



p-ISSN : 2520-0348 | e-ISSN : 2616-793X

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gssr  
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gssr/.2024(IX)  
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX.IV)

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gssr  
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gssr/.2024(IX)  
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX.I)

# GSSR

**GLOBAL SOCIAL SCIENCES REVIEW**  
HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

**VOL. IX, ISSUE IV, FALL (DECEMBER-2024)**

### Article Title

## Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students

### Global Social Sciences Review

p-ISSN: 2520-0348 e-ISSN: 2616-793x

DOI(journal):10.31703/gssr

Volume: IX (2024)

DOI (volume):10.31703/gssr.2024(IX)

Issue: IV Fall (December 2024)

DOI(Issue):10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV)

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Volume: IX (2024)

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/Current-issue>

Issue: IV-Fall (June-2024)

<https://www.gssrjournal.com/issue/9/4/2024>

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### Abstract

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**Keywords:** Aggressive Behavior, Teachers' Professionalism, University Students' Resilience

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Pages: 169-178

DOI:10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).17

DOI link:[https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024\(IX-IV\).17](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).17)

Article link: <http://www.gssrjournal.com/article/A-b-c>

Full-text Link: <https://gssrjournal.com/fulltext/>

Pdf link: <https://www.gssrjournal.com/jadmin/Author/31rv1o1A2.pdf>

Citing this Article

Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students							
17	Author	Muhammad Shokat Zaman Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal Khalid Saleem		DOI	10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).17		
Pages	169-178	Year	2024	Volume	IX	Issue	IV
Referencing & Citing Styles	APA 7 <sup>th</sup>	Zaman, M. S., Iqbal, M. N., & Saleem, K. (2024). Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students. <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX(IV), 169-178. <a href="https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).17">https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).17</a>					
	CHICAGO	Zaman, Muhammad Shokat, Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal, and Khalid Saleem. 2024. "Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> IX (IV):169-178. doi: 10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).17.					
	HARVARD	ZAMAN, M. S., IQBAL, M. N. & SALEEM, K. 2024. Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students. <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX, 169-178.					
	MHRA	Zaman, Muhammad Shokat, Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal, and Khalid Saleem. 2024. 'Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students', <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX: 169-78.					
	MLA	Zaman, Muhammad Shokat, Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal, and Khalid Saleem. "Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> IX.IV (2024): 169-78. Print.					
	OXFORD	Zaman, Muhammad Shokat, Iqbal, Muhammad Nadeem, and Saleem, Khalid (2024), 'Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students', <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> , IX (IV), 169-78.					
	TURABIAN	Zaman, Muhammad Shokat, Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal, and Khalid Saleem. "Examining the Role of Teachers' Professionalism in Mitigating Aggressive Behavior among University-Level Resilient Students." <i>Global Social Sciences Review</i> IX, no. IV (2024): 169-78. <a href="https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).17">https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-IV).17</a> .					



## Global Social Sciences Review

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DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr>



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### Abstract

The study focused on investigating the role of teachers' professionalism in mitigating aggressive behavior among university-level resilient students. The quantitative survey design was followed to conduct this study. The study sample consisted of 237 students with MPhil and PhD degrees (Edu). Three tools (The Brief Resilience Scale, the Aggression Questionnaire, and the Teachers Professionalism Scale) were used in this quantitative study to collect data. Tools were converted to Google Forms and disseminated for data collection. Data were analyzed by utilizing descriptive (percentage, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, and Hays Process macro mediation analysis model-4). Results revealed that university students were normally resilient and, there was a significant moderating role of the resilience of students on the relationship between teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior of students. The study indicates that university teachers necessitate more interventions to enhance the resilience of graduate students and decrease the level of aggression.

**Keywords:** [Aggressive Behavior](#), [Teachers' Professionalism](#), [University Students' Resilience](#)

### Introduction

Over the past three decades, the link between resilience and education has been an active area of study in the social sciences. Several student

population-based studies have scrutinized the role of teachers and specific experiences in building resilience and enabling learners to cope with adversity. The following potential variables may



shed some light on how learners can grow more resilient: children's happiness, the classroom environment, and the direct interaction between teachers and learners. An emerging body of research on the growth of positive coping strategies following major adversity shows that children and adolescents who experience adversity, trauma, and disaster, in particular, are more resilient (Serrano et al., 2021).

Many definitions of resilience exist; they are all essentially the same. Resilience, also known as coping, refers to the ability to function effectively following significant adversities in one's life, such as bereavement, divorce, or disability (Kaplan et al., 1996). "Resilience" for an individual is his or her ability to maintain high productivity levels and avert or minimize the negative effects of high-risk situations, stress, or trauma (Herrman et al., 2011). Masten (2012) defines resilience as a system's ability to respond positively to stressors and threats that aim to undermine its functionality and growth.

Aggression may arise from a desire to inflict harm on oneself or others. Negative behaviors include verbal aggression, coercion, intimidation, and destructive management methods, all of which are capable of damaging the mental state of a person. One of the observable signs of the use of violence is the social rejection of other people. Deviation from the norm was easily predicted by norm orientation, perceived self and other responsibility, and an overall aggressive attitude towards the self and others. The analysis of data trends reveals that these kids are obedient individuals who use an external mode of regulating anger and rage. Their psychological well-being hinges on their ability to take control of their lives and establish an internal mode of regulating anger and rage (Myburgh et al., 2020).

Bukhari et al. (2017) measured the level of aggression exhibited by university students in Islamabad. This specific research revealed surprisingly high levels of aggression among both male and female university students. The study also revealed that male university students exhibited higher levels of aggression compared to their female counterparts. They claimed that male students showed more anger and physical aggression, and female students showed more hostility and verbal aggression.

Teachers' behavior and conduct encompass their self-behavior, the application of their professional knowledge and skills, and the reasons they are considered professionals. When one's professionalism increases, he or she receives an increased salary. When teachers dedicate much of their time and energy to enhancing their teaching practice, they expect some encouragement to push on. If this is the case, they may not even consider enhancing their certifications to improve the outcomes for their pupils. However, numerous studies have demonstrated that professionalism and professionalization are not synonymous terms. One country's education policies may differ from those of another, and the evolution of these policies may also diverge. Put differently, the issue of teachers' professionalism has now escalated to a national crisis. Legally provided training, mandatory courses, and educational workshops enable teachers to enhance their professional credentials. Besides, educational policies require teachers to maintain and renew their academic qualifications to respond to their learners' increasing education needs (Wardoyo & Herdiani, 2017).

Resilience is the capacity to overcome adversity. The adverse situation produces stress and aggression for students. Teachers guide the students to tackle the adverse situation. Upon reviewing the available literature, the researcher discovered numerous studies describing resilience, aggressive behavior, and teachers' professionalism across various contexts and levels. Rare studies have explored the phenomenon of the role of teachers' professionalism in mitigating aggressive behavior among university-level resilient students, both globally and in Pakistan. As a result, it is critical to investigate the role of teachers' professionalism in mitigating aggressive behavior among university-level resilient students.

### **Purpose Statement**

The holistic development of students is the responsibility of teachers at the university level. It needs a high level of professionalism among teachers. Previous research indicated to examination of the role of teachers in the development of students in many aspects but there was a rare study that focused on investigating the role of teachers' professionalism in mitigating

aggressive behavior among university-level resilient students. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine the role of teachers' professionalism in mitigating aggressive behavior among university-level resilient students.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The major objectives of the study were:

1. To identify the level of teachers' professionalism, aggression among university students, and resilience of university students.
2. To analyze the relationship between university teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior.
3. To analyze the mediating role of university students' resilience on the relationship between teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of teachers' professionalism at the university level?
2. What is the level of aggression among university students?
3. What is the level of resilience of university students?
4. Is there any relationship between university teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior?
5. Is there any mediating role of university students' resilience on the relationship between teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior?

### **Delimitation of Study**

The study was delimited only to the students of MPhil/PhD of the departments of education from public sector universities of Punjab.

### **Literature Review**

Researchers conducted a study among students in public universities to evaluate their perceptions of academic tenacity and institutional sustainability. This approach enables scholars to predict the future academic achievements of students using decision trees and linear discriminant analysis. The research study focuses on the analysis of qualitative

data, leading to a thematic analysis of the data. The study proved that students are capable of doing well academically irrespective of the amount of stress they encounter. The study's results show a correlation between consistent learning for students and the dependability of public universities (Sohil et al., [2019](#)).

In another study, the authors examined the relationship between academic resilience, academic self-concept, and academic achievement. Academic resilience, academic achievement, and academic self-concept show a positive and statistically significant relationship between them, as supported by the correlation coefficient. The results of the linear regression analysis of academic resilience and academic self-concept show good reliability with respect to academic accomplishment. When analyzing the outcomes of the independent t-test, the authors conclude there are no statistically significant differences between males and females in terms of academic resilience or achievement. An extensive evaluation of the research variables suggests conducting an equivalent study with a group of college or university students (Fatima & Nadeem, [2022](#)).

A similar study established that social support—perceived support, received support, and support seeking—mediates the indirect association between resilience and prosocial behavior. Moreover, the results of the moderation analyses suggested that support use had a moderating effect on the stated relationship. Furthermore, it could serve as a buffering factor for resilience in relation to propositive behaviors within high-stress environments (Xue et al., [2022](#)).

The results show that resilience protects adolescents' social well-being from the detrimental impact of psychological abuse. Later studies have demonstrated that the level of positive emotions influences the relationship between psychological abuse, on the one hand, and the overall psychological resilience and social processes on the other. Furthermore, they moderated the effects of resilience on societal welfare. The research findings have presented the effects of psychological abuse on the emotional aspect of a person. The study's findings have practical-empirical and theoretical-practical implications for developing resilience,

regulating positive effects, and contributing to social well-being (Arslan, 2021).

People with resilience help them navigate through challenges because they are able to leverage their strengths and resources. Resisting workplace stress is crucial for teachers to facilitate outstanding-quality teaching and learning in their workplace. Facilities in the education sector incur significant energy costs due to factors such as students' willingness to learn and their need for cognitive, social, and emotional engagement. It is important to build professional self-sufficiency by energizing and overcoming difficulties because it correlates with the quality of the teaching and learning process (Li, 2022).

### Research Design

The study focused on investigating the role of teachers' professionalism in mitigating aggressive behavior among university-level resilient students. The nature of the study was descriptive. Therefore quantitative descriptive survey design was followed to conduct the study.

### Population

The total number of university students of the Department of Education at MPhil (Session 2023-2025) and PhD level (Session 2022-2025) is considered as the population of the study. Only those universities are included in the population that have a department of Education and have MPhil and PhD classes. There were 556 students of MPhil (193 male and 363 female) and 153 students of the PhD (56 male and 97 female) included in the study. The total population of the study was 709 MPhil (Edu) and PhD (Edu) Students.

### Sample of the Study

The sample for the study was determined using a stratified random sampling technique. The study sample of 247 was determined using Yamane's formula (1967), expressed as  $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ . The sample of the study comprised 247 MPhil and PhD education students from public sector universities in Punjab, Pakistan. Those students were excluded whose level of resilience was below average. Therefore 237 students were included in this analysis.

### Research Tools & Data Collection

Three questionnaires "The Brief Resilience Scale", "The Aggression Questionnaire" (Buss & Perry, 1992), and the "Teachers Professionalism Scale" (self-developed and validated) were used for the collection of data. These scales were validated by expert opinion and pilot testing in public universities in Punjab, Pakistan. The reliability of tools was calculated by applying the Chronbach alpha test. Confirmatory factor analysis was also done for the validation of tools. Tools were converted to Google Forms and disseminated for data collection. Data were collected by sharing Google forms, disseminating through WhatsApp and email, and visiting universities by the researcher himself.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistical tools and techniques were employed to analyze the data. Descriptive Statistics i.e. Mean and Standard Deviation and Inferential statistics i.e. Pearson correlation and statistical Model 4 of Hyes (2014) were followed to analyze the obtained data.

## Results

**Table 1**

*Gender-wise Sample Size*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	152	64.1
Male	85	35.9
Total	237	100.0

Table 1 presents the gender-wise distribution of the sample. There were 64.1% female and 35.9 % male graduate-level students included in the sample.

**Table 2**

Locality-wise Sample Distribution

Locality	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	148	62.4
Rural	89	37.6
Total	237	100.0

Table 2 shows that there were 62.4% urban and 37.6% rural participants included in the study.

**Table 3**

Program of Study

Program	Frequency	Percentage
MPhil	165	69.6
Ph.D	72	30.4
Total	237	100.0

Table 3 demonstrates that there was 69.6% of MPhil and 30.4% were Ph.D. students included in the sample.

**Objective 1**

To identify the level of teachers' professionalism, aggression among university students, and resilience of university students.

**Table 4**

Level of Teachers' Professionalism, university students' Aggressive Behaviour and Resilience

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev
Teachers' Professionalism	3.62	.99
Aggressive Behaviour of University Students	3.40	.87
University Students' Resilience	3.27	1.22

Table 4 shows the level of teachers' professionalism, university students' aggressive behavior, and resilience. The mean score of teachers' professionalism was above average (M=3.62, SD=.99), aggression was above average (M=3.40, SD=.87), and university students' resilience was also found above average (M=3.27,SD=1.22). Therefore it may be concluded that the level of university teachers' professionalism

was high, the resilience level of students was normal and the level of aggression among MPhil/PhD (Edu) was also found significant.

**Objective 2**

To analyze the relationship between university teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior.

**Table 5**

Relationship between Teachers' Professionalism and Aggressive Behaviour

Variables	N	Mean	SD	TP	ABS	P-Value
Teachers' Professionalism	237	3.62	.99	1	.181**	.005
Aggressive Behaviour of Students	237	3.40	.87			

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

Table 5 demonstrates that there is a significant negative correlation (r=-.181\*\* P=.005<.05) between

teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior. Therefore it may be concluded that teachers'



professionalism and aggressive behavior of students have significant negative correlations and decreased students' aggression.

**Objective 3**

To analyze the mediating role of university students' resilience on the relationship between teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior.

**Table 6**

Mediation Analysis Summary

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t	P Value	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound			
USR -> TP-> AB	-.1594 (.000)	-.278 (.000)	.1190	.0470	.1992	-2.81	.000	Partial Mediation

Table 6 shows the mediating role of the resilience of university students on the relationship between teachers' professionalism and students' aggressive behavior. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of university students' resilience on aggressive behavior ( $\beta = .1190$ ). Furthermore, the direct effect of teachers' professionalism on aggressive behavior in the presence of the mediator resilience of university students was also significant ( $\beta = -.278$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ). Moreover, the total effect of teachers' professionalism on the aggressive behavior of students was also significant ( $\beta = -.1594$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ). Hence, university students' resilience partially mediated (LB=.0470, UB=.1992) the relationship between teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior. Therefore it may be concluded that the resilience of students plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between teachers' professionalism and the aggressive behavior of MPhil/PhD (Edu) students.

**Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn on the base of the results.

The first objective of the study was to identify the level of teachers' professionalism, aggression among university students, and resilience of university students. It may be concluded that the level of teachers' professionalism was high, aggression among university students was significant and resilience of students was normal.

The second objective was to analyze the relationship between university teachers' professionalism and the aggression of students. Results revealed that there was a significant negative correlation between university teachers'

professionalism and the aggression of students.

The third objective of the study was to analyze the mediating role of university students' resilience on the relationship between teachers' professionalism and aggressive behavior. It may be concluded that the resilience of students had a partial mediating role in the relationship between teachers' professionalism and the aggressive behavior of MPhil/PhD (Edu) students.

**Discussion**

Results revealed that the level of teachers' professionalism was high. Studies show that teachers are highly professional, despite situational differences. A Malaysian study revealed that teachers exhibit a higher level of professionalism, with their knowledge and understanding rated higher than the other sub-dimension (Zakaria et al., 2021). 81.6% of vocational high school teachers in Indonesia demonstrated good professionalism, while about 43.2% demonstrated professional competence. In Indonesia, one of the studies shows that vocational high school teachers got a high score of professionalism (Gunawan et al., 2020). The results reveal the importance of teachers' professionalism in learning environments and the educational process. As discussed in the literature, several studies show that the moral development of teachers impacts their professionalism greatly (Aslam et al., 2021). The study revisits the various findings that assessed the impact of teacher professionalism on students' performance and the quality of their education. As a result, such conclusions emphasize the need for further research and practice concerning the strengthening of and progress in the concept of teacher

professionalism in view of the educational results (Zakaria et al. [2021](#)).

The current study found the level of aggression among university students was significant. Several studies reveal that there are increasing levels of aggression among university students in different countries. The same research revealed that seventy-six percent of students indulged in aggressive behaviors, 86% of Pakistani students, and 41% of Australian students (Khurshid, [2020](#)). Alorani ([2017](#)) pointed out that about 51.3% of the university students in Jordan displayed a high level of aggression. Male students exhibited higher levels of anger and physical aggression compared to female students, while female students displayed more hostility and verbal aggression (Bukhari et al., [2017](#)). The study found a negative relationship between perceived social support and aggression, as participants with low social support exhibited higher levels of aggression (Alorani, [2017](#)). The findings indicate a high prevalence of aggressive behavior among university students, highlighting the need for increased attention, prevention strategies like counseling services, and anger management techniques (Bukhari et al., [2017](#), Khurshid, [2020](#)).

The study found that university students' resilience was at a normal level. Research that focuses on the resilience of university students shows its importance in handling stress and protecting psychological health while studying. McGillivray and Pidgeon, ([2015](#)) maintain that high resilience is associated with less psychological distress and more mindfulness than low resilience found among the students. The results have shown that perceived social support and campus connectedness have an impact on agricultural students' resilience. According to Pidgeon et al. ([2014](#)), students who are less resilient exhibit significant compromise in the aforementioned factors and experience a higher level of psychological stress. Hope, optimism, and self-esteem are the characteristics of survivors, and optimism is one of the strongest predictors of resilience, accounting for 25% of the variance in resilience among university students (Gómez Molinero et al., [2018](#)). The outcomes suggest that there is an opportunity for universities to develop strategies to improve resilience that will help reduce most mental health-related factors and thus

promote students' health. Efforts directed at enhancing other modifiable psychosocial resources, which include social support, campus connectedness, and optimism, can enhance students coping styles concerning academic stress and enhance their adjustment to university life (McGillivray & Pidgeon, [2015](#); Pidgeon et al., [2014](#); Gómez Molinero et al., [2018](#)).

Research suggests that a significant correlation exists between teacher professionalism and reduced incidence of student aggression. The recent study by Wang and Pan ([2023](#)) confirmed the cross-sectional survey showing that teacher aggression and burnout in Chinese EFL teachers were negative predictors of professional accomplishment. In their study, Mojriani et al. ([2017](#)) pointed out those university students who had high resilience scores had low levels of aggression, so there is a negative relation between the two variables. Alorani & Alradaydeh ([2017](#)) observed a significant, positive relationship between depression and aggression and a significant negative relationship between spiritual well-being and these variables in university students. The results imply the need to control teacher aggression and to pay attention to the problem of teacher burnout in children, as well as promoting student resilience and spiritual well-being in order to reduce aggression and improve education outcomes.

The study showed that student resilience partially mediates between teacher professionalism and the aggressive attitude of the MPhil/PhD (Edu) students. Current evidence suggests that resilience and/or aggression and correlated variables are complexly related in students. Studies show that resilience and aggression are inversely proportional among university students with increased resilience, and there will be decreased aggression (Mojriani et al., [2017](#)). Teachers' professionalism may moderate this relationship, possibly reducing aggression and increasing campus resilience among academic students. Furthermore, a large amount of effort has been linked to gains in teachers' resilience levels, whereby work engagement and job crafting act as fully mediated variables (Van Wingerden & Poell, [2019](#)). The results emphasize the need to prevent and address aggression and promote protective and possible positive aspects in school settings. Due to the limitations of the present research, further studies have to be

conducted to define how the discovered relationship between resilience and aggression occurs and how the ways to boost resilience interact with the means to decrease aggression in students and teachers. A review of the literature by Sadeghifard et al. (2020) revealed that teachers' professionalism was positively linked to resilience and acted as a moderator between aggression and resilience. Similarly, research indicates that individuals who possess greater resilience tend to exhibit decreased levels of aggression and hostility. This suggests that implementing resilience-building programs may have the capacity to effectively mitigate aggressive tendencies. The role of teacher resilience in addressing student rudeness and negative behavioral interactions resulting from social media usage is of utmost importance (Ali et al., 2023). Kaya and Yagan (2022) found a negative correlation between resilience anxiety and poor health and a positive correlation with optimism, self-efficacy, and problem-solving coping skills.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were suggested based on the results of this study.

- University students are normally resilient by nature and therefore there is a need to change the curriculum to foster resilience.
- Thus, the existence of numerous students exhibiting aggressive actions requires extra precaution towards aggression.
- Teachers' professionalism is considered to be high however to enhance students' resilience extra teaching methods are needed to strengthen the students.
- Professional Standards may be devised for university teachers.
- During the lesson, it is possible to strengthen students' resilience by engaging them in problem-solving, project work, discussions,

and debates as well as peer group work.

- Also on the guidance and counseling the service provision should be fully enhanced to meet aggression.
- Mental health services should be adopted in development to ensure students manage stress.
- The appropriate campus environment of the student group should be supportive of this process.
- More student unions should be encouraged to engage in training on aspects such as stress, time, and academic stress management should be offered.
- Promotion of advocacy for self-care practices.
- Teachers should help students make friends, learn academic skills, help formulate goals, and offer feedback on students' flexibility.

### Suggestions for Future Research

- Research could be repeated with students of different population types and with teachers.
- Conventional research could be implemented in all public and private universities within Pakistan.
- Investigate students' defense mechanisms against aggressive behavior, teachers' professionalism as a moderator.
- Other variables such as students' family background, economic status, teachers' resilience, parental involvement, and the role of a curriculum could extend the research possibility.
- Future research could combine the findings with the level of resilience of university students in other countries.
- It is also possible to carry out interviews and observational research on the teachers' point of view.

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