

Resilience, Decision-Making and Psychological Immunity in Lifelong Learners

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Abstract

High learners are found to be lifelong learners with personality traits like curiosity, high well-being, resilience, self-motivation, life satisfaction, good decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, learning from experiences, psychological immunity, etc. The present study was conducted on certain personality correlates like resilience, decision-making, and the psychological immune system (PIS) of lifelong learners. The present study was conducted on a sample of ten lifelong learners. Learners who are found to be involved in learning, teaching and researching in their endeavors in the age range of 70 and above. Mixed research methods using both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used. The research was based on the case study method (ten cases of lifelong learners, lifelong teachers and lifelong researchers from academia). All the cases were interviewed to ascertain their involvement in lifelong learning.

ARTICLE INFO

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Dates:

Received: 20-03-2025

Accepted: 28-03-2025

Published: 31-03-2025

Keywords:

Lifelong learning,
Resilience, Decision-
making, Psychological
immune system (PIS)

How to Cite:

Srivastava, S., Chandi,
V. (2025). Resilience,
Decision-Making and
Psychological Immunity
in Lifelong Learners.
Mind and Society, 14(1):
74-80.
doi: 10.56011/mind-
mri-141-202510

INTRODUCTION

A lifelong learner is a person who is always ardent to improving and developing their knowledge and skills for both employment and personal fulfillment. Learning is something different for everyone. To some, it may be attending workshops, reading or writing books, learning a new language or, learning to make different cuisines, etc. But what matters is that it is something one finds useful, interesting, meaningful, or enjoyable. The research shows that in people who voluntarily dedicate time to engage in learning opportunities, their mental health flourishes. Lifelong Learning is a Crucial Education Mindset. Lifelong learners play an important role in the educational process, and it is found that they have some important personality traits. High learners are lifelong learners with personality traits like curiosity, high well-being, resilience, self-motivation, life satisfaction, good decision-making skills, Problem-solving skills, learning from experiences, psychological immunity, etc. The objective of the present study was to find the association between personality correlates like resilience, decision-making and psychological immune system (PIS) of lifelong learners in late adulthood.

Psychological immunity is a system of adaptive resources and positive personality characteristics that act as psychological antibodies during stress (Olah,

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2005). It includes various positive personality traits such as resilience, decision-making, positive thinking, sense of control, sense of coherence, emotional regulation, goal orientation, positive self-efficacy, problem-solving skills, etc.

Resilience is a person's ability to face and come back from a stressful situation. A resilient person can adjust better to stressful situations and find ways to adjust and overcome even adverse circumstances. Highly resilient people are always ready to respond to life's challenges. There are many types of resilience: physical, mental, emotional and social. Mental resilience is an important component for lifelong learners because it allows people to develop resilient thinking to successfully adjust to life tasks in the face of social disadvantage or extreme circumstances.

Decision-making skills are a person's ability to choose the right solution at the right time to address the challenges in different life situations. Lifelong learners' decision-making and problem-solving skills can be refined through continuous learning.

Literature Review

After reviewing the literature, the studies demonstrated that learning new skills and acquiring knowledge after retirement has received a lot of positive attention. It is also found that most of the seniors are choosing to participate in college classes geared toward older adults. Research suggests that lifelong learning can help keep an older adult's body and mind active, prevent physical and cognitive decline, and go a long way toward maintaining health and happiness. Evidence exists that lifelong learning can reduce age-related cognitive decline, improve memory, increase overall activity levels, combat depression, and improve poor self-image. Few studies have investigated interventions that can support active aging and resilience in older people.

Villanueva (2020) has shown the significant differences in emotional balance, productivity, general health awareness and social activity in groups of seniors who participate in university-based lifelong learning programs.

In another study, Narushima *et al.* (2016) examined the association between older adults' duration of participation in the courses and their level of psy-

chological well-being. The results showed that older adults' participation is independently and positively associated with their psychological well-being, even among those typically classified as 'Vulnerable.'

Tyler (2025) has shown that the commitment to lifelong learning helps to enhance individuals' emotional resilience.

Southwick *et al.* (2018) found in a study that resilience in adulthood can be found in a rich body of investigation about psychological factors like dispositional optimism, active coping and greater emotion regulation.

Finucane *et al.* (2002) showed that older adults are less likely than their younger counterparts to engage in decision-making in the first place and often bypass the entire process through choice delegation, deferral, or avoidance.

Reed *et al.* (2013) found that with a decision, older adults' information search tends to be less exhaustive than younger adults. They prefer to choose among fewer options.

Mata *et al.* (2010) explain in their study that older adults review fewer pieces of information and often make their decisions more quickly.

In another study, Hess *et al.* (2013) have shown that older age is also associated with a preference for personally relevant information, and Cansino *et al.* (2013) examined how it reduced sensitivity to the sources of information.

Vyasamoorthy (2018) emphasized the importance of lifelong learning for senior citizens. He found in his study that lifelong learning improves cognitive skills and prevents the onset of Dementia or Alzheimer's disease. It improves self-confidence, employability, and usefulness to self/ others and is also like a remedy for boredom, loneliness and depression. He also suggested that lifelong learning puts them in the company of other learners – motivation to live longer, happier and healthier is possible. In Indian setting, Chandi and Srivastava (2024) conducted a study on psychological immunity, explaining the social-emotional learning (SEL) and school-family partnerships (SFP) programs, along with positive parenting. The findings revealed that the development of positive personality traits in children strengthen the psychological immune system of children.

Objective of the Study

To measure the resilience, decision-making skills and psychological immunity of lifelong learners.

Hypothesis

Resilience, decision-making skills, and psychological immunity will be high for lifelong learners.

Sample

The sample of the study included ten case studies of lifelong learners from Kanpur, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Rohtak, and Kurukshetra between the age range of 70 and above. Two cases from Kanpur were interviewed personally, and eight other cases from outside Kanpur were sent to the respondents through Google Forms. All these learners are found to be actively involved in academic bodies. They were writing books and researching in their endeavor still now.

METHOD

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in the present study.

Qualitative method

A self-devised interview schedule was used in the present study. In this interview schedule, questions pertaining to lifelong academic involvement were taken.

Quantitative tools

Three quantitative psychometric tests were also administered to the ten lifelong learners.

- Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ) contains 12 items covering the strongest indicators of the overall level of resilience. This is a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The reliability estimated by Cronbach's Alpha = .76.
- Decision-making questionnaire by Clarke and Nicholson (2010). This test contains 10 statements (statements 'A' and statements 'B') describing how individuals go about making important decisions. Scoring has been done on five categories (rational, consultive, intuitive, independent and avoidant). The maximum score

in each category is 4, and 0 is very low.

- OLA's Psychological Immune System Inventory (PISI) has 80 items, having sixteen different factors or sub-scales. Each sub-scale or factor has 5 items in the form of statements. These sixteen sub-scales were divided into 3 sub-systems. The responses were made on a four-point rating scale ranging from 1 to 4. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients and correlation were found from .62 to .80, and the Test-retest reliability was found from .77 to .89.

Results have been Analyzed and Discussed Case-wise

Case 1

The lifelong learner is 87 years old. He is the former Principal and HOD of the psychology department at P.G. College in Kanpur. He retired in 1996 after 40 years of service. After retirement, he held the position of director in two schools and an institute of management and mass communication. He has presented and published more than 85 research papers at national and international conferences and is still engaged in this work. He has also been a member of selection committees of banks, educational institutions and academic bodies. He is a former president of the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA). He has two fellowships in academic bodies: a fellow of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology and a fellow of the Indian School Psychological Association. He has been awarded the U.P. Ratan and Rashtriya Gaurav Awards. IAHP and CPAI have awarded him lifetime achievement awards. Still, he has engaged himself in learning. On psychometric tests, his RQ score shows that he has an exceptional level of resilience, and on Decision-making skills, it is found that in the rational-intuitive axis, he has a very high rational score, which means he probably adopts an analytical, logical approach to decision-making. On the independent-consultative axis, he has a high consultative score indicates that he values the input of others, actively seeks their opinions and is likely to listen to any advice given. His avoidance score is very low. On PISI score is also high, which means his psychological immune system is strong.

Case 2

The lifelong learner is 84 years old. He has retired as a reader and head of the Department of Sociology of a P.G. college in Kanpur. Even after his retirement, he is contributing a lot to the field of his study. He has published more than two dozen books after his retirement. He has written more than 50 books, and several books have been written after his retirement. His creativity is not confined only to writing textbooks; he has developed his poetic creativity after his retirement. On psychometric tests in decision-making on the rational-intuitive axis, he got a high score on intuitive, which means he is more likely to go with his gut feeling. On the consultative-independent axis, he got a high score on independent, which means he makes his decisions on their own. His avoidance score is very low. His RQ score shows that he has a strong level of resilience. His high PISI scores show that his psychological immune system is also strong.

Case 3

The lifelong learner is 70 years old. He retired from the HOD of psychology in 2016 after 42 years of service in Faizabad. After retirement, he is engaged in psychological testing, and he has also constructed psychological tests. Still, he is attending and presenting research papers at conferences.

On psychometric tests, his RQ score shows that he has an exceptional level of resilience in decision-making on the rational-intuitive axis. His rational scores are very high, which means he probably adopts an analytical, logical approach to decision-making. On the consultative-independent axis, his consultative scores are high, which means he values the opinions and advice of others. His avoidance score is very low. PISI scores are also found to be high, which means his psychological immunity is also good.

Case 4

The lifelong learner is 70 years old. She retired from HOD psychology at Kumaun University in 2019 after serving 38 years of service. After retirement, she is still involved in academic activities. She is writing books and research papers. She is an active member of the Sahitya Kala Dharm and Darshan organization

and indulges in social services. She is a publisher and publishes journals also. Still, she is delivering lectures at different universities. She said that she spent 4 to 5 hours reading daily. On psychometric tests, in decision-making on the rational-intuitive axis, her scores are high on Intuitive, which means she always goes with her gut feeling. In the consultative -Independent axis, she has high scores on independent, which means that she makes decisions on their own. She also expressed this thing in her interview. She said that she rarely seeks the input of others and always makes her decisions on their own. Her Avoidance score is low. Her RQ score shows that she has an exceptional level of resilience. Her PISI scores are also high, which means that her psychological immunity is high.

Case 5

The lifelong learner is a 75-year-old retired professor of psychology from Bhubaneswar. He retired in 2008 after serving 33 years of service. After retirement, he keeps himself busy studying and writing books. He has presented more than 22 research papers. He said that he wakes up at 4 a.m. and keeps busy himself, either studying or attending seminars and webinars and working till 10 p.m. He is also working for disabled children and education for poor children. On psychometric tests in the Rational-Intuitive axis, his rational scores are very high, which means he probably adopts an analytical, logical approach to decision-making and in the independent-consultative axis, his consultative scores are average. His avoidant scores are low. RQ score shows that she has an exceptional level of resilience. His PISI scores are also high, which means his psychological immune system is strong.

Case 6

The lifelong learner is 66 years old and retired in 2017 after 37 years of service in the post of HOD psychology at Kurukshetra University. After retirement, he indulged in various activities. He is experimenting with new ideas in the field of education, doing counseling in school and motivating the students. He spent a lot of time reading and collecting new knowledge. On psychometric tests, he has a high rational score on the rational-intuitive axis and the

consultative-independent axis, he has a high score on consultative, which means he probably adopts an analytical, logical approach to decision-making and seeks others' opinions and is likely to listen to any advice given by them. He also said in his interview that he thinks long and hard about the criteria before applying them and always respects others' thoughts and opinions. His avoidant scores are very low. His RQ score shows a strong level of resilience. PISI scores show an average level of the psychological immune system.

Case 7

The lifelong learner is 70 years old. He retired in 2015 after serving 36 years of service as a professor of psychology. He is a former session president of the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA). Most of his time was spent reading and attending seminars, webinars and lectures. He has also published his research papers. On psychometric tests, his intuitive scores are high on the rational-intuitive axis, and the consultative-independent axis consultative score is high. This means he goes with his gut feeling, driven by values and emotions, and also value others' emotions and feelings. He also expressed in his interview that values and emotions drive him. His avoidance score is very low. His RQ scores show that he has an exceptional level of resilience. PISI scores indicate that his psychological immune system is average.

Case 8

The lifelong learner is 70 years old. He retired from Jaunpur University in 2015 as an HOD and professor of psychology at VBS Poorvanchal University, Jaunpur. He served 42 years of service. Overall, he has spent 50 years of academic life and still indulges in many activities like publishing books, research papers, and journals and also delivering lectures on mental health after retirement. He published the first virtual book in India on community psychology; he also established a community counselling center. On psychometric tests in the decision-making questionnaire, he has a high intuitive score on the rational-intuitive axis and a high independent score on the consultative-independent axis. This means he goes with his gut feeling, and he makes his decisions on his own. His avoidant scores are low. RQ scores

show that he has an established level of resilience. According to his high PISI scores, his psychological immune system is good.

Case 9

The lifelong learner is 72 years old. He retired in 2016 from M. G. Kashi Vidyapeeth University as a HOD and Professor of Psychology. He is the president of the Indian Academy of Health Psychology. After retirement, he ran a psychological clinic and indulged in organizing conferences and presenting research papers. On psychometric tests in the Rational-Intuitive axis, his rational scores are very high, which means she probably adopts an analytical, logical approach to decision-making and in the independent-consultative axis, his consultative scores are average. His avoidant scores are low. RQ scores show that she has an exceptional level of resilience. His PISI scores are also high, which means his psychological immune system is strong.

Case 10

The lifelong learner is 73 years old. She retired as a HOD and professor of psychology in 2017. After retirement, she is still indulging in academics and research work. She delivers lectures and presents papers. She spent a lot of time learning and reading about new things. On psychometric tests, in decision-making on rational-intuitive, her scores are high on Intuitive, which means she always goes with her gut feeling. In the consultative -Independent axis, she has high scores on independent, which means that she makes decisions on their own. Her Avoidance score is low. Her RQ scores show that she has an exceptional level of resilience. Her PISI scores are also high, which means that her psychological immunity is high.

Table 1 shows the raw scores and levels of resilience, decision-making and psychological immune system of lifelong learners. It indicates that all the subjects got 40 or above 40 scores on resilience, which means that they are all very high on resilience. In the psychological immune system, eight of them got above a 240 score, which means their psychological immune system is also very strong. Decision-making skills have been measured on two axes, rational-intuitive and independent-consultative and also explore the extent to which they

Table 1: Showing the raw scores and levels of resilience, decision-making skills and psychological immune system of lifelong learners

Case No.	Resilience	Decision-making skills	Psychological immune system
1.	An exceptional level of resilience (54)	High on Rational and Consultative decision-making with Low Avoidant	High (275)
2.	Strong level of resilience (46)	High on Intuitive and Independent decision-making with Low Avoidant	High (264)
3.	An exceptional level of resilience (51)	High on Rational and consultative decision-making with very low avoidant	High (270)
4.	An exceptional level of resilience (51)	High on Intuitive and Independent decision-making with Low Avoidant	High (261)
5.	An exceptional level of resilience (50)	High on Rational and Consultative decision-making with Low Avoidant	High (261)
6.	Strong level of resilience (44)	High on Rational and Consultative decision-making with Very Low Avoidant	Medium (237)
7.	An exceptional level of resilience (53)	High on Intuitive and consultative decision-making with Very low avoidant	Medium (240)
8.	An established level of resilience (40)	High on Intuitive and Independent decision-making with Low Avoidant	High (241)
9.	An exceptional level of resilience (53)	High on Rational and Consultative decision-making with Low Avoidant	High (244)
10.	An exceptional level of resilience (52)	High on Intuitive and Independent decision-making with Low Avoidant	High (245)

are avoidant. The result table shows that they are all low on avoidant. This means that they always prefer to make a decision, no matter how little information is available or what the implications of that decision might be. High on rationale means they probably adopt an analytical, logical approach to decision-making. They think long and hard about the criteria they apply and then work systematically, and they try to avoid getting sucked into emotional debates. High consultative means they value the input of others, who actively seek their opinions and are likely to listen to any advice given. High independence means they make their decisions on their own. They rarely seek the input of others, preferring instead to demonstrate. They have good leadership qualities. They know their mind and are not afraid to stand by their decisions. High on intuitive means they are more likely to go with their gut feeling and are always driven by values and emotions. They always listen to their heart, not their head.

In their interview, they said that they never

accepted any information as it is. They analyze and think logically about it before accepting it. They also admitted that they do not get distracted even in adverse situations but dare to face those situations and are capable of solving problems. A common habit found in all lifelong learners is that even at this age, everyone has the curiosity to learn something new, and they all have a habit of continuous reading. According to all of them:

- Lifelong learning strengthens their horizon.
- Helps them understand their selves better.
- Helps ignore or forget age-related issues
- Gives a purpose to go on.

The present research is based on a case study method with mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative) and has fully accepted the hypothesis that lifelong learners are high on psychological immune system, resilience and decision-making skills. It may be added that continuous usage of cognitive functions facilitates successful aging. It has been found that those who do not use their cogni-

tive functions are likely to suffer from Alzheimer's and Dementia. In old age, those who do not use their cognition and avoid dialogue and interactions with others may suffer from these two dreaded mental disorders. Lifelong learning is related to successful aging. Some lifelong learners age more successfully than their counterparts who are not lifelong learners. It is aptly remarked, "Loneliness is a silent jail without cellmates, parole, or bail."

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