

Role of Psychological Resilience in Coping with Life Stressors among Young Adults

Dhami Sagarsinha Ganeshasinha¹ and Dr. Abhay Rajpoot²

¹Research Scholar, ²Professor

Department of Psychology
Vikrant University, Gwalior M.P

Abstract: *Young adulthood is a critical developmental period characterized by major educational, occupational, financial, interpersonal, and social transitions. These changes frequently expose young adults to multiple life stressors that may influence psychological well-being and everyday functioning. Psychological resilience has emerged as an important protective resource that enables individuals to adapt positively to adversity, recover from stressful experiences, and maintain relatively stable psychological functioning. Resilience does not imply the absence of stress or emotional difficulties; rather, it refers to the capacity to respond adaptively to challenging circumstances through effective coping, emotional regulation, positive thinking, self-efficacy, problem-solving, and utilization of social resources.*

Recent research indicates that resilience among young adults is influenced by interacting individual, family, peer, educational, community, cultural, and socioeconomic factors. An integrative review identified more than 60 protective factors among children, adolescents, and young adults, including self-regulation, optimism, self-esteem, self-efficacy, physical activity, coping skills, social support, family relationships, peer connectedness, educational engagement, and community resources.

Keywords: Psychological resilience, young adults, life stressors, coping, emotional regulation, social support, mental health, adaptive functioning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood represents a transitional stage in which individuals experience substantial changes in personal identity, education, employment, relationships, financial independence, and social responsibilities. Although this period can provide opportunities for personal growth, it can also create considerable psychological pressure. Academic competition, uncertainty regarding employment, financial difficulties, relationship conflicts, family expectations, social comparison, relocation, loneliness, and concerns about the future can collectively contribute to stress. The effects of these stressors vary considerably among individuals. While some young adults experience substantial emotional difficulties, others maintain psychological stability and continue functioning effectively despite similar challenges. This variation has encouraged researchers to focus increasingly on psychological resilience. Contemporary resilience research conceptualizes resilience not simply as a fixed personality characteristic but as a dynamic process through which individuals achieve relatively positive adaptation despite adversity. An affect-regulation framework further emphasizes that resilience involves processes associated with emotional experience, regulation, stress responses, and coping.

II. CONCEPT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

Psychological resilience can broadly be understood as the capacity to adapt effectively when faced with adversity, stress, disruption, or significant life challenges. A resilient person may experience fear, sadness, frustration, or uncertainty but is generally able to regulate these responses and continue pursuing meaningful goals. Thus, resilience should not be interpreted as emotional invulnerability. Instead, it involves flexible adaptation and the ability to recover

or maintain functioning under difficult conditions. The modern literature increasingly emphasizes that resilience develops through the interaction between personal characteristics and environmental resources. An integrative systematic review of young populations identified individual skills as well as environmental conditions as major dimensions of resilience. Individual protective factors included self-regulation, optimism, confidence, self-esteem, hope, coping, perseverance, physical activity, positive life goals, and self-efficacy, while environmental factors included family support, peer relationships, educational connectedness, community resources, and social relationships.

III. MAJOR LIFE STRESSORS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Young adults encounter stressors across several domains. Educational stress may result from examinations, academic workload, performance expectations, competition, and uncertainty about future careers. Employment-related stress can arise from unemployment, job insecurity, workplace pressure, long working hours, and difficulties in achieving work-life balance. Financial stress is another important concern because young adults may be attempting to establish economic independence while facing high educational, housing, or living expenses. Interpersonal stress may emerge through romantic relationships, friendship conflicts, family expectations, social isolation, and difficulties in establishing a stable adult identity. In addition, exposure to social media can increase social comparison and perceptions of inadequacy. Major societal events, including pandemics, natural disasters, economic instability, and environmental threats, can introduce additional uncertainty. Recent reviews demonstrate that resilience in young people is shaped by psychological skills as well as supportive social networks, education, community connection, youth agency, and broader environmental conditions.

IV. ROLE OF RESILIENCE IN COPING WITH STRESS

Psychological resilience contributes to coping by helping young adults evaluate stressful situations more flexibly and select adaptive responses. Individuals with stronger resilience may be more likely to perceive challenges as manageable, identify available resources, regulate negative emotions, and develop practical solutions. Resilience can therefore influence both the interpretation of stress and the behavioral response to it. Effective coping may include problem-focused strategies, seeking social support, emotional regulation, acceptance, positive reframing, physical activity, and constructive planning. Conversely, limited resilience may increase vulnerability to avoidance, rumination, emotional dysregulation, substance misuse, social withdrawal, or other maladaptive coping responses. Evidence from college populations has increasingly examined the relationship between resilience and stress, including systematic synthesis of studies investigating this association.

V. PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS SUPPORTING RESILIENCE

Several psychological mechanisms explain how resilience may protect young adults from the negative consequences of stress. Emotional regulation allows individuals to recognize and manage difficult emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them. Self-efficacy provides confidence in one's ability to handle challenges and influence outcomes. Optimism encourages individuals to maintain expectations that difficulties can be managed or improved. Self-esteem supports a stable sense of personal worth during periods of failure or criticism. Problem-solving ability enables individuals to break complex problems into manageable steps. Cognitive flexibility helps individuals consider alternative interpretations and solutions rather than becoming fixed on negative outcomes. Meaning and purpose may also support persistence by helping individuals connect stressful experiences with broader personal goals. These mechanisms interact rather than functioning independently, making resilience a multidimensional process rather than a single psychological trait.

VI. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SOURCES OF RESILIENCE

Resilience among young adults cannot be adequately understood solely at the individual level. Family relationships, friendships, peer networks, educational institutions, workplaces, and communities can provide resources that strengthen

adaptive functioning. Supportive families can provide emotional security, guidance, financial assistance, and opportunities for open communication. Positive friendships can reduce loneliness and provide opportunities for emotional expression and problem-solving. Educational institutions may contribute through mentoring, counseling, supportive teachers, extracurricular activities, and accessible mental-health services. Community connectedness can provide belonging and practical assistance. Research on young populations has identified family support, peer support, school connectedness, community resources, and social relationships as important protective factors.

VII. RESILIENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Psychological resilience is closely associated with mental-health outcomes because it can reduce vulnerability to prolonged psychological distress following stressful experiences. Young adults with greater resilience may be better able to recover from setbacks and prevent temporary stress reactions from developing into persistent emotional difficulties. The relationship is particularly relevant to anxiety and depressive symptoms. A large 2025 systematic review of resilience to depression among young adults found that psychological resilience and positive cognition were frequently associated with lower depression symptomology, while social and family support also emerged as important protective factors. However, the evidence also indicates that resilience should not be reduced to an exclusively individual psychological characteristic because economic, institutional, cultural, and environmental conditions can influence young adults' ability to adapt.

VIII. RESILIENCE-BUILDING INTERVENTIONS

The evidence suggests that resilience can be strengthened through appropriately designed interventions. Potential approaches include cognitive-behavioral strategies, mindfulness, emotional-regulation training, problem-solving skills, physical activity, social-support enhancement, and psychological skills training. A recent systematic review and network meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials involving adolescents and young adults found evidence that physical activity, psychotherapy, mindfulness-related approaches, and skills training can enhance resilience, although effects vary across interventions and populations. Educational institutions can incorporate resilience-building programmes into student support systems, while workplaces can provide stress-management training, supportive supervision, flexible practices, and access to counseling. Importantly, resilience interventions should not place responsibility entirely on individuals; reducing unnecessary environmental stressors and improving access to social and institutional resources are equally important.

IX. REVIEW OF MAJOR PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Domain	Major Protective Factors	Possible Contribution to Coping
Emotional	Emotional regulation, optimism, confidence	Reduces emotional overwhelm and supports adaptive responses
Cognitive	Self-efficacy, positive thinking, problem-solving	Improves perception of control and decision-making
Behavioral	Physical activity, perseverance, healthy routines	Supports psychological and physical well-being
Social	Peer support, friendships, social connectedness	Reduces isolation and provides emotional assistance
Family	Family support, communication, positive family climate	Provides security, guidance, and practical resources
Educational	School/college engagement, mentoring	Supports belonging, motivation, and academic adjustment
Community	Community participation, social resources	Enhances belonging and access to assistance
Cultural	Identity, spirituality, cultural connection	Provides meaning, identity, and psychological grounding

Environmental	Safety, economic resources, supportive institutions	Reduces external vulnerability and facilitates adaptation
Purpose	Hope, aspirations, meaningful life goals	Encourages persistence during difficult situations

The table synthesizes protective domains identified across systematic reviews of resilience in young populations. Despite extensive research, several gaps remain. First, resilience is measured using numerous scales and definitions, making comparisons between studies difficult. Recent reviews have also noted conceptual inconsistencies in how resilience is defined. Second, many studies emphasize individual psychological characteristics while giving comparatively less attention to structural and environmental conditions. Third, young people from low- and middle-income countries remain underrepresented in some areas of the resilience literature. The 2025 review of young-adult resilience to depression specifically identified limited representation of low- and middle-income settings. Future research should therefore examine culturally diverse populations and consider interactions among psychological, family, social, economic, institutional, and environmental factors. Longitudinal studies are particularly necessary to determine whether resilience predicts long-term adaptation or changes in response to different types of stress.

X. CONCLUSION

Psychological resilience plays an important role in helping young adults cope with life stressors and maintain psychological well-being. It enables individuals to regulate emotions, use adaptive coping strategies, maintain positive expectations, solve problems, seek support, and recover from difficult experiences. However, resilience should not be regarded as an entirely personal characteristic. Evidence increasingly supports a multidimensional perspective in which individual psychological resources interact with family, peer, educational, community, cultural, economic, and institutional resources. Therefore, effective resilience promotion should combine individual skill development with supportive environments. Universities, workplaces, families, and community organizations can contribute by providing accessible mental-health services, social support, mentoring, stress-management programmes, and opportunities for meaningful participation. Strengthening psychological resilience among young adults may consequently contribute not only to better stress management but also to improved emotional well-being, social functioning, academic and occupational adjustment, and long-term mental health.

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