

# NAVIGATING ADVERSITY DURING EMERGING ADULTHOOD: EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY, PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL & RESILIENCE

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Youngsters, often seen as the promise of the future, constitute the largest demographic in India. Recent research and statistical reports revealed a shocking decline in the mental health status of Indian youth, who currently face an increase in mental health crises. As per the existing data, emerging adults in India and all over the globe are vulnerable to mental health problems compared to any other age group.

**Purpose:** The present study aimed to explore the relationship and predictive pathways among Psychological Flexibility, Psychological Capital and Resilience, and to examine the mediating role of Psychological Capital in the link between Psychological Flexibility and Resilience among emerging adults.

**Methodology:** The study employed a cross-sectional correlational design and purposive sampling to recruit 149 emerging adults aged 18-24 years from a college setting. The Multidimensional Psychological Flexibility Scale, the Compound Psychological Capital Scale-12 (CPC-12), and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-10 (CD-RISC) were used to collect the data. The data were analysed using statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression, and mediation analysis (Hayes process macro).

**Results:** Findings revealed that global flexibility is positively related to PsyCap and Resilience, ( $r = 0.52, p < .01$ ) & ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ), whereas global inflexibility indicated negative correlation with both ( $r = -0.41, p < .01$ ) & ( $r = -0.38, p < .01$ ). Specifically, PsyCap was identified as a partial mediator, [ $B=0.060, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.032, 0.091]$ ] indicating that flexibility enable individuals to develop internal psychological strength which in turn promote resilience.

**Conclusion:** By integrating the theoretical formulation offered by COR and Broaden-and-Build theory, the findings provide a novel and comprehensive view of how adaptive cognitive-emotional mechanisms promote resilience during the critical developmental period. The existing body of research also validates these findings. Limitations, Implications and directions for future research were discussed.

## Keywords

Mental Health, Psychological Flexibility, Psychological Capital, Resilience

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## Introduction

Emerging adulthood is a critical developmental stage characterised by challenges, transitions and identity exploration and formation across multiple life domains. According to Arnett (2005), five features characterise emerging adulthood. The core characteristics of emerging adulthood are: (a) Identity Exploration: Individuals seek to explore and form their identity, especially in terms of love and work. (b) Instability: This indicates changes in romantic relationships, jobs and where the individual lives. (c) Self-Focus: Emerging adults are self-focused, with obligations and interest in others being low. (d) Feeling in between: The period of emerging adulthood reflects the transitioning nature, neither an adolescent nor a full-fledged adult. (e) The age of possibilities: An opportunity to transform their lives. (Sanrock, 2011). During this phase, individuals often face academic pressures as well as career uncertainties and relationship instability, which collectively heighten individuals' vulnerability to Psychopathology (Arnette, 2007). This highlights the importance of developing core psychological resources to cope with adversity and sustain well-being.

### Emerging adults in India

According to research presented by Amrut Bang (2025) at the 11th Conference on Emerging Adulthood held in the USA, 53% of Indian youth (aged 18–28) are characterized as "personality malnourished". As reported by Ahmed (2025), this term denotes a developmental deficit in at least four of seven key psychosocial domains, with significant gaps in emotional resilience, social values, and interpersonal life skills among the surveyed population (Ahamed, 2025). In addition to this, another report says that there is a 61% increase in the suicide rate among the student population over the past 10 years. (Shiraz, 2025). With the continuous rise in mental health issues, there is an urgent need to identify and strengthen protective psychological resources that can act as a buffer against mental health issues and foster sustained well-being.

One such promising framework, psychological capital (PsyCap), is a strengths-based construct. According to Luthans et al. (2007), Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is defined as an individual's positive psychological state of development characterised by hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. It represents an individual's hopefulness, resilience, confidence, and optimism (Sridevi & Srinivasan, 2012). Specifically, Hope is defined as a positive emotion often occurs in the amidst of adverse or uncertain

circumstances; resilience is the ability to bounce back from setback; The tendency to expect good things in the future is called optimism and self-efficacy represents the general belief of individuals while they exhibit their performances or behaviour (Conversano, et. al, 2010 & Schéle et al., 2021). Empirical evidence indicates that PsyCap directly predicts problem-focused coping, suggesting that individuals with higher PsyCap are more likely to adopt constructive approaches to life challenges, thereby improving their well-being (Wang & Siu, 2022).

### A Unified Framework: Psychological capital, Psychological Flexibility & Resilience

Studies have shown that the components of PsyCap are directly and significantly positively correlated with Psychological Flexibility (PF), a fundamental protective factor for mental health. It is also considered a self-regulation construct. According to Hayes et. al (2006), Psychological flexibility (PF) is defined as "the ability to be in the present moment more fully as a conscious human being, and to change or persist in behaviour when doing so serves valued ends. Levens et al. (2014) define Psychological Inflexibility (PI) as a behavioural pattern of excessive control over a person's thoughts, feelings, and emotions, with a tendency to avoid unpleasant internal experiences at the expense of more effective or valued action. A recent study by Faustino et al. (2023) found that psychological inflexibility, a core transdiagnostic variable in mental health, reinforces PF's role as a protective factor. Furthermore, it was also found that, hope is influenced by psychological inflexibility (PI) in such a way that when PI decreases, hope increases; In addition, another research states that PF predicts resilient mental health trajectories such as hope, self-efficacy and optimism, and the researchers suggested that it is vital to cultivate psychological flexibility to prevent mental health damage during potentially traumatic events (PTE) and to favour resilience trajectories. Furthermore, individuals with higher PF exhibit higher self-efficacy (Jeffords et al., 2018; Sarıçali et al., 2021; Pellerin et al., 2022).

### Need and Significance

While resilience is one component of PsyCap, its dynamic role in recovery and adaptive functioning warrants distinct attention. Despite the individual contributions of PsyCap, Psychological Flexibility & Resilience, previous studies have not examined them together within a unified framework. The universal character of these three constructs lies in their pivotal role in preventing psychopathology and maintaining well-being. The present study seeks to address this gap by

examining how these three constructs interact and influence one another. Beyond its theoretical contributions, understanding the interplay might pave the way for an integrative intervention that not only promotes well-being but also equips young individuals with the psychological resources necessary to navigate future life challenges with confidence.

## Purpose

The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship and predictive pathways among Psychological Flexibility, Psychological Capital and Resilience in emerging adults. The study also seeks to examine the mediating role of Psychological Capital in the link between Psychological Flexibility and Resilience. By conducting the research within the social context of emerging adulthood- a developmental stage marked by challenges, transitions and identity exploration and formation across multiple life domains and opportunities, the study aims toward establishing a strong theoretical foundation for developing a new toolkit which equip emerging adults not only to withstand the challenges, but also to enable them to thrive, innovate and lead meaningful life, and thereby contributing to the long-term strengthening of the society. In addition, the study aims to provide methodological and practical insights into how psychological resources can foster resilience.

### Objectives:

- To explore the relationship and mediating pathways between Psychological Flexibility, Resilience, and Psychological Capital among emerging adults
- To find out whether Psychological Flexibility predicts Psychological Capital in emerging adults.

## Methodology

### Hypotheses

- H1: Psychological flexibility will be a significant predictor of psychological capital
- H2: Psychological flexibility will be a significant predictor of Resilience
- H3: Psychological Capital will be a significant predictor of Resilience
- H4: Psychological Capital will mediate the relationship between psychological flexibility and resilience

### Research Design

The present study employed a cross-sectional correlational design, a quantitative approach. Quantitative research methods focus on objective measurements, statistical analysis, or

numerical data collection. Data are collected through various methods, such as surveys and self-report questionnaires (Creswell, 2009).

### Participants

The study used purposive sampling to recruit 149 emerging adults aged 18-24 years from a college setting. Participants include regular undergraduate and postgraduate students who are proficient in English. Individuals were excluded if they had a current diagnosis or were undergoing treatment/psychotherapy for any severe mental or physical illness or substance use disorder .

### Rationale for Participant Selection:

The selection of emerging adults (aged 18-24) is rooted in the developmental significance of this period. According to Arnett (2000), this stage is characterized by identity exploration, instability, feeling in between, and heightened psychological vulnerability. All of these make it an ideal period for examining psychological flexibility, psychological capital, and resilience. This study chose college students as they undergo uniform life transitions, particularly academic stress, career planning and social role changes, and serve as a primary group of interest in resilience and positive psychology research. To ensure internal validity of the study, English proficiency was required to ensure a clear understanding of the measurement tools, and exclusion criteria for pathology and substance use were established to ensure that the data reflect normative developmental challenges without the influence of clinical conditions.

### Measures

The study employed specific measures to assess the relationships among the variables under study. Psychological capital was assessed using the Compound Psychological Capital Scale 12 (CPC-12), developed by Timo Lorenz (2012). Resilience was assessed using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). The scale was used with appropriate copyright permissions obtained from the authors prior to data collection. Psychological flexibility was assessed using the Multidimensional Psychological Flexibility Inventory (MPFI) short form (Rolfes, Rogge, & Wilson). (Since MPFI is a single instrument, its theoretical structure is outlined into two primary distinct dimensions: Global flexibility and Global inflexibility. Therefore, for the subsequent analysis, they were treated separately.

Although flexibility, resilience, and psychological capital are related concepts, they represent distinct yet complementary aspects of

positive psychological functioning. Psychological flexibility is the process that enables the most remarkable human ability: adaptation. In contrast, resilience is the outcome of that process: the capacity to recover from setbacks. PsyCap is a broader, higher-order construct that combines several positive psychological resources—hope, efficacy, optimism and resilience into an integrated personal asset. Investigating the complex interplay among these constructs enables an in-depth understanding of how adaptive traits interact. These constructs can be explained in terms of the conservation of resources theory and the Broaden and Build theory, which emphasise how interrelated constructs build upon one another to enhance flourishing.

### Procedure

The study employed a single-phase design comprising recruitment and assessment. During the recruitment phase, potential participants would be informed about the study and invited to participate. During the screening phase, participants would be assessed for eligibility based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. During the assessment, participants would complete the measures: the Compound Psychology Capital Scale (CPC-12), the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and the short form of the Multidimensional Psychological Flexibility Inventory (MPFI).

### Data Analysis

The analysis followed a structured sequence. Initially, descriptive statistics for the study variables were computed. Subsequently, correlation analysis and simple mediation analysis were conducted.

### Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Human Ethics Committee (CARE IHEC-II). The Ref No: IHEC-II/0930/25.

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) was used in this study with authorisation from the copyright owner.

### Informed Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the study.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis

**Table 1:** Summary of the Demographic characteristics of the Sample (N= 149)

Serial Number	Demographic variable	Number and Percentage	M(SD)
1	Gender		0.47 (0.50)
	Male	70 (46.9%)	
2	Age (In years)	Female	79 (53.02%)
		18-20	97 (65.1%)
		21-24	52 (34.8%)
3	Education	UG	103 (69.12%)
		PG	46 (30.87%)

The participant characteristics, Mean and standard deviations are summarized in Table 1. The total sample consists of 149. The sample selected for the study was emerging adults. The mean age was 20.72 years (SD = 1.32; range = 18-24). The sample consists of more Females than males (n=79 [53.02%] females & n= 70 [46.9%] males). Among the sample, the majority are pursuing an undergraduate degree (n =103 (69.1%)) while comparatively a smaller proportion are enrolled in postgraduate studies (n = 46 (30.9%).

### Pearson Correlation Analysis

**Table 2:** Intercorrelations among the variables used in the study (N= 149)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Global flexibility	--			
2. Global Inflexibility	-	--		
	0.25*			
3. PsyCap	0.52*	-	--	
	*	0.41*		
4. Resilience	0.48*	-	0.55*	--
	*	0.38*	*	
		*		

Table 2 presents the relationships among psychological flexibility, psychological capital, and resilience. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that multidimensional psychological flexibility was statistically significantly associated with resilience and psychological capital. It was found that global flexibility was positively associated with Psychological Capital (PsyCap) ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Resilience ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that higher levels of psychological flexibility are related to higher levels of PsyCap and resilience. On the contrary, global inflexibility showed significant negative correlations with

PsyCap ( $r = -0.41, p < .01$ ) and resilience ( $r = -0.38, p < .01$ ), suggesting that individuals with rigid behavioural patterns or rigid adaptive styles tend to report lower levels of psychological capital and resilience. Furthermore, a strong positive correlation was observed between PsyCap and resilience ( $r = .55, p < .01$ ), highlighting the close relationship between these two psychological resources. Consistent with theory, global flexibility and global inflexibility were negatively correlated

( $r = -0.25, p < 0.01$ ), confirming their conceptual opposition.

### Regression Analyses Predicting Psychological Capital and Resilience

As a preliminary step to the mediation analysis, three separate regression analyses were conducted. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3:** Regression models predicting PsyCap and Resilience (N= 149).

Dependent Variable	Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	F
PsyCap	Global Flexibility	0.48	0.15	0.46	3.19	<.001	0.098	7.97
	Global Inflexibility	-0.31	0.13	-0.39	-2.40	<.001		
Resilience	Global Flexibility	0.45	0.16	0.44	2.83	<.001	0.077	6.06
	Global Inflexibility	-0.28	0.14	-0.36	-2.03	<.001		
Resilience	PsyCap	0.45	0.15	0.55	3.12	<.001	0.062	9.73

Note. N = 149. Values are unstandardized coefficients unless otherwise indicated. All models are significant at  $p < .001$

#### Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the extent to which global flexibility and global inflexibility predict psychological capital. The overall model was statistically significant,  $F(2, 146) = 7.97, p < .001$ , and accounted for 9.8% of the variance in PsyCap ( $R^2 = 0.98$ ).

Examination of the individual predictors revealed that global flexibility significantly and positively predicted PsyCap ( $\beta = 0.46, t = 3.19, p < .001$ ), indicating that greater flexibility is associated with higher psychological capital. On the contrary, global inflexibility emerged as a significant negative predictor ( $\beta = -0.39, t = -2.40, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that higher levels of inflexibility are associated with lower PsyCap.

#### Resilience

A second simultaneous multiple regression was conducted to assess the predictive value of global flexibility and global inflexibility on resilience. The model was statistically significant,  $F(2, 146) = 6.06, p < .001$ , accounting for 7.7% of the variance in Resilience ( $R^2 = .077$ ).

Both predictors were statistically significant. Global Flexibility was a positive predictor of resilience ( $\beta = .44, t = 2.83, p < .001$ ), while global inflexibility negatively predicted resilience ( $\beta = -.36, t = -2.03, p < .001$ ). These findings indicate that individuals with greater flexibility tend to exhibit higher resilience, whereas those with greater inflexibility tend to show lower resilience

#### Total effect of psychological capital on resilience

To establish the baseline relationship between psychological capital and Resilience for subsequent mediation analysis, a simple linear regression was conducted. The model was statistically significant,  $F(1, 147) = 9.73, p < .001$ , accounting for 6.2% of the variance in resilience ( $R^2 = .062$ ).

Psychological Capital was found to be a strong positive predictor of Resilience ( $\beta = .55, t = 3.12, p < .001$ ), indicating that individuals with higher PsyCap are more likely to demonstrate greater resilience.

#### Mediation Analysis.

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine the effect of psychological flexibility on resilience, with psychological capital (PsyCap) as the mediator (see Table 4).

#### Global flexibility and Resilience

Global flexibility demonstrated a significant positive total effect on resilience,  $B = 0.111, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.062, 0.160]$ . After accounting for PsyCap, the direct effect of global flexibility on resilience remained statistically significant,  $B = 0.072, p = 0.003, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.024, 0.120]$ . The indirect effect of global flexibility on resilience via PsyCap was also significant ( $B = 0.060, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.032, 0.091]$ ), indicating partial mediation. Specifically, global flexibility was a significant positive predictor of PsyCap ( $a1, b = 0.183, p < 0.001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.131, 0.235]$ ), and PsyCap significantly predicted resilience ( $b1, B = 0.326, p < 0.001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.290, 0.362]$ ).

**Table 4:** Mediation Model Summary table (with 95% confidence intervals) for Psychological Capital as a mediator between psychological flexibility and resilience ( $N = 149$ )

Predictor/ Path	Effect (B)	p	95% CI [LL, UL]
Global Flexibility			
→ PsyCap ( $a_1$ )	0.183	<.001	[0.131, 0.235]
PsyCap → Resilience ( $b_1$ )	0.326	<.001	[0.290, 0.362]
Total effect on Resilience	0.111	<.001	[0.062, 0.160]
Direct effect on resilience	0.072	.003	[0.024, 0.120]
Indirect effect through PsyCAP	0.060	-	[0.032, 0.091]
Global Inflexibility			
→ PsyCap ( $a_2$ )	-0.094	<.001	[-0.137, -0.051]
PsyCap → Resilience ( $b_2$ )	0.326	<.001	[0.290, 0.362]
Total effect on Resilience	-0.163	<.001	[-0.205, -0.121]
Direct effect on resilience	-0.089	<.001	[-0.129, -0.049]
Indirect effect through PsyCAP	-0.031	-	[-0.055, -0.010]

Note. Indirect effects based on 5,000 bootstrap samples. CI Confidence Interval. Mediation is significant when the 95% CI does not include zero

### Global Inflexibility and Resilience

Global inflexibility showed a significant negative total effect on resilience,  $B = -0.163$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.205, -0.121]. The direct effect of Global Inflexibility on Resilience, controlling for PsyCap, remained significant,  $B = -0.089$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.129, -0.049]. The indirect effect through PsyCap was also significant,  $B = -0.031$ , 95% CI [-0.055, -0.010], suggesting a partial mediation. Global inflexibility was a significant negative predictor of PsyCap ( $a_2$ ),  $B = -0.094$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [-0.137, -0.051], and PsyCap positively predicted Resilience ( $b_2$ ),  $B = 0.326$ ,  $P < .001$ , 95% CI [0.290, 0.362].

The present findings support the partial mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between multidimensional psychological flexibility and resilience.

## Discussion

### Summary of significant findings.

The present study aimed to explore the relationships and predictive pathways among multidimensional Psychological Flexibility, Psychological Capital, and Resilience, and to examine the mediating role of Psychological Capital in the link between multidimensional Psychological Flexibility and Resilience among emerging adults. Findings revealed that global flexibility is positively associated with PsyCap and Resilience, whereas global inflexibility is negatively associated with both. Specifically, PsyCap was identified as a partial mediator, indicating that flexibility enables individuals to develop internal psychological strengths, which, in turn, promote

resilience. These relationships were further supported by regression analysis, which showed that participants with greater psychological flexibility tend to exhibit higher levels of PsyCap and Resilience. On the contrary, those with greater psychological inflexibility reported lower levels of resilience and PsyCap. Additionally, the mediation analysis showed that PsyCap act as a mediator through which flexibility domains influence resilience. That means psychologically flexible individuals may be more efficient in employing psychological resources that enable adaptive coping and persistence in challenging situations than those with a rigid mindset.

The present results are consistent with the existing body of research. Psychological flexibility is associated with adaptive outcomes, including reduced stress, enhanced coping and better mental health across the population (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). Research by Cherry et al (2024) reported that flexibility predicts lower academic burnout and improved well-being.

Previous studies have also shown that Psychological Capital is a core predictor and mediator of positive psychological outcomes. Psychological capital has been found to mediate the relationships between mindfulness and life satisfaction among college students, and between emotional intelligence and well-being (Huang & Kou, 2025; Carmona-Halty et al., 2019). These findings validate the present results, in which Psychology Capital serves as the mediating mechanism through which flexibility promotes resilience.

Regarding resilience, the strong correlation between resilience and PsyCap in this study ( $r = .55$ ,  $p < .01$ ) is consistent with existing evidence

that PsyCap predicts resilience, positive coping, and well-being among emerging adults (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). As a whole, these findings once again establish the existing findings that psychological flexibility promotes internal psychological resources through (PsyCap), thereby facilitating resilient functioning- a central adaptive mechanism during emerging adulthood (and throughout life), when individuals face challenges related to life events and developmental transitions.

### Interpretation in light of theoretical frameworks.

The present findings can be explained within two major theoretical frameworks in Positive Psychology. Firstly, Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), states that individuals strive to acquire, protect and preserve valued resources, and when they are exposed to psychological distress, these resources are lost or endangered. Psychological resources, namely optimism, self-efficacy, and hope, are valuable because they facilitate the acquisition of additional resources. In the context of the present findings, psychological flexibility can be considered a meta-resource that facilitates individuals in managing their psychological resources efficiently, thereby promoting the cycle of resource gain. On the other hand, psychological inflexibility may hinder adaptive functioning and effective use of psychological resources, leading to their depletion.

The mediating effect of PsyCap supports this view. Flexibility appears to facilitate the development of internal psychological resources, such as optimism and hope, which are essential for resilience. This aligns with recent findings that PsyCap acts as a reservoir of psychological resources that buffer against stress and burnout (Kumyoung & Kumyoung, 2025; Malak & Quasim, 2025). PsyCap has also been found to act as a protective mechanism against stressors by fostering a sense of agency and optimism, especially in academic and occupational settings (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Therefore, psychological flexibility may be a crucial tool for emerging adults in building and sustaining internal psychological resources as they navigate identity shifts and social transitions.

Another central theoretical viewpoint that aligns with the current finding is the Broaden-and-Build theory of positive emotion (Frederickson, 2001). The theory states that positive emotions broaden individuals' cognitive-behavioral repertoires, which, over time, help individuals to build internal psychological resources. Psychological flexibility likely contributes to this process by encouraging openness and

acceptance, fostering positive emotions, and expanding cognitive abilities. This, in turn, led to the development of PsyCap, characterized by hope, self-efficacy, and optimism that support resilience. The present mediation results also support this view- flexibility found to broaden adaptive cognition and affect, thereby building PsyCap, which ultimately facilitates resilience.

Existing evidence supports these mechanisms. Research by Frederickson and Joiner (2002) showed that positive emotions generate an upward spiral of well-being and resource building. Tugade and Frederickson (2004) found that resilient individuals use positive emotions to recover from stress, thereby enhancing flexibility and resourcefulness. Also, PsyCap is said to have emerged from positive emotional and cognitive experiences that foster resilience and functional adaptability (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2017). All these studies are validating the crucial role of psychological flexibility in building and sustaining internal psychological resources.

### Theoretical and Practical Implications

The result integrates positive psychology and the theoretical conceptualization of third-wave behavioral therapy from an ACT perspective. Taken together, the study paves the way for constructing a solid foundation for advancing a primary intervention framework for the prevention of psychopathology and mental health promotion. The practical and social value of this study lies in several aspects. The results provide a proactive model for mental health prevention, highlighting the complex interplay among variables. The findings will also guide universities, workplaces, and policymakers in designing integrated training programs by underscoring the importance of incorporating adaptive psychological resources into youth development and preventive strategies.

### Strength, Limitations and Future Directions

#### Strength of the study

The present study is both timely and highly relevant as it investigates emerging adults- a population that represents the future workforce, parents and leaders. Examining and understanding the relationships and predictive pathways among psychological flexibility, psychological capital, and resilience in this age group is crucial, as their mental health and well-being will shape current and future generations. By examining the mechanistic pathways through which these variables operate, the findings provide a strong foundation for designing and

implementing effective interventions that address both prevention and treatment, thereby fostering the resilience of an entire generation.

### Limitations and Future Directions

While the present findings meaningfully contribute to the literature, the study has a few limitations:

- Participant unavailability constrained the final sample size.
- The present study used a cross-sectional design. Experimental and mixed-methods research designs can yield causal inferences and can also address the issue of relying entirely on self-report measures.
- Future works can test how moderators and contextual variables play any role in the interplay between resilience, PsyCap and Psychological flexibility. Additionally, focusing on domain-wise exploration can yield theoretically rich findings.

### Practical and Social Value

The present study is distinctive in exploring the novel, mechanistic pathway among resilience (the buffer), Psychological Capital (the reservoir), and Psychological Flexibility (the adaptive regulator) as an integrated triad of protective mechanisms for emerging adults. Using a quantitative approach to examine their interrelationships and mediating pathways, the study offers a holistic framework for understanding how young adults navigate their lives amid rapidly changing social, economic, and personal transitions. Drawing on Frederickson's Broaden-Build Theory of Positive Emotions & Conservation of Resources Theory, the present finding reveals that these variables together expand coping repertoires, build enduring psychological resources, and safeguard emerging adults as they navigate major developmental transitions.

Furthermore, the study paves the way for constructing a solid foundation for advancing a primary intervention framework for the prevention of psychopathology and mental health promotion. The practical and social value of this study lies in several aspects. The results provide a proactive model for mental health prevention, highlighting the complex interplay among variables. The findings will also guide universities, workplaces, and policymakers in designing integrated training programs by underscoring the importance of incorporating adaptive psychological resources into youth development and preventive strategies.

At its core, this research represents the first step toward establishing a strong theoretical foundation for developing a new toolkit that

equips emerging adults not only to withstand challenges but also to thrive, innovate, and lead meaningful lives, thereby contributing to the long-term strengthening of society.

### Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the relationships and predictive pathways among multidimensional Psychological Flexibility, Psychological Capital, and Resilience, and to examine the mediating role of Psychological Capital in the link between multidimensional Psychological Flexibility and Resilience among emerging adults. Findings revealed that global flexibility is positively associated with PsyCap and Resilience, whereas global inflexibility is negatively associated with both. Specifically, PsyCap was identified as a partial mediator, indicating that flexibility enables individuals to develop internal psychological strengths, which, in turn, promote resilience. By integrating the theoretical formulation offered by COR and Broaden-and-Build theory, the findings offer a novel and comprehensive view of how adaptive cognitive-emotional mechanisms promote resilience during the critical developmental period. The existing body of research also validates these findings.

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### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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