

Ego-resilience, Stress and Anxiety predicting Psychological Well-being of Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a vulnerable growing phase marked by physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes. During this phase, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to stress and anxiety — driven by fear of failure, academic overload, and peer competition — which significantly impacts their psychological well-being. This study examined how ego resilience, perceived stress, and anxiety predict the psychological well-being of adolescents. A quantitative, predictive correlational design was employed with 61 adolescents (aged 13–18) from urban private schools in Delhi, India, selected through disproportionate stratified sampling. The Perceived Stress Scale, Ego Resilience Scale, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory were administered. Ego resilience was significantly positively associated with self-acceptance ($r = .353, p = .005$). State and trait anxiety demonstrated the strongest negative associations with self-acceptance ($r = -.643$ and $r = -.591$, respectively) and environmental mastery. Perceived stress significantly and negatively predicted environmental mastery ($r = -.448$) and self-acceptance ($r = -.412$). Together, all the predictors explained 16.6% of the variance in psychological well-being ($F(4, 56) = 2.78, p = .035, R^2 = .166$). While the overall regression model significantly predicted psychological well-being, none of the individual predictors reached a statistically significant level independently, suggesting that ego resilience, perceived stress, and anxiety collectively contribute to psychological well-being rather than any single factor acting as a dominant predictor. Findings support the need for school-based anxiety management and resilience-building interventions to promote adolescent psychological well-being.

Keywords: Self-acceptance, Environmental Mastery, Mental Health, Academic Pressure, Developmental Vulnerability

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence refers to a period that usually occurs in the middle of childhood & adulthood, i.e. 12 years old to 18 years old (Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015). It is a critical & essential developmental phase that leads to the neurobiological changes in the body, which increase the vulnerability of adolescents towards the stressors present in the environment, which can also imperil the psychological well-being of the adolescents and heighten the probability for psychopathology (Chavanne et al., 2023; Wiglesworth et al., 2023).

Ego resilience refers to the individual's ability to deal with and adapt to stress, anxiety & challenges they face over the course of life. It basically reflects the inner potential and capacity of the individual to flexibly adapt and recover from the hurdles and adversities faced by them, and to balance their emotional stability under times of pressure (Block & Kremen, 1996; Tyagi & Khokkar, 2024). Ego resilience develops through a mix of early life experiences, coping styles, personality traits, and social support. Supportive caregiving in childhood, healthy ways of handling stress, and qualities like optimism and self-esteem all help individuals become more emotionally strong and adaptable. It has been observed that positive social relationships during childhood and adolescence play a crucial role in building resilience during the later years of life (Chen et al., 2021; Tyagi & Khokkar, 2024).

Stress is a widely investigated concept in the domain of developmental and health psychology. According to Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, stress does not solely emerge as an outcome of environmental events or an individual's personal characteristics but are also the result of the ongoing interaction between the individual and their environment (Lazarus and Folkman's (1984). Stress occurs when individuals perceive that the demands of a situation exceed their available coping resources, thereby posing a threat to their well-being. In this view, the experience of stress depends largely on how a person interprets and evaluates a particular situation rather than on the situation itself. Physical

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form includes insomnia or hypersomnia, fatigue, nausea, and chest pains. Mental forms include problems in memory, concentration, decision making, and loss of sense of humour. Emotional forms include anxiety, anger, frustration, and depression (Ciccarelli & White, 2025).

Anxiety can be understood as a mental state in which an individual goes through a state of extreme apprehension, worry or tension that something adverse is going to happen in the near future. When it becomes excessive and arises without any clear cause, it leads to maladaptive behaviours and the onset of anxiety disorders (Saviola et al., 2020). It includes both emotional and physical components, containing the most common symptoms, which are shortness of breath, tremors and palpitations (Impey et al., 2020). Charles Spielberger introduced a theoretical framework, which is known as the State- Trait Anxiety theory (Skapinakis, 2014). State anxiety is a temporary emotional reaction that occurs in stressful situations and is often marked by nervousness, worry, and tension. In contrast, trait anxiety is a more stable personality characteristic, where individuals are generally more likely to experience anxiety in various situations.

Psychological well-being (PWB) is a multidimensional concept that refers to an individual's optimal psychological functioning, personal growth, self-actualisation, and ability to face life's challenges (Ryff, 1989). This framework includes the six distinct yet interrelated domains/ keys – autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relations, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and positive functioning (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The hedonic perspective of well-being is deeply rooted in the philosophy of Aristippus, who taught the world that all the happiness in the world is present in hedonic moments and that the main goal or aim of life is to experience the maximum amount of pleasure in life. Meanwhile, in contrast, the Eudaimonic perspective is based upon Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which states that all the human goods that are at the highest are achievable by human action was eudaimonia. It is defined as the activity of the soul which is followed by virtue- a personal kind of excellence, which helps to achieve the best in us.

Recent research shows that people with higher ego resilience generally experience better psychological well-being and are able to gain more from a sense of community and social support (Fino et al., 2025). Studies also suggest that resilience is a fixed personality trait and a flexible trait that helps to connect healthy habits – such as exercise, good sleep, supportive friendships, and belongingness – with positive well-being outcomes (LiuB et al., 2025). On the other side, factors like academic pressure, financial difficulties, and stress caused by events such as the pandemic have been found to negatively affect psychological well-being, especially among adolescents and students (Allayannis et al., 2022; Ebrahim et al., 2022).

High anxiety has been found to be linked with lower academic involvement, reduced independence, and poorer adjustment (Sinval et al., 2025), although individuals with stronger ego resilience reported lower stress levels, less depression, and greater life satisfaction (Abd el-Halem et al., 2022; Elzohary et al., 2017; Lee & Lee, 2021). Ego resilience acts as a protective factor against the harmful effects of loneliness on anxiety (Padmanabhanunni & Pretorius, 2025). Although many studies have explored these variables separately, there is still limited research that examines resilience, stress, and both state and trait anxiety together, particularly among Indian adolescents. The present study fills this gap by exploring how these factors jointly influence the six dimensions of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff in an Indian adolescent population. From a theoretical perspective, this study draws on the idea proposed by Block and Kremen (1996) that ego resilience functions as a flexible self-regulatory capacity, enabling individuals to adapt effectively to changing circumstances and cope with challenges. This view aligns with the transactional model of stress developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which suggests that the impact of stressful situations depends largely on how individuals interpret and respond to them. Within this framework, ego resilience can be understood as a personal resource that influences the way stress and anxiety are perceived, regulated, and managed.

The most existing research has focused on Western societies and adult samples. Indian adolescents, however, as grow up in a socio-cultural environment, they are influenced by strong family interconnectedness, intense academic pressures, and evolving social and cultural expectations. These contextual factors shape the ways in which resilience operates and the extent to which it protects young people from the negative effects of stress and anxiety. Such an investigation of these relationships in an Indian adolescent population projects to offer an opportunity to broaden the relevance of existing theories as well as assess their applicability within a cultural and developmental context. Such emphasis has received comparatively limited attention in psychological research.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1 Aims

To examine how ego resilience, anxiety and stress predict the psychological well-being of adolescents

2.2 Objectives

- To analyse the relationship between ego resilience and psychological well-being in adolescents.
- To examine the association between anxiety and the psychological well-being of adolescents.

- To examine the association between stress and the psychological well-being of adolescents
- To analyse the predictive roles of ego resilience, anxiety, and stress on psychological well-being among adolescents.

2.3 Research questions

- Does ego resilience significantly predict the psychological well-being of adolescents?
- Does anxiety significantly predict the psychological well-being of adolescents?
- Does stress significantly predict the psychological well-being of adolescents?
- Do ego resilience, anxiety, and stress together significantly predict the psychological well-being of adolescents?

2.4 Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between ego-resilience and the psychological well-being of adolescents

H2: There will be a significant association between anxiety and the psychological well-being of adolescents

H3: There will be a significant association between stress and the psychological well-being of adolescents

H4: Ego-resilience, anxiety and stress will significantly predict the psychological well-being of adolescents

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current study has a Quantitative, Predictive Correlational Design as it predicts the psychological well-being of adolescents from ego resilience, anxiety and stress.

3.2 Participants

The study includes early adolescents aged 13-15 years and middle adolescents aged 15-18 years from urban private schools in Delhi, India. Participants were selected based on the following criteria. Inclusion Criteria: Early adolescents, 13-15 years old, and middle adolescents, 15-18 years old, living with at least one parent or guardian, willing to provide informed consent, parental consent is mandatory for minors. Exclusion Criteria- Individuals who do not fall into the early adolescent and middle adolescent age groups, adolescents unwilling or unable to participate or provide consent, living with neither of the Parents

3.3 Variables and tools

3.3.1 Variables

Independent Variables: Ego resilience, stress and anxiety

Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-being

3.3.2 Tools

Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB) (1989)- The internal consistency of the scale was 0.82, and the sub-scales range between 0.71 and 0.78. Ryff's Cronbach's Alpha for each were reported as 0.83, 0.86, 0.85, 0.88, 0.88 and 0.91.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) 10-item questionnaire was developed by Cohen et al. (1983). Individuals score between the range of 0 and 40, with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress. Reliability- The internal consistency of the scale, indicated by Cronbach's alpha, ranged from 0.71 to 0.91, while the test-retest reliability has been generally observed at 0.70.

The State Trait Anxiety Inventory is a 40-item questionnaire that is used to measure the state and trait anxiety of the individual separately. It was developed by Charles D. Spielberger, Richard L. Gorsuch, and Robert E. Lushene in 1964. The Trait-anxiety scale, the coefficients ranged from .65 to .86, whereas the range for the State-anxiety scale was .16 to .62.

Ego Resilience Scale by Block & Kremen (1996). It shows good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$) and strong construct validity, as confirmed in diverse samples and contexts (Block & Kremen, 1996; Alessandri et al., 2007). Each of the 14 items is rated on a 4-point scale.

3.4 Procedure

Participants were recruited through urban private schools in Delhi, India, where the school administration shared the Google Form link directly with parents via their phone numbers. Parents were briefed about the nature and purpose of the research, and informed consent was obtained from them through a dedicated consent section within the same Google Form before their adolescent child proceeded to the questionnaires. As this study was conducted, the research design, consent procedure, and data collection protocol were reviewed and approved by the Subject Research Committee in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Psychology, Keshav Mahavidyalaya, University of Delhi. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their results. After that, consent to voluntarily participate was taken, and each participant completed standardised questionnaires to assess ego resilience, anxiety – state and trait, perceived

stress and psychological well-being through Google Forms. Data were measured using the Ego Resilience Scale (PWB), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales, respectively. The participant's doubts were clarified through a call. The participant was thanked after completion of all three scales.

4. Results

The results of a study conducted on 61 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 to understand how ego resilience, perceived stress, and state-trait anxiety are connected to psychological well-being. The analysis included descriptive statistics, regression analysis and correlation analysis to explore these relationships in detail.

The descriptive statistics were calculated for all the primary variables to characterise the central tendency, variability, and distributional shape of scores in the sample. This will help to understand where the data of each sample stands on each construct.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variables	Min	Max	Range	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
ERS	22	50	28	38.75	5.50	-.321	.067
PSS	7	40	33	22.25	5.75	.277	.755
STAI-Y1	27	74	47	50.48	9.37	.167	-.017
STAI-Y2	28	75	47	52.77	8.86	.335	.759
Autonomy	11	39	28	25.67	4.77	.094	.956
EM	16	33	17	24.57	3.48	-.047	.162
PG	15	42	27	26.98	5.54	.473	-.040
PR	13	42	29	25.98	5.05	.621	1.413
PI	17	41	24	26.36	5.43	.799	.584
SA	10	41	31	24.62	5.23	-.031	1.801

Note: ERS = Ego Resilience Scale; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; STAI-Y1 = State Anxiety; STAI-Y2 = Trait Anxiety; EM = Environmental Mastery; PG = Personal Growth; PR = Positive Relations with Others; PI = Purpose in Life; SA = Self-Acceptance. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation

The results showed that participants generally had moderate to higher levels of ego resilience and moderate levels of perceived stress (Table 1). At the same time, both state and trait anxiety scores were higher than the standard STAI cut-off, indicating that many adolescents in the sample were experiencing noticeable anxiety during the study period. Among the six dimensions of psychological well-being, Personal Growth received the highest scores, whereas Environmental Mastery and Self-Acceptance were the lowest. This suggests that although adolescents may feel they are developing and learning, they are still working on building confidence, self-worth, and a sense of control over their environment.

Correlation findings revealed that ego resilience was positively related to Self-Acceptance and showed a slight positive trend with Positive Relations (but did not reach the significant threshold). However, its relationship with the remaining well-being dimensions was not significant, providing only partial support for the first hypothesis. In contrast, both state and trait anxiety were strongly and negatively associated with Self-Acceptance, Environmental Mastery, and Positive Relations (Table 2). Adolescents with higher anxiety tended to have a poorer self-image and felt less capable of managing everyday challenges. Perceived stress also showed negative links with Environmental Mastery and Self-Acceptance, further highlighting the negative association between stress and adolescent well-being.

Before conducting regression analysis, statistical assumptions such as autocorrelation and multicollinearity were checked and found to be within acceptable limits. The regression model as a whole was statistically significant and explained around 17% of the variance in overall psychological well-being (Table 3)

Ego resilience showed a positive relationship with total psychological well-being, indicating that higher levels of ego resilience were associated with better psychological well-being among adolescents. However, this relationship was not statistically significant, suggesting that ego resilience did not independently contribute to the prediction of psychological well-being when other variables were included in the model. This may be due to shared variance with other predictors,

which reduced its unique contribution. Perceived stress also did not independently predict psychological well-being at a significant level (Table 4).

Table 2: Pearson Correlation among the variables (N=61)

Variables	ERS	PSS	STAI-Y1	STAI-Y2	Auto	EM	PG	PR	PI	SA
ERS	1	-.09	-.30*	-.08	.02	.18	.07	.24	-.01	.35**
PSS	-.09	-	.60**	.73**	.20	-.44**	.06	-.25	-.02	-.41**
STAI-Y1	-.30*	.64**	-	.74**	-.02	-.41**	-.17	-.44**	.01	-.64**
STAI-Y2	-.08	.73**	.74**	-	.01	-.54**	-.09	-.34**	.06	-.59**
Auto	.02	.20	-.02	.01	-	-.02	.14	.16	.04	.23
EM	.18	-.44**	-.41**	-.54**	-.02	-	.13	.27*	.17	.41**
PG	.07	.06	-.17	-.09	.14	.13	-	.25*	.58**	.15
PR	.24	-.25	-.44**	-.34**	.16	.27*	.25*	-	.17	.27*
PI	-.01	-.02	.005	.06	.04	.17	.58**	.17	-	.08
SA	.35**	-.41**	-.64**	-.59**	.23	.41**	.15	.27*	.08	-

Note: ERS = Ego Resilience Scale; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; STAI-Y1 = State Anxiety; STAI-Y2 = Trait Anxiety; EM = Environmental Mastery; PG = Personal Growth; PR = Positive Relations; PI = Purpose in Life; SA = Self-Acceptance; Auto = Autonomy. a) * $p < .05$. b) ** $p < .01$ (all tests two-tailed).

Table 3: Model Fit Summary for Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Total Psychological Well-Being

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.407	0.166	0.106	2.78	4	56	.035

Note: R = multiple correlation coefficient; R² = coefficient of determination; Adjusted R² = adjusted coefficient of determination; F = overall model F-statistic; df1 = regression degrees of freedom; df2 = residual degrees of freedom; p = two-tailed significance of the overall model.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for the Prediction of Total Psychological Well-Being

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	β	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Ego Resilience (ERS)	0.32	0.45	0.70	.485	.092	-0.171	0.356
Perceived Stress (PSS)	0.89	0.60	1.47	.146	.268	-0.097	0.633
State Anxiety (STAI-Y1)	-0.58	0.40	-1.44	.155	-.283	-0.678	0.111
Trait Anxiety (STAI-Y2)	-0.59	0.47	-1.23	.221	-.274	-0.717	0.169

Note: B = unstandardised regression coefficient; SE = standard error of B; t = t-statistic for the individual predictor; p = two-tailed significance of the individual predictor; β = standardised regression coefficient (beta); 95% CI = 95% confidence interval for the unstandardised coefficient.

Although the analysis indicated an unexpected positive relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being, this finding may be explained by the strong associations between perceived stress and both state anxiety and trait anxiety. Due to a substantial amount of variance, the independent effect of perceived stress becomes difficult to distinguish within the regression model. State anxiety demonstrated a negative relationship with psychological well-

being, indicating that higher levels of state anxiety were associated with lower psychological well-being. However, this effect was not statistically significant, suggesting that state anxiety did not independently contribute to the prediction of psychological well-being. Similar to ego resilience, its unique effect may have been reduced because of overlap with the other predictors included in the model. Likewise, trait anxiety showed a negative association with psychological well-being, indicating that increases in trait anxiety were related to decreases in psychological well-being. However, this relationship was also not statistically significant, suggesting that trait anxiety did not independently predict psychological well-being. The shared variance between trait anxiety and the other predictors may have limited its unique contribution to the model.

Though the individual predictors have shown the non-significant effects, the overall regression model has been found to be statistically significant which suggests that the predictors collectively explained a meaningful proportion of the variance in adolescent psychological well-being (Table 4.3). Thus, ego resilience, perceived stress, state anxiety, and trait anxiety jointly contribute to understanding adolescent well-being. These findings collectively suggest that adolescent psychological well-being is not influenced by any single variable acting in isolation rather is shaped by the combined influence of several psychological factors.

5. Discussion

The present study aims to predict the psychological well-being of adolescents from their ego resilience, anxiety and stress. For this purpose, a total of 61 students (31 males, 30 females) were recruited based on their age, ranging from 13 years old to 18 years old. The first hypothesis was that there would be a significant relationship between ego-resilience and the psychological well-being of adolescents, and it was partially supported, based on the Pearson correlational analyses. Self-acceptance was the dimension of psychological well-being that had a statistically significant relationship with ego resilience. The significant positive relationship found between ego resilience and self-acceptance is theoretically coherent and resonates with the existing research. Fino et al. (2025) found that participants with high ego-resilience personality profiles scored significantly higher on measures of individual functioning and well-being as compared to individuals with lower resilience, and community identification positively influenced social support and well-being, with this relationship being much stronger among highly ego-resilient individuals. These findings are relevant to the present study, where ego resilience in adolescents was also associated with well-being, though in a more specific rather than overall manner.

The second hypothesis was that there would be a significant association between anxiety and the psychological well-being of adolescents, and it was retained, which indicates that both state anxiety (STAI-Y1) and trait anxiety (STAI-Y2) showed multiple significant negative correlations with psychological well-being dimensions. Research by Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2025) found that ego resilience significantly and negatively predicted trait anxiety, and moreover, that ego resilience played a moderating role between the relationship of loneliness and anxiety, such that higher ego resilience attenuated the anxiety-amplifying effects of isolation. In the current study, ego resilience was also significantly and negatively correlated with state anxiety, which mirrors the findings of Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2025).

The third hypothesis states that there would be a significant association between stress and the psychological well-being of adolescents, which indicates that perceived stress has significant negative correlations with Environmental Mastery and Self-Acceptance, but it was unable to reach statistically significant levels in its relationship with Autonomy, Personal Growth, Positive Relations, or Purpose in Life. Research by Barbayannis et al. (2022) found a significant negative correlation between academic stress and mental well-being. Adolescents experienced significance of the stress and psychological well-being relationship is parallel across both studies, strengthening confidence in the robustness of this finding across different samples and measurement approaches.

The fourth hypothesis states that ego- resilience, anxiety and stress would significantly predict the psychological well-being of adolescents, and it was retained, which indicates that the psychological well-being of adolescents is determined by the interplay of ego resilience, anxiety and stress. Research conducted by Sharif Nia et al. (2021) found that resilience was a significant negative predictor of both state and trait anxiety, and that higher anxiety was associated with poorer psychological outcomes. This study is relevant to the current study findings as it explains that well-being is influenced by resilience and anxiety acting as opposing predictive forces.

5.1 Limitations and Future Suggestions

This study offers valuable insights into adolescent well-being, but it has some limitations. The sample size was small, which limits the ability to generalise findings or identify cause-and-effect relationships. Relying only on self-report measures may have affected the accuracy of responses. In addition, as this is a correlational study, causal inferences cannot be drawn from the findings; the observed associations may be influenced by unmeasured third variables, and

directionality cannot be established. Future research should use larger samples, follow adolescents over time, and explore factors like social support that may influence the relationship between resilience, stress, anxiety, and well-being.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined ego resilience, perceived stress, and state-trait anxiety and their relationship to the psychological well-being of adolescents. The findings suggested that adolescents with higher ego resilience tend to have better self-acceptance. However, statistically non-significant trend observed for positive relations with others. In contrast, higher levels of stress and anxiety were linked with lower well-being, particularly in areas such as self-confidence, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others. Further, psychological well-being is not influenced by any particular individual factors but is a composite outcome of resilience, stress, and anxiety working together. In addition, the results suggested that different dimensions of well-being are affected differently, emphasising the need of understanding adolescent mental health in a multidimensional way.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There is no financial/commercial conflicts of interest for conducting this research.

Ethical Declarations

All data used in this study was obtained and processed according to ethical and legal guidelines and the data collection was started after getting approval from Subject Research Committee of the Department of Psychology, Keshav Mahavidyalaya, University of Delhi.

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