Abstract

This thesis presents an integrated theoretical synthesis and an empirical study undertaken to understand the developmental courses and contributions of pain and suffering associated with stress and disadvantage. The review of existing literature on pain, suffering, stress, disadvantage, coping, experiencing, and invulnerability led to the conclusion that (a) disadvantage, stress, frustration, conflict, and crisis need to be integrally considered as ontologically different hierarchical levels of Psychologically Critical Life Situations (PCLS), which (b) are normally distributed in the human population and over a lifespan; (c) are unavoidable and universal phenomena immanent in all aspects of life; (d) are caused by adhayatimika, adhibhautika, and adhidaivika factors; (e) have both positive and negative contributions to life, producing invulnerabilities as well as vulnerabilities; and (e) can be prevented, defended, overcome, and/or experienced creatively transforming the tragedy into a triumph. The empirical study conducted in Orissa, India; using a cross-sectional developmental design, aimed at investigating inter-culturally, the nature of common stressful PCLS, resultant reactions, and coping actions of urban, rural, and tribal adolescent boys and girls. Three research inventories were completed by 350 children of grades 7 and 9. The data were analysed using Chi-square and ANOVA tests. Results revealed that, irrespective of area, age, and/or sex; almost all children reported encountering some sorts of PCLS, experiencing some common reactions, and using certain coping actions naturally.