Psychological Resilience: Drawing Parallels between Characters in *The Maze Runner- Trilogy* and Individuals Coping with COVID-19

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Abstract

Aim: *The aim of this study is to compare the experiences of individuals overcoming the COVID-19 epidemic with those of characters in The Maze Runner series, aiming to investigate the concept of psychological resilience.*

Methodology and Approaches: *The study utilises a comparative analysis between real-life experiences of individuals dealing with COVID-19 and the fictional adventures depicted in The Maze Runner series. It employs an interdisciplinary approach that combines insights from psychology, literature, and sociology to understand how resilience manifests in the face of adversity.*

Outcome: *The research aims to clarify the ways in which resilience manifests itself during times of crisis through the comparative examination of real-life experiences and fictional narratives. The results offer insightful guidance to individuals, groups, and society at large, contributing to the ongoing conversation about psychological resilience and providing nuanced perspectives on managing misfortune and uncertainty effectively.*

Conclusion: *In conclusion, there are important lessons to be learned about coping strategies, resilience, and adaptation from the similarities between the COVID-19 epidemic and the The Maze Runner trilogy. In the same vein, those overcoming the pandemic's obstacles have demonstrated resilience in the face of uncertainty, social isolation, and life disruption. In the end, realising these parallels improves our comprehension of human resilience and guides initiatives to help people and communities confronting hardship in both real and fictitious settings.*

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James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* series tells the story of a group of teens who are killed by animals known as Grievers and left for dead in a mystery maze with no memory of their history. They must find their way out of the maze, unravel its secrets, and get away. The characters in the series exhibit varying degrees of psychological resilience to overcome the obstacles they encounter. There are several similarities between the experiences of the characters in *The Maze Runner* series and those of people dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Like people who were confined or segregated during the pandemic, the characters in the maze are cut off from the outside world. People throughout the epidemic have had to adjust to new methods of living and working, such as remote work and virtual social contacts, much as the characters in the maze must adjust to the changing environment and adopt new survival techniques.

The characters in the trilogy show resilience and persistence in their attempt to escape the maze despite encountering many challenges and failures. In a similar vein, people impacted by COVID-19 need to muster strength to face obstacles including illness, financial difficulty, and social isolation. The characters in the maze develop close relationships and rely on one another for assistance. In the same vein, those dealing with the pandemic have looked to their networks of friends and family for emotional support. The protagonists in the trilogy are driven to keep moving forward despite the obstacles because they hold onto the belief that there is a better world waiting for them outside the maze. In a similar vein, people who are facing the pandemic cling to hope that things will get back to normal and that things will get better after the catastrophe.

Through an analysis of the psychological resilience portrayed in *The Maze Runner* trilogy and its similarities to people coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, scientific research sheds light on the mechanisms behind resilience. Psychological research has emphasised the significance of elements including coping mechanisms, social support, and cognitive flexibility in building resilience in the face of hardship. For example, a study published in the journal Psychological Science found that cognitive flexibility predicted better psychological adjustment in response to the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic (P.

North, 2020). Like this, the protagonists in the *The Maze Runner* trilogy show cognitive flexibility as they come up with new survival tactics and adjust to the maze's hardships.

Another important element in building resilience is social support. Strong social networks and support systems have been repeatedly demonstrated in research to be protective against the damaging effects of stress and misfortune. A study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found that perceived social support was associated with greater resilience in the face of traumatic events (Ozbay et al., 2007). In a similar vein, the protagonists in *The Maze Runner* series find strength in their relationships with one another, emphasising the value of camaraderie and teamwork in conquering obstacles. Resilience is greatly influenced by cognitive flexibility, which is the capacity to modify one's thoughts and actions in response to shifting conditions. Research has indicated that people with higher levels of cognitive flexibility are more capable of managing stress and recovering from setbacks.

The Maze Runner trilogy provides insight into the psychological fortitude exhibited by people confronting severe hardships, which is comparable to what those going through the COVID-19 epidemic are going through. Both circumstances call for flexibility, fortitude, support from the community, and optimism for the future.

Using the resilience framework from *The Maze Runner* to overcome obstacles requires taking cues from the characters' experiences and implementing adaptation techniques that reflect their resilience. Characters like Thomas, Teresa, and Newt show different facets of resilience throughout the trilogy as they deal with the perils of the maze and the uncertainty of their circumstances. Cognitive flexibility is a crucial component of resilience that the stories of the protagonists demonstrate. They create innovative ways to get around the maze's obstacles by adjusting their ways of thinking and acting in response to fresh knowledge and difficulties. This is consistent with studies showing how critical cognitive flexibility is to resilience (Dashner, 2009).

Characters in *The Maze Runner* trilogy emphasise the value of strong social ties in building resilience by largely depending on their networks for assistance and companionship. Even though there are disagreements and tensions within the group, they eventually work together to overcome challenges and encourage one another in their pursuit of independence. Characters in the *The Maze Runner* series show how to overcome hardship by using strong coping mechanisms. They use a variety of strategies to deal with stress and get over obstacles, from learning survival skills to finding comfort in each other's company. This is consistent with research showing how important coping mechanisms—like problem-solving abilities and emotion regulation techniques—are to resilience (Dashner, 2009).

The characters' resiliency is also fuelled by their unwavering sense of purpose and optimism for a brighter future. They hold onto the hope that there is a route out of the maze and a better future waiting for them outside its borders despite the dismal reality of their circumstances. This is consistent with studies showing how optimism and a feeling of purpose help people become resilient under trying circumstances (Dashner, 2009). Overcoming obstacles with *The Maze Runner* resilience framework entails implementing adaption techniques motivated by the experiences of the protagonists. People can develop cognitive flexibility, solid social networks, efficient coping mechanisms, and a feeling of purpose and optimism during hardship by drawing on their resilience. By using these techniques, people can overcome hurdles and prosper in the face of adversity by navigating the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and other problems with perseverance and fortitude (Dashner, 2009).

Analysing and contrasting real-life COVID-19 pandemic coping tactics with those depicted by characters in the *The Maze Runner* trilogy provides important insights into resilience and adaptability. Characters in the trilogy including Thomas, Teresa, and Newt use a variety of coping strategies to get through the difficulties of the maze and the unpredictability of their circumstances. These coping mechanisms can be compared to actual reactions to

the pandemic, providing insight into practical methods people use to overcome hardship.

Solving problems is a common coping strategy seen in the *The Maze Runner* trilogy. Resilient characters actively seek solutions to the problems they face, whether it is making plans for escape or solving the riddles of the maze. This aligns with research indicating that problem-solving skills are integral to effective coping during stressful situations (Compas et al., 2017). Like this, people dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic have used problem-solving techniques to adjust to new situations. Examples include moving to a remote work environment or figuring out different ways to stay in touch with loved ones even when they are physically apart.

Social support is another coping strategy that is portrayed in the trilogy. Characters develop close relationships with one another that enable them to overcome obstacles by leaning on one another for both practical and emotional support. Research consistently shows that social support is a crucial factor in resilience, buffering against the negative effects of stress and adversity (Ozbay et al., 2007). In a similar vein, many have resorted to their social networks during the COVID-19 pandemic for assistance, whether it be through online support groups, phone conversations with friends and family, or virtual get-togethers.

The characters in *The Maze Runner* trilogy also show resilience by employing adaptive coping mechanisms, like holding onto their sense of humour, finding happiness even in the face of adversity, and holding out hope for a brighter tomorrow. This aligns with research indicating that positive coping mechanisms, such as humour and optimism, can enhance resilience and psychological well-being during challenging times (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). Similarly, people have found moments of humour and hope for a post-epidemic society by using humour and optimism as coping methods with the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analysing how real-life coping strategies and character insights interact might improve our comprehension of resilience in a variety of settings. Even if fictional characters deal with fantasy issues, their emotional reactions and coping

mechanisms frequently resemble those seen in actual world circumstances. Through examining how literary characters deal with hardship and overcome barriers, scholars can pinpoint recurring motifs and psychological mechanisms that support useful coping strategies. Simultaneously, research on how people coped during the COVID-19 epidemic offers factual proof of the effectiveness of coping mechanisms in reducing stress and fostering psychological health. Integrating insights from both fictional portrayals and empirical research can inform the development of comprehensive frameworks for understanding resilience and guiding interventions to support individuals facing adversity, including during public health crises like COVID-19 (Hawryluck et al., 2004; Holmes et al., 2020).

In conclusion, contrasting the coping tactics used in real life during the COVID-19 epidemic with those portrayed by characters in the *The Maze Runner* series provides important insights into resilience and adaptability. Researchers can find useful coping mechanisms and resilience-building techniques that enable people to face hardship with strength and resilience by identifying similarities between fictional stories and real-world situations.

Two major themes of *The Maze Runner* trilogy and the COVID-19 epidemic are social isolation and resilience, which offer important insights into coping strategies in harsh situations. The individuals in the trilogy are compelled to rely entirely on one another for assistance while enduring the solitude of the maze and being cut off from the outside world. Their fortitude in the face of social exclusion draws comparisons to actual events during the pandemic, in which people have struggled with the difficulties of extended social seclusion and isolation.

Research on social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted its detrimental effects on mental health and well-being, including increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Brooks et al., 2020). Characters in *The Maze Runner* trilogy also struggle with emotions of fear, loneliness, and uncertainty because of their isolation, which has a significant psychological impact on them. Despite these difficulties, they show resilience by

developing close relationships, offering emotional support, and cooperating to get things done. This underscores the value of social networks in preventing the detrimental consequences of loneliness and building perseverance in the face of hardship (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).

The *The Maze Runner* trilogy's teachings from the maze provide valuable insights into practical coping strategies for social isolation. The maze's characters have to adjust to their cramped surroundings, figure out how to stay in touch with one another, and hold onto their sense of purpose and optimism for the future. Like this, studies on coping mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the value of preserving social ties via virtual interactions, taking part in worthwhile pursuits, and practicing self-care methods like mindfulness and relaxation exercises (Galea et al., 2020; Killgore et al., 2020). Researchers can uncover tactics for fostering resilience and well-being in the face of social isolation by identifying similarities between the experiences of characters in the maze and people dealing with pandemic isolation.

Analysing the sense of uncertainty and anxiety in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic and the *The Maze Runner* trilogy offers important insights about comparable experiences. In *The Maze Runner*, characters find themselves in an enigmatic and dangerous setting with limited understanding of their background or the world outside the maze. As individuals strive to make sense of their surroundings and deal with the unknown, this constant ambiguity causes worry. Like this, people have experienced never-before-seen levels of uncertainty about the virus, how it spreads, and how it will affect society, the economy, and health in the long run during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information about the frequency and effects of uncertainty and anxiety is provided by data from research done during the pandemic. For example, research has shown that uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with heightened levels of anxiety and psychological distress (Brooks et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). A study published in JAMA Network Open found that individuals who perceived higher levels of uncertainty about the pandemic reported greater anxiety and depression symptoms (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). This

is like what happens to the protagonists in *The Maze Runner*, who struggle with fear and anxiety when faced with uncertainty.

Furthermore, the similarities between the COVID-19 epidemic and the uncertainty and fear in *The Maze Runner* underscore typical psychological reactions to ambiguity and unpredictability. Anxiety is bred by uncertainty because people find it difficult to predict and manage the future, which makes them feel vulnerable and distressed. Like how characters in *The Maze Runner* deal with anxiety when faced with the unknown, people during the epidemic encounter psychological obstacles as they deal with concerns about their safety, health, and the future.

The COVID-19 epidemic and the *The Maze Runner* trilogy both depict journeys of uncertainty and fear that are similar, highlighting how common these psychological states are. Through a combination of real-world data and fictional portrayals, researchers can better understand the ways in which anxiety and uncertainty appear in various circumstances and design interventions to help people going through comparable struggles.

Building support systems during difficult times is a crucial component of resilience; this can be seen in both the COVID-19 pandemic and the *The Maze Runner* trilogy. Characters in the maze depend on one another for companionship, emotional support, and practical help as they navigate the risks and uncertainties they encounter. Their relationships create an essential network of support that helps people overcome obstacles and promotes a feeling of community and unity. Like this, people have resorted to their social networks during the COVID-19 pandemic to find solace, support, and useful guidance in managing the difficulties of the situation.

There are similarities and difficulties between the creation of support networks during the pandemic and in the maze. Individuals in both situations must get beyond obstacles like physical distance, mistrust, and conflicting priorities to communicate and work together. To locate and save their allies, characters in the *The Maze Runner* trilogy must make their way through the maze's twisting passageways, forming bonds in the face of danger. In the same

vein, people have adjusted to virtual and remote contact channels throughout the epidemic to preserve social ties while following physical boundaries.

Through their conversations and deeds, the characters in *The Maze Runner* series eloquently highlight their dependence on support networks. One noteworthy phrase from the book that highlights the value of support and camaraderie between people is when the main character, Newt, says, "We're all in this together. We're all suffering. We're all gonna fight our way out!" (Dashner, 2009).

This expression perfectly captures the characters' camaraderie as they face the maze's obstacles. In a similar vein, people have expressed comparable feelings of solidarity and group resilience in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic. Through neighbourhood projects, online support groups, or community outreach activities, people have united to offer support and solidarity to one another during these trying times.

The creation of support systems during the COVID-19 epidemic and in the maze highlights the value of interpersonal relationships in fostering resilience and general well-being during trying circumstances. Through the analysis of similarities between literary representations and actual experiences, scholars might discern tactics for enhancing support systems and fostering perseverance in the face of hardship.

Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the *The Maze Runner* trilogy centre on trauma and recovery, providing insights for resilient paths in the face of hardship. The characters in the trilogy suffer severe stress as they deal with memory loss, the perils of the maze, and the loss of friends and loved ones. As individuals work to reconstruct their lives and negotiate the repercussions of trauma, their recovery journeys are characterised by resilience. Likewise, those impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic have gone through a range of traumas, such as sickness, losing their job, being alone in society, and bereavement. Strategies for healing and recovery can be informed by an understanding of the routes to resilience portrayed in *The Maze Runner* and throughout the pandemic.

Studies on resilience and trauma during the COVID-19 pandemic offer important new perspectives on efficient recovery routes. Studies have highlighted the importance of factors such as social support, adaptive coping strategies, and meaning-making in facilitating resilience and promoting post-traumatic growth (Galatzer-Levy et al., 2018; Horesh & Brown, 2020). Characters in *The Maze Runner* series also exhibit resilience by finding purpose in their experiences, adjusting to adversity, and forming relationships with others. Their stories provide resilience lessons that are applicable to actual experiences of trauma and pandemic recovery.

Furthermore, the similarities between the COVID-19 epidemic and the trauma and recovery depicted in *The Maze Runner* highlight how similar human experiences are when faced with hardship. The human spirit's ability to recover from tragedy and start afresh in the face of uncertainty and bereavement is demonstrated in both situations. Researchers can find practical methods for encouraging healing and recovery in traumatised individuals and communities by looking at the routes to resilience portrayed in *The Maze Runner* and during the pandemic.

Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the *The Maze Runner* trilogy centre on trauma and rehabilitation, providing important insights into coping strategies in the face of hardship. Through establishing connections between fictitious representations and actual experiences, scholars can contribute to the development of healing and recovery plans that support resilience and growth following traumatic experiences in both individuals and groups.

A recurring motif in both the COVID-19 pandemic and the *The Maze Runner* trilogy is youth resilience, which emphasises the abilities and fortitude of teenagers in the face of hardship. The characters in the trilogy are mostly teenagers who show incredible resilience while figuring out the maze's hurdles and facing their past's secrets. Despite their youth and inexperience, they show bravery, ingenuity, and tenacity in overcoming challenges and cooperating to achieve shared objectives. Adolescents have also demonstrated incredible

resilience in handling changes to their daily routines, social lives, and education throughout the COVID-19 epidemic.

Studies on youth resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on the elements that support teenagers' capacity for change and adolescent success in the face of adversity. Studies have highlighted the importance of factors such as social support, coping skills, and positive youth-adult relationships in promoting resilience and well-being (Prime et al., 2020; Saurabh & Ranjan, 2020). Characters in *The Maze Runner* trilogy also find strength in their relationships with one another, their flexibility in the face of change, and their will to triumph over hardship. Their experiences provide insightful resilience lessons that are applicable to the struggles that adolescents face in the real world as they deal with the pandemic.

Furthermore, the similarities between young people's resistance in *The Maze Runner* and during the COVID-19 epidemic highlight how resilient adolescents are in facing hardship everywhere. In both situations, youth's ability to bounce back from uncertainty, fear, and disturbance is demonstrated. Through an analysis of the strengths and adaptive skills of adolescents as portrayed in *The Maze Runner* and as witnessed during the pandemic, researchers might ascertain tactics aimed at fostering resilience and overall well-being within this susceptible demographic. A major motif in both the COVID-19 pandemic and the *The Maze Runner* trilogy is young resilience, which emphasises the abilities and fortitude of teenagers in the face of hardship. Researchers can provide guidance for interventions and support systems that foster resilience and well-being in teenagers experiencing problems by establishing connections between fictional portrayals and real-world experiences.

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