

Research Paper

A Study on the Relationship of Anxiety and Resilience Among Entrepreneurs: Importance of Leadership Role in Fostering a Mentally Healthy Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is a state of continuous risk-taking, uncertainty, and responsibility and thus entrepreneurs are vulnerable to psychological issues such as anxiety. Yet resilience buffers and makes adaptation and flourishing possible when experiencing stress. Mindfulness-based programs have proved helpful to reduce psychological distress and allow resilience, yet there is limited research aimed at entrepreneurs with consideration about the Indian context. The present study examined the relationship between anxiety and resilience among entrepreneurs who work at Nashik district, and investigated how implementing a one-month mindfulness program is significant. The purposive sample consisted 50 male entrepreneurs aged 30 to 40 years old. The data collection was conducted by administering Dr. Kranti's Anxiety Scale and Wagnild's Resilience Scale (RS-14). Pre-test/post-test single group design was adopted. Participants completed the tools before and after receiving a one-month group mindfulness session. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests. Findings revealed that entrepreneurs had high anxiety and varying levels of resilience before the intervention. After the mindfulness session, anxiety levels significantly reduced, while resilience levels significantly increased. The study concludes that mindfulness training is effective in lowering anxiety and enhancing resilience among entrepreneurs. These findings highlight the importance of resilience-building interventions in fostering psychological well-being and effective leadership in entrepreneurial contexts.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Resilience, Entrepreneurs, Mindfulness, Leadership*

Entrepreneurship has evolved to become a risky and ambitious enterprise whereby entrepreneurs are bound to embrace risk-taking, innovation, and decision-making while immersed in uncertainty. Entrepreneurial activities are blamed for being a colossal contributor towards economic progress while at the same time exposing entrepreneurs to heightened psychological tension (Stephan, 2018). Research has empirically all confirmed that entrepreneurs relative to those engaged in normal work

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Received: November 20, 2025; Revision Received: May 07, 2026; Accepted: May 11, 2026

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positions have augmented uncertainty, economic pressure, and work demands, all with corresponding raised levels of anxiety (Uy et al., 2013).

Anxiety:

Anxiety, which is excessive fear and worry, is considered to be the source of several mental health issues and has its connection with compromised performance in decision-making, reduced ability to solve issues, and poor well-being overall (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Resilience:

Instead, resilience is the ability to flourish under difficult situations, pressure, or failure. It is not only the absence of mental disorder but the presence of protecting factors that enable individuals to rebound and thrive under challenges (Wagnild, 2009). To entrepreneurs, resilience is critical to sustaining motivation, remaining emotionally calm, and enjoying long-term success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). High resilience doesn't only forestall adverse outcomes of anxiety but builds outstanding leadership, critical thinking, and determination in competition (Hartmann et al., 2020).

The interplay between anxiety and resilience amongst entrepreneurs is particularly germane to today's socio-economic landscape, with uncertainty being a central descriptive characteristic of business environments (Luthans, Vogelgesang & Lester, 2006). In this instance, leadership is less characterized by organizational management and is instead characterized by promoting a healthy mind at work. The resilient leader is therefore one who personally handles stresses but leads by example and fosters a healthy and responsive organizational culture (Kuntz, Malinen & Näswall, 2017).

Significance of the Study

Entrepreneurship has come to be at the center of innovation and economic development but puts its participants through extreme psychological demands. Entrepreneurs are commonly exposed to heightened uncertainty, long working hours, and financial insecurity and consequent increased levels of anxiety and stress (Stephan, 2018). Research indicates entrepreneurs are found to have higher levels of expressed anxiety compared to those working in nonentrepreneurial activities by and large due to uncertainty and competitiveness characteristic of business environments (Uy, Foo, & Song, 2013). Anxiety here is deserving of consideration since chronic psychological distress is negative for entrepreneurial decision-making, creativity, and performance.

As well, resilience has been discovered to be a powerful psychological resource through which individuals are able to cope with and adapt successfully to stress and adversity. It is being capable of rebounding from setbacks and maintaining psychological balance when experiencing challenge (Wagnild, 2009). Studies have discovered resilience to enhance coping ability, promote effective leadership, and significantly correlate with entrepreneurial performance (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Investigating anxiety and resilience is therefore key to furthering knowledge regarding entrepreneurs' ability to cope with situations involving extreme pressure.

Organizational well-being is influenced by leadership as well. Entrepreneurs are leaders who own businesses and set the cultural and affective tone for their businesses. Those who are strong leaders can create healthier workplaces by modeling adaptive coping and fostering

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employee psychological safety (Kuntz, Malinen, & Näswall, 2017). More insight into how resilience constructs leadership among entrepreneurs is thus useful for organizational cultures promoting productivity and organizational health.

Mindfulness-based interventions are being increasingly found to be effective to reduce anxiety and enhance resilience. Research indicates mindfulness to improve emotion regulation, reduce stress, and engender enhanced job satisfaction and well-being (Hülshager et al., 2013). By applying these interventions to the entrepreneurial context itself, this work measures not only their effectivity but goes further to examine implementable techniques to enhance resilience and reduce anxiety among entrepreneurs.

This research is useful because it addresses an untapped area in the Indian entrepreneurial context, wherein cultural, social, and economic imperatives potentially increase entrepreneurial challenges. By empirically exploring anxiety and resilience levels before and after a mindfulness-based intervention among Nashik district entrepreneurs, this study has informative value regarding stimulating mental health promotion, leadership development, and entrepreneurial venture continuity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anxiety among Entrepreneurs

Stephan (2018) consolidated entrepreneurs' psychological well-being and found entrepreneurs to be more anxious and stressed compared to salaried employees due to uncertainty, financial pressure, and work overload. Similarly, Uy, Foo, and Song (2013) investigated entrepreneurs' coping and found ineffective coping to be associated with reduced psychological well-being and increased anxiety. Foo, Uy, and Baron (2009) investigated entrepreneurs' emotions and effort and found anxiety to negatively impact effort, persistence, decision-making, and venture performance. The American Psychiatric Association (2013) defined anxiety as excessive fear and worry that can impact functioning and expect entrepreneurs to reflect high anxiety before any intervention.

Resilience in Entrepreneurs

Wagnild (2009) evaluated the scale of resilience and added further emphasis to doing well with positivity and recovering from distress, and there is inherent variation among individuals regarding levels of resilience. Ayala and Manzano (2014) conducted a longitudinal study and found that entrepreneurs who proved to be resilient maintained their passion and managed disappointments with efficiency, and it contributed to their entrepreneurial success. Hartmann, Weiss, Newman, and Hoegl (2020) investigated entrepreneurial resilience and found that social resources and self-regulation cumulatively worked to enhance resilience, and it contributed to entrepreneurial outcomes being long-term.

Mindfulness and Anxiety Reduction

Kabat-Zinn (2003) initially created mindfulness-based interventions and found mindfulness exercises diminished stress and anxiety effectively. Hülshager et al. (2013) investigated mindfulness at an organizational level and noticed mindfulness reduced emotional exhaustion, enhanced emotion regulation, and raised job satisfaction. Roche et al. (2014) investigated mindfulness at a leader's level and found mindfulness exercises diminished anxiety and promoted general psychological well-being.

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Mindfulness and Resilience Development

Luthans, Vogelgesang, and Lester (2006) investigated psychological capital and found resilience can be developed and strengthened through deliberate efforts, like training exercises. Hartmann et al. (2020) found resilience is more than an individual trait and is an ability strengthened by social and psychological resources. Roche et al. (2014) demonstrated mindfulness exercises increased leaders' resilience to further improve their coping and leadership performance.

Statement of the Problem

“To study the relationship between anxiety and resilience among entrepreneurs before and after a one-month mindfulness intervention.”

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the levels of anxiety and resilience among entrepreneurs before a one-month mindfulness intervention.
2. To examine the impact of mindfulness intervention on the anxiety levels of entrepreneurs.
3. To evaluate the changes in resilience among entrepreneurs following the mindfulness intervention.
4. To analyze the relationship between anxiety and resilience in the pre-test and post-test phases.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Entrepreneurs will have higher levels of anxiety and different ranges of resilience before the one-month mindfulness session.
2. Entrepreneurs will have lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of resilience after the one-month mindfulness session.

Variables of the Study

- **Independent Variable:** Mindfulness intervention (one-week group session).
- **Dependent Variables:** Anxiety levels and resilience levels of entrepreneurs.
- **Control Variables:** Gender (male), age (30–40 years), and occupational status (entrepreneurs).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study followed a **pre-test and post-test design** with a single group. Data were collected from entrepreneurs before and after a one-month mindfulness intervention, and results were compared.

Operational Definition

- **Anxiety:** The score obtained on the Anxiety Scale developed by Dr. Kranti, indicating the level of worry and apprehension.
- **Resilience:** The score obtained on the Resilience Scale (RS-14) by Wagnild (2009), indicating the ability to adapt positively in the face of adversity.
- **Mindfulness Intervention:** A structured one-month group session focusing on awareness, breathing techniques, and stress-reduction strategies.

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Sample and Data Collection Procedure

A purposive sampling method was used to select 50 male entrepreneurs aged 30–40 years from Nashik district. Informed consent was obtained from participants, and confidentiality was maintained. Pre-test data were collected using the Anxiety Scale and RS-14. After this, a one-month group mindfulness session was conducted, followed by post-test data collection with the same tools.

Tools of the Study

- 1. Anxiety Scale by Dr. Kranti:** The Anxiety Scale developed by Dr. Kranti is a standardized psychological assessment tool designed to measure the degree of anxiety experienced by individuals. It evaluates symptoms such as restlessness, worry, tension, and physiological responses that are associated with anxiety disorders. The scale is structured in a Likert-type format, where respondents indicate the extent to which they experience certain symptoms. High scores on the scale indicate lower levels of anxiety. The scale has been widely applied in psychological and behavioral research to assess anxiety in different populations, including working professionals and students. It is considered a reliable tool for identifying variations in anxiety before and after interventions such as counselling or mindfulness practices.
- 2. Resilience Scale (RS-14) by Wagnild (2009):** The 14-item Resilience Scale (RS-14) has been developed by Wagnild (2009) from the original 25-item Resilience Scale. The 14 items are administered to tap psychological resilience as an ability to adjust adaptively to change, adversity, and stress. The scale is rated with a Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The items tap key aspects of resilience such as perseverance, self-reliance, purpose in life, equanimity, and existential aloneness. Greater ratings denote greater resilience. The RS-14 has obtained validity and reliability with various cultural backgrounds and populations like students, healthcare professionals, and entrepreneurs. Wagnild (2009) noted high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha > 0.90 and adequate construct validity to justify its use as a reliable measure of resilience. The scale has attained universal application and is present in studies to examine resilience as an antecedent factor for psychological well-being and coping behavior and to identify outcomes of adverse situations.

Statistics Treatment

Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation for descriptive statistics. Pre-test and post-test results were compared to examine changes in anxiety and resilience by using paired sample t test.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Entrepreneurs on anxiety and resilience before mindfulness session.

Table 1: Entrepreneurs on anxiety and resilience before mindfulness session.

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Anxiety	4.44	3.16	50
Resilience	73.08	10.93	50

The pre-test mean anxiety score was $M = 4.44$ ($SD = 3.16$). Since higher scores indicate lower anxiety, the relatively low mean score shows that entrepreneurs experienced high levels of anxiety prior to the mindfulness session.

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The mean resilience score was $M = 73.08$ ($SD = 10.93$). The relatively large standard deviation indicates that participants had different ranges of resilience, with some reporting higher adaptability and others lower.

Our first hypothesis stating that “Entrepreneurs will have higher levels of anxiety and different ranges of resilience before the one- month mindfulness session” is supported.

Finding supported previous research showing that entrepreneurs face heightened stress due to uncertain business conditions (Stephan, 2018; Uy, Foo, & Song, 2013).

Entrepreneurs on anxiety and resilience after mindfulness session

Table 2: Entrepreneurs on anxiety and resilience after mindfulness session

Variable	Before intervention	After intervention	Total N	t-value	p-value
Anxiety	4.44	24.16	50	27.43	< .001
Resilience	73.08	79.98	50	3.95	< .001

The mean post-test anxiety score increased significantly to $M = 24.16$ ($SD = 3.93$) from $M = 4.44$ ($SD = 3.16$) in the pre-test. Because higher scores reflect lower anxiety, this result demonstrates that anxiety levels significantly reduced following the mindfulness session, $t = 27.43$, $p < .001$.

Resilience scores also improved from $M = 73.08$ ($SD = 10.93$) to $M = 79.98$ ($SD = 6.11$). The reduction in standard deviation suggests that participants became more consistent in their resilience levels after training. The paired t-test confirmed this improvement was statistically significant, $t(49) = 3.95$, $p < .001$.

Our second hypothesis stating that “Entrepreneurs will have lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of resilience after the one- month mindfulness session” is supported.

CONCLUSION

1. Entrepreneurs indicated high levels of anxiety and varying levels of resilience before mindfulness intervention.
2. After one month from the mindfulness session, entrepreneurs reported lower levels of anxiety and enhanced levels of resilience.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to male entrepreneurs aged 30–40 years.
2. The sample size of 50 restricts generalizability.
3. Self-report tools were used, which may involve bias.
4. The absence of a control group limits causal interpretation.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Comparative studies across regions or industries should be conducted.
2. Longitudinal research is needed to examine long-term effects of mindfulness interventions.
3. Experimental designs with control groups are recommended to establish causal relationships.
4. Mixed-method studies combining quantitative scales with interviews can provide deeper insights.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Inderjeet, R.S. & Pawar, D.P. (2026). A Study on the Relationship of Anxiety and Resilience Among Entrepreneurs: Importance of Leadership Role in Fostering a Mentally Healthy Workplace. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *14*(2), 985-991. DIP:18.01.093.20261402, DOI:10.25215/1402.093