

Resilience, Self-Esteem and Loneliness Among College Students

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Abstract

The study focused on examining how resilience affects the feelings of loneliness and self-worth experienced by young adults. The study included participants in the age range of 18 to 30 from throughout India. Most of the participants are from Meghalaya in northeastern India. The sample consisted of 149 young individuals (112 females and 37 males), ages 18 to 30. The study examined the relationship between resilience, loneliness, and self-esteem. Pearson correlation coefficients showed a significant positive correlation between resilience and self-esteem, suggesting that individuals with higher self-esteem tend to exhibit higher resilience. ANOVA results showed a significant difference in resilience scores between male and female groups, suggesting gender plays a role in resilience.

Keywords: Resilience, Young Adults, College Students, Loneliness and Self-Esteem.

Introduction

For young adults, moving to college can be quite difficult even if it offers many opportunities for intellectual and personal development. College students frequently struggle with the demands of their studies, adjusting to unfamiliar social situations, and growing independence, all of which can negatively affect their mental health (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The two most important variables affecting this population's mental health are loneliness and low self-esteem.

Self-esteem, an individual's overall positive evaluation of themselves, plays a central role in psychological well-being (Morris et al., 2017). According to Robins et al. (2001), students who have high self-esteem are more likely to feel good about themselves, form wholesome connections, and handle stress well. On the other hand, low self-esteem can exacerbate emotions of vulnerability and isolation, which can result in loneliness (Crain et al., 2009).

College students frequently experience loneliness, which is the upsetting sense of social separation and lack of connection (Russell et al., 2008). Academic performance (Russell et al., 2008), mental health (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2005), and even physical health (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015) can all suffer from loneliness. Studies indicate a mutual association between loneliness and self-worth. Low self-esteem might make it difficult for a person to build deep social relationships, which can result in loneliness (Crain et al., 2009). On the other hand, loneliness can worsen low self-esteem and start a vicious cycle (Peplau & Perlman, 2015).

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2023), resilience is the dynamic process and favourable result of successfully adjusting to difficult life situations. Individuals may adapt to both internal and external challenges thanks to this adaptability, which is characterised by mental, emotional, and behavioral

flexibility. Numerous elements impact resilience, such as social support networks, coping mechanisms (how people handle stress), and cognitive evaluations (the way people see obstacles). According to research, resilience is a skill that can be developed by both individual and group interventions rather than a fixed attribute.

Resilience is the result of protective mechanisms that are present in a person, family, or community, such as resources, skills, and talents (Loh, Schutte & Thorsteinsson, 2014). When people are placed in high-risk environments, the importance of these protective attributes increases significantly. Murray and others (2010). For example, a resilient individual is more likely to demonstrate improved flexibility and tolerance to unfamiliar circumstances as well as effortlessly carry out self-control actions meant to get through trying circumstances (Loh et al., 2014).

In (2020), Lu et al. examined the prevalence of mental health problems and the variables that predicted them in a sample of 1048 Chinese freshmen in college who were based in Shanghai. 46.85% of students said they struggled with anxiety. A person who possesses resilience is able to thrive in difficult circumstances and triumph over misfortune. In the last two decades, there has been a growing emphasis on the components associated with psychological resilience following traumatic experiences.

Bonanno (2004), studied how people develop effective coping mechanisms, stay focused on goals, and persevere through difficulties. This resilience translates into positive outcomes. The capacity to withstand stress and return to a state of normal equilibrium is known as resilience. Research indicates that those who are resilient have better mental health and possess all the necessary traits to successfully face new obstacles and challenges in their lives.

A study by Arikewuyo et al. (2023), focused to see people with lower self-esteem were more likely to have negative thoughts, feelings, and assessments of their romantic relationships. The study also looked at whether relationship insecurity, relationship dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem exacerbated lead to relationship breakups. Additionally, the study demonstrates that the association between poor self-esteem and the intention to end a relationship is partially mediated by insecurity and relationship unhappiness. Finally, people with poor self-esteem could start to question the amount of love, trust, and care that their partners are showing them.

Muhammad and Jaffar's (2022) study looked at the associations between different romantic relationship kinds and self-esteem levels, as well as how these relationships affected people's pleasure in their relationships. A total of 385 engaged and committed people answered self-report questionnaires and took part in a semi-structured interview.

The findings show that relationship satisfaction was lower in those with lower levels of self-esteem. The results also showed that those with low self-esteem scored higher on romanticism—pleasant feelings resulting from an individual's emotional desire for another person—than on emophilia, which is defined as falling in love too soon and easily and is linked to rapid romantic engagement, sometimes referred to as emotional promiscuity.

Research by Orth and Robins (2015) shows a positive correlation between self-esteem and academic performance. Students with higher self-esteem tend to be more motivated and confident in their abilities, leading to potentially better grades. The social environment presents a double-edged sword. College campuses can be breeding grounds for social comparison.

Robins et al. (2002) examined and found that females, in certain situations, report lower self-esteem than males, potentially influencing their experiences of loneliness. These studies underscore the need for further exploration of this complex relationship and the importance of fostering positive self-esteem in college

students to combat loneliness. Loneliness reflects the subjective feeling of disconnectedness and not belonging and is often characterized as “a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships”

Seygin et al. (2015), studied that loneliness affects a person’s well-being to a great extent. The research-based findings showed that interpersonal problem-solving and loneliness are significant predictors of subjective well-being. One aspect of the finding shows that when there is lack of interpersonal problem-solving skill it lessens the levels of subjective well-being. It was also seen that self-confidence decreases and negativity increases. Loneliness is associated with more health problem and has been linked to an increased mortality risk. Researchers have found that interpersonal problem-solving positively correlates with well-being in terms of constructive problem-solving. Some young adults with pre-existing feelings of loneliness may turn to social media as a coping mechanism, potentially leading to a cycle of increased use and reinforced loneliness.

1.1 Objectives

1. To find out the relationship between self-esteem, loneliness, and resilience among college students.
2. To determine the gender difference in self-esteem among college students.
3. To explore gender differences in loneliness among college students.
4. To study gender differences in self-esteem among college students

1.2 Hypothesis

1. There is a significant relationship between self-esteem, loneliness, and resilience among college students.
2. There is a significant gender difference in self-esteem among college students.
3. There is no significant gender difference in loneliness among college students.
4. There is no significant gender difference in self-esteem among college students.

II. METHOD

2.1 Participants

The study's participants consist of 149 students (111 female and 43 male). The participants were selected randomly and their ages ranged from 18 to 30. Data collection took place via a self-report smartphone-based application. All respondents gave their informed consent for inclusion before participating in the study. They were all from different backgrounds, B.sc Nursing, GNM, M.sc, M.com, M.A, BA LLB, B.Tech, MBA, Polytechnic, and Higher Secondary students.

Inclusion criteria

Participants should lie between the age of 18 - 30

All gender category of gender is included

Participants from any geographical location will be considered

Exclusion criteria

Participants who are not willing the study

The participant who is under treatment for mental illness

2.2 Instruments

1. Brief Resilience Scale- There are six items in the BRS. On a 5-point Likert-type scale, from "1" = does not tell me at all to "5" = represents me very well, the respondents were asked to rate how well each statement reflected their activities and behaviour. The data were recorded prior to analysis because items 2 (I have trouble getting over stressful occurrences), 4 (It is difficult for me to snap back when

anything awful happens), and 6 (I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life) were reverse-coded. Four items make up the BRCS. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, the participants were asked to select one choice for each statement to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with each item.

2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale- The purpose of the 10-item RSE scale is to measure self-esteem. Originally the measure was designed to measure the self-esteem of high school students. However, since its development, the scale has been used with a variety of groups including adults, with norms available for many of those groups.
3. De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale- One widely used instrument for evaluating a person's level of loneliness is the De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale. It evaluates both emotional loneliness (lack of close confidantes) and social loneliness (absence of a larger social network) and is available in two versions: the 11-item original version and the shorter 6-item variant. Every item has a score ranging from 1 (yes/more or less) to 3 (no), or depending on how it is worded, vice versa. Greater loneliness is indicated by higher scores.

2.3 Procedure

Quantitative methods are the primary source of data collection, a simple random sampling technique was applied and Google forms have been adopted to serve as the tool, every participant who took part in the study was assured that their demographic details remain confidential and solely utilized for research. The Google form was sent along with the consent form and the participants were strongly encouraged to fill out the form actively and honestly. After collecting the required data, the investigator carried out scoring as per the instructions given in the manual, and then the data were put into a spreadsheet for statistical analysis, followed by the execution of the SPSS analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 The descriptive statistics

	Resilience	Loneliness	Self-Esteem
Mean	18.03	3.61	16.50
Median	18.00	4.00	16.00
Mode	18	4	15
Std.Deviation	2.826	1.597	3.836
Skewness	-.039	-3.51	.509
Kurtosis	.385	-.447	1.327

The descriptive statistics for the three variables—self-esteem, loneliness, and resilience—are compiled in the given table. With a mean of 18.03 and a standard deviation of 2.826 for resilience, the distribution is almost symmetrical and shows moderate variability. With a mean of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 1.597, loneliness has a flatter distribution with a small left skewness. Self-esteem's distribution is more peaked and significantly right-skewed, with a mean of 16.50 and a standard deviation of 3.836. These statistics shed light on each variable's distribution's shape, central tendency, and variability. So the data is normally distributed.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation of Loneliness, Self-Esteem and Resilience

Variables	Loneliness	Self-Esteem	Resilience
Loneliness	1		
Self-Esteem	-.113	1	
Resilience	-.046	.428**	1

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Based on a sample size of 149 people, the table shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between three psychological variables: resilience, self-esteem, and loneliness. Based on the results, it can be seen that there is a significant correlation between resilience and self-esteem ($r=0.428, p<0.01$). That means when self-esteem increases resilience also increases. Other variables do not have any significant correlation with other variables.

Table 3 One-way ANOVA depicting the results of resilience, self-esteem and loneliness based on gender

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Resilience	Between Groups	39.172	1	39.172	5.039**
	Within Groups	1142.721	147	7.774	
	Total	1181.893	148		
Loneliness	Between Groups	7.661	1	7.661	3.046
	Within Groups	369.761	147	2.515	
	Total	377.423	148		
Self-Esteem	Between Groups	.068	1	.068	.005
	Within Groups	2177.180	147	14.811	
	Total	2177.248	148		

The ANOVA test showed a significant difference in resilience scores ($F=5.039, p<0.01$) between male and female groups. However, there were no significant differences in self-esteem levels between the groups. The results suggest that while loneliness and self-esteem are unrelated to gender in this population, resilience can be influenced by it. The overall sum of squares for resilience is 1181.893, while self-esteem levels are 2177.248.

Table 4 Descriptive table of one-way ANOVA depicting mean differences of resilience based on gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean
Resilience	Female	112	17.73
	Male	37	18.92

The table shows a descriptive table of one-way ANOVA depicting mean differences of resilience based on gender. Females scored 17.73 for resilience and 2.907 for males, with men reporting higher resilience.

Table 5 Two-way ANOVA depicting the independent and interaction effect of loneliness and self-esteem on resilience

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Corrected Model	664.026 ^a	71	9.352	1.391
Intercept	21067.546	1	21067.546	3.13
Loneliness	10.936	6	1.823	.271
Selfesteem	268.283	19	14.120	2.099*
Loneliness * Self-Esteem	309.751	46	6.734	1.001
Total	49602.000	149		
Corrected Total	1181.893	148		

The study uses self-esteem and loneliness as independent variables to investigate the independent and interaction effects of those variables on resilience. From the result, it can be seen that there is a significant independent effect of self-esteem on resilience ($F=2.099, p<0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The study found a significant positive correlation between resilience and self-esteem, suggesting that individuals with higher self-esteem tend to exhibit higher resilience. However, loneliness did not show a significant relationship with either resilience or self-esteem. Gender also played a role in resilience, with males reporting higher resilience scores compared to females. Self-esteem levels were relatively stable across genders, but there were no significant differences in resilience scores between males and females. The independent and interaction effects of self-esteem and loneliness on resilience were also found to be significant, indicating that self-esteem is a key factor in promoting resilience, independent of loneliness. The combined effect of self-esteem and loneliness did not significantly alter resilience levels beyond their individual contributions.

According to Hoferek and Sarnowski's (2015) study on female medical students, 97-88% of them experienced loneliness. According to studies, loneliness is not the same as being alone; rather, it is felt when social interactions are both statistically and qualitatively faulty. This emotion has a big role in the development, risk factors for, or exacerbation of mental and physical illnesses.

Interestingly, gender may play a role in self-esteem, with some studies like Robins et al. (2002) found females reported lower self-esteem than males in certain situations. While these findings warrant further exploration, they highlight the multifaceted nature of self-esteem in college. The good news is that self-esteem can be nurtured. By focusing on academic strengths, building positive social connections, and developing healthy coping mechanisms, students can navigate this transitional period and emerge with a healthy sense of self-worth.

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the relationships between self-esteem, loneliness, and resilience among a sample of 149 individuals. The descriptive statistics and inferential analyses

highlight important aspects of these psychological variables, their interrelations, and the influence of gender.

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