



## Resilience in Adolescents and Sustainability

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### ABSTRACT

Resilience in adolescents plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability at both individual and societal levels. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid biological, emotional, and social changes, during which young individuals face increasing academic, social and environmental challenges. Resilience enables adolescents to adapt positively to stress, adversity, and uncertainty, thereby supporting their long-term psychological well-being and responsible decision-making. Sustainable development requires individuals who can cope with change, think critically, and contribute constructively to their communities. Resilient adolescents are more likely to demonstrate pro-social behaviours, emotional regulation, and a sense of responsibility toward social and environmental sustainability. This study highlights the interconnectedness of adolescent resilience and sustainability, emphasizing the need for supportive family environments, educational institutions, and community-based interventions. Strengthening resilience during adolescence not only enhances mental health and academic outcomes but also fosters sustainable attitudes and behaviours essential for building a resilient and sustainable future society. The study aims to analyze the relationship between resilience and sustainable attitudes, and to identify the significance of supportive environments such as family, school, and community in strengthening resilience among adolescents.

It can be concluded that adolescents with higher levels of resilience demonstrate better emotional regulation, effective coping strategies, and greater awareness of social and environmental responsibility. Resilient adolescents show more positive engagement with academic and social challenges and exhibit behaviours aligned with sustainable development goals, such as cooperation, empathy, and long-term thinking. The results suggest that resilience serves as a protective and promotive factor, linking adolescent mental health with sustainability outcomes.

*Keywords:* Adolescents, Resilience, Sustainability, Psychological Well-Being, Coping Skills, Positive Adaptation, Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the transitional phase of physical and psychological development between childhood and adulthood, encompassing the ages of approximately 10 to 19 years, though some sources define it as 10 to 24 years.

### Adolescence as a Critical Developmental Stage

Adolescence is a critical period where emotional intelligence (EI) and resilience are vital for developing good mental health by helping adolescents cope with stress, manage emotions, and build healthy relationships, which protects against issues like anxiety and depression. High EI and resilience are linked to positive well-being, while low levels of these traits increase the risk of developing mental health problems during this sensitive life stage. This stage is characterized by rapid and significant biological, emotional, and social changes, which together shape an individual's personality, identity, and overall well-being.

Biological Changes during adolescence include physical growth spurts, hormonal changes, and sexual maturation. These changes lead to the development of secondary sexual characteristics and increased awareness of one's body. The brain also continues to develop, particularly areas related to decision-making, impulse control, and emotional regulation, which influences adolescent behaviour. However, studies on neurodevelopment in adolescence indicate ways and strategies to manage adolescent heightened emotionality in productive ways (Crone & Dahl, 2012).

Emotional changes are prominent in this stage. Adolescents experience heightened emotions, mood swings, and increased sensitivity to stress and peer feedback. They begin to explore their identity, values, and beliefs, often questioning authority and seeking independence. Developing self-esteem and emotional regulation skills is a key developmental task during this period.

Social Changes involve shifting relationships with family, peers, and society. Peer influence becomes stronger, and adolescents seek acceptance and belonging within social groups. Relationships with

parents may change as adolescents strive for autonomy, while social expectations and roles become more complex.

Parallel to the growing focus on resilience, sustainability has emerged as a global priority. While sustainability was initially centred on environmental protection and resource conservation, it has increasingly been recognized as a holistic concept that includes social well-being, mental health, and the development of human capacities. Gronhoj, A., and Thogersen, J. (2012) showed that adolescence is less likely to behave sustainably when influential individuals, such as parents or peers, do not demonstrate or support such behaviour. Both descriptive norms (what others do) and injunctive norms (what others approve of) strongly affect adolescents' actions.

Sustainable development requires individuals who can cope with change, think long-term, demonstrate responsibility, and contribute constructively to society. Adolescents, as future citizens and leaders, play a critical role in achieving sustainability goals. Integrating resilience with sustainability provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how adolescents can develop the psychological strengths necessary for sustainable personal and societal development.

### Conceptual Framework of Resilience in Adolescence

Resilience plays a vital role in helping adolescents cope effectively with adversity, stress, and life challenges. Fenwick, Dahlberg & Thompson (2018), Resilience and well-being are necessary for ending and decreasing mental health problems in children. Trained children with coping strategies and defensive behaviour help them to respond strongly to life challenges and adversity. Resilience enhances mental health, which allows academic and social success. There are five internet portals for the database: The Cochrane Library, PsycINFO, Web of Science, Medline, PubMed, and Embase.

It refers to the ability to adapt positively, recover from setbacks, and maintain psychological well-being despite difficult circumstances. When faced with stress or adversity, resilient adolescents are better able to manage their emotions, think realistically, and find constructive ways to deal with problems rather than feeling overwhelmed or helpless. Mello (2016), explored how negative childhood experiences, difficulties in college, and social support are connected to resilience in students. The finding reveals that college hassles and social support positively predict resilience and mental health. This research also suggests that adverse childhood experiences do not predict resilience and mental health.

Resilience helps reduce the negative impact of stress by promoting emotional regulation, optimism, and a sense of control over one's life.

Moreover, resilience supports adolescents in learning from challenges and using difficult experiences as opportunities for personal growth. It encourages perseverance, problem-solving skills, and flexibility in thinking, which are essential for handling academic, social, and personal challenges. Though resilience, individuals are more likely to seek social support, maintain hope, and stay motivated during tough times. Overall, resilience acts as a protective factor that strengthens mental health, enhances coping strategies, and enables individuals to face life's challenges with confidence and inner strength. Chamuah (2019), conducted a study to discover the role that learned optimism, resilience, and self-esteem play in the minds of college students. Based on the findings, it was suggested that resilience, learned optimism, and self-esteem are the protective factors.

Protective factors play a central role in the development of resilience. Individual factors include positive self-concept, motivation, coping skills, and emotional intelligence. Environmental factors encompass supportive family relationships, positive school climate, peer acceptance, and access to community resources. The interaction between risk factors and protective factors determines the levels of resilience exhibited by adolescents. Theoretically, resilience serves both a protective function by buffering the effects of stress and a promotive function by enhancing positive outcomes such as well-being, academic engagement, and a social competence. Vinayak and Judge (2018), the purpose of the study was to identify a predictor of psychological well-being. On the bases of findings, in the case of girls, resilience and empathy were both the predictors, but in boys, only resilience was the predictor of psychological well-being. There was no difference in psychological well-being, but girls were more resilient and empathic than boys.

Enhancing resilience among adolescence can help to prevent mental health problems such as conduct disorders, anxiety, depression and eating disorders as well as other risk behaviours including those that relate to sexual behaviour, substance abuse, and violent behaviour. Health workers need to have the competencies to relate to young people. Venta, Bailey, Muoz, Godinez, Colin, Arreola, Abate, Camins, Rivas, and Lawlace (2018), the purpose was to assess the proactive factors like peer support, parental attachment, and school engagement. Results revealed that school engagement had enhanced the resilience and mental health of youth beyond parental attachment. Overall, findings

demonstrated that school engagement may have a positive effect on immigrant youth beyond family support.

Resilience is defined as “the happy knack of being able to ‘Bungee jump’ through the pitfalls of life. Even when hardship and adversity arise, it is as if the person has an elasticized rope around them that helps them to rebound when things get low and to maintain a sense of who they are as a person.”

### Understanding Sustainability from a Psychological Perspective

Sustainability is commonly defined as development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. While environmental sustainability remains a core component, contemporary discourse emphasizes the psychological and social dimensions of sustainability. Folke (2010), explain that resilience thinking includes adaptive governance, ecosystem management, and the study of social-ecological systems. In the context of climate change, resilience is especially important because it helps deal with unpredictable environmental and socio-economic challenges. These challenges require flexible and strong adaptive strategies. Adaptive governance means having the ability to change policies and management systems using new information and changing situations, so that resilient systems can be developed to handle change effectively.

Psychological sustainability refers to the maintenance of mental health, emotional balance, and adaptive functioning over time.

From a psychological perspective, sustainability involves the capacity to manage stress without depleting personal resources, maintain meaningful relationships, and contribute positively to society. Adolescents who develop sustainable psychological patterns are better equipped to cope with life transitions, occupational challenges, and social responsibilities in adulthood.

### Theoretical Perspective Linking Resilience and Sustainability

Several psychological theories provide a framework for understanding the relationship between resilience and sustainability. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory emphasizes the interaction between individuals and multiple environmental systems, including family, school, community and society. According to this theory, resilience develops through supportive interactions across these systems, enabling

adolescents to adapt to changing environmental demands. Sustainable development similarly depends on the balance and stability of interconnected systems. Van der Werff, E., and Steg, L. (2016) identified several psychological barriers that hinder adolescents' sustainable behaviour. One major line of research highlights the role of cognitive and normative processes, drawing on frameworks such as the theory of planned behaviour, the value-belief-norm theory, and related models. This study emphasizes how personal values, identity development, beliefs, and social norms influence- and often restrict-adolescents' engagement in sustainable actions.

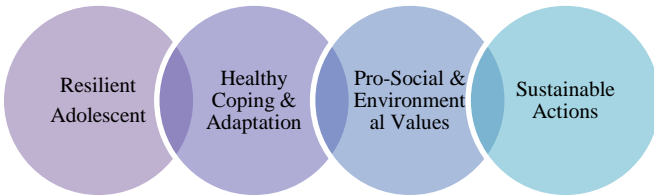


Figure 1: The Pathway from Resilience to Sustainability  
Source: Author Compiled

Positive psychology further strengthens the link between resilience and sustainability by focusing on strengths, virtues, and optimal functioning. Olsson, D., and Gericke, N. (2016) one might expect adolescence to be actively committed to sustainability in their everyday lives. Research indicates that adolescence, particularly those between the ages of 14 and 18, are less likely than children and adults to hold strong environmental values and attitudes, feel connected to nature, or demonstrate awareness of environmental sustainability.

Constructs such as optimism, hope, meaning, and well-being contribute to both resilience and sustainable living. Adolescents who develop these strengths are more likely to engage in pro-social behaviours, demonstrate environmental and social responsibility, and maintain psychological well-being. Fernandez (2018), evaluates the link between resilience, academic achievement, and psychological well-being. The study used structural models to examine the effects of RS and psychological well-being on perceived performance and school engagement. Finally, the result strongly predicts that there is a requirement to promote RS and psychological well-being to increase academic achievement.

Developmental psychopathology also offers insights into how resilience mitigates risk and promotes adaptive outcomes across developmental

stages. From this perspective, resilience supports sustainability by reducing vulnerability to mental health problems and enhancing adaptive pathways throughout adolescence and adulthood.

### Role of Family, School, and Community

Family is the primary context for adolescent development and plays a critical role in fostering resilience. Warm, supportive, and consistent parenting practices contribute to emotional security, self-esteem, and adaptive coping skills. Families that encourage open communication and autonomy support resilience and sustainable psychological development.

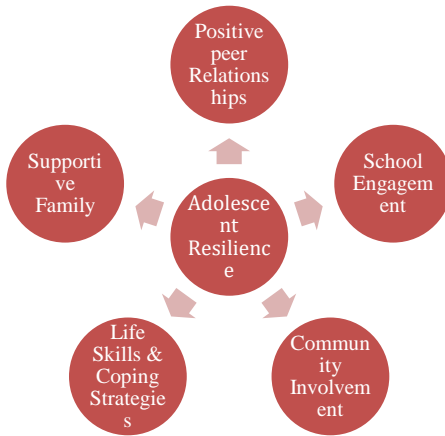


Figure 2: Autonomy support & sustainable psychological development Connectivity  
Source: Author Compiled

Schools serve as important socializing institutions where adolescents acquire academic skills, social competence, and life skills. A positive school climate, supportive teacher-student relationships, and opportunities for participation enhance resilience. Schools that integrate social-emotional learning and life skills education contribute to both resilience and sustainability.

Community environments provide adolescents with opportunities for social engagement, leadership, and civic participation. Community support systems, extracurricular activities, and peer networks reinforce resilience and encourage socially responsible behaviour. Together, family, school, and community systems create a supportive ecological framework for sustainable adolescent development. Balunde, A.,

Jovarauskaite, L., and Poskus, M. (2020) suggest that adolescents' limited sustainable behaviour may stem from underdeveloped value systems. When adolescents place less importance on nature and environmental protection, they are less likely to form an environmental self-identity or feel a sense of responsibility to protect the environment. These factors collectively act as barriers to adolescents' sustainable engagement.

## 2. IMPLICATIONS & FINDINGS

The theoretical analysis suggests that resilience functions as a critical link between adolescent mental health and sustainability. Resilient adolescents demonstrate better emotional regulation, effective coping strategies, optimism, and social responsibility. These qualities contribute to sustainable personal development, positive social relationships, and long-term well-being. Integrating resilience-building approaches within educational and community settings can promote sustainable attitudes and behaviours among adolescents.

## 3. DISCUSSION

The conceptualization of resilience in adolescents highlighted its dynamic and developmental nature, emphasizing its role in emotional regulation, coping skills, and positive adaptation. Sustainability was discussed as a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological well-being, social responsibility, and long-term development. The theoretical relationship between resilience and sustainability revealed that resilient adolescents are more likely to demonstrate pro-social behaviour, responsible decision-making, and sustainable attitudes. Liebenberg & Scherman (2021) considered the role of community resilience important in achieving the Sustainable development goals. Additionally, the discussion emphasized the crucial role of family, school, and community systems in fostering resilience, thereby supporting sustainable development during adolescence. This discussion collectively reinforces the importance of resilience as a foundational resource for achieving sustainability at both individual and societal levels.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Resilience in adolescents is a vital psychological resource that supports sustainability at both individual and societal levels. By enabling adolescents to cope effectively with adversity, adapt to change, and engage responsibly with their environments, resilience contributes to sustainable mental health and social development. This theoretical paper underscores the importance of integrating resilience with sustainability frameworks and highlights the need for preventive and promotive interventions during adolescence. Strengthening resilience through supportive family environments, educational initiatives, and community programs can help cultivate a resilient and sustainability-oriented generation capable of contributing to a healthier and more balanced future society.

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