnal (2013), Magnuson and Barnett (2013), and Staempfi (2007), emphasize the importance of playfulness in the coping process. Recent studies indicate that playfulness in adults may contribute to improved mental and physical health outcomes (Farley, Kennedy Behr, & Brown, 2021). Playful individuals tend to experience lower stress levels and employ more adaptive coping strategies to mitigate distress (Clifford et al., 2024). Playfulness influences the stress-coping process by impacting cognitive assessments, as shown by Magnuson and Barnett (2013). Playfulness can serve as a coping mechanism by mediating how stress is perceived and felt (Staempfi, 2007). While both highly playful and less playful individuals generally use the same types of coping methods, highly playful people tend to employ adaptive or engagement coping techniques more frequently (Magnuson & Barnett, 2013). These findings suggest that playfulness may be a valuable coping mechanism that enables individuals to manage highly stressful situations more effectively, potentially reducing psychological distress.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The goal and tasks of the research. The goal of the research was to determine the connection between playfulness and intra /interpersonal resilience of young people. Based on the formulated goal, the following research tasks were set: 1. Examine youth playfulness and whether there are differences in relation to the measured socio-demographic characteristics; 2. Examine the intra / interpersonal resilience of young people and whether there are differences in relation to the measured socio-demographic characteristics; 3. Examine the connection between youth playfulness and intra / interpersonal resilience of young people and whether there are differences in relation to the measured socio-demographic characteristics; 3. Examine the connection between youth playfulness and intra / intrapersonal resilience of young people;

Research instruments. The following instruments were used for the purposes of examining the set goal and tasks of the research:

- A questionnaire on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents was designed specifically for this research. It included questions related to gender, age, place of residence, housing situation, family structure, number of children in the family, financial situation, student status, employment, field of study, and academic performance.
- Adult Playfulness Scale: This scale, originally developed by Shen, Chick, and Zinn (2014), was translated and adapted for Serbian research context by Jovanović (2020). It utilizes a seven-point Likert-type scale comprising 19 items (ranging from 1 "do not agree at all" to 7 "completely agree"). The scale comprises three subscales: Fun-seeking motivation (9 items, Cronbach's alpha =.85), Uninhibitedness (5 items, Cronbach's alpha =.60, attributed to the smaller item count), and Spontaneity (5 items, Cronbach's alpha =.75).
- Youth Resilience Assessment Scale: This scale was developed by Jefferies, McGarrigle, and Ungar (2019) and validated through confirmatory factor analysis on Serbian sample of respondents as part of Đorđić's doctoral dissertation (2020). The model with seventeen items and two factors family resilience and intra/interpersonal resilience was found to be the most suitable (RMSEA =.046, SRMR =.038, CFI =.936, TLI =.924, AIC = 64895.132, BIC = 65193.561) (Đorđić, 2020, pp. 150). The intra/interpersonal resilience factor used in our research comprises 10 items and exhibits adequate reliability (Cronbach's alpha =.88).

Sample, Research Flow, and Statistical Procedures. The research included a sample of 200 respondents, selected through convenience sampling. Data collection was conducted via Google Forms between February and May 2022. The distribution of the sample based on examined socio-demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1.

	n	%		
Gender				
Male	34	17%		
Female	166	83%		
Place of living				
City	134	67%		
Suburb	24	12%		
The countryside	42	21%		

Table 1. Sample structure

Housing situation		
With parents	101	50.5%
In a rented apartment	65	32.5%
In the dormitory	34	17%
Family structure		
A complete family	166	83%
An incomplete family	34%	17%
Number of children in the family		
One	26	13%
Two	127	63.5%
Three and more	47	23%
Financial situation		
Extremely unsatisfactory	1	0.5%
Unsatisfactory	31	15.5%
Satisfying	144	72%
Very satisfying	24	12%
Student status		
Yes	193	96.5%
No	7	3.5%
Employment		
Yes	7	3.5%
No, I'm studying	147	73.5%
I work and study	46	23
Field of study		
Social - humanistic	148	74%
Natural - mathematical	25	12.5%
Technical - technological	13	6.5%
Medical	4	2%
Art	3	1.5%
I'm not studying	7	3.5%
Total	200	100%

RESULTS

Youth Playfulness. The first task related to the examination of the youth playfulness and whether there are differences in relation to the measured socio-demographic characteristics. Table 2 shows the descriptive indicators of the youth playfulness.

	min	max	AM	SD
Fun-seeking motivation	27	63	52.04	7.87
When someone else starts something fun, I'm happy to follow him/her.	1	7	5.84	1.26
I try to have fun no matter what I do.	1	7	5.33	1.66
I can recognize fun in most situations.	1	7	5.40	1.38
I appreciate the fun stuff that other people run.	2	7	6.32	.95
I believe in good fun.	2	7	6.39	.99
I'm often the person who starts the fun in a given situation.	1	7	4.98	1.49
I enjoy the fun things that other people initiate.	2	7	6.07	1.02
I believe that entertainment is a very important part of life.	3	7	6.35	1.01
I can make almost any activity fun for myself	1	7	5.36	1.48
Uninhibitedness	11	35	23.62	5.34
Sometimes I can do something without worrying about the consequences.	1	7	4.00	1.83
When I want to do something, I usually don't let other people's opinions stop me from doing it.	1	7	4.22	2.04
I understand social norms, but in most cases, they do not limit me.	1	7	5.37	1.48
I don't think I have anything to lose by being a little crazy.	1	7	4.41	1.78
I don't think I have anything to lose by being a little crazy.	1	7	5.63	1.47
Spontaneity	6	35	23.72	5.97
I often act without any plan.	1	7	3.87	1.85
I often do what I want in the moment without prior planning and thinking.	1	7	4.39	1.87

Table 2. Descriptive indicators of the scale of the youth playfulness

I often react impulsively.	1	7	4.48	1.95
I often follow my current thoughts.	1	7	5.46	1.29
I often follow my current feelings.	1	7	5.59	1.33
Total	58	133	99.39	15.49

Based on Table 2, it is evident that, on the overall scale, the respondents achieved a moderately high score in playfulness (AM=99.39, possible max = 133). In order to make subscales' score ranks comparable and get deeper insights, a Friedman's ANOVA test was conducted. A Friedman's ANOVA by ranks revealed significant differences in scores among the three subscales: Uninhibitedness, Fun-seeking motivation, and Spontaneity χ^2 (2, N = 200) = 398.010 XX, p<.001. Post-hoc analyses using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests with a Bonferroni correction (α = 0.0167) showed that Uninhibitedness scores (Mdn = 45.00) were significantly lower than Fun-seeking motivation scores (Mdn = 50.00), Z = -12.263, p<.001. Additionally, Spontaneity scores (Mdn = 55.00) were significantly higher than Uninhibitedness scores (Mdn = 45.00), Z = -12.263, p<.001. Lastly, Spontaneity scores (Mdn = 50.00), Z = -12.262, p<.001. These results indicate significant differences between each pair of subscales, even after adjusting for multiple comparisons which implies that in our sample of respondents, the highest scores were achieved on subscale measuring Spontaneity.

An analysis using a t-test of independent samples was conducted to examine the differences in youth playfulness with regard to gender. The findings indicated that female respondents tend to show less of playfulness behaviour, although these differences did not reach statistical significance. Additionally, when analysing the variations in the achieved scores on the subscales concerning socio-demographic characteristics, statistically significant differences were identified. Specifically, there were significant differences in the scores on the Fun-seeking motivation subscale in relation to both financial situation and gender (as presented in Table 4 and 5).

	Ν	AM	SD	F	р
Extremely unsatisfactory	1	39.00	-		
Unsatisfactory	31	53.03	6.82	4.49	.1
Satisfying	144	51.24	8.02		
Very satisfying	24	56.12	5.75		

Table 3. Fun-seeking motivation and financial situation

Additional analysis did not include the first group, which consisted of one respondent, due to the impossibility of conducting the ANOVA statistical procedure. Applying the Tukey test, additional analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in youth playfulness who rated their financial situation as satisfactory (AM = 51.24) and young people who rated their financial situation as very satisfactory (AM=56.12) compared to the respondents who assessed their financial situation as unsatisfactory.

	Ν	AM	SD	F	р
Female	166	52.26	7.42	5.71	01
Male	34	50.97	9.39		.01

Table 4. Fun-seeking motivation and gender

Scores achieved on the Fun-Seeking motivation subscale indicate that male respondents exhibit this behavior at a statistically significantly higher level compared to female respondents.

Intra / interpersonal resilience of young people. The second task referred to the examination of intra /interpersonal resilience of young people and whether there are differences in relation to the measured socio-demographic characteristics. Descriptive indicators of the youth intra /interpersonal resilience scale are given in Table 6.

 Table 5. Descriptive indicators of the scale of intra /interpersonal resilience of young people

	min	max	AM	SD
Intra and interpersonal resilience	31.87	52.24	44.01	4.55
I cooperate with people from my environment.	2	5	4.45	.74
Getting an education is important to me.	1	5	4.78	.63
I know how to behave in different social situations.	2	5	4.57	.70
Others think it's fun to be in my company.	1	5	4.24	.84
I feel that my friends support me.	1	5	4.46	.84
I feel that I belong in my school/college/work environment.	1	5	4.36	.91
My friends are there for me during difficult times.	1	5	4.42	.91
People in my environment treat me fairly.	2	5	4.26	.81

I have opportunities to show others that I am becoming an adult and that I can behave responsibly.	1	5	4.39	.81
I have opportunities to develop skills that will be useful to me later in life (e.g., skills for a future job).	1	5	4.08	.75

The analysis found statistically significant differences in relation to gender, financial situation and age (Tables 6, 7, 8.)

	Ν	AM	SD	F	р
Female	166	44.29	4.41	0.25	00
Male	34	42.52	5.80	8.35	.00

Table 6. Intra / interpersonal resilience of young people and gender

In our sample, a statistically significant difference in intra/interpersonal resilience was found between genders, favoring female subjects. This indicates that females exhibit higher levels of intra/interpersonal resilience compared to male respondents.

	Ν	AM	SD	F	р
Extremely unsatisfactory	1	29.00			
Unsatisfactory	31	42.25	5.02	6.30	.01
Satisfying	144	44.20	4.56		
Very satisfying	24	45.62	3.48		

Table 7. Intra /interpersonal resilience of young people and financial situation

Statistically significant differences were found in intra/interpersonal resilience based on the financial situation of the respondents. When examining the average scores, it is evident that a better financial situation is associated with higher self-assessments of intra/ interpersonal resilience among young people. Further analysis revealed notable differences between specific groups: respondents who rated their financial situation as unsatisfactory had an average inter/intrapersonal resilience score of 42.24, while those who rated their financial situation as very satisfactory had a higher average resilience score of 45.62. This suggests that young people with a more positive view of their financial situation tend to perceive themselves as more resilient both intra- and interpersonally.

	Table 6. Intra / interpersonal resilience of young people and age							
	Ν	AM	SD	F	р			
19	43	44.25	5.18					
20	55	45.16	4.44					
21	30	45.20	3.87					
22	23	42.04	4.50	2.50	.01			
23	23	43.69	4.59					
24	14	41.92	3.95					
25	10	41.30	6.32					
26	1	47.00	-					
29	1	36.00	-					

Table 8. Intra /interpersonal resilience of young people and age

Statistically significant differences based on the age of young people were identified using the ANOVA test. However, upon examining Table 9 and the arithmetic values of intra/interpersonal resilience, no consistent pattern emerged in relation to the age of the respondents. Further analysis showed that there were no statistically significant differences between specific age groups. This indicates that age does not have a consistent or significant impact on the intra/interpersonal resilience of young people in this sample.

The third research task involved investigating the correlation between youth playfulness and the intra/interpersonal resilience of young people, as presented in Table 10.

	Youth playfulness	Intra / interpersonal resilience	р
Youth playfulness	1	.410**	
Intra / interpersonal resilience	.410**	1	. 00

Table 9. Youth playfulness and intra /interpersonal resilience of young people

A strong positive correlation, statistically significant at a high level (p < 0.01), was found between youth playfulness behavior and intra/interpersonal resilience. This means that as young people's playfulness increases, their resilience, both within themselves and in their interactions with others, also significantly increases. The high level of statistical significance indicates that this relationship is very unlikely to be due to chance, underscoring the robustness of the findings.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The initial research task involved examining the playfulness of young individuals and assessing the presence of variations concerning their measured socio-demographic characteristics. Notably, a significant difference was observed concerning the financial situation of the respondents, favouring those who expressed greater satisfaction with their financial circumstances. This finding finds resonance with earlier research positing that financial stressors may exert a detrimental influence on an individual's capacity to engage in playful activities. Precisely, individuals grappling with financial difficulties may find themselves constrained by limited temporal and financial resources for leisure and recreational activities, as corroborated by the work of Oncescu and Neufeld (2018). Further analysis has shown the differences in fun-seeking motivation concerning gender. While our research showed that female participants achieved higher scores on fun-seeking motivation, previous research has ambivalent implications (Barnett, 2007; Barnett & Klitzing, 2006).

In second task, which include differences in socio-demographic characteristics and inter/interpersonal resilience, results also shows significant differences in relation to gender and financial situation. Within the domain of gender-related coping strategies, extant scholarly investigations, as exemplified by the work of Tamres et al. (2002), have found higher tendency among women for the utilization of coping strategies characterized by verbal articulation directed both inwardly and outwardly. These strategies encompass the solicitation of emotional support, the engagement in problem rumination, and the application of affirmative self-dialogue. Additionally, empirical studies, such as those conducted by McPherson et al. (2006), have revealed that women often possess more extensive confidant networks than their male counterparts. This aspect may offer further insight into our findings, potentially elucidating the increased participation of female respondents in situations conducive to the cultivation of both intrapersonal and interpersonal resilience. When it comes to financial status, previous research suggests that financial stress, often arising from economic adversities, stands as a test for resilience, significantly challenging an individual's capacity to adapt (Dew, 2007). The choice of coping strategies and the availability of resources are both notably influenced by one's financial situation, thereby shaping the individual's resilience (Gallo et al., 2009).

Finally, this study shows a positive correlation between playfulness and both intra and interpersonal resilience within the cohort of young individuals. This observation can be elucidated through the diverse paths by which playfulness enriches the emotional and cognitive facets of young people's development. Furthermore, our research substantiates the affirmative impact of playfulness on resilience, stress coping, and the cultivation of adaptability, aligning with earlier related investigations (Magnuson & Barnett, 2013; Staempfi, 2007). These findings collectively underscore the pivotal role of playfulness in

nurturing resilience and its far-reaching implications for the socio-psychological maturation of young individuals.

Given the many advantages of playfulness, it begs the issue of whether it will be possible to educate people how to be playful in the future. It would appear that improving someone's playfulness would be a difficult task because the conceptualization of playfulness maintains that it is a feature of personality that is generally constant throughout time. In addition to organizing work and activities with young people, it is important to grasp the relationship between resilience and youth playfulness. In light of that, more study should concentrate on the relationship between playfulness and other facets of young people's psychological and physical functioning in an effort to help and enhance their lives and wellbeing.

Ethical aspects

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study, ensuring adherence to principles of respect, integrity, and privacy. Participation was voluntary, with university students consenting to take part after being informed about the research's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. To protect participant anonymity, no identifying information was collected, and all responses were recorded and analyzed in a manner that ensured confidentiality. The data were used solely for research purposes, minimizing any risk of harm to participants. This study complied with institutional ethical guidelines for research with adult participants

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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