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*Research Article*

## Investigation of Resilience in Terms of Gender: A Meta-Analysis Study

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### Abstract

The present study aims to examine resilience in terms of gender via the meta-analysis method. Postgraduate theses have been written on resilience in Turkey in 2019 were examined for this purpose. Higher Education Council National Thesis Center was scanned on the internet to reach theses. Fifty seven postgraduate theses that examined resilience by gender and which contain the necessary statistical information were reached and 61 effect sizes were calculated from these theses. The sample of this meta-analysis study included a total of 26193 participants, 14593 women (55.71%) - 11600 men (44.28%). The effect size of endurance by gender was determined by Cohen's *d* analysis (Standardized Means Difference). Funnel Plot, Duval-Tweedie's Trim-Fill Method and Egger's regression test showed no publication bias in meta-analysis. The effect sizes show a heterogeneous distribution in this meta-analysis ( $Q = 220.37, p = 0.000, I^2 = 72.773$ ). The findings of the research showed a negligible and statistically insignificant effect size in favor of women according to the random-effects model ( $d = 0.023, [-0.028; 0.075], p > .05$ ). Based on these findings, it can be said that the resilience levels of women and men are equal. Research results were discussed within the framework of the literature. It is presented the limitation of study and some suggestions for future research.

### Key Words

Resilience • Gender • Turkey • Meta-analysis

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In life, significant threats, stressful situations, traumatic experiences happen. Each person cope with stress, negative life circumstances and traumatic experiences in different ways. While some of them can cope with stressful or traumatic experiences easier in a short period, some of them have problems and difficulties to maintain their life. The fact that some people cope with stressful experiences better than expected, given the nature of adversity, is the essence of the concept of resilience. According to Masten (2011) resilience may be viewed as “the capacity of a dynamic system to withstand or recover from significant threats to its stability, viability or development”. In another definition, resilience is the human being’s capacity to recover from the experience of traumatic events and to learn to come out of these events stronger than they were before them (Masten, 2001, 2002). With time, many different definitions of the term ‘resilience’ have done. Resilience is a complex phenomenon different according to variables (Luthar, 2006). In order for resilience to emerge, the individual must be exposed to a risk or difficulty and adapt to the situation at the end of this process and achieve success in different areas of life despite the existing adversity conditions (Terzi, 2008). Despite experiencing negative life events, self-confidence, self-efficacy, perseverance, insisting on balance despite adversities and having a life purpose contribute to the development of resilience (Cal, Cal, Glustak, & Barreto, 2015).

Some investigations point out the relationships between psychological resilience in childhood period and social-emotional development. Factors like congenital disorders, low birth rate, and premature birth are classified under biological factors whereas factors such as poverty, low economic status are listed under environmental classification (Demircioğlu, 2017). When these negative factors and situations are taken into consideration, violence, bullying, negligence, and abuse, substance use and addiction can be mentioned as the negative environmental factors. These studies point out the negative environmental factors and psychological resilience reveal the importance of protective factors. DuMont, Widom, and Czaja (2007) in their investigation, identified the protective factors about the effects of the psychological resilience of the individuals in different periods. According to the study, having a stable, positive and safe life standard enables resilience. Furthermore, in the early adulthood period, having a good partner or a good close relationship is also considered as a protective factor that enhances psychological resilience. On the other hand, the negative life experiences exposed during childhood (violence, abuse, stress...etc) are related to negative aspects of psychobiological development (Schore, 2001). Besides, there are different studies, which relate psychological resilience with cognitive factors. Parsons, Kruijt, and Fox (2016) noted that processing styles may be adaptive or maladaptive depending on the situation, and subsequently that transitioning between resilience and rigidity in processing style is particularly important in promoting adaptive cognitive processing. In addition, social interest (Ergüner-Tekinalp & Terzi, 2016), internal control (Kararmak & Çetinkaya, 2011), secure attachment (Terzi, 2013), and self-esteem (Güloğlu & Kararmak, 2010) were also found to be variables associated with resilience.

Another study (Oshio, Taku, Hirano, & Saeed, 2018) examines the relationships between big five personality traits and resiliency by synthesizing the studies that focused on trait resilience. This research indicates that there is a remarkable relationship between resilience and personality traits. In other words, the fact that the individual has the properties of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness makes him more resilient, while having neuroticism feature causes him to be less resilient (Oshio et al., 2018). Meanwhile, there are other studies examine resilience and gender. The results of some studies shows that there are no differences between psychological resilience levels of women and men. For example, Şahin and Hepsöğütü (2018) found that high school students’ psychological resilience levels do not differentiate according to gender. There are other studies

supporting these findings (De Caroli & Sagone, 2014; Diker-Coşkun, Garipoğlu, & Tosun, 2014; Sagone & Indiana, 2017; Şahin-Baltacı & Karataş, 2015; Terzi, 2008; Thomas, 2020). However, other studies point out that women are more psychologically resilient than men (Çelikkaleli & Kaya, 2016; Güngörmüş, Okanlı, & Kocabeyoğlu, 2015; Oktan, 2008). Considering the inconsistencies in the research results, it is not possible to decide whether women or men are more resilient. There is a need for research that will integrate different research results by synthesizing them. Thus, the present study aims to examine resilience in terms of gender via the meta-analysis method. It is expected that the present study's findings regarding the examination of resilience by gender will provide important implications for future theoretical and applied research on resilience within the scope of psychological counseling and guidance services. In other words, in this study, determining the effect size of gender on resilience by the meta-analysis method is considered important in terms of giving direction in psychological counseling and guidance services regarding resilience for women and men.

### **Method**

This study was carried out with the meta-analysis method. Meta-analysis is a research process used to systematically synthesize or combine the findings of single, independent studies, using statistical methods to calculate an overall or absolute effect (Egger & Smith, 1997).

#### **Determination of the studies to be included in the scope of meta-analysis**

The research data were obtained from the postgraduate theses about resilience in Turkey. To reach these studies, National Thesis Center were searched. Resilience word was used as keywords to reach related studies. The theses carried out in Turkey at 2019, which are in accordance with the inclusion criteria, were included in the meta-analysis. Resilience is among the concepts being studied intensively in Turkey (Işık, 2016). Therefore, in this meta-analysis study, it was estimated that only postgraduate theses carried out in 2019 are sufficient.

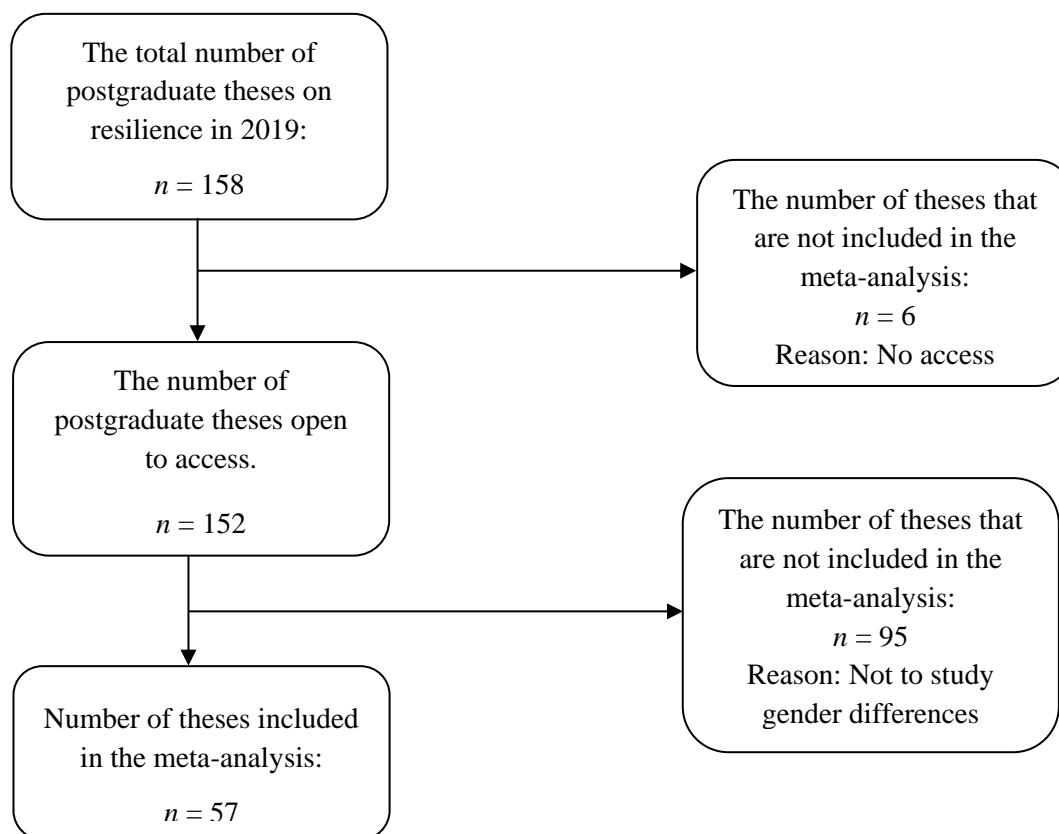
Criteria for inclusion of studies in meta-analysis:

- It must be a graduate thesis available at the National Thesis Center.
- Only studies about psychological resilience are included. Studies related to any special dimension of the resilience such as academic resilience, family resilience, relationship resilience are not included.
- Gender differences at the level of total resilience must be examined.
- It must include the statistical information needed to calculate the effect size (Mean scores of resilience of women and men, standard deviations, and sample sizes).

#### **Screening Process of Literature**

Flow Chart Showing The Literature Review and Exclusion Process is presented in Figure 1. The literature screening for this meta-analysis study was conducted between 29.01.2020, and 06.02.2020.

- A total of 158 graduate theses conducted at 2019 on resilience were reached from the National Thesis Center. 152 of the graduate theses are open to access and 6 of them are closed to access. 57 postgraduate theses containing the data required to calculate the effect size were included in the meta analysis.
- Sixty one different effect sizes were calculated from 57 graduate theses included in the meta-analysis.

**Figure 1.** Flow Chart Showing The Literature Review and Exclusion Process

### Coding of Studies

A coding form was formed and the sample size of the gender group, resilience mean scores of women and men, and standard deviation values were coded. In addition, the study group features of the theses are also included. The literature has been individually scanned and coded by researchers. The codings were compared one by one and then they discussed the issue until they agreed on the differences between the coders.

### Characteristics of Theses Included in Meta Analysis

The sample of this meta-analysis is 26193 individuals, 14593 of which are women (55.71%) and 11600 of which are men (44.29%). A total of 61 effect sizes were calculated from 57 postgraduate theses included in the meta-analysis. It is seen that the study groups of theses are composed of individuals who are at risk and exposed to negative life events (adults who suffered losses, refugee children, cancer patients, divorced family children...etc), as well as individuals who are not at risk or who do not encounter negative life events (adolescents, university students, adults, teachers, nurses...etc) are preferred as the study group.

### Analysis Process

The effect size of endurance by gender was determined by Cohen's  $d$  analysis (Standardized Means Difference - SMD). Comprehensive Meta-Analysis program was used to calculate the effect sizes of the studies included in the meta-analysis and to evaluate publication bias.  $Q$  and  $I^2$  statistics were used to evaluate heterogeneity and the overall effect size value was calculated for both fixed effects and random effects models. A positive Cohen's  $d$  result indicates that women's resilience level is higher than men, while a negative Cohen's

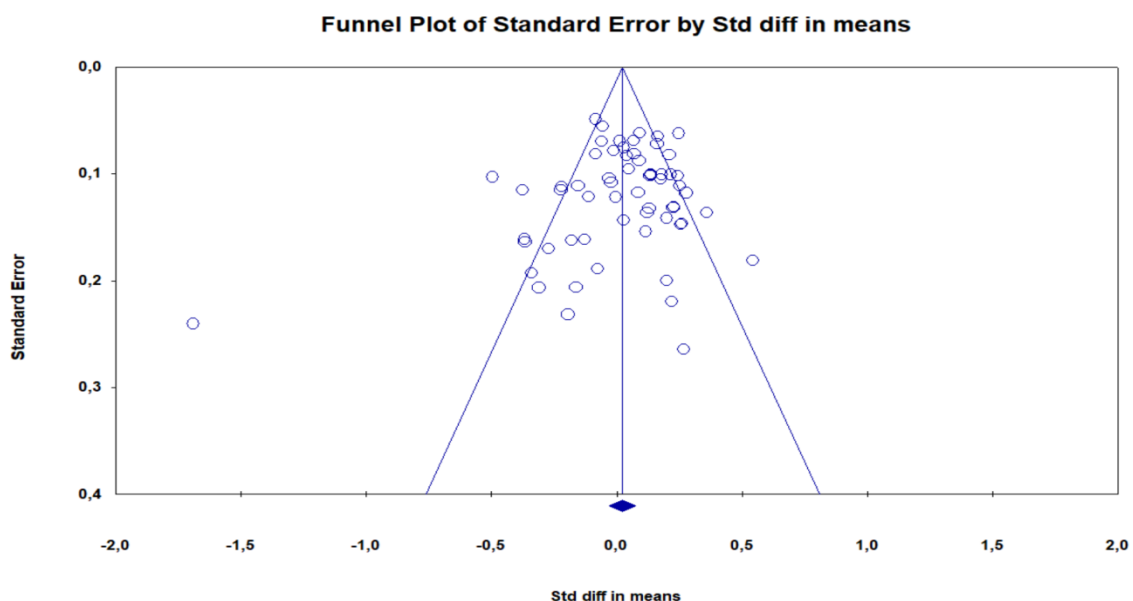
*d* result indicates that men's resilience level is higher than women. Duval and Tweedie's Trim-Fill method, Egger's Regression Test and Funnel Graph were used to evaluate publication bias (Duval & Tweedie, 2000a, 2000b; Egger, Smith, Schneider, & Minder, 1997).

### Findings

As a results of Egger's Regression Test, Duval and Tweedie's Trim and Fill method and funnel graph, it was determined that there was no publication bias in the research.

Publication bias test results for theses included in the meta-analysis to examine resilience in terms of gender are given below.

Figure 2. Funnel Plot Results



In Figure 2, it is seen that 61 effect sizes calculated from the theses included in the meta-analysis are positioned balanced on both sides of the vertical line and close to the general effect size line. In order to determine the overall effect size, 61 effect sizes calculated within the scope of the meta-analysis are generally found in the upper and middle regions in a balanced way, and it can be interpreted that there is no publication bias.

Table 1

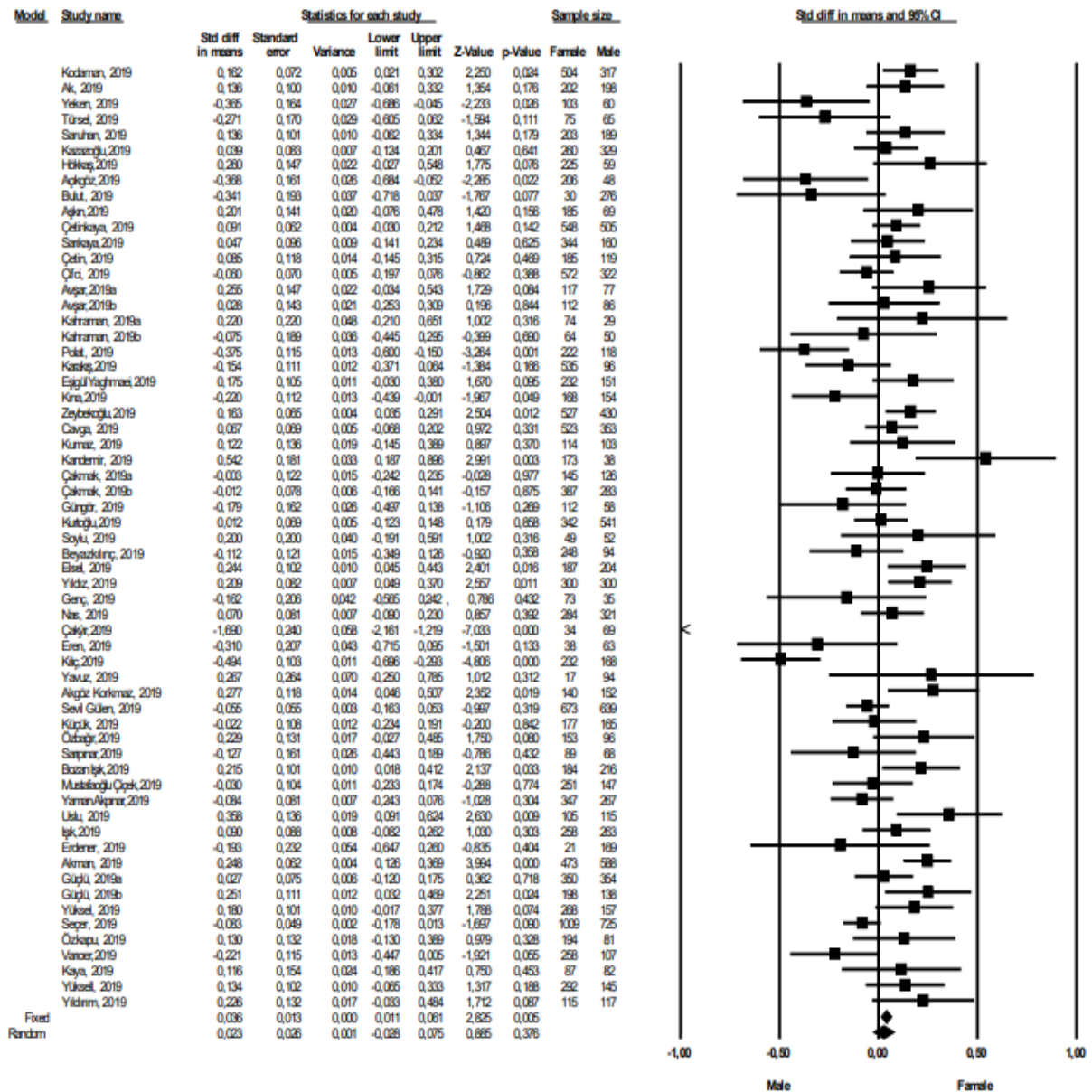
#### Publishing Bias Test Results

Duval - Tweedie's trim and fill		Egger's regression test
Studies trimmed	SMD observed (adjusted)	
4	0.023 (0.004)	$p = 0,274$ (2-tailed)

According to the trim and fill method of Duval and Tweedie, 4 studies are required according to the random-effects model to make the funnel graph symmetrical. However, Duval and Tweedie's trim - fill method shows that there is no bias in the meta-analysis since the difference between the new result (0.004) and the previous one (0.023) is very small. Moreover, this difference does not change the effect size classification. Egger's regression

test result ( $p = 0.274, p > .05$ ), which is another publication bias test, considered to be another indication that there is no publication bias in this meta-analysis study (Egger et al., 1997).

Figure 2. Individual Effect Sizes and Forest Graphic of the Studies within the Scope of Meta Analysis



When the graph is examined, it is seen that the difference between the groups of female and male at the level of resilience is negligible level in favor of female and is statistically insignificant.

Table 2

Resilience-Gender Basic Analysis

Model	Point Estimate	Heterogeneity				Standard Error	95% CI	
		Q	df (Q)	p	I <sup>2</sup>		Lower	Upper
Random	0.023	220.37	60	0.000	72.773	0.026	-0.028	0.075

The  $Q$  value for testing homogeneity was found to be 220.373 [ $Q(df = 60) = 220.37, p < .01$ ]. If the calculated  $Q$  value exceeds the value corresponding to 60 degrees of freedom and .05 confidence level in the chi-square table ( $df = 60, \chi^2(.05) = 79.081$ ), the effect size distribution of the studies in the meta-analysis is heterogeneous (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2014).  $I$ -squared value is 72.773 shows that 72.773% of total variability is related to inter-study variability (Higgins, Thompson, Deeks, & Altman, 2003). This indicates a high level of heterogeneity (Patsopoulos, Evangelou, & Ioannidis, 2008). In general, it can be said that the variability between studies is significant. The overall effect size was calculated as  $d = 0.023$  ( $p > .05$ ) according to the random effects model. The overall effect size is negligible level according to Cohen (1988) and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), as well as is statistically insignificant [ $d = 0.023, (-0.028; 0.075)$ ]. In this study, Cohen's  $U_3$  (Cohen, 1988) was calculated as 50.9%, the overlapping coefficient (Ruscio, 2008) was calculated as 99.1%, and the probability of superiority (Reiser & Faraggi, 1999) was calculated as 50.6%.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine resilience in terms of gender via the meta-analysis method. Meta analysis results showed that there was no publication bias. The random-effects model has been taken into consideration. In the random-effects model, women's resilience levels were higher than men's resilience levels. However, this difference is not statistically significant. Accordingly, it can be said that the level of resilience of men and women is not different. In this study, Cohen's  $U_3$  (Cohen, 1988) was calculated as 50.9%, the overlapping coefficient (Ruscio, 2008) was calculated as 99.1%, and the probability of superiority (Reiser & Faraggi, 1999) was calculated as 50.6%. In other words, with Cohen's  $d$  of 0, 50.9% of the female group will be above the mean of the male group, 99.1% of the two groups will overlap, and there is a 50.6% chance that a person selected randomly from the female group will have a higher resilience score than a person selected randomly from the male group.

Men and women socialize differently and they undertake different roles in life. Compared to men, women can get more happiness from social networks and family relationships (Hu, Zhang, & Wang, 2015). It is stated that men are more affected by these negative life events, psychological distress, loss or disaster (Bernard, 1996). In addition, men are more vulnerable to risk factors such as their parents' pathologies and poverty (Luthar, 1999). Moreover, it is generally believed that women are sicker than men because they express their negative health problems more clearly than men (McDonough & Walters, 2001). Resilience develops more in girls and female adolescents at risk (Kumpfer, 1999). However, given similar levels of depression and anxiety in women and men, it was seen that women could better adapt to chronic pain (Ramírez-Maestre & Esteve, 2014; Ramírez-Maestre, Martínez, & Zarazaga, 2004). Based on these theoretical explanations, it can be said that women are more resilient. On the other hand, it is stated that women are exposed to more adversity and are more sensitive to these adversity experiences (Aneshensel, 1992; Ramírez-Maestre et al., 2004). In the face of adversity, men are more tolerant than women (De la Fuente, Cardelle-Elawar, Martínez-Vicente, Zapata, & Peralta, 2013), and women have more ruminative thoughts that prolonged depressive periods (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). However, women show lower self-confidence and lower self-efficacy than men do (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001). This may cause women to be less resilient. When examined in terms of heredity, there are explanations that the heritability of trait resilience is lower among women than men (Boardman, Blalock, & Button, 2008). Based on these theoretical explanations, it can be said that men are more resilient. When evaluated in general, it can be



said that there are different risk factors and protective factors for men and women. There are also reasons for high and low levels of resilience for both women and men. From this point of view, it can be said that women and men should be given equal importance in intervention services related to resilience.

The results of the research examining the resilience by gender in our country and abroad (Ak, 2019; Atik, 2013; Çetinkaya & Sarıcı Bulut, 2019; De Caroli & Sagone, 2014; Göksel-Oflas & Yüksel-Şahin, 2019; Güney, 2016; McGrath, Julie, & Caron, 2009; Özünlü, 2018; Sagone & Indiana, 2017; Terzi, 2008; Thomas, 2020; Traş, Öztemel, & Kağnıcı, 2019) support the results of this study regarding that the levels of resilience by gender do not differ. In addition, the results of this research support Hyde's (2005) view that there is no gender difference in many of the psychological variables.

There are some limitations and suggestions to consider in this research. Only postgraduate theses are included in this meta-analysis study. In addition, the condition that these theses must have been made in 2019 was taken into consideration. Different databases may be included in future meta-analysis studies. In addition, a wider time frame can be included in the inclusion criteria. A second limitation is that no moderator analysis was used in this study. In future research, factors such as age, class level can be examined as moderator variables. Third, this meta-analysis study evaluates resilience only by gender difference. In the future, meta-analysis studies can be conducted that examine the relations of resilience with different variables.



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