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**THE INFLUENCE OF BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND
MOTIVATION ON STUDENT RESILIENCE IN MALAYSIAN
UNIVERSITIES**

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Abstract:

This study investigates the influence of Big Five personality traits and motivation on student resilience among Malaysian university students. Personality traits: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism are established as core dimensions of individual differences, while motivation remains a central driver of academic performance and persistence. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Determination Theory, the study employed a quantitative survey design with data analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings validated the proposed theoretical assumptions, demonstrating significant effects of both Big Five personality traits and motivation on student resilience, thereby supporting the study's hypotheses (H1 and H2). The predictors explained a substantial proportion of the variance in resilience, with R² values ranging from 0.421 to 0.414. Importantly, the R² value of 0.414 exceeded Cohen's (1988) recommended threshold of 0.26, affirming the robustness and stability of the research model. These results highlight that personality traits and motivation positively and meaningfully enhance resilience among students. The study contributes theoretically by bridging Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Determination Theory in understanding

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resilience, and practically by providing insights for universities and policymakers to develop targeted interventions that strengthen resilience and motivation. Such efforts are crucial to improving student well-being, adaptability, and academic success in Malaysia's higher education context.

Keywords:

Big Five Personality Traits, Motivation, Student Resilience, Malaysian Universities, Higher Education

Introduction

Higher education plays a pivotal role in Malaysia's socio-economic development, particularly through public universities, which account for the largest share of student enrolment. These institutions not only provide access to specialized knowledge but also shape students' personal and professional competencies for future employability (Lu, 2021; Ahmad & Yusof, 2020). However, the increasing complexity of academic demands, globalization, and the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have created unprecedented challenges for university students. Malaysian public university students face heightened academic stress, financial constraints, and psychological pressures, which have brought the concept of **resilience** into sharper focus (Wang et al., 2022; Ching et al., 2020).

Resilience, defined as the capacity to adapt positively and thrive in the face of adversity (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007), has become a critical psychological resource in higher education. Students with higher resilience are more capable of handling academic workloads, navigating uncertainties, and sustaining motivation in their studies. For university students, resilience is especially significant given their exposure to intense competition, scholarship obligations, and socio-economic diversity (Ramachandiran et al., 2018; Pascoe et al., 2020). Without resilience, students are more likely to experience mental health difficulties, academic underperformance, or even withdrawal from their studies (Sherman, 2021).

Individual differences in resilience can often be explained by **personality traits**. The Big Five personality traits; Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism are widely recognized as predictors of coping ability and adaptation (Goldberg, 1992; DeYoung, 2015). Research has shown that conscientiousness and agreeableness are positively associated with resilience, while neuroticism tends to reduce it (Oshio et al., 2018; Backmann et al., 2019). For instance, conscientious students may demonstrate resilience through discipline and persistence in academic tasks, while extraverted students may draw on social support networks in overcoming adversity. Conversely, highly neurotic students are more vulnerable to stress and negative emotional responses, undermining resilience (McDonnell et al., 2020).

Alongside personality, **motivation** is another vital factor influencing resilience. Motivation drives effort, perseverance, and engagement, all of which are necessary for sustaining resilience in academic settings (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In the context of Malaysian universities, motivation often determines how students respond to academic pressures, with intrinsically motivated students more likely to view challenges as opportunities for growth, while extrinsically motivated students may persist due to external rewards or expectations (Yang & Wang, 2022). Studies also suggest that motivation mediates the relationship between personality and

resilience, further emphasizing its central role in students' ability to adapt (Resnick et al., 2018, as cited in Yang & Wang, 2022).

Despite growing international research, there remains limited empirical evidence on how personality traits and motivation shape resilience specifically among Malaysian university students. Much of the existing literature is concentrated in Western contexts (Mammadov, 2022). Addressing this gap, the present study examines the influence of Big Five personality traits and motivation on student resilience in Malaysian universities. By doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how psychological resources support students' adaptability, well-being, and academic success in a challenging higher education environment.

Table 1: Research Objectives and Research Questions

Research Objectives (ROs)	Research Questions (RQs)
RO1: To examine the influence of Big Five Personality Traits on student resilience in Malaysian universities.	RQ1: Do the Big Five Personality Traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) significantly influence student resilience in Malaysian universities?
RO2: To examine the influence of motivation on student resilience in Malaysian universities.	RQ2: Does motivation significantly influence student resilience in Malaysian universities?
RO3: To provide recommendations based on the influence of Big Five Personality Traits and motivation on student resilience.	RQ3: What recommendations can be made to strengthen student resilience based on the influence of Big Five Personality Traits and motivation?

Literature Review

Student Resilience

Resilience is widely defined as the ability to adapt positively and recover from adversity, stress, or unexpected disruptions (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Within higher education, student resilience is conceptualized as the capacity to withstand academic, psychological, and social challenges while continuing to pursue educational goals (Southwick & Charney, 2018). It is not merely a fixed trait, but a dynamic process shaped by personal, social, and environmental resources (Masten & Barnes, 2018). University students face multiple stressors, including academic workload, financial difficulties, scholarship requirements, and peer competition. These challenges often undermine mental health and performance, especially among universities student where diverse socio-economic backgrounds are represented (Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these pressures, forcing students into remote learning and exposing them to stress, digital inequity, and reduced social interaction, which highlighted the urgent need for resilience (Wang et al., 2022; Malik & Javed, 2021).

Recent evidence suggests that resilient students are more capable of maintaining motivation, regulating emotions, and adapting to sudden changes such as online learning transitions (Suhaimi et al., 2024). Studies also show that resilience buffers against the negative effects of stress on academic outcomes, making it an essential psychological resource for success in

higher education (Pascoe et al., 2020). Resilience is influenced by both individual and contextual factors. At the individual level, personality traits play a critical role. Meta-analytic evidence shows that resilience correlates positively with Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Openness, and negatively with Neuroticism (Oshio et al., 2018). For instance, conscientious students exhibit resilience through discipline and organization, while extraverted students draw strength from social support (Backmann et al., 2019).

Motivation is another significant determinant. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation driven by autonomy, competence, and relatedness strengthens persistence and resilience, while extrinsic motivation can also sustain effort in high-pressure academic environments (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Recent studies confirm that motivation often mediates the relationship between stress and resilience, enabling students to transform challenges into adaptive learning opportunities (Shengyao, 2024; Yang & Wang, 2022). Student resilience is consistently linked to improved mental health, higher academic performance, and reduced dropout rates (Sherman, 2021; Chye et al., 2024). Among Malaysian students, resilience has been associated with better adjustment during online learning, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, where grit and resilience are vital for academic persistence. Internationally, growth mindset interventions have been shown to enhance resilience by promoting adaptive coping and persistence, with comparative studies in Malaysia and Indonesia highlighting cultural nuances in resilience development (Ramadhona et al., 2025). Beyond individual traits and motivation, resilience is shaped by institutional supports. University learning environments that encourage active participation, clear instruction, and supportive teaching practices significantly enhance resilience (Wang et al., 2025). In Malaysia, online resilience-building programmes have been piloted to support final-year students, with promising results in reducing anxiety and improving adaptability (Chong, 2025). This indicates that resilience is both a personal and institutional responsibility, requiring coordinated interventions at multiple levels. The literature demonstrates that resilience is a critical factor for academic success and well-being, shaped by personality, motivation, and environmental supports. However, most resilience research has been concentrated in Western contexts (Mammadov, 2022). There is limited empirical evidence examining how Big Five personality traits and motivation interact to influence resilience among Malaysian university students, who face unique socio-cultural and economic challenges. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates these relationships to inform both theoretical understanding and practical interventions for resilience-building in Malaysia's higher education sector.

Big Five Personality Traits

The Big Five Personality Traits; Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism represent the most widely accepted framework for understanding individual differences in personality (Goldberg, 1992; DeYoung, 2015). These traits capture stable patterns of behavior, cognition, and emotion that influence how individuals perceive and interact with their environment. Research across cultures and contexts has consistently validated the Big Five model as a robust predictor of psychological outcomes, including academic performance, well-being, and resilience (Mammadov, 2022).

Openness to Experience

Openness reflects creativity, intellectual curiosity, and flexibility in thinking. Students high in openness tend to adapt more easily to new learning environments and exhibit greater problem-solving capacity (McDonnell et al., 2020). Studies show that openness positively correlates

with resilience, as it enables individuals to perceive challenges as opportunities for growth (Oshio et al., 2018).

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness encompasses traits such as discipline, organization, and responsibility. It is consistently linked to academic success and resilience (Backmann et al., 2019). Conscientious students are more likely to persist through difficulties, manage time effectively, and sustain motivation qualities critical for resilience in demanding higher education environments (Sherman, 2021).

Extraversion

Extraversion is characterized by sociability, assertiveness, and positive emotionality. Extraverted students often rely on social networks for emotional and academic support, enhancing their ability to cope with stress (Southwick & Charney, 2018). This trait has been found to foster resilience by promoting optimism and effective stress-buffering behaviors (Suhaimi et al., 2024).

Agreeableness

Agreeableness reflects trust, cooperation, and empathy. Agreeable students are more likely to engage in collaborative learning and build supportive relationships with peers and lecturers, which act as protective factors against stress (Chye et al., 2024). Empirical evidence suggests that agreeableness is positively associated with resilience, as supportive social interactions enhance adaptive coping (Yang & Wang, 2022).

Neuroticism

Neuroticism, defined by anxiety, emotional instability, and vulnerability to stress, is negatively associated with resilience (Oshio et al., 2018). Students high in neuroticism are more prone to academic burnout, depression, and withdrawal (Pascoe et al., 2020). In Malaysian university contexts, neuroticism has been identified as a significant risk factor undermining well-being and resilience (Ching et al., 2020).

Big Five and Student Resilience

Meta-analyses demonstrate that four of the Big Five traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness) positively predict resilience, whereas neuroticism has a detrimental effect (Oshio et al., 2018; Mammadov, 2022). In higher education, particularly among Malaysian university students, these traits influence how individuals adapt to academic stressors, manage uncertainty, and sustain motivation. For example, conscientiousness predicts academic perseverance, while extraversion and agreeableness enhance social resilience through peer support. Recent studies continue to emphasize the role of personality in resilience. McDonnell et al. (2020) highlighted that personality interacts with coping strategies to predict resilience among university students. Suhaimi et al. (2024) found that agreeableness and extraversion were protective factors in mental health outcomes. Newer work integrates personality with growth mindset (Ramadhona et al., 2025) and motivation (Yang & Wang, 2022), suggesting that personality does not operate in isolation but within a broader system of psychological resources.

Motivation

Motivation is a central psychological construct that explains why individuals initiate, persist in, and regulate behaviors in academic settings. Within higher education, motivation plays a crucial role in shaping students' engagement, perseverance, and adaptive responses to stress (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation can be classified as intrinsic motivation, driven by curiosity, interest, and personal growth, and extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards, obligations, or recognition (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

In the context of resilience, motivation is not only a determinant of performance but also a protective factor that enables students to cope with adversity. Motivated students are more likely to approach academic challenges proactively, use adaptive coping strategies, and persist despite setbacks (Yang & Wang, 2022). Recent findings suggest that autonomous motivation strengthens resilience by fostering a sense of control, competence, and purpose in learning, while controlled forms of motivation may have weaker or inconsistent effects (Sherman, 2021; Suhaimi et al., 2024).

In Malaysia, motivation has been identified as a key factor influencing students' ability to cope with the academic demands of public universities, where socio-economic and cultural pressures can either reinforce or undermine motivation (Ching et al., 2020). For example, students from disadvantaged backgrounds often demonstrate resilience when their motivation is anchored in long-term goals, such as improving family well-being or fulfilling scholarship obligations (Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018; B40 Study, 2025).

Thus, motivation functions both directly by driving effort and persistence and indirectly, by mediating the relationship between personality traits and resilience. This dual role underscores its importance in resilience research within Malaysian higher education.

Empirical evidence consistently highlights the role of motivation in building and sustaining student resilience. Motivated students demonstrate higher levels of persistence, adaptive coping, and positive academic outcomes even under stress (Yang & Wang, 2022). Studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that motivation helped students maintain focus and overcome obstacles in online learning environments, where uncertainty and isolation were major challenges (Malik & Javed, 2021; Ching et al., 2020). Autonomous motivation (driven by internalized values) has been shown to buffer the negative effects of stress on psychological well-being and academic performance (Suhaimi et al., 2024).

Beyond being a direct predictor, motivation often mediates the relationship between personal characteristics (such as personality traits) and resilience. For example, conscientious students may display resilience because they are intrinsically motivated to achieve academic goals, while agreeable students may derive motivation from collaboration and peer support (Backmann et al., 2019; McDonnell et al., 2020). This mediating function makes motivation a central variable in resilience models, highlighting its importance for understanding how different students adapt to adversity in higher education contexts.

Motivation And Student Resilience

In Malaysian universities, motivation is a critical resource for resilience, given the multiple pressures students face including academic competition, socio-economic constraints, and

scholarship obligations. Research indicates that students from disadvantaged groups (such as the B40 income group) are more resilient when motivated by long-term goals such as improving their families' socio-economic standing (Ramachandiran & Dhanapal, 2018; Ramadhona et al., 2025). Moreover, interventions aimed at enhancing motivation, such as growth mindset programs and resilience training, have been effective in strengthening resilience among Malaysian and regional university students (Chong, 2025). Taken together, the literature shows that motivation is both a direct driver of resilience and an indirect mechanism linking personality traits and resilience outcomes. Students with strong intrinsic and autonomous motivation are more capable of sustaining engagement and adapting to challenges, while extrinsic motivation when aligned with personal goals also contributes to persistence. In Malaysia's universities, strengthening motivation is thus a vital strategy for enhancing resilience, especially among students facing structural and socio-economic challenges.

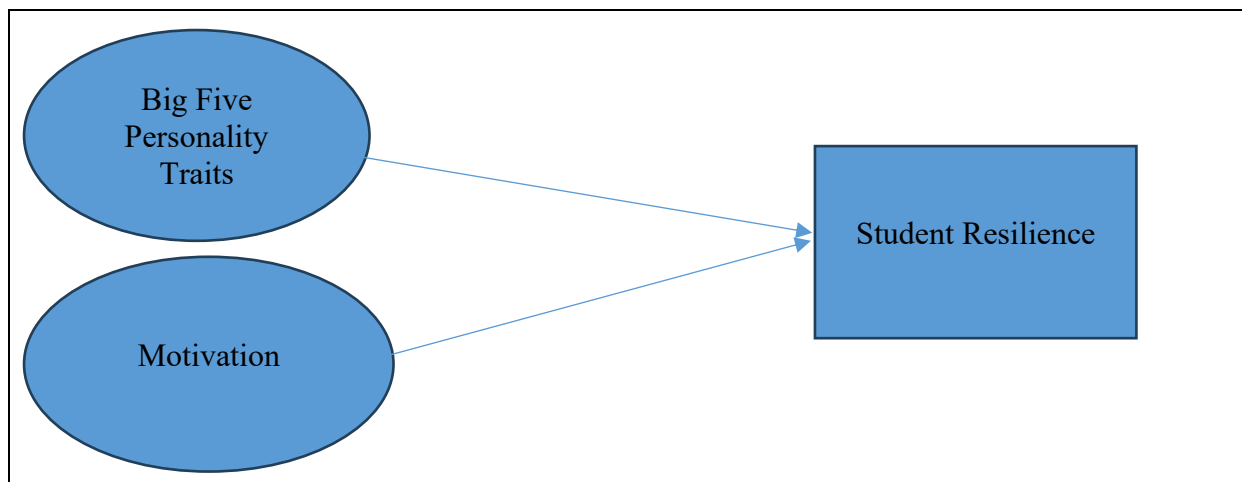


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Integrating Big Five Traits and Motivation on Resilience

Resilience in university students is increasingly recognized as a protective mechanism against the mounting stressors of higher education, including heavy workloads, academic performance pressures, and shifting social relationships (Sarrionandia et al., 2018; Côté, 2018). The Big Five Personality Traits; openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism have been identified as central non-cognitive factors that influence how students adapt to academic and personal challenges (Backmann et al., 2019). Conscientiousness is associated with perseverance, organization, and long-term planning, which strengthens resilience by helping students regulate stress effectively. Extraversion fosters positive emotionality and social support-seeking, contributing to higher adaptability, while agreeableness promotes cooperation and trust, which buffer stress in group learning environments. In contrast, neuroticism tends to undermine resilience due to heightened vulnerability to anxiety and negative affect (Barańczuk, 2021). These links suggest that personality trait's function both as risk and protective factors in resilience-building among students.

Motivation also plays a significant role in shaping student resilience. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), resilience is enhanced when students' basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met (Koole et al., 2019). Intrinsic motivation, driven by personal interest and enjoyment, promotes persistence and adaptability in the face of academic adversity, while extrinsic motivation, when internalized, can also sustain resilience by aligning external goals with personal growth (Xavier et al., 2021). Research in Malaysia highlights that student resilience is strongly tied to motivational factors. For instance, motivated students tend to cope better with academic stressors such as high exam expectations, heavy workloads, and pressure to achieve societal standards (Selvam et al., 2023). Moreover, resilience is reinforced when motivation mediates the relationship between individual differences (such as personality traits) and adaptive academic outcomes (Yang & Wang, 2022).

Hypotheses Development

The integration of personality traits and motivation provides a deeper understanding of resilience. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and SDT together suggest that personal factors (traits), environmental supports, and internalized motivation interact to shape student behavior and resilience (Bandura, 1986; Ryan & Deci, 2020). For example, a conscientious student with high intrinsic motivation may display stronger resilience through structured study routines, while an extraverted and intrinsically motivated student may show resilience through collaborative learning and social engagement. The literature also identifies research gaps: resilience linked to Big Five traits has been well-studied in Western contexts but remains underexplored in Asian higher education, particularly in Malaysia. Furthermore, few studies directly connect motivation and personality traits simultaneously with resilience, highlighting the novelty and significance of this research focus.

Development of Hypothesis 1 (Big Five Personality Traits → Resilience)

The Big Five personality traits consist of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are extensively recognized as significant predictors of coping capacity and adaptability (Oshio et al., 2018; Backmann et al., 2019). Conscientiousness and agreeableness are positively associated with resilience, whereas neuroticism undermines it. Within the university context, conscientious students typically exhibit discipline and persistence, extraverted students benefit from peer interaction and support, and agreeable students gain advantages through cooperation and empathy (McDonnell et al., 2020). Conversely, students with high levels of neuroticism are more susceptible to stress and negative emotions. Overall, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness enhance adaptive coping mechanisms, while low neuroticism reduces vulnerability to stress (Backmann et al., 2019; Barańczuk, 2021). On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Big Five Personality Traits have a significant influence on student resilience.

Development of Hypothesis 2 (Motivation → Resilience)

Motivation is a key determinant of effort, perseverance, and engagement, which collectively strengthen resilience in academic settings (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Intrinsically motivated students approach challenges as opportunities for growth, whereas extrinsically motivated students persist due to external rewards or expectations (Yang & Wang, 2022). Evidence also shows that motivation mediates the link between stress and resilience, emphasizing its role in helping students adapt to academic demands (Shengyao, 2024). In line with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation enhance persistence and adaptive coping,

thereby fostering resilience (Koole et al., 2019; Yang & Wang, 2022). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Motivation have a significant influence on student resilience.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design grounded in the positivist paradigm, which emphasizes the objective measurement of social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). The unit of analysis was the individual student, as resilience, personality, and motivation are psychological constructs situated at the personal level (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007).

The study population comprised Malaysian university students, with purposive sampling applied to target individuals experiencing academic stress and adaptation challenges (Etikan et al., 2016). G*Power analysis determined the minimum required sample size, and a total of 163 valid responses were obtained. Respondents were selected based on the following criteria: (1) full-time or part-time enrollment in diploma, degree, or postgraduate programmes, (2) exposure to academic stressors such as heavy coursework or scholarship obligations, and (3) willingness to participate voluntarily. Both public and private universities across different regions of Malaysia were included to ensure diversity and representativeness.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising four sections: resilience (Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale; Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007), Big Five personality traits (Goldberg, 1992), motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic, based on Self-Determination Theory; Ryan & Deci, 2020), and demographic information. A pilot test confirmed clarity and reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha values exceeding the 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2019). The survey was distributed both online and in person, with voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality assured.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS, selected for its suitability in handling complex models and relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2021).

Findings and Result

Profile of Respondents

A total of 163 Malaysian university students participated in the study. The sample was predominantly female (68.1%) and comprised mainly students aged 18–24 years (77.9%), with smaller proportions in the 25–30 age group (16.6%) and above. Geographically, the highest representation was from Selangor (22.1%), Pulau Pinang (17.2%), Sarawak (13.5%), and Kedah (12.9%), while the remaining respondents were distributed across other states in Malaysia. In terms of institutional affiliation, the majority were from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) (68.1%), followed by smaller proportions from other public universities such as UKM, UniSZA, USM, and UPM, as well as private universities (6.7%). Most respondents were full-time students (85.9%) enrolled primarily in degree programmes (47.2%), with the remainder pursuing diplomas (36.8%), master’s degrees (13.5%), and doctoral studies (2.5%). Distribution across semesters indicated the largest group in semester five (22.7%), followed by those in semesters one, three, and two, with smaller proportions in later semesters.

Table 2: Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequencies (N)	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	52	31.9
	Female	111	68.1
Age	18–24 years	127	77.9
	25–30 years	27	16.6
	31 years and above	9	5.5
University	UiTM	111	68.1
	Other Public Univ.	41	25.2
	Private Univ.	11	6.7
Mode of Study	Full-time	140	85.9
	Part-time	23	14.1
Education Level	Diploma	60	36.8
	Degree	77	47.2
	Master/PhD	26	16.0

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics show that Malaysian university students reported moderately high levels of resilience ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.42$) and positive Big Five personality traits ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.38$), with motivation emerging as the strongest construct ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.09$), indicating consistently high motivational levels across the sample.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Student Resilience	163	3.6675	0.42264
Big Five Personality Traits	163	3.7098	0.38349
Motivation	163	3.9282	0.09197

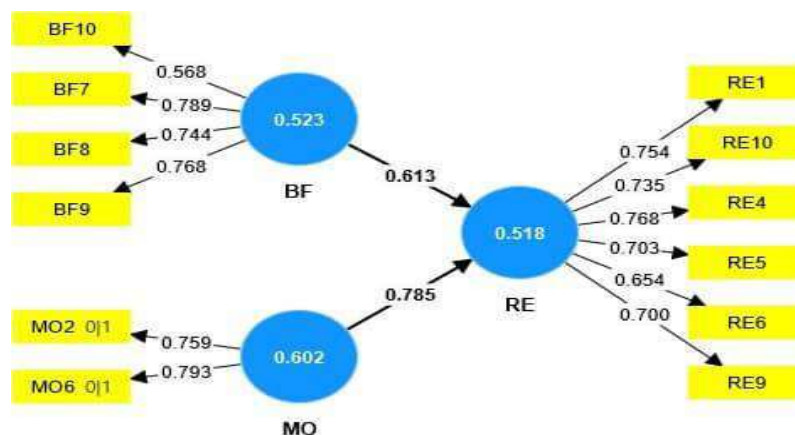
PLS-Path Analysis

Figure 4.2 presents the PLS-Path Analysis of the measurement model. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, confirming convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Specifically, the AVE for Big Five Personality Traits was 0.523, for Motivation 0.602, and for Student Resilience 0.518, indicating that each construct explained more than 50% of the variance of its indicators.

Path coefficients further demonstrated positive relationships among the constructs. The effect of Big Five Personality Traits on Student Resilience was 0.613, while the effect of Motivation on Student Resilience was stronger at 0.785, suggesting that motivation plays a more substantial role than personality traits in predicting resilience. All indicator loadings ranged between 0.568 and 0.793, providing additional support for measurement reliability. These findings confirm that the proposed model demonstrates satisfactory validity and reliability, and both personality traits and motivation significantly contribute to enhancing resilience among Malaysian university students.

The results highlight that both Big Five Personality Traits and motivation significantly influence student resilience, with motivation showing a stronger predictive effect. This finding aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which emphasizes the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sustaining persistence and adaptive coping. High levels of motivation appear to enable students to navigate academic stressors more effectively, reinforcing resilience. At the same time, the significant contribution of personality traits corroborates earlier studies suggesting that conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion enhance coping and adaptation, while low neuroticism reduces vulnerability to stress (Backmann et al., 2019; Barańczuk, 2021). From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), these results suggest that resilience arises from the interaction between individual personality dispositions and motivational processes, supported by environmental demands and resources. Importantly, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that while both factors matter, motivation exerts a more dominant role than personality in shaping resilience among Malaysian university students, underscoring the need for higher education institutions to foster motivational climates that support students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Figure 4.2: PLS-Path Analysis of AVE value (n=163)



Discriminant Validity – Fornell and Larcker Criterion

The Fornell-Larcker criterion results confirm discriminant validity, as the square root of AVE values for Big Five Personality (0.603), Motivation (0.592), and Student Resilience (0.704) are all greater than their inter-construct correlations.

Table 4: Fornell-Larcker Criterion Results

Latent Variables	BF	MO	RE
Big Five Personality (BF)	0.603		
Motivation (MO)	0.024	0.592	
Student Resilience (RE)	0.603	0.254	0.704

Discriminant Validity – Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ration Criterion

The HTMT values between Big Five Personality and Motivation (0.266), Big Five Personality and Student Resilience (0.674), and Motivation and Student Resilience (0.363) are all below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015), thus confirming discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity of Measurement Model (HTMT Criterion)

Latent Variables	Big Five Personality	Motivation	Student Resilience
Big Five Personality	–	0.266	0.674
Motivation	0.266	–	0.363
Student Resilience	0.674	0.363	–

Model Fit Indices

Table 6 presents the goodness-of-fit indices for both the Saturated Model and the Estimated Model. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values were 0.092 for both models, which is below the maximum cut-off value of 0.10, indicating an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Similarly, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) values for both models were 0.632, suggesting a moderate model fit.

Table 6: Model Fit Indices for the Measurement Model

Fit Indices	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.092	0.092
NFI	0.632	0.632

Assessment of R² Values

Table 7 shows the R² values for the endogenous construct, Student Resilience. The R² value of 0.420 and adjusted R² of 0.414 both exceed Cohen's (1988) recommended threshold of 0.26, indicating that the model demonstrates a substantial level of explanatory power. This suggests that the combination of Big Five Personality Traits and Motivation explains approximately 42% of the variance in Student Resilience among Malaysian university students.

Table 7: Result of R² Values

Endogenous Construct	R-Square	Threshold	R-Square Adjusted
Student Resilience	0.420	> 0.26 (substantial)	0.414

Structural Path Effect Sizes (f^2)

Table 8 presents the effect sizes (f^2) of the structural paths in the model. The effect of Big Five Personality Traits on Student Resilience was 0.655, which is considered large, indicating that personality traits strongly contribute to explaining resilience. In contrast, the effect of Motivation on Student Resilience was 0.070, which falls under the small effect size category (Cohen, 1988). These results suggest that while both predictors are significant, personality traits exert a much stronger influence on resilience compared to motivation. The results indicate that Big Five Personality is the dominant predictor of student resilience with a large effect size ($f^2 = 0.655$), while motivation contributes a smaller yet meaningful effect ($f^2 = 0.070$).

Table 8: Structural Path Effect Sizes (f^2)

Structural Path	Effect Size (f^2)	Rating
Big Five Personality → Student Resilience	0.655	Large
Motivation → Student Resilience	0.070	Small

Recapitulation of Findings

This study examined the influence of the Big Five Personality Traits and motivation on student resilience among Malaysian university students. The findings validated the proposed hypotheses, confirming that both personality traits and motivation significantly impact resilience, thereby supporting H1 and H2. The R^2 value of 0.420 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.414$) exceeded Cohen's (1988) benchmark of 0.26, indicating that the predictors explained a substantial proportion of variance in resilience. These results affirm that personality and motivational factors jointly enhance the ability of students to adapt and persevere in higher education contexts.

Discussion of Findings

Research Objective 1: Big Five Personality Traits and Resilience

The results demonstrate that the Big Five Personality Traits significantly affect resilience, with conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness contributing positively, while neuroticism weakens resilience. These findings echo previous studies (Tamannaifar & Shahmirzaei, 2019; Fullerton et al., 2021), highlighting the role of adaptive coping strategies and positive personality traits in sustaining resilience. For Malaysian universities, this underscores the importance of providing personalized support mechanisms such as time management workshops for conscientious students or social support networks for extraverted learners—to strengthen resilience across diverse personality profiles.

Research Objective 2: Motivation and Resilience

Motivation emerged as a significant predictor of resilience, supporting H2. Consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) and recent empirical evidence (Yang & Wang, 2022), motivated students were better equipped to cope with academic stressors, sustain persistence, and maintain well-being. The findings suggest that motivation serves as a psychological resource that bolsters resilience against challenges such as academic pressure, cultural adjustment, and limited resources. Practically, higher education institutions can integrate motivation-enhancing initiatives, such as mentoring, cultural exchange activities, and mental health support programs, to reinforce resilience among students.

Research Objective 3: Recommendations

Building upon the findings from RO1 and RO2, this study provides several recommendations to strengthen student resilience in Malaysian universities. First, universities should design personality-sensitive interventions, such as resilience training tailored to conscientious, extraverted, or agreeable students, while offering targeted psychological support for students high in neuroticism. Second, motivation-focused programs should be institutionalized, including workshops that enhance intrinsic motivation, peer mentoring schemes, and culturally inclusive student activities that foster belonging and persistence. Finally, collaboration with mental health professionals is essential for creating structured support systems that address both personality-related challenges and motivational needs. Together, these initiatives can foster a holistic educational environment that cultivates resilience, academic achievement, and well-being.

These findings can be further explained through Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which emphasizes the interaction between personal traits and environmental factors in shaping adaptive behavior, and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which highlights the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sustaining resilience. Together, these theories provide a robust framework for interpreting how personality traits and motivation jointly influence resilience in Malaysian higher education.

Contributions of the Study

This study contributes both theoretically and practically.

- **Theoretical Contribution:** The research integrates Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Determination Theory to explain resilience, offering empirical evidence from a Malaysian context where such studies are scarce. It highlights the joint role of personality and motivation, expanding resilience research beyond Western settings.
- **Practical Contribution:** The findings provide actionable insights for higher education institutions and policymakers. Universities can design personality-sensitive interventions (e.g., resilience training tailored to conscientious or extraverted students) and motivation-enhancing programmes (e.g., peer mentoring, growth mindset workshops). Such initiatives can strengthen resilience, improve student well-being, and enhance academic success.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that both Big Five Personality Traits and motivation significantly contribute to student resilience in the Malaysian higher education context. While personality traits shape students' predispositions to cope with adversity, motivation plays a more dynamic role in sustaining persistence and adaptive behavior. The results extend theoretical perspectives such as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) by demonstrating the interactive role of personality and motivation in resilience building.

From a practical standpoint, the findings emphasize the need for Malaysian universities to design holistic interventions that not only address academic performance but also foster psychological well-being, resilience, and adaptability among students. By strengthening both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors while recognizing diverse personality profiles,

higher education institutions can better equip students to thrive in demanding academic and life contexts.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the influence of Big Five Personality Traits and motivation on student resilience in Malaysian universities, several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to establish causality between personality, motivation, and resilience. Longitudinal studies are recommended to capture changes in resilience over time and to assess the long-term impact of personality traits and motivational factors.

Second, the sample size of 163 respondents, although adequate for PLS-SEM analysis, may limit the generalizability of the findings across Malaysia's diverse higher education institutions. Future research should expand to include larger and more diverse samples across public, private, and international universities.

Third, data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias and common method variance. Future studies could integrate mixed-method approaches, such as interviews or behavioral assessments, to triangulate findings and provide deeper insights.

Finally, the study focused only on personality and motivation as predictors of resilience. Other potentially influential factors such as social support, emotional intelligence, academic environment, and digital learning experiences were not examined. Future research could adopt a more comprehensive framework that incorporates individual, social, and institutional factors.

In conclusion, future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-method designs, expand the range of predictors, and examine cross-cultural comparisons within ASEAN or global contexts. Such efforts would advance a more holistic understanding of resilience in higher education.

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