

# Resilient Profile and Creative Personality in Middle and Late Adolescents: A Validation Study of the Italian-RASP

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**Abstract** This study analyzed the relationship between resilient profile and creative personality in a large sample of 749 Italian middle and late adolescents recruited from six Public High Schools in East Sicily (Italy). As corollary, it was investigated the validity of the Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (Italian-RASP) by means of principal components factorial analysis (PCA) and its reliability by calculating Cronbach's alpha. We administered, in a small group setting, the following measures: 1) the RASP (Hurtes & Allen, 2001) to explore the characteristics of resilient profile; 2) the Test of Creative Personality (Williams, 1994) to analyze the four factors of personality named curiosity, preference for complexity, willingness to risk taking, and imagination. The PCA revealed the five-components solution of Italian-RASP as the better one than the others (with the 41,67% of total explained variance), obtaining the following components: engagement (21,14% of variance), adaptability (6,26%), control (5,30%), competence (4,71%), and sense of humor (4,28%). Results indicated that the more the adolescents were engaged, adapted, and competent in front of adversity, the more they were likely to be curious, complexity-loving, willing to risk taking, and to use mental images; in addition, the more the adolescents practiced their control on surroundings and used their sense of humor, the more they were likely to be curious and complexity-loving, and prone to risk taking. Implications for future projects centered on the effects of creative resilience on the positive youth development will be discussed.

**Keywords:** *resilience, creativity, personality, middle and late adolescents*

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## 1. Introduction

The relationships between resilience and psychological well-being ([1,2,3]), as well as between resilience and coping styles and personality traits ([1,4,5,6]) have been considered some of the most important issues analyzed in the Positive Youth Development Perspective (PYD: [7,8]), with reference to development of psychological health of young individuals ([9,10,11]).

Lerner and his colleagues [11] pointed out that PYD emphasized the interrelation of the following "Five Cs" useful to move adolescents into a productively positive and healthy adulthood: competence, confidence, connexion, character, and caring/compassion. In detail, the dimension of *competence* is defined as positive view of one's interpersonal skills, decision making, academic performance, keeping oneself in a good fit, and exploration of career choices; the dimension of *confidence* is considered as an internal sense of positive self-worth and self-efficacy; the *connection* is viewed as a positive bond between youths and their peers, family, school, and social community; the *character* is considered in terms of a sense of respect for societal and cultural norms, morality, and integrity; finally, the dimensions of *caring/compassion* correspond to a

sense of sympathy and empathy for other people. These aspects are greatly present in resilient children and adolescents who have strengths and resources essential to promote a positive youth development and follow a fully adaptive trajectory of growth.

Considering the connection between psychological resilience and multiple elements that characterized the developmental tasks during adolescence, little evidences were found about the relationship between resilience and creativity ([12]; specifically, in calamitous and critical situations: [13]), even if, as stated by Wolin and Wolin [14], the psychological characteristics of resilient individuals included *creativity*. These authors added creativity to the other aspects of psychological resilience, that is, *insight* (in terms of understanding, knowing, and sensing), *initiative* (including the three aspects of exploring, working, and generating), *independence* (such as straying, disengaging, and separating), *positive relationships* (considered as connecting, recruiting, and attaching), *sense of humor* (in terms of playing, shaping, and laughing), and *value orientation* (including the three sub-dimensions of judging, valuing, and serving). All these skills allowed individuals to overcome the adversities of daily life and bounce back from stressful events in order to reach the whole adaptation. From the findings of Wolin and Wolin's qualitative analysis, Hurtes

and Allen [15] realized the operationalization of the construct of resilience, creating the Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile for Youths.

The main purpose of this paper was to analyze the relationship between resilience and creative personality in a large sample of middle and late adolescents attending the Public High Schools in Sicily (Italy). Additionally, the second aim concerned the analysis of validity of the Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile in Italian context.

### 1.1. Resilient Profile

Resilience has been viewed as a personal quality that permits individuals to overcome hardships and flourish in the face of them (e.g., [16,17]). From early theoretical points of view, it was recognized as a personality characteristic that restores or maintains equilibrium under significant threats, as well as the ability to fly in the face of adversity. More recently, researchers considered it as the ability to “bounce back” or recover from stressful circumstances (e.g., [17,18]), asserting that highly resilient individuals were better at maintaining their psychological health and recovering themselves from stressful events than lowly resilient ones [19]. Moreover, individuals significantly able to bounce back from adversities were also more ego-resilient and optimistic people, engaged in positive social relationships, and used positive coping strategies (e.g., acceptance, active coping, and positive reframing) compared to individuals characterized by low levels of resilience [19].

Several researchers dedicated attention to resilience and its evaluation in adolescents; for example, Gartland et al. [20] applied the *Adolescent Resilience Questionnaire* to a group of adolescents between 11 and 17 years of age; Prince-Embury [21] created the *Resiliency Scales for Children & Adolescents* aged between 9 and 18 years; Von Soest et al. [22] realized the validation of the *Resilience Scale for Adolescents* on high school students between 18 and 20 years of age and, more recently, Şahin Baltacı and Karataş [23] adopted the *Resilience Scale for Early Adolescents* in a group of students between 12 and 14 years old.

The current study was focused on the Hurtes and Allen’s analysis [15] about the main attitudes and skills typically traceable in the “resilient profile”. This profile was characterized by the presence of the following strength-oriented psychological dimensions ([15], pp.335-336: 1) *insight*, that is, “the ability to read and interpret situations, people, and subtle nuances of both verbal and nonverbal communication”; 2) *independence*, that is, “a balance between being true to oneself and accommodating the concerns of others”; 3) *creativity*, that is, the ability to “generate options and alternatives to cope with the challenges of life”; 4) *sense of humor*, that is, “the ability to laugh at oneself and to find joy in one’s surroundings”; 5) *initiative*, that is, “the desire and determination to take charge of one’s own life” in a proactively way; 6) *supportive relationships*, that is, the ability to seek out and maintain fulfilling and healthy relationships with peers, family members, and other individuals; finally, 7) *values orientation*, that is, the need to identify what is morally just and appropriate, independently from one’s own desires. The authors created the RASP-Youth (Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile for Youths), generating an

initial set of 65 items, distributed in each of the previously cited dimensions, and involving a sample of youths from 12 to 17 years old. Using the structural equation modeling to investigate the construct validity of the RASP-Youth, the authors confirmed that the final structure of this measure was composed by 34 items (Likert-type scales ranging from 1 to 6 intervals), grouped in seven sub-scales adequately correlated between them and internally consistent with the general construct of resiliency. More recently, Laudadio et al. [24] used the RASP with Italian middle and late adolescents, confirming the seven-factors structure, while Williams et al. [25] applied the RASP to early American adolescents, obtaining a structure with four main factors, named “relationship maintenance”, “personal fortitude”, “positive coping”, and “independence and insight”.

### 1.2. Creative Personality

The second domain of this research contribution was represented by the analysis of creative personality and the typical personality factors of highly creative individuals: e.g., openness to experience ([26,27]), extroversion, playfulness and sense of humor [28], attraction to complexity, curiosity, tolerance of ambiguity, independence of judgment ([29,30]), imagination [31], tension towards novelty, and risk assumption ([32,33]).

The model of Williams ([34,35]) constituted the framework of this study; according to this model, it was possible to identify the following four typical characteristics of creative personality: 1) *willingness to risk-taking*, that is, the tendency to act under non-structured conditions and defend one’s own ideas; 2) *imagination*, considered as the ability to visualize and build mental images; 3) *curiosity*, in terms of the ability to investigate elements and ideas, finding new connections which are not always direct and obvious; lastly, 4) *preference for complexity*, in terms of the tendency to look for new alternatives and solutions to problems, to restore order out of chaos.

Creativity has been considered theoretically, but not empirically, as a psychological aspect of problem solving and coping in situations of tension and adversity ([36,37]); thus, it is recognized and socially shared that when resilient and self-efficient individuals are in front of adversities or unexpected outcomes they tend to cope with adversity using creative solutions and new possibilities for their own life and environmental adjustment [38].

Empirical evidences about the relationships between creative personality and adjustment showed unclear and not univocal results. Recently, in a study realized with a group of Sicilian adolescents aged between 14 and 18 years, Sagone and De Caroli [39] found significant and negative correlations of curiosity and willingness to risk-taking with passivity and negative correlations of willingness to risk-taking with stress in social situations.

Other scholars investigated the relationship between creativity and adjustment in gifted and non-gifted students; Ziegler and Stoeger [40], as well as Ogoemeka [41], found that gifted adolescents displayed maladaptive behavioral patterns more than non-gifted ones. Contrarily, Lopez and Sotillo [42] revealed that gifted children and adolescents were neither significantly more poorly nor better adjusted than non-gifted ones. In addition, Jovanovic and Brdaric

[43] found that highly curious adolescents expressed higher levels of life satisfaction and psychological adjustment than lowly and average curious ones. In relation to these last evidences, we decided to carry out an empirical study focused on the relationship between personality traits linked to creativity (as, for example, curiosity) and resiliency in Italian context, involving a large sample of middle and late adolescents.

The choice of this stage has been directly connected with the positive youth development perspective, even though the limit of the present investigation has been marked by the lack of developmental analysis in a longitudinal way.

### 1.3. Hypotheses of Study

We hypothesized that high levels of resilience will be positively related to creative personality ( $H_1$ ); specifically, highly resilient adolescents will score higher on curiosity, imagination, preference for complexity, and willingness to risk taking than lowly resilient ones. In relation to differences for sex and age groups, as found by our previous empirical findings [39], we expected that:

- girls will score higher than boys on components of resilience ( $H_{1a}$ ) and factors of creative personality ( $H_{1b}$ );

- late adolescents will score higher than middle ones on components of resilience ( $H_{1c}$ ) and factors of creative personality ( $H_{1d}$ ).

As corollary, we carried out the factorial analysis (PCA) in order to verify the validity of the RASP and its reliability in Italian context.

## 1.4. Methodology

### 1.4.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 749 Italian middle and late adolescents (372 boys and 377 girls) aged between 13 and 19 years and recruited from six Public High Schools in Sicily (Italy). Participants were chosen with random sampling method and divided in two age-groups: middle ( $n=443$ ) and late ( $n=306$ ) adolescents. Parental consent for the underage adolescents' participation to this study was obtained.

### 1.4.2. Measures and Procedure

We used a self-report and anonymous questionnaire, administered in a small group setting and consisting of the Resiliency Attitudes and Skills Profile (RASP: [15,24]) and the Test of Creative Personality (TCP: [35]).

Table 1. Factor analysis (PCA) for Italian-RASP (N = 749)

No. Items	Components of Italian-RASP				
	I	II	III	IV	V
I can tell what mood someone is in just by looking at him/her (it. 28)	.77				
My friend know they can count on me (it.14)	.72				
I can sense when someone is not telling the truth (it. 12)	.53				
I try to figure out things I do not understand (it.29)	.50				
I have friends that will back me up (it.23)	.47				
I stand up for what I believe is right (it.20)	.46				
I can come up different ways to led out my feelings (it.13)	.36				
I can change my surroundings (it.17)		.62			
When something goes wrong, I can tell if it was my fault (it.6)		.52			
I can image the consequences of my actions (it.7)		.51			
When I'm faced with a tough situation, I come up with new ways to handle it (it.19)		.45			
I'm prepared to deal with the consequences of my actions (it.16)		.44			
I can deal with whatever comes in the future (it.11)		.43			
I can change my behavior to match the situation (it.4)		.27			
I avoid situation where I could get into trouble (it.24)			.82		
I avoid people who could get me into trouble (it. 22)			.79		
I choose my friends carefully (it.30)			.53		
When my work is criticized, I try harder the next time (it.21)			.47		
Lying is unacceptable (it.8)			.36		
I learn from my mistakes (it.15)			.31		
I say "no" to things I don't want to do (it.2)				.67	
It's ok if some people do not like me (it.10)				.59	
It's ok if I don't see things the way other people do (it.25)				.53	
My family is there for me when I need them (it.3)				.46	
I know when I am good at something (it.1)				.42	
I look for the "lighter side" of tough situations (it.18)					.76
My sense of humor makes it easier to deal with tough situations (it.9)					.72
Laughter helps me deal with stress (it.27)					.58

RASP-I: Engagement; RASP-II: Adaptability; RASP-III: Control RASP-IV: Competence; RASP-V: Sense of humor

The original version of RASP was a 34-item version scale, elaborated by Hurtes and Allen on the basis of evidences by Wolin and Wolin [14]. Each item was rated according to a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (corresponding to "strongly disagree") to 6 intervals (corresponding to "strongly agree"). We conducted the

factorial analysis with principal components extraction (PCA) and Promax rotation, using eigenvalues  $> 1$  ([44], [45]). After repeated analyses, results demonstrated the better five-components solution than the others (with the 41,67% of total explained variance), eliminating only two items (of initial 30 items used by Laudadio et al. [24])

because reported a low communality and cross-loaded on greater than one component: in addition, the KMO value equal to 0.88 and Bartlett’s test of sphericity,  $\chi^2(378)=4075.128, p<.001$ , indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. The first component was named “*engagement*” and accounted for the 21,14% of the total variance: it included seven items ( $\alpha=.70$ ) and its factor loads varied between 0.77 and 0.36. The second component was called “*adaptability*” and explained the 6,2% of variance: it was constituted by seven items ( $\alpha=.67$ ) and its factor loads varied between 0.62 and 0.27. The third component, termed “*control*”, accounted for the 5,3% of variance and included six items ( $\alpha=.65$ ); factor loads of this component varied between 0.82 and 0.31. The four component was named “*competence*” and accounted for the 4,7% of variance, with five items ( $\alpha=.60$ ); its factor loads varied between 0.67 and 0.42. Finally, the last component, called “*sense of humor*”, explained the 4,3% of total variance and was composed by three items ( $\alpha=.66$ ), with factor loads varying between 0.76 and 0.58. The final version of Italian-RASP was made up of 28 items (Table 1). The internal consistency of Italian-RASP, using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, was satisfactory for total scale ( $\alpha=.85$ ) and for each sub-scale.

The Test of Creative Personality (TCP) was a 50-items inventory used to analyze the factors of creative personality. Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with each statement on a 4-point Likert-type scale (always true, always false, partially true, partially false, I do not know) in relation to the following four factors: *willingness to risk-taking* (Wr), *imagination* (Im), *curiosity* (Cu), and *preference for complexity* (Co). For the willingness to risk-taking, the following statements have been included: e.g., “I don’t like the rules”, “I like experiencing new things to see whatever it will happen”. For the imagination, it is possible to identify, e.g., “When I’m reading a newspaper or watching TV, I like to pretend to be one of these protagonists”, “I like to think new ideas to whom anyone didn’t ever thought”. Among the sentences helpful to evaluate the factor of curiosity, it is possible to find, for example, “Generally I ask questions when I don’t know anything”, “I often wonder what do other people think”. Finally, for the complexity, e.g., “I like ideas which are different from others”, “I prefer looking for solve a problem when there isn’t only one correct solution”. The internal consistency of TCP was satisfactory for total scale ( $\alpha=.80$ ) and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of each subscale ranged from .65 to .83.

**1.4.3. Data Analysis**

Data analysis was performed by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20) using t-tests and Pearson’s linear correlations. A *p*-value of .05 was used to determine statistical significance in all analyses. Sex and age-groups were used as independent variables, while scores of Italian-RASP and TCP were used as dependent variables.

**2. Results and Discussion**

**2.1. Resilient Profile**

Descriptive analyses for the components of resilience showed that adolescents scored higher on competence ( $M=4,88, sd=.79$ ) and engagement ( $M=4,74, sd=.72$ ) than humor ( $M=4,57, sd=1,05$ ), control ( $M=4,52, sd=.85$ ), and adaptability ( $M=4,29, sd=.74$ ) ( $F=88.86, p<.001$ ).

Pearson’s linear correlations demonstrated that all components of Italian-RASP were significantly linked between them (Table 2). These results indicated that the more the adolescents were engaged to cope with adversities in daily life (as typical aspect of resilient profile), the more they were likely to positively adapt themselves to their surroundings, control their behaviors in order to improve the situations, express their self-efficacy demonstrating to be competent and laughing individuals.

**Table 2. Components of Italian-RASP: linear correlations (N = 749)**

RASP	Components of Italian-RASP				
	I	II	III	IV	V
I	-				
II	,509**	-			
III	,438**	,409**	-		
IV	,479**	,497**	,395**	-	
V	,360**	,368**	,213**	,368**	-

Level of significance for (\*\*)  $p<.001$   
 RASP-I: Engagement; RASP-II: Adaptability; RASP-III: Control  
 RASP-IV: Competence; RASP-V: Sense of humor

Significant sex differences were noted for the components of control ( $t_{(747)}=2,11, p=.035$ ) and engagement ( $t_{(747)}=4,85, p<.001$ ): so, girls obtained higher scores (control:  $M_{girls}=4,58, sd=.82$ ; engagement:  $M_{girls}=4,87, sd=.67$ ) than boys (control:  $M_{boys}=4,45, sd=.86$ ; engagement:  $M_{boys}=4,61, sd=.75$ ), indicating that they tended to express higher levels of control and engagement in reaching of established goals compared to their peers. In addition (Table 3), significant differences for age-groups were observed in almost all components of resilience, except for the sense of humor: in fact, late adolescents scored higher than middle ones on competence ( $t_{(747)}=-2,05, p=.041$ ), adaptability ( $t_{(747)}=-1,98, p=.046$ ), control ( $t_{(747)}=-4,16, p<.001$ ), and engagement ( $t_{(747)}=-2,35, p=.019$ ). These results confirmed that, with the increase of positive growth, adolescents improved their resilient abilities in front of adversities.

**Table 3. Resilience: differences for age groups (N = 749)**

Age groups	Components of Italian-RASP				
	I*	II*	III**	IV*	V
Middle	4,69(.74)	4,24(.75)	4,42(.90)	4,84(.83)	4,53(1,07)
Late	4,82(.69)	4,35(.73)	4,67(.74)	4,95(.71)	4,60(1,02)

Levels of significance for (\*)  $p<.05$  and (\*\*)  $p<.001$   
 RASP-I: Engagement; RASP-II: Adaptability; RASP-III: Control RASP-IV: Competence; RASP-V: Sense of humor

**2.2. Creative Personality**

Descriptive analyses carried out for the four factors of creative personality demonstrated that adolescents reported higher levels of curiosity ( $M=17,81, sd=3,18$ ) and complexity ( $M=16,03, sd=2,89$ ) than those of willingness to risk taking ( $M=15,90, sd=2,61$ ) and imagination ( $M=15,11, sd=3,26$ ) ( $F=196,28, p<.001$ ).

Also in this case, linear correlations demonstrated that factors of creative personality were positively linked



between them (Table 4); in fact, it was possible to highlight that the more the adolescents were curious, the more they were likely to use mental images creating new solutions to the problems, to search for complexity putting their life into order, and to be willing to take risks.

**Table 4. Creative personality: linear correlations (N = 749)**

TCP	Factors of creative personality			
	Cu	Wr	Im	Co
Cu	-			
Wr	,419**	-		
Im	,541**	,371**	-	
Co	,500**	,446**	,417**	-

Level of significance for (\*\*)  $p < .001$

Sex differences were noted only for willingness to risk-taking ( $t_{(747)}=2,09, p=.036$ ): in fact, girls were more willing to take risk than boys ( $M_{\text{girls}}=16,10, sd=2,41$  vs.  $M_{\text{boys}}=15,70, sd=2,78$ ). Furthermore, significant age-groups differences were found only for willingness to risk-taking ( $t_{(747)}=-2,77, p=.006$ ) and preference for complexity ( $t_{(747)}=-3,47, p=.001$ ) (Table 5): so, late adolescents scored higher than middle ones on the ability to challenge the risk situations and move themselves toward complexity.

**Table 5. Creative personality: differences for age groups (N = 749)**

Age groups	Factors of creative personality			
	Cu	Wr*	Im	Co*
Middle	17,69 (3,2)	15,68 (2,5)	14,96 (3,1)	15,73 (2,9)
Late	18,01 (3,1)	16,22 (2,6)	15,35 (3,4)	16,47 (2,8)

Level of significance for (\*)  $p < .01$

### 2.3. Relationships between Components of Resilience and Factors of Creative Personality

As observed in Table 6, considering the sampling size, Pearson’s correlations showed weak but significantly positive relationships between the components of resilience and factors of creative personality (RASP-TCP). Engagement, adaptability, and competence were all positively related to curiosity, complexity, willingness to risk taking, and imagination; in addition, control and sense of humor were weakly and positively related to curiosity, complexity, and willingness to risk taking.

These interesting results pointed out that the more the adolescents were engaged, adapted, and competent in front of daily life adversities, the more they were likely to be curious, complexity-lovers for putting their life into order, willing to risk taking, and to use mental images; in addition, the more the adolescents practiced their control on surroundings and used their sense of humor, the more they were likely to be curious and complexity-lovers, and prone to risk taking.

**Table 6. Resilience and creative personality: linear correlations for total sample (N = 749)**

TCP	Components of Italian-RASP				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Cu	,29**	,26**	,19**	,21**	,17**
Wr	,25**	,16**	,10**	,26**	,12**
Im	,20**	,15**	,07	,12**	,08
Co	,27**	,25**	,23**	,27**	,15**

Level of significance for (\*\*)  $p < .001$   
 RASP-I: Engagement; RASP-II: Adaptability; RASP-III: Control  
 RASP-IV: Competence; RASP-V: Sense of humor

### 3. Conclusions

Findings of the present study provided an original and basically empirical evidence of the relationships existing between components of resilience and creative personality traits. As reported in  $H_{1a}$  and  $H_{1c}$ , we expected that girls and late adolescents would score higher than boys and middle ones on the components of resilience: these hypotheses were confirmed for sex differences only in reference to control and engagement (as reported by Sun and Stewart [46]) and almost totally for age groups, except for sense of humor.

As indicated in  $H_{1b}$  and  $H_{1d}$ , we expected that girls and late adolescents would score higher than boys and middle ones on factors of creative personality: the results of our study partially confirmed these two hypotheses, in the sense that girls were more willing to take risk than boys and late adolescents scored higher on willingness to risk-taking and preference for complexity than middle ones (as previously reported by Sagone and De Caroli [39]).

One of the most interesting results emerged by the present study was given by significant relationships between creative personality traits and engagement, competence, and adaptability; it meant that the more the adolescents perceived themselves as creative youths, the more they tended to be engaged and competent in searching for new solutions to problems in a resilient way.

This contribution suggested the idea of a new perspective that included the “creative resilience” into the Positive Youth Development in terms of psychological quality to cope with adversities and unexpected outcomes in creative way, distinguishing highly creative resilient individuals from lowly creative resilient ones. It would be possible to cluster four typologies of individuals: 1) highly creative and highly resilient individuals, 2) lowly creative and lowly resilient individuals, 3) highly creative but lowly resilient individuals, and 4) lowly creative but highly resilient individuals. The belonging to one of these clusters could positively or negatively affect the outcomes of development trajectory and growth of individuals in different domains of daily life, as academic performance, career choice and job satisfaction, close relationships, and so on.

A limit of this study could be represented by the absence of the group of early adolescents: so, we believe that it will be necessary to deepen the relationships between the two examined topics also with a group of teenagers in the next researches in order to have clear ideas about the growth of highly creative resilient individuals. Moreover, we think that it will be important to verify the convergent validity using another tests on the factors of creative personality and resilience in order to generalize the empirical evidences of this phenomenon. In addition, future researches in Italian context could compare groups of adolescents with university students and adults on the components of creative resilience and other psychological dimensions, such as self-efficacy, optimism, psychological well-being, value orientation, humor style, and hope.

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