

Perceived Stress and Resilience among Young Adults: A Correlational Study

Riya Goyal^{1*}, Dr. Roopali Sharma²

ABSTRACT

The stage of youth is a period of existence, during which significant personal and social transformations take place and can add to the psychological stress. At this stage, people have to cope with new demands in education, work, relations, and future perspectives. Resilience has been regarded as a significant psychological strength that enables people to handle stress and adapt to a difficult situation. The current research was conducted to examine the perceived stress and resilience in young adults, to analyze the connection between the two and to find out gender variances in perceived stress and resilience. A sample of 120 young adults within the age bracket of 18 to 30 years consisting of 60 boys and 60 girls was chosen to conduct the study. A convenience sampling technique was used in selecting applicants. The perceived stress and the resilience measures were measured using standardized tools and were acquired online by using Google Forms. The quantitative cross-sectional research design was chosen. The relationship between perceived stress and resilience was evaluated using Pearson correlation, and independent samples t-tests were utilized to determine gender differences. The findings indicated that the resilience and perceived stress had a strong negative correlation in which young adults with higher resilience reported lower perceived stress. The result also showed that there was a significant gender difference in perceived stress where in the male reported more stress compared to females. The difference in resilience among the genders was however not significant. This study has designated that resilience is a significant protective factor in the perceived stress management of young adults. The improvement of resilience can help to increase the level of stress management and mental health in the development of this crucial period.

Keywords: *Perceived Stress, Resilience, Young Adults, Gender Differences*

Young adulthood, typically defined as the time period from 18 to 30 years of age, is considered to be a distinctive and momentous stage of the human life span. It is a period of rapid cognitive, social, emotional and psychological changes occurring between the ages of adolescence and complete maturity. The period encompasses decisions on education, employment and lifestyle, as well as advancement in the construction of individual and relational identities and personal autonomy. Young adulthood is assumed to be a vulnerable and a promising time of life.

¹Undergraduate Student, Amity University, Noida Uttar Pradesh, India

²Professor, Amity University, Noida Uttar Pradesh, India

*Corresponding Author

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This phase is defined as a separate phase of development with its own developmental tasks, issues and expectations; it is neither a transition from adolescence nor an extension of childhood into adulthood. Researchers emphasize that young adulthood is different from adolescence and old age in its systemic conditions of existence and developmental objectives, such as adaptation to emerging work and social demands, struggles for one's own identity and more independence. (Higley, 2019)

The term stress was initially popularized in its biological sense by "Hans Selye" in "1936". He defined stress as "The non-specific response of the body to any demand for change." This description puts emphasis on the fact that stress is not just dependent on the nature of the stressor. Instead, it is the general response that is shown by the body whenever it is required to adapt to a demand, disturbance or a situation that is not experienced before (Ramanathan & Desrouleaux, 2022)

Perceived stress is the way one feels and perceives the level of stress that one is going through at a certain point in time or within a specific period. Instead of simply being a response to an actual stress event, it is a reaction on an emotional and cognitive basis to the event. According to "Lazarus and Folkman", this first appraisal referred to as perceived stress is important in determining the confidence that individuals have with regard to their capacity to handle stressful experiences. That is, it is not only what happens to an individual, but the way that one assesses and interprets the situation, that contributes to the stress experience. (George, 2022)

Resilience is an important psycho-social construct which is used to describe people response and adaptation to stressors, adversity, or trauma and negative events of life. It refers to the capacity of an individual to overcome adversity in difficult times without compromising his / her mental health and emotional stability.

Psychologically, resilience is not considered as a single personality trait, but it is a dynamic and changing process that is determined as a result of the interplay between the personal traits and the environmental factors. Resilience gained the attention of researchers after it was observed that numerous people could effectively operate even following exposure to very stressful or negative events in life. This gave rise to the concept of resilience as a protective mechanism that can aid mental well-being and allow people to overcome the challenges and achieve success in their daily lives (Jabbar, 2020).

Resilience also has cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social dimensions. It can be hugely useful for instance for controlling overshooting emotions, making more beneficial choices and using adaptive strategies to deal with tough situations. The more resilient people tend to have a more optimistic attitude towards and be more problems focused in their responses to negative situations, which significantly facilitates their adaptation and growth (Kinga Kołodziej et al., 2025).

Notably, the concept of resilience is not inborn and fixed. It evolves with time in the form of life experiences, social support system, belief systems, and coping skills. Family, education, peer pressure, cultural factors are the factors that greatly affect its development. Being a multidimensional and complicated concept, resilience could be different in different domains, such as academic, emotional, or social, and in different individuals (Jabbar, 2020).

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Perceived stress and resilience are interrelated constructs that shape how individuals experience and respond to challenging life circumstances. Perceived stress reflects the extent to which individuals evaluate situations as overwhelming, unpredictable, or beyond their coping resources, whereas resilience represents the capacity to adapt effectively and maintain psychological stability in the face of adversity.

Resilience plays a crucial role in influencing cognitive appraisal processes. Individuals with higher resilience are more likely to interpret stressors as manageable and temporary, which reduces the intensity of stress experienced. In contrast, lower resilience is associated with negative appraisals of stressful situations, resulting in heightened perceived stress and emotional distress. Empirical findings indicate that resilience functions as a protective factor, buffering the impact of stress and promoting adaptive coping strategies (Abai & Madihie, 2021).

Furthermore, resilience is linked with adaptive personal characteristics such as optimism, tenacity, and self-efficacy, which enhance effective stress management and contribute to lower levels of perceived stress (Pour et al., 2022). Thus, resilience not only mitigates the perception of stress but also facilitates healthier psychological adjustment.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the Study

The goal of the research is to study the connection between perceived stress and resilience in young adults as well as investigate gender differences in perceived stress and resilience.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the level of perceived stress and resilience among young adults
2. To examine the relationship between perceived stress and resilience among young adults.
3. To examine gender variations in the perceived stress of young adults.
4. To examine gender differences in resilience among young adults.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between perceived stress and resilience among young adults.

H2: There will be a significant difference in perceived stress between male and female young adults.

H3: There will be a significant difference in resilience between male and female young adults.

Sample

This study took a sample of 120 people, 60 of them were female young adults and 60 were male young adults in this age group of 18-30 years.

Research design

Quantitative and cross-sectional research design was utilized to study the relationship between perceived stress and resilience among young adults.

Variables of the Study

- Independent Variable: Resilience
- Dependent Variable: Perceived Stress

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Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

1. Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10) is a 10-item self-reporting scale, which was created by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983) to measure perceived stress in the last month. The items are evaluated with a five-point Likert scale starting with 0 (never) to 4 (very often). Items 1, 2, 3, 6, 9 and 10 will be negatively framed and Items 4, 5, 7 and 8 will be positively framed and inversely scored. The total scores are 0 to 40 with high scores implying high perceived stress.
2. The second test used for this study is Brief Resilience Scale by Dr. Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008) to assess the capacity of a person to be able to recover due to stressful events. It comprises six items, three of which are addressed in a positive way (Items 1, 3, and 5) and the other three are in the negative manner (Items 2, 4 and 6) and are rated on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The scale generates a unit factor, scores of which are greater as the resilience increases. The “BRS” has expressed a great level of internal consistency and it can be used in academics freely.

Procedure

The data were collected using Google Forms in the current research. This was done by informing the participants about the purpose of the research process beforehand and assuring them that their answers would not be disclosed to other third parties and they would only be used in the research process. The respondents were informed to sign an informed consent electronically and after that, fill up the questionnaire. The Google Form was composed of a short introduction, demographic section and the standardized questionnaires, which assessed the perceived stress and resilience. The form was distributed to young adults online (e.g. email and social media). The respondents were requested to peruse all the statements and respond to them in the truthful way. After the responses were received, they were automatically captured and the responses were safely stored to be analysed later. All the responses were used in academic research exclusively.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Descriptive analysis of perceived stress and resilience among young adults

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
PSS TOTAL	1	60	22.90	22.50	6.952	0.8975
	2	60	19.80	20.00	5.161	0.6663
BRS	1	60	2.89	3.00	0.623	0.0805
	2	60	3.06	3.00	0.686	0.0886

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics of perceived stress and resilience in young adults. The average resilience score of the female population ($M = 3.06$) was a bit higher than that of the male population ($M = 2.89$) showing a slight difference with the female population, where the female participants exhibited a bit more resilience. Nevertheless, both genders had similar median scores related to resilience, which indicated similar central tendencies. In relation to perceived stress, the male young adults indicated a higher mean stress score ($M = 22.9$) than the female young adults ($M = 19.8$). The standard deviation of perceived stress is greater in males, which implies that the perceived stress levels are more varied. Altogether, the descriptive statistics identify a picture of the stress and resilience rates in young adults and serve as the foundation of further inferential statistics.

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Table No. 2 Correlation between perceived stress and resilience

		PSS TOTAL	BRS
PSS TOTAL	Pearson's r	—	
	N	—	
BRS	Pearson's r	-0.475***	—
	N	120	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2: Indicates the relationship between perceived stress and resilience in young adults. The findings show that the perceived stress and resilience are moderately negatively correlated ($r = -0.475$, $p < .001$). This implies that the higher the resilience, the lower the perceived stress.

Table No. 3 Independent Sample T-Test for gender differences in perceived stress

		Statistic	df	P
BRS	Student's t	-1.39	118	.166
PSS TOTAL	Student's t	2.77	118	.006

Note. $H_a \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

Table 3: Shows the outcome of independent samples t-test of perceived stress in male and female young adults. The findings reveal a strong gender difference in perceived stress ($t = 2.77$, $p = .006$). This shows that there is a big difference between the perceived levels of stress by males and females.

Table No. 4 Independent Sample T-Test for gender differences in resilience

		Statistic	df	P
BRS	Student's t	-1.39	118	.166

Note. $H_a \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

Table 4: Shows the result of independent samples t-test between male and female young adults in respect of resilience. They demonstrate that there exists no significant gender variance in resilience ($t = -1.39$, $p = .166$). This means that the degree of resilience that is expressed by male and female young adults does not differ considerably.

DISCUSSION

The current research examined the relationship between perceived stress and resilience in young adults and also investigated gender variation both using descriptive and inferential statistics. It is commonly known that young adulthood is a stage characterized by increased developmental demands, such as academic demands, career planning, and subsequent social roles. These transitions tend to make a person susceptible to stress. As it is in line with the cognitive appraisal model that was postulated by „Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman“ (1984) stress is not simply a reaction to external occurrences but is instead created by the way people interpret and assess the occurrences against their resources to cope. In this respect, resilience is a very important adaptive process.

Descriptive statistics (**Table No. 1**) indicated the mean perceived stress and resilience scores of male and female. Mean perceived stress score of males was higher ($M = 22.90$, $SD = 6.95$) than females ($M = 19.80$, $SD = 5.16$). Similarly mean resilience score of females was higher ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.68$) than males ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.62$). Though these differences are only

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minor at the level of description, they offer a significant generalization of stress and resilience tendencies in the sample and are the foundation of further statistical analysis.

The correlation analysis presented in **Table No.2** has demonstrated that perceived stress and resilience have a moderate negative relationship ($r = -0.475$, $p = .001$). This shows that young adults who are more resilient are likely to report on the reduction of perceived stress. Therefore, the first hypothesis is accepted. The conclusion indicates that resilience serves as a buffer in psychology, which minimizes the magnitude of stressful events.

Previous studies have supported this finding. Abai & Madihie (2021) discovered that there was a strong negative correlation between resilience and stress in undergraduates. On the same note, Jabbar (2020) indicated that resilience is an adaptive process that reduces perception of stress. Kumari & Sinha (2025) also in the Indian context found that perceived stress was minimized in students through resilience. These repeated results support the conclusion that resilience is a very important protective element in the young adult stage.

Regarding the male and female perceived stress difference, **Table No.3** suggests that there is a significant difference ($t = 2.77$, $p = .006$). The rate of perceived stress was found to be much higher in male participants than in female participants. Therefore, the second hypothesis is accepted. This result is opposed to the result of the research by Pour et al. (2022), which reports a higher rate of stress in females and also follows the result of Gey et al. (2025), which also reports a higher perceived stress in females.

Nevertheless, Abai & Madihie (2021) did not report any significant gender difference, which implies that different cultures and contexts can have different stress experiences. The increased levels of stress experienced by males in the current study might be attributed to the sociocultural demands with regard to financial obligation, career building, and social demands.

The gender effects on resilience are further computed separately, and results are reported in **Table No. 4**. The results indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females on resilience ($t = -1.39$, $p = .166$). Therefore, the third hypothesis is rejected. The results taken reflect that resilience, which is considered the capacity of overcoming stress may not reflect the gender difference. Similarly, no significant gender differences in resilience were reported by Mendes et al. (2021) and Abai & Madihie (2021). These suggest that resilience is influenced more by the environmental exposure experience in coping with stressors and psychosocial resources or factors than the biological sex.

Results, reported in the present study demonstrate resilience as an important vulnerability reduction in perceived stress among young adults. The negative relationship between the two constructs was moderate in strength, which emphasizes the need for resilience, boosting interventions among individuals in this age range. Significant differences in perceived stress among gender groups were observed, but the levels of resilience did not vary. Therefore, resilience intervention programs may be implemented for individuals of both genders. This study also clearly shows the value of promoting resilience using an educational intervention program among young adults.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that perceived stress is becoming a common problem in young people with increasing demands from education, relationships and social lives. While moderate

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stress can be adaptive, it can also be detrimental to mental health when sustained without effective coping strategies. The findings have shown the importance of resilience in buffering the effects of stress, which has implications for understanding how individuals adapt successfully to adversity. The findings showed a moderate negative relationship between perceived stress and resilience among young adults and have supported the theoretical justification that resilience is an essential internal resource for good psychological adjustment. That the sex difference is not significant for resilience but only on perceived stress raises the possibility of resilience being something that both men and women can be learned. The research has demonstrated the importance of supporting young people in developing resilience so that they may be better equipped to manage stress.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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