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Research Paper

# Exploring The Relationship between Resilience and Growth Mindset among Female College Students

Dhairya Sood[1]*, Dr. Nidhi Chadha[2]

## ABSTRACT

Resilience and growth mindset are widely regarded as mutually reinforcing concepts, allowing an individual to respond, adapt and effectively overcome adversities during one's lifetime. This is especially relevant in the case of young females who are subjected to constant criticism and social constraints. Forced to survive in the rigid patriarchal structure of society, constructs like resilience and growth mindset may offer insight into how young women persist in the face of academic and societal pressures. This study explores the relationship between resilience and growth mindset among female college students. A total of 102 female participants from the age range of 17-23 were taken from the colleges of North India. The scales used in this research are Carol Dweck's Growth vs. Fixed Mindset Assessment (Dweck, 2006) and The Resilience Scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993). Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a moderate, positive relationship with $r(102) = 0.349$ and p-value$<0.001$, indicating that females with greater psychological resilience also demonstrate a strong belief in self-developmental attitude. Descriptive statistics confirmed approximately normal distribution of both variables. The results have potential applicability in educational and mental health interventions targeting young women in academic settings. Further studies should expand to include male participants to determine gender variations and provide comparative analysis.

***Keywords:*** *resilience, growth mindset, female college students, educational equity, persistence*

The educational and occupational landscape in today's world has transformed into one that provides more opportunities to fail than to succeed, to fiercely compete rather than to truly excel, and to make an individual feel inferior rather than develop competency. This has led to a generalized inhibition of mental and emotional faculties in the populace. This observation becomes increasingly apparent in those sections of the population that are behaviourally and socially predisposed to decrease their intensity of effort, input, and intent toward the achievement of their goals under repeated episodes of setbacks, failures, and unmet targets. This necessitates the cultivation of psychological constructs such as resilience and growth mindset to help individuals regain control over their actions and maintain persistent efforts toward goal-directed and self-improvement processes. Interestingly enough, both resilience and growth mindset share something in common- the

[1]Post Graduate Student, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Goswami Ganesh Dutta Sanatan Dharma College, Chandigarh
*Corresponding Author

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ability to identify opportunities in obstacles and find novel solutions to unconventional problems.

**Resilience** denotes the capacity of positively facing adversity and "bouncing back" (Windle et al., 2011). It is the capacity to recover from adversity, maintain purpose, and continue to grow despite life's challenges (Wagnild & Young, 1993). It comprises five key dimensions: equanimity (a balanced perspective), perseverance (persistence despite obstacles), meaningfulness (a sense of purpose), self-reliance (belief in one's ability to solve problems), and existential aloneness (comfort in one's individuality) (Wagnild, 2009). Resilience is not a fixed trait but a dynamic process that can be cultivated over time through support, experience, and mindset and helps an individual to develop perseverance.

**Mindset** refers to an individual's underlying beliefs and assumptions about the nature of their abilities, intelligence, and potential for change. It acts as a cognitive framework that shapes how a person interprets success, failure, effort, and personal growth (Dweck, 2006). The term 'belief system' of an individual is synonymous with the concept of mindset. Two kinds of mindsets have been identified:

A. Fixed Mindset: Individuals with a fixed mindset strongly believe that their abilities and intelligence are innate and unchangeable. They view effort as meaningless if it does not lead to immediate success, often using achievements as a way to prove themselves to others rather than to grow personally. These individuals may interpret failures, even after sincere efforts, as evidence of personal inadequacy. They tend to make misattribution errors, crediting success to external luck and internalizing failure as a fixed personal flaw. This mindset often aligns with a fatalistic outlook, where change in one's psychological or physiological capacities is considered improbable or impossible.
B. Growth Mindset: In contrast, individuals with a growth mindset believe that abilities can be developed over time through consistent effort, learning, and adaptation. They see challenges, mistakes, and obstacles as opportunities for improvement rather than threats to their self-worth. These individuals are more likely to accurately attribute their successes and failures, recognizing the role of both effort and strategy. Growth mindset refers to the belief that intelligence and abilities can be developed through dedication, effort, and learning (Dweck, 2006).

Thus, by adopting one of the above stated mindset patterns, a person develops a unique kind of mentality about themselves, their abilities and opportunities available for growth. One's mentality shapes one's thoughts, actions, and personality, resulting in distinct human experiences based on whether an individual aligns with the fixed or growth mindsets. The most significant takeaway is that one can shift their perspective. (Dweck, 2006)

These traits become especially significant for female college students in India, who often navigate complex socio-cultural barriers, including academic pressure, restrictive gender norms, and expectations related to familial roles. Although recent data suggest that females now represent nearly 49% of India's higher education enrollment (Ministry of Education, 2023), this quantitative gain has not fully erased the qualitative disparities they experience. Such disparities include challenges such as lack of accessibility of higher education in rural areas, sociocultural expectations, moulding one's choices as per family responsibilities and limited representation in leadership roles and technical disciplines. These stressors make it

especially relevant to analyse the internal psychological resources like resilience and growth mindset that help female students adapt and thrive in academic environments.

While previous research has examined these constructs individually, there remains limited empirical evidence on their interrelationship, particularly in the context of young Indian women. Understanding this connection may offer insight into mental health support and intervention strategies aimed at empowering women through education. The present study aims to examine the relationship between resilience and growth mindset among female college students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Resilience and Growth Mindset*

According to Dweck and Leggett (1988), students develop implicit "theories" of intelligence that influence their motivation and behavior. Those who adopt an entity theory (fixed mindset) believe that intelligence is static and unchangeable. They often view success as validation of innate ability and failure as evidence of inadequacy, leading to withdrawal and avoidance of challenge. In contrast, those with an incremental theory (growth mindset) believe intelligence can develop with effort, viewing failure as an opportunity to learn and adapt (Dweck, 2006; Henderson & Dweck, 1990).

Blackwell et al. (2007) and Grant and Dweck (2003) found that students with a growth mindset are more likely to adopt learning goals, persist through difficulties, and demonstrate adaptive effort attribution. Aditomo (2015) further confirmed that a growth mindset can act as a buffer against demotivation during academic setbacks.

The construct of resilience has evolved from early stress-coping models (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004) and builds on psychological hardiness and adaptability (Kobasa, 1979; Rutter, 1985). It reflects a dynamic capacity to maintain or regain psychological well-being in the face of adversity. As Rutter (1985) argued, resilience includes personal, social, and environmental protective factors that interact with situational stressors.

Studies in health and education settings consistently highlight that students with higher resilience are more likely to manage academic pressure effectively, maintain motivation, and succeed academically (Calo et al., 2019; Barber et al., 2019). According to Sanju et al. (2019) and Limeri et al. (2020), growth mindset not only facilitates learning motivation but also strengthens resilience by promoting adaptive interpretation of failure. In essence, a growth mindset helps individuals view struggle as a learning process, which in turn reinforces their ability to bounce back. Thus, creating a psychological loop between the two constructs.

Murphy and Gash (2020) and Smiley et al. (2016) also demonstrated that students with a growth mindset tend to manage stress better, perform higher academically, and persevere more during failure than students with fixed beliefs. This strengthens the theoretical argument that resilience and growth mindset may be deeply interlinked. Though this relationship remains underexplored, especially in non-Western and gendered academic contexts.

***Objectives of the study***

- To examine the levels of resilience among female college students using Wagnild and Young's Resilience Scale (1993).
- To examine the levels of growth mindset among female college students using Carol Dweck's Growth vs. Fixed Mindset Assessment (2006).
- To assess the correlation between resilience and growth mindset among female college students.

***Hypothesis of the study***

- It is hypothesized that there exists a positive correlation between the two constructs. That is, female college students who exhibit greater resilience are more likely to demonstrate a growth mindset.

## METHODOLOGY

***Sample***

The sample for the present study consisted of 102 female college students, aged between 17 to 23 years, recruited from various colleges in North India through convenience sampling. The inclusion criteria specified that only currently enrolled undergraduate students identifying as female were considered. Participants who gave informed consent and completed the online questionnaire were included in the final analysis. Data was collected through an online Google Form, and all responses were anonymized to protect the participants' identities.

***Tools***

**For present study and for collection of quantitative data, two scales were used:**

- The Resilience Scale (RS) developed by Wagnild and Young (1993), is a 25-item self-report measure that assesses psychological resilience across five dimensions: equanimity, perseverance, self-reliance, meaningfulness, and existential aloneness.
- The Growth vs. Fixed Mindset Assessment, developed by Carol Dweck (2006), is an 20-item scale designed to assess the extent to which an individual believes that intelligence and ability can be developed over time.

**Scoring**

- Responses collected from The Resilience Scale (RS) were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The possible scores range from 25 to 175, with higher scores indicating higher levels of resilience. Based on Wagnild's guidelines (2009), scores below 121 reflect low resilience, scores between 121 and 145 indicate moderate resilience, and scores above 145 suggest high resilience.
- The items on Growth vs. Fixed Mindset Assessment were based on a 4 point Likert scale with options ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree.* Item numbers 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 15, 18 and 19 were reverse-scored items i.e. strongly agree=3, agree=2, disagree=1, strongly disagree=0. The possible score range was 0-60 with scores between 0 and 20 indicating strong fixed mindset, scores between 21 and 33 indicating fixed mindset with some growth ideas, scores between 34 and 44 indicating growth mindset with some fixed ideas and scores between 45 and 60 indicating strong growth mindset.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The collected data were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics, including mean, median, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, were calculated separately for resilience and growth mindset scores to examine the distribution and variability of the data. The internal consistency (reliability) of both scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. To assess the relationship between the two psychological constructs, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was calculated. Additionally, the coefficient of determination ($r^2$) and p-value were derived to assess the strength and significance of the correlation. All statistical analyses were conducted using Microsoft Excel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- In order to assess levels of resilience among female college students, the following results were derived. The mean resilience score was 134.18 with a median of 136, suggesting a central tendency in the moderate range of resilience. The standard deviation was 21.91, indicating moderate variability within the sample. Skewness was -0.564, indicating a slight negative skew i.e., more participants scored above the mean. Kurtosis was 0.008, showing that the distribution was near normal (mesokurtic). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the Resilience Scale was 0.93, indicating excellent internal consistency. (see Table 1)
- To evaluate the levels of growth mindset among female college students, the results observed were as follows. The mean growth mindset score was 37.47, and the median was 37, reflecting a growth mindset with some fixed ideas orientation among participants. The standard deviation was 6.11, suggesting moderate dispersion in responses. Skewness was 0.203, indicating a slight positive skew i.e., more participants scored just below the mean. Kurtosis was –0.479, indicating the distribution to be flatter than normal (platykurtic). The Cronbach's alpha for the Growth Mindset Questionnaire was 0.74, showing acceptable reliability. (see Table 1)

***Table 1. Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Resilience and Growth Mindset (N=102)***

| Variables | Mean | Median | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis | Cronbach's α |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Resilience** | 134.18 | 136 | 21.91 | -0.564 | 0.009 | 0.93 |
| **Growth Mindset** | 37.47 | 37 | 6.11 | 0.203 | -0.479 | 0.74 |

- To examine the correlation between resilience and growth mindset among female college students, the following results can be considered. The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was 0.349, indicating a moderate positive correlation between resilience and growth mindset. The p-value was 0.00034, which is statistically significant at $p < .001$, suggesting the correlation is not due to chance. The coefficient of determination ($r^2$) was 0.122, meaning approximately 12.2% of the variance in growth mindset scores can be explained by resilience scores. (see Table 2)

***Table 2. Correlation between Resilience and Growth Mindset (N=102)***

| Variables | r | $r^2$ | p-value | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Resilience and Growth Mindset** | 0.349 | 0.122 | 0.00034 | p<0.001 |

- Additional observations (age-wise trends) were also made. Average scores for resilience and growth mindset across different age groups were recorded and analysed (see Table 3). A pivot table analysis was also conducted to explore the variation of levels of resilience and growth mindset scores across different age groups which suggested that mean scores for both psychological constructs remained relatively stable across all age groups.

***Table 3. Average Scores for Resilience and Growth Mindset across Different Age Groups (N=102)***

| **Ages** | **17** | **18** | **19** | **20** | **21** | **22** | **23** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Average Scores for Resilience** | 128 | 149.2 | 131.54 | 123.16 | 137.5 | 140.57 | 140.75 |
| **Average Scores for Growth Mindset** | 39.67 | 39.4 | 39.35 | 36.79 | 35.78 | 37.71 | 33.5 |

- This suggests that individuals who persist in the face of adversity tend to show a strong belief in their capacity to grow, adapt and enhance their intellectual capacity. The result conversely aligns with earlier studies (e.g., Cai et al., 2019; Saputra & Suryani, 2019) that suggest a growth mindset predicts adaptive coping and psychological strength.

## CONCLUSION

The present study contributes to the field of positive psychology by evaluating the relationship between two increasingly popular psychological constructs of resilience and growth mindset. The research has demonstrated a statistically significant and meaningful positive correlation between resilience and growth mindset among female college students in India. These findings highlight the critical role of psychological strengths in promoting emotional adaptability and academic perseverance, especially for a demographic that has time and again encountered gender biasness and social obstacles. The following analogy has been observed regarding the relationship of the chosen variables- A person having faced multiple challenges throughout their life, paired with adequate social, material, and emotional resources, is able to develop a tendency to 'bounce back' from difficulties in life. Eventually, their mental faculty gets trained in perceiving such obstacles as opportunities to learn, gain more knowledge, upskill themselves and grow their abilities.

By isolating and examining these constructs within a culturally and socially relevant context, the study has been conducted, keeping in mind, the socio-cultural context for a specific group of people i.e. female college students from the ages 17 to 23. The study provides empirical evidence that can enrich intervention programs, counseling practices, and educational policy. The moderate correlation found ($r$ = 0.349) suggests that fostering resilience may be a viable pathway to enhancing growth mindset in young women navigating complex academic and societal demands. The vice-versa of which is also true. This study opens a dialogue about strengthening these internal faculties, not just for academic gain, but for holistic well-being and long-term success. Future research, especially longitudinal, diverse and intervention-based, may help translate these insights into tangible impact.

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***Conflict of Interest***
The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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