# RESILIENCE OF HIGHER  EDUCATIONAL STUDENTS, THE HUMAN SPIRIT AMONG THAI AND MUSLIM STUDENTS.

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**ABSTRACT: (Purpose)** *The present study sought to enhance the understanding of 1148 Thai and Muslims college students' resilience during the time of insurgent terrorism in the southernmost province of Thailand, Pattani.* **(Methodology)** *Resilience scale based on Grotberg three features of 'I HAVE", "I AM" and "I CAN" was developed in Thai as an instrument. Respondents' characteristics or protective factors regarding ethnic identity, academic achievement, faculty of enrollment and birth order were explored.* **(Results)** *The results revealed as follows: 1) Students' resilience were in moderate level with no meaningful difference between Thais and Muslims. 2) High GPA students had resilience and "I HAVE" features meaningful difference than low GPA fellows. 3) Students from all faculties in campus scored on resilience with meaningful difference while those from faculty of Fine and Applied Arts ranked the most in having resilience in high level (38. %). 4). The only child respondents manifested resilience meaningful difference from those of other birth order.* This study explored the resilience and protective factors among Thai and Muslim college students. **(Conclusions)** The results revealed that our hypotheses were mostly supported. Respondents manifested resilience in moderate level with out meaningful difference between Thais and Muslims. Also, two resilience features "I HAVE" and "I AM" were found to be different among respondents. Academic achievement, field of study and birth order had influence on resilience. **(Recommendations)** If intervention to foster resiliency were to implement on campus, low GPA, the only child and those from faculty of Human and Social Science should be the primary targeted participants to reach out.

**Keywords:** *Resilience, Human spirit, Higher students, Thai and Muslim students*

## INTRODUCTION

Individuals who have been living in Southernmost of Thailand are somewhat affected by the current unrest situation which has been fired to violence since 2004. Televisions and newspapers each day report events caused by the insurgents such as the gunning of innocent civilians regardless of gender or ages, teachers, civil officers, community leaders ; the burning of schools, the bombing at diverse targets such as banks, government offices, hotels, markets, stores, etc. Soldiers and tanks are often seen around town, villages, or on streets to guard for safety and counteract insurgents.

Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, is located in a southernmost province where terrorism has taken placed. The violence from the unrest has directly affected the enrollment of students with high socioeconomic status. In addition, students from the upper southern provinces or other parts of the country are less likely to apply for a study at PSU. Currently, Muslim students are enrolled in the university more than the Thais.  Like other Blacks or Hispanics minority in the US, Muslims are perceived to have lower academic aptitude than the Thai mainstreams. However, when compared to fellow Thai students at Pattani campus, their socioeconomic status are not much difference. Majority of Thai students who have enrolled at PSU are in moderate to low socioeconomic.  In short, Thai and Muslim students at Pattani campus have faced three major risk factors: the lower in SES and academic aptitude and the community terrorism. Despite such fact, they appear to function well. In other words, they seem to bounce back from those adversities. This ability is called resilience. Other alternative terms for resilience are invulnerability (Garmezy & Rutter, 1985),

hardiness, adaptation, adjustment, mastery, plasticity, person-environment fit, and social buffering (Losel, Bliesener, & Koeferl, 1989).

Early theories of resilience emphasized identification of child characteristics associated with positive outcome in face of adversity (Rutter, 1990). What are the resources of resilience? Holleran (2003) findings suggest that adhering to traditional values and belief is a source of strength that promote resilience and that culture serves as a reservoir of coping and adaptation strategies. It is possible that the cultural values of action of law (Krama) give a sanction for Thais when they face obstacles. For Muslims, the believe in law of determination by Allah (God) is a relief of their adversity. Orozco's study (2007) found that ethnic identity, perceived social support from family, friends, and a significant other, coping strategies, university environment, and cultural congruity determined their relation to resilience of 150 Latino college students. Another study by Campbell-Sills et al. (2005) proposed that personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness and coping styles particularly task-oriented were positively related to resilience. In addition, the traditional work of resilience by Grotberg (2000) suggested three features of resilience source: "I HAVE", "I CAN" and "I AM". The first source "I HAVE" refers to a fulfilling need of love and belonging or the external supports and resources. The second "I AM" represents the inner, personal strengths or individual self esteem. The third source "I CAN" identifies the ability to communicate with others and solve problem or the social, interpersonal skills.

The present study sought to explore the resilience level of Thai and Muslim undergraduate students pending on Grotberg model of three resilience features "I HAVE", "I AM" and "I CAN". We hypothesized that respondents would have resilience in a moderate level because more recent research addressed protective factors as moderators to make resilience common among children and adolescents (Lazarus, 2004). We believe participants have certain characteristics which reflecting protective factors. The secondary purpose of the study was to enhance the understanding of  respondents' protective factors or characteristic contributing to resiliency. We hypothesized that ethnic identity, academic achievement (grade point average), academic interests (field of study/faculty enrollment) and birth order were variables indirectly affect resiliency. We predicted that Thais and Muslims had resilience features "I HAVE", "I AM" and "I CAN" meaningful difference. Graham and Hudley (2005) reported that ethnic identity might be an important variable that contributed to the resilience of racial/ethnic individual in general. Also, the study of 150 Latino college students by Orozo (2007) suggested that ethnic identity and cultural congruity determined their relation to resilience. Next, we predicted that scores of resilience were meaningful difference among respondents of three levels of GPA: low, moderate and high. Ong et al. (2006) explored the protective influence of psychological and family factors on academic achievement in 123 Latino college students. They reported that students with greater family and psychological resource evidenced greater academic achievement. Next, we hypothesized that students enrolled in different faculty scored meaningful different on resilience. Attainment in a particular field of study could have influence on students self perception, which was related to resilience. That is, students might assimilate some values or philosophy of their field of study which would affect the perceived self. Zea et.al. (1977) reported that ethnic minority who were well integrated into the university environment were more likely to remain and commit to the university. Lastly, we predicted that students who were the first born, the middle, the youngest and the only child scored on resilience meaningful difference. As theorized by Adler (1929, cited in Claxton, 1994), psychological birth order of sibling had a possible effect on personality development. Different siblings responded to distress differently. The first were assumed to seek out personal interaction to counter stress more than individual of other birth order. Similar to the oldest, the youngest also develop good social skills. The middle was least anxious and harmonious while the only child was to reconcile with loneliness (Isaacson, 1977). However, birth order research has always been controversial.

## DEFINITION OF RESILIENCE

Resilience as defined by Grotberg (2000) is a universal capacity which allow a person ,group or community to prevent, minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity.        According to Luthar, et al.,(2000), resilience refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptations within the context of significant adversity. Joseph (1994) asserted  " resilience refers to the individual's ability to adjust and adapt to the changes, demands, and disappointments that come up in the course of life. Hawley and DeHaan (1996) stated resilience arises through hardship. Lastly, Lasarus(2004), defined resilience as the ability to overcome obstacles and stressors by using adaptive coping strategies in order to maintain an effective level of adjustment and functioning.  Though, these constructs of resilience seem to be synonymous, researchers define resiliency differentially in the context of their specific studies and theoretical orientations. For the present study, resilience will be defined by adhering to Grotberg's definition.

## THREE SOURCES OF RESILIENCE

Grotberg (2000) three sources of resilience are labeled: "I HAVE" , "I AM" and "I CAN". The first source "I HAVE" includes: People around me I trust and who love me no matter what; People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble; People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things; People who want me to learn to do things on my own; People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn. The second source "I AM" features: A person people can like and love; Glad to do nice things for others and show my concern; Respectful of myself and others; Willing to be responsible for what I do; Sure things will be all right. The Third source "I CAN" covers: Talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me; Find ways to solve problems that I face; Control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous; Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action; Find someone to help me when I need. According to Grotberg, a resilient does not need all of these features to be resilient but bit one is not enough. A person may be loved (I HAVE), but if he or she has no inner strength (I AM) or social skills ( I CAN ), there may be no resilience. A person may have a great deal of self-esteem (I AM), but if he or she does not know how to communicate with others or solve problems (I CAN), and has no one to help him or her (I HAVE), the person is not resilience. A person may be very verbal and speak well (I CAN), but if he or she has no empathy (I AM ) or does not learn from role models (I HAVE) , there is no resilience. Resilience results from a combination of these three features. For the present study, we investigate these three components among Thai and Muslim students.

## METHOD
### Participants

*Population:* 7,669 undergraduate students attended Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus with a still predominantly Thai student body in 2005 academic year.

*Subject:* 1,148 participants with Thais (206 men, 502women) constituted the majority of the sample, followed by Muslim ( 138 men, 302 women). They were randomly stratified from Faculty of Education (29.8%), Humanity and Social Science (33%), Science and technology (14.2%), Fine and Applied Arts(2.4%), Communication Science (7.1% ) and College of Islamic Study (13.5% ).

*Variables:* Independent variables were ethnic identity, GPA, academic interest (field of study)and birth order.  Dependent variables were resilience.

### Measures

Resilience Scales is developed by Prinyapol (2003) using Grotberg (2000) three sources of resilience: " I HAVE", "I AM" and "I CAN".  There are 20 items answered on five-point scale from strongly agree to moderately disagree. On "I HAVE" included 5 Items such as "I have a person whom I can trust and love me no matter what happen" and " I have people who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn". Another 7 items on "I CAN" were "I can talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me" and "I can find someone to help me when I need". The other 8 items on "I AM" included "I am a person people can like and love" and "I am sure things will be all right".  The ranges of the scores were divided in three levels: more than 83.61, between 66.41-83.61 and 0-66.4 indicating high, moderate and low resilience respectively. The overall Cronbach's alpha is .79

### Procedure

Appointments were made with participants from each faculty to set time and date for distributing questionnaires included resilience scales. The research assistants waited for subjects to complete the questions and collected them back. A t-test was used for analyzing the means of resilience between Thais and Muslims. One way analysis of variance was performed comparing subject resilience on GPA, academic interest and birth order.

### Results

1.   The average scores of resilience were 76.89 revealed students  possessed resilience at a moderate degree (M=76.896, SD=8.55). Thais and Muslims have resilience significantly no difference (t=-1.013; Sig. =.311).

2.   Students with high GPA had resilience scores and " I HAVE" feature significantly different from low GPA fellows (M Diff.=1.9377, Sig. = .035; M Diff.= .8228, Sig. =.013).

3.   Students' resilience scores were categorized in three levels: high, moderate and low. Based on

academic interest, subjects from Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts ranked the most for having high resilience (35.72%) while subjects from Faculty of Islamic Studies ranked the most for moderate resilience (74.84%) and subjects from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences ranked the first for low resilience (15.30% ). (Table 1)

Table1

| Faculties | Resilience score | | | | Mean | Std. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Low | Moderate | High | Total | | |
| Education | 25 | 233 | 84 | 342 | 77.6520 | 7.85753 |
| | 7.31% | 68.13% | 24.56% | 100% | | |
| Humanities and Social Sciences | 58 | 233 | 88 | 379 | 76.0000 | 9.52052 |
| | 15.30% | 61.48% | 23.22% | 100% | | |
| Fine and Applied Arts | 2 | 16 | 10 | 28 | 80.2143 | 8.44309 |
| | 7.14% | 57.14% | 35.72% | 100% | | |
| Communication Sciences | 10 | 56 | 15 | 81 | 77.5309 | 8.41143 |
| | 12.35% | 69.14% | 18.52% | 100% | | |
| Science and Technology | 17 | 114 | 32 | 163 | 76.0675 | 7.95600 |
| | 10.43% | 69.94% | 19.63% | 100% | | |
| Islamic Studies | 11 | 116 | 28 | 155 | 77.3613 | 7.90847 |
| | 7.10% | 74.84% | 18.06% | 100% | | |

4.    The average scores of  total resilience and "I AM" label of students fromdifferent faculties  were significantly different (F=2.721, Sig. =.019 ; F=4.388, Sig.=.001). Students from Faculty of Education had resilience total and "I AM" scores higher than those from Humanities and Social Sciences (M Diff. =1.652, Sig.= .009 ; M Diff.= 1.1188, Sig.= .001). Also, students from Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts had resilience total and "I AM" higher than those from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (M Diff. =4.2143, Sig.= .012; M Diff. = 2.1451, Sig.= .005)and those from Faculty of Science and Technology (M Diff. = 4.1468, Sig.= .017; M Diff. = 1.8221, Sig.= .022).   For  "I AM" resilience, students from Faculty of  Communication Sciences and College of Islamic Studies had scores significantly higher than those from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (M. Diff.= 1.0340, Sig.=.030 ; M. Diff.= .8483, Sig.= .022). (Table 2,2.1)

Table 2

| Variables | Sources | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Resilience | Between Groups | 986.159 | 5 | 197.232 | 2.721 | .019* |
| | Within Groups | 82786.506 | 1142 | 72.493 | | |
| | Total | 83772.665 | 1147 | | | |
| I am | Between Groups | 332.246 | 5 | 66.449 | 4.388 | .001*** |
| | Within Groups | 17293.971 | 1142 | 15.144 | | |
| | Total | 17626.216 | 1147 | | | |
| I can | Between Groups | 58.641 | 5 | 11.728 | .974 | .432 |
| | Within Groups | 13745.1881 | 1142 | 12.036 | | |
| | Total | 3803.828 | 1147 | | | |
| I have | Between Groups | 85.845 | 5 | 17.169 | 1.828 | .104 |
| | Within Groups | 10723.172 | 1142 | 9.390 | | |
| | Total | 10809.017 | 1147 | | | |

* p<.05
*** p<.001

Table 2.1 Multiple Comparisons : LSD

| Variable | Faculties | | Mean Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Resilience | Education | Humanities and Social Sciences | 1.6520** |
| | Fine and Applied Arts | Humanities and Social Sciences | 4.2143** |
| | | Science and Technology | 4.1468* |
| I am | Education | Humanities and Social Sciences | 1.1188*** |
| | | Science and Technology | .7958** |
| | Fine and Applied Arts | Humanities and Social Sciences | 2.1451*** |

| | | Science and Technology | 1.8221* |
| | Communication Sciences | Humanities and Social Sciences | 1.0340* |
| | Islamic Studies | Humanities and Social Sciences | .8483* |

*p<.05
** p<.01
*** p<.001

     5.   Students who were first born, the between, the youngest and the only child manifested resilience and "I AM" label  significantly different (F= 2.112, Sig.=.054; F=4.919, Sig.=.001). That is, the only child had resilience total and "I AM" feature differently from the others, while there were no different among the first, the between and the youngest. (Table 3,3.1).

Table 3

| Variables | Sources | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Resilience | Between Groups | 614.661 | 4 | 153.665 | 2.112 | .054 |
| | Within Groups | 83158.004 | 1143 | 72.754 | | |
| | Total | 83772.665 | 1147 | | | |
| I am | Between Groups | 298.264 | 4 | 74.566 | 4.919 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 17327.952 | 1143 | 15.160 | | |
| | Total | 17626.216 | 1147 | | | |
| I can | Between Groups | 31.831 | 4 | 7.958 | .660 | .620 |
| | Within Groups | 13771.997 | 1143 | 12.049 | | |
| | Total | 13803.828 | 1147 | | | |
| I have | Between Groups | 54.615 | 4 | 13.654 | 1.451 | .215 |
| | Within Groups | 10754.403 | 1143 | 9.409 | | |
| | Total | 10809.017 | 1147 | | | |

*p<.05
*** p<.001

Table 3.1  Multiple Comparisons : LSD

| Variable | Birth orders | | Mean Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Resilience | only child | first born | -2.0147* |
| | | between | -2.0952* |
| | | youngest | -2.6473* |
| I am | only child | first born | -1.3467* |
| | | between | -1.6627* |
| | | youngest | -1.6720* |

*p<.05

**DISCUSSION**

     The current study evaluated hypotheses about the resilient level of undergraduate students when insurgent terrorism had been occurring. The analyses also examined students' resilience with respect to ethnic identity, GPA, faculty enrollment and birth of order. Results were mostly consistent with study hypotheses. Respondents' resilient scores were moderate and their resilience were meaningful different among those of different faculty enrollment, GPA and birth of order. There were no different when ethic identity was compared.

     Overall, students scored moderately on resilience during the time of community stress from insurgency. They displayed fairly positive adaptation. The finding is consistent with recent research which suggests that resilience is relatively common among children and adolescents exposed to disadvantages, trauma and adversity (Masten, 2001). Another finding from Kessleer et al. (1995) suggests that most adults do not go on develop severe distress despite high levels of exposure to potentially traumatic events during their lifetimes. Also, the study of L. Campbell-Sill et al. (2006) found that undergraduate students who reported relatively high levels of emotional neglect during childhood scored not only low but also high on resilience. Those on high could be explained in the context of stress inoculation theory, whereby a psychological and physiological toughening

occurs through exposure to moderate levels of stress (Rutter,1987). Since this study was a preliminary exploration of resilient level, the analyses did not probe into the mechanisms or the processes which moderate between the effects of adversity and resilience. Further studies should explore the protective factors that lead to positive adaptation. However, we had examined the certain existed variables such as academic interests and achievement, ethnic identity and birth of order.

In term of the ethic identity, resilience were displayed moderately in both Thais and Muslims. Their resilience features of I HAVE (a social support), I AM (a self-esteem) and I CAN (interpersonal skills) were compatible. Although Thais and Muslims hold different religion, they both share culture of "collectivist orientation". As a group, they prefer living in harmony with nature, subordinating individual to group goals which may indicate that they value social relationship. This could reinforce their resilience on 'I CAN". Also, the home, family, and community are often more highly valued than job, career, or occupation. This may facilitate their resilience on "I HAVE". As a whole, these cultures displayed certain moderated effects on resilience. This explanation is correspondent to Phinney study(1995 ) which suggest that the achieved ethic identity promotes psychological well-being among minority group members and can influence adjustment in adolescence and young adult.

Regarding academic achievement, high GPA students manifested resilience higher than those of low GPA. Generally, there is a relationship between students' ability and self-esteem. Thus, high GPA students would be more likely to have strong self-efficacy and would take an active problem-solving approach in dealing with stress (L. Campbell Sills et at, 2006). In other words, effective school and active problem solving are factors that allows individual to cope well with stress life events (Luthar et. al, 2000 ). Consistent with Ong et. al. study (2001), they found that Latino students with greater parental support and family interdependence evidence greater academic achievement.

When academic interests were taken into consideration, resilience was found to be different among students of different faculties, indicating a relationship between fields of study and hardiness. According to Holland (1956; cited in Walsh and Betz, 2001), behavior is a function of interests, personality, and social environment. He suggested that the choice of an occupation is an expression of personality. Thus, the choice of an occupation represented the individual's motivation, an understanding of self, and ability. Students from Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts had high resilience at the most proportion (35.72%). They were those who expressed themselves by making and creating works of art. By the nature of art field, they created arts work regularly and their products enhanced their self-efficacy. This expressed in their significantly high scores on I AM resilience compared to those from Faculty of Science and Technology, and Faculty of Human and Social Sciences. The works of these students were more likely to be criticized for systematic solution which was in contrast to those of Fine and Applied Arts.

In addition, students from Faculty of Education had relatively higher resilience than
those from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty of Science and Technology. Educational students' scores were also high in I AM feature. This finding is interesting and could be explained in terms of environmental factor effecting resilience. Upon entering into education major, students had always learned to be proud of their future profession. Also, their major seemed to meet parental expectation. Both Thai and Muslim local community cultures regard teacher career with respect. Thus, parental support for their study enhanced their academic adjustment (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004).

Also, students from Faculty of Islamic Studies and Faculty of Communication Sciences scored higher on resilience than those from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Students who majored in Islamic Studies had adhered to religion. They found meaning of life in religion which gave them high spirits or a buffer for any adversities. This is in consistent with a study that spirituality, personality and are related to resilience (Grotberg, 2000). Similar to their fellows from Faculty of Education, students from Communication Sciences were proud of their majors. The prospective careers in newspaper, radio, and television media could moderate their adaptive functioning and resilience. Thus, they scored higher than those from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Lastly, with respect to birth order, students were the only child had resilience meaningfully lower than any of the first, the between, and the youngest. The finding is correspondent to the view that the only children have poorer interpersonal skills which result in less effective relationships Falbo (1984). Some research also indicates that the only child who attempt to fulfill all their parents' expectations are less independent than other birth order (Boling et al., 1993). We didn't find the meaningful influence of birth order on resilience among the first, the between, and the youngest. The first borns are sometimes theorized to be more achievement oriented, while younger siblings are often believed to be more successful in social endeavors (Claxton, 1994). Although the resilience scales included both achievement "I AM" factor and successful social endeavor "I HAVE", the resilience scores of the first and younger siblings turned out not to be meaningful different. This finding partly

supported the affect of birth order on personality. Maybe the influence of Thai and Muslim culture, to focus on social support than individual, lessen the affect of birth order proposed from western culture.

**LIMITATION**

This study has focused on some aspects of resilient individuals rather than exploring the protective process through which students are able to overcome stress or trauma. However, it gave a preview understanding of college students resilience under the construct of I HAVE, I AM and I CAN.

**CONCLUSION**

This study explored the resilience and protective factors among Thai and Muslim college students. The results revealed that our hypotheses were mostly supported. Respondents manifested resilience in moderate level with out meaningful difference between Thais and Muslims. Also, two resilience features "I HAVE" and "I AM" were found to be different among respondents. Academic achievement, field of study and birth order had influence on resilience. If intervention to foster resiliency were to implement on campus, low GPA, the only child and those from faculty of Human and Social Science should be the primary targeted participants to reach out.

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