CHAPTER III
RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES
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The present study was proposed to investigate personality and creativity styles of invulnerable children in the Astaranga and Kakatapur Blocks in the Puri district of Orissa. The locality is considered as a remote rural coastal belt where natural calamities like flood and cyclone are regular phenomenon every year. Most of the people in the area belong to the category of marginal farmers, landless laborers, small businessmen, or fish vendors. A large number of families in this locality fall in the category of below poverty line. The area is extremely under developed with respect to road and transport, health and sanitation, education, and modern amenities. Government reports indicate that there are frequent breaks of water borne epidemics in this locality, and from primary to high school education, there are large scale dropouts, stagnations, and cases of failure in the examination.

Furthermore, this was the most affected area in the super cyclone of 1999, which had created havoc among the people. Many households were wiped out, large number children became orphans, many schools were closed down for years, and a number of families have not been appropriately settled yet. The boys and girls who are included in our study are all direct victims of cyclone and have the most traumatic experience of their life. In summary, the present generation of high school students in this locality was not only subject to terrible
childhood experiences from their socioeconomic family backgrounds and conditions, but also from a devastating natural calamity.

The Rationale

Despite such wholesome terrible and wretched life environment, there were reports about number of students from different schools and colleges who excelled in different state level competitions, in different professional fields, and also in academics. Such reports clearly warranted that the locality could be used as a vast set of natural laboratory for the study of invulnerability. The researcher being a resident of this locality from childhood years personally observed many cases of invulnerability, where many 'at-risk' children have come out with flying colors in their lives. Subsequently as faculty of psychology in a local college the author visualized the rationale for conducting research on the personality factors of invulnerable children of this area.

As cited in the literature, most of the studies on invulnerability have been carried on minority children, children of specific ethnic groups, migrant children, children of psychopathic parents, and / or individual cases who have had extremely traumatic childhood experiences. Such studies have used only few at-risk children, and addressed to invulnerability only under extreme conditions of deviations. Therefore, the findings of such studies were limited in generalizability. These studies have not been able to provide a framework for the study of invulnerability among majority groups. Further, these studies have interpreted invulnerability as a dichotomous event leading to a belief that a child
is either invulnerable or vulnerable; when in fact many observers have reported that invulnerability is a continuous event with vulnerability.

The present study having planned on a large sample of children (2200) from a significantly homogeneous socio-demographic environment in a specified geographical boundary would be extremely useful in understanding invulnerability. It is very likely that the findings of the present study would have larger scope for generalizability. The changes in the approach of methodology in studying invulnerability provide a strong rationale for the present the study.

In most of the earlier studies, the samples of invulnerable children had been shown as belonging not only to a disadvantaged socioeconomic and cultural background, but also to a different life setting. For example, when the Mexican-American invulnerable children were compared with American children as their counterpart, invulnerability estimates could not be properly identified because of large difference in their socio-historical heritage of these two groups. The significant advantage in the design of the present study lies in its homogeneity of sociocultural heritage for all the four groups of subjects. Hence, it was expected that the findings of the present study would be free from many types of confounding effects arising from cross-cultural variations.

Further more, many studies on invulnerability conducted earlier have not used different types of comparative samples. In most of those studies invulnerable children are compared across ethnic groups, religious groups, majority groups, and socioeconomic groups. Partly because of this methodology,
personality and individual characteristics of invulnerable children with respect to a particular eco-cultural setting could not have been properly assessed. The present study being designed on a majority group having the same ethnic, socioeconomic, and sociocultural background is likely to provide unbiased results in many respects. The above modifications in the methodology provide a strong rationale justifying the conduction of the present study.

Further more, on the basis of reports from several studies discussed in the review section; it is evident that the social differentiation mechanism has been used as a significant model in explaining invulnerability. Ogbu (1992) argues invulnerability is largely a product bounce back against the differential treatment made to an individual child due to his social difference. In other words, this model argues invulnerability as a set of reaction patterns in children originating from social differences. Several other studies have also provided that invulnerability can result without social differentiation, and particularly from the adaptive personality and creativity styles of children.

The homogeneous characteristics with respect to social, cultural, and demographic backgrounds of all the four groups of subjects in the present study would be able to throw some light on the relative importance of the social differentiation mechanism and individual characteristics on the development of invulnerability. Furthermore, the findings of the present study would be of immense importance to the subjects and other children of the locality so that appropriate compensatory programs could be developed to promote educational
invulnerability among those children. The above discussions relating to the sample characteristics, methodological variations, and research issues provide a strong rationale for the present study.

Objectives

In summary, the following objectives were raised for the present study with respect to the personality and creativity styles of invulnerable children in general and also of the subjects in the present study for having a traumatic childhood experience from super cyclone in particular.

1. To identify the specific personality styles of invulnerable children compared to their counterparts in a defined socio-ecocultural setting.

2. To examine the significance of the creativity styles of children in developing and maintaining academic invulnerability.

3. To observe the gender differences in the development, maintenance, and use of invulnerability.

4. To examine the significance of different socio-demographic variables in the nurturance of invulnerability.

5. To correlate invulnerability with different kinds of academic competence.

6. To understand a developmental trend of invulnerability among the boys and girls.

7. To examine whether invulnerability is a continuous event from vulnerability or is a discrete magical phenomenon for some children.
Choice of the Tasks

Four categories of measures were used in the present study to assess the personality and creativity characteristic of invulnerable and other comparable groups. Those were psychometric measures, measures through teacher's rating, personality measures by child's Competency Scale I, and personality measures by Child's Competency Scale II. There were respectively five, five, ten, and ten measures in the above tests.

Psychometric tests- The psychometric measures included in the present study were Embedded Figure Test (field independence), Curiosity Test, Risk Taking Test, Creativity Test, and Task Persistence. In several prior research findings, all these skills had been shown as important measure of personality characteristics of invulnerable children. Furthermore, it was also necessary to use some psychometric tests in the present study as the rest of the measures were in rating scales. Mostly, these two considerations guided the inclusion of above psychometric tests in the present study.

Teacher's rating- Usually, teachers provide a very powerful source in estimating children's behavior. Some of the behavioral skills of children can be more effectively and unbiasedly assessed by teachers than by any other sources. Particularly, teacher's estimation of invulnerability of a child is more authentic because they have more of face-to-face interaction with child as he/she solves problems of different types. In prior studies teacher's rating of some personality variables had been found to correlate highly with invulnerability. With these
considerations, five measures of teacher's rating were used in the present study namely Verbal and Expressive Talents, Relationship with Adults, Physical and Mental Health, Athletic Ability, and Nurturance and Grooming.

**Child’s Competency Scale I**— It is a popularly used measure of personality in which 40 behavior dimensions included under 10 foundational personality attributes of children relating to their socio-emotional characteristics are self assessed. The three reasons for which this test is included in the present study were (i) it is a standardized measure in Oriya language, appropriately developed and used among the children of Orissa (ii) it provides for self assessment by children, and (iii) many prior studies on invulnerability have used the measure to yield consistent findings.

**Child’s Competence Scale II**— It is also another popular measure of personality in which 14 foundational attributes are assessed from 56 explicitly manifested and observable behavior. In some earlier studies, 10 of those attributes had been shown as highly correlating with invulnerability. In the present study, the test was used for those 10 attributes consisting of 40 explicit or manifested behavior dimensions. The reasons that guided to include this test were (i) the test was available in Oriya version, (ii) it provides for self assessment by children, (iii) it helps to tap the core personality structures from sources of explicit and manifested behavior, and (iv) it has been safely used in many prior research studies on invulnerability and other personality related topics in Orissa.
Major Hypotheses

It is difficult to formulate specific hypotheses relating to the various issues addressed in the review section about the personality and creativity styles of invulnerable children. However, basing on the discussions about the major findings in the review of literature tentative directions in results are specified.

As pointed out in the review, gender difference in invulnerability is one of the thoroughly researched areas. Most of the research findings agreed to the point that development of invulnerability gradually bridges the gender gap in many aspects of personality. The personality structure of invulnerable boys and girls becomes more homogeneous by not aligning to either feminine or masculine type but by accommodating to the healthy and positive skills from both sides. Further results also pointed to the fact that girls have longer gestation period for the development of invulnerability than boys, and parents who have better socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds give more scope and freedom to boys for their personal growth than to girls. In view of such findings about gender differences in invulnerability, the following hypotheses may be postulated.

Hypothesis I

*Boys and girls under the disadvantaged conditions will have less personality differences among them than boys and girls under the advantaged conditions.*
Hypothesis II

The least of the gender differences will be observed among the invulnerable or the disadvantaged competent group.

Hypothesis III

Maximum gender differences in the personality characteristics will be observed among the boys and girls in the advantaged competent group.

Hypothesis IV

Gender differences will be more prominent in the measures of the behavioral skills as assessed by the Teacher’s rating, Socioemotional skills as measured by the Child’s competency Scale I and measurement of explicit behavior by Child’s Competence Scale II than by the psychometric measures. The reason for such differences lies in the nature of the social perception about boys and girls in the cultural set up where the study is conducted.

Hypothesis V

While in several measures boys will show leads over the girls, in several other measures girls will show lead over the boys, in most of measures, there will be parity among the boys and girls.

The present study was carried out on four groups of subjects having two levels of advantage (Advantaged and Disadvantaged) and two levels of competency (competent and incompetent). In the findings and discussions about studies on invulnerability in the review section, it is observed that in some children disadvantage is conducive to competency while in some others, it
seriously threatens or breaks the development of competency. By certain distinct mechanisms, the former group acquires skills of invulnerability which help to bounce back or generate specific powers which can not be created by the advantage factors. On the other hand, some children in the advantaged group utilize the benefits of the advantage factors and become competent while some others fail to do so and become incompetent. Arising from these discussions, the following hypotheses may be formulated.

**Hypothesis VI**

*In most of the measures, the invulnerable group will outperform the other three groups, and particularly with respect to the measures of socioemotional skills, the invulnerable group will make significant differences.*

**Hypothesis VII**

*For most of the measures, the competency factor will contribute to much larger variances compared to the advantage factor highlighting the fact that invulnerability is something beyond the provisions of the advantage.*

**Hypothesis VIII**

*The comparative performance of all the four groups will show that the advantaged competent group will closely compete with the invulnerable group while the other two groups will perform very low.*

**Hypothesis IX**

*With respect to some measures strong interaction effects between advantage and competency will be observed.*