

Resilience and Psychological Well-Being During Career Transitions Education

Prof. Camille R. Dufour

Centre for Intelligent Analytics, Nouvelle Université de Lyon, Lyon, France

Received: 25/04/2026 Accepted: 11/06/2026 Published: 10/07/2026

Abstract

Career transitions represent significant developmental milestones that often involve changes in educational pathways, employment status, professional roles, or career aspirations. While these transitions provide opportunities for personal and professional growth, they also expose individuals to uncertainty, stress, and psychological challenges that may influence their overall well-being. Among students and early-career professionals, resilience has emerged as a critical psychological resource that enables individuals to adapt effectively to changing circumstances, overcome setbacks, and maintain positive mental health during periods of transition. The relationship between resilience and psychological well-being during career transitions from an educational perspective, with particular emphasis on university students preparing to enter the workforce. A quantitative research design is proposed using a structured questionnaire to assess resilience, psychological well-being, career adaptability, and perceived transition-related stress among final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students. Standardized measurement scales may be employed to evaluate resilience, emotional well-being, self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and career readiness. The collected data can be analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression techniques to determine the extent to which resilience predicts psychological well-being during career transitions.

Keywords: Resilience, Psychological Well-Being, Career Transitions, Higher Education, Career Adaptability

Introduction

Career transitions are among the most significant developmental experiences in an individual's life, involving movement from one educational, professional, or occupational stage to another. These transitions may include progressing from school to higher education, entering the workforce after graduation, changing careers, pursuing advanced education, or adapting to new workplace roles. Although career transitions provide opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and professional advancement, they also present numerous psychological, emotional, and social challenges. The uncertainty associated with career decisions, employment opportunities, changing work environments, and evolving professional expectations often creates considerable stress, particularly among university students preparing to enter the labor market. Higher education institutions play a vital role in preparing students not only with academic knowledge and technical competencies but also with the psychological resources necessary to manage career-related challenges. In today's rapidly changing global economy, technological innovation, digital transformation, automation, and shifting labor market demands require graduates to demonstrate adaptability, lifelong learning, and

resilience. Employers increasingly value graduates who possess strong emotional competencies, problem-solving abilities, and the capacity to cope effectively with uncertainty and change. Consequently, universities are placing greater emphasis on developing students' psychological readiness alongside their academic and professional qualifications. One of the most important psychological resources during career transitions is **resilience**. Resilience refers to an individual's ability to adapt positively to adversity, recover from setbacks, and maintain effective functioning despite experiencing stressful or challenging circumstances. Rather than avoiding difficulties, resilient individuals demonstrate flexibility, optimism, perseverance, and confidence when confronted with obstacles. They view challenges as opportunities for learning and personal development, enabling them to respond constructively to uncertainty and change. In educational settings, resilience helps students manage academic pressures, career-related anxiety, and the emotional demands associated with preparing for future employment. Closely related to resilience is the concept of **psychological well-being**, which encompasses positive mental functioning, emotional stability, self-acceptance, meaningful relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, and purpose in life. Psychological well-being extends beyond the absence of psychological disorders and reflects an individual's capacity to lead a satisfying, productive, and meaningful life. Students with high levels of psychological well-being are generally more motivated, confident, emotionally balanced, and capable of managing academic and career-related challenges effectively. Conversely, prolonged uncertainty, fear of unemployment, financial concerns, and career indecision may negatively affect mental health, increasing stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and reduced life satisfaction. The transition from higher education to employment has become increasingly complex due to globalization, technological advancement, economic fluctuations, and changing employment patterns. Rapid developments in artificial intelligence, automation, remote work, and the digital economy have transformed traditional career pathways, requiring graduates to acquire new competencies and continuously update their skills. Competition within the labor market has intensified, and many students experience uncertainty regarding career choices, employability, professional identity, and long-term career prospects. These changing conditions highlight the importance of psychological resilience in helping individuals successfully navigate career transitions. Several theoretical perspectives explain the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being during career transitions. Positive psychology emphasizes individual strengths, optimism, and adaptive functioning as key determinants of well-being and successful adjustment. Career construction theory suggests that individuals actively shape their careers by developing adaptability, confidence, curiosity, and control in response to changing occupational environments. Similarly, the Conservation of Resources Theory proposes that psychological resources such as resilience protect individuals from the harmful effects of stress by enhancing their ability to cope with demanding situations. Together, these perspectives suggest that resilience strengthens psychological well-being by enabling individuals to interpret career-related challenges as manageable and meaningful experiences. Empirical research has consistently demonstrated positive associations between resilience and psychological well-being among students and young professionals. Individuals with higher resilience generally report lower

levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion while exhibiting greater life satisfaction, self-efficacy, optimism, and career adaptability. Resilient students are more likely to engage in effective problem-solving, seek social support, maintain motivation, and persist despite setbacks encountered during job searches, interviews, or career planning activities. These adaptive behaviors enhance both psychological health and career success. Career transitions are also influenced by numerous contextual factors, including family support, socioeconomic background, educational experiences, mentorship, institutional resources, and access to career guidance services. Universities increasingly recognize the need to provide comprehensive support through career counseling, employability training, internships, mentoring programs, entrepreneurship education, and mental health services. Such initiatives help students develop resilience, confidence, communication skills, and emotional intelligence, thereby improving their readiness for professional life. In addition to institutional support, personal characteristics such as self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and lifelong learning orientation contribute significantly to successful career transitions. Students who possess strong psychological resources are more likely to embrace change, identify new opportunities, recover from disappointments, and remain committed to achieving their professional goals. These attributes are particularly important in contemporary labor markets characterized by continuous technological change, flexible employment arrangements, and evolving occupational requirements.

Dimensions of Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept that reflects an individual's ability to function effectively, experience positive emotions, maintain satisfying relationships, and achieve personal growth while successfully coping with life's challenges. Unlike traditional approaches that define mental health simply as the absence of psychological disorders, psychological well-being emphasizes positive functioning, self-realization, and the capacity to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life. In educational settings, psychological well-being is particularly important because it influences students' academic performance, motivation, career readiness, resilience, and overall quality of life. During career transitions, maintaining high levels of psychological well-being enables university students to adapt to changing circumstances, manage uncertainty, and pursue professional goals with confidence. One of the most widely accepted frameworks of psychological well-being was proposed by Carol D. Ryff, who identified six core dimensions: **self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth**. These dimensions collectively explain how individuals maintain positive psychological functioning and successfully navigate developmental transitions. The first dimension, **self-acceptance**, refers to an individual's ability to recognize and accept both personal strengths and weaknesses while maintaining a positive attitude toward oneself. Self-acceptance involves realistic self-evaluation, confidence, and emotional stability rather than perfectionism. University students with high self-acceptance are better able to manage academic setbacks, career uncertainty, and professional rejection without experiencing excessive self-criticism. They view mistakes as valuable learning opportunities and maintain confidence in their abilities despite temporary challenges. The second dimension is **positive relationships with others**, which emphasizes

the ability to establish warm, trusting, and supportive interpersonal relationships. Strong social connections with family members, friends, teachers, mentors, and colleagues provide emotional support, practical guidance, and encouragement during periods of career transition. Positive relationships reduce feelings of isolation, increase resilience, and enhance psychological well-being by fostering a sense of belonging and social security. Students who maintain healthy interpersonal relationships are generally more successful in collaborative learning, networking, and professional development. **Autonomy** represents another essential dimension of psychological well-being. It refers to an individual's capacity to make independent decisions, regulate personal behavior, and resist inappropriate external pressures. Autonomous individuals demonstrate confidence in their judgments and are capable of making career decisions based on their personal interests, values, and long-term aspirations rather than solely responding to societal or peer expectations. During career transitions, autonomy enables students to evaluate opportunities objectively and make informed educational and occupational choices. Another important dimension is **environmental mastery**, which reflects the ability to effectively manage one's surroundings and utilize available resources to achieve personal goals. Individuals with strong environmental mastery demonstrate effective problem-solving skills, adaptability, and organizational competence. They can successfully balance academic responsibilities, career planning, internships, financial obligations, and personal commitments. Environmental mastery is particularly valuable during career transitions because it enhances individuals' ability to adapt to changing workplace environments and evolving professional expectations. The fifth dimension, **purpose in life**, refers to having meaningful goals, clear direction, and a sense of purpose that guides personal and professional development. Students with a strong sense of purpose remain motivated despite obstacles because they understand the long-term significance of their educational and career efforts. Purpose in life enhances persistence, optimism, and resilience by providing a meaningful framework for interpreting challenges and setbacks. Individuals who perceive their careers as aligned with their personal values and aspirations generally experience higher levels of psychological well-being. The sixth dimension, **personal growth**, reflects the continuous pursuit of self-improvement, learning, and realization of one's potential. Individuals who value personal growth remain open to new experiences, actively develop new skills, and embrace opportunities for professional and personal development. Career transitions often require individuals to acquire additional competencies, adapt to changing technologies, and continuously update their knowledge. Students with strong personal growth orientations are more likely to view career transitions as opportunities for advancement rather than sources of stress. Beyond Ryff's model, researchers also recognize **emotional well-being** as an important aspect of psychological functioning. Emotional well-being refers to the experience of positive emotions such as happiness, optimism, gratitude, and life satisfaction while effectively managing negative emotions including stress, anxiety, disappointment, and frustration. Emotionally healthy students demonstrate resilience during job searches, interviews, examinations, and career-related uncertainty because they possess effective emotional regulation strategies. Another significant dimension is **social well-being**, which reflects individuals' sense of belonging, community participation, and contribution to society. Socially connected students are more likely to build

professional networks, participate in internships, collaborate with peers, and seek mentorship opportunities that facilitate successful career transitions. Social well-being enhances confidence and reduces psychological distress during periods of change. **Occupational well-being** has also gained increasing attention in studies of career development. It refers to satisfaction with career preparation, confidence in employability, work-life balance expectations, and perceived readiness for professional responsibilities. University students who believe they possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to succeed in the labor market generally report greater optimism and lower levels of transition-related stress. These dimensions are highly interconnected and mutually reinforcing. For example, self-acceptance strengthens autonomy, positive relationships enhance emotional well-being, environmental mastery supports career adaptability, and purpose in life promotes personal growth. Together, these dimensions enable individuals to maintain psychological stability while responding

Challenges Faced During Career Transitions

Career transitions are important developmental milestones that involve movement from one educational or professional stage to another. These transitions may include entering higher education, graduating from university, securing the first job, changing careers, returning to education, or adapting to new organizational roles. Although career transitions create opportunities for learning, professional advancement, and personal growth, they also present a wide range of psychological, social, economic, and occupational challenges. Successfully navigating these challenges requires resilience, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and strong support systems. Understanding the difficulties encountered during career transitions is essential for developing interventions that promote psychological well-being and career success. One of the most common challenges is **career uncertainty**. University students and recent graduates often face uncertainty regarding career choices, employment opportunities, job stability, and future professional development. Rapid technological change, globalization, and evolving labor market demands have made career pathways less predictable than in previous generations. Many students experience difficulty identifying suitable career options that align with their interests, abilities, and long-term aspirations. This uncertainty frequently contributes to stress, anxiety, and reduced confidence during the transition from education to employment. Another significant challenge is **employment competition**. The growing number of graduates entering the labor market has intensified competition for high-quality employment opportunities. Employers increasingly seek candidates who possess not only academic qualifications but also practical experience, communication skills, digital competencies, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities. Students who lack internships, work experience, or industry-specific skills may encounter difficulties securing employment, leading to frustration, self-doubt, and psychological distress. **Skill gaps and employability concerns** represent another major obstacle during career transitions. The rapid pace of technological advancement requires graduates to continuously update their knowledge and acquire new competencies. In many cases, there is a mismatch between university curricula and the practical skills expected by employers. Graduates may feel inadequately prepared for workplace responsibilities, particularly in areas such as digital literacy, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, and project management. These perceived skill deficiencies can reduce career confidence and increase

transition-related stress. **Financial pressure** also plays a significant role during career transitions. Many university students graduate with educational expenses, student loans, or financial responsibilities that create pressure to secure stable employment quickly. Delays in obtaining employment or accepting positions that do not meet career expectations may generate financial insecurity, emotional stress, and reduced psychological well-being. Economic uncertainty may further limit opportunities for additional education, professional certifications, or career exploration. The transition from university to professional employment often requires substantial **psychological adjustment**. Students move from structured academic environments with clear schedules and institutional support to workplaces characterized by greater responsibility, accountability, and performance expectations. Adapting to organizational cultures, workplace relationships, professional ethics, and changing job roles may initially be challenging. Individuals who struggle to adjust may experience increased anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction. Another important challenge involves **identity development and role transition**. Career transitions frequently require individuals to redefine their personal and professional identities. Students who previously identified themselves primarily as learners must gradually adopt new roles as professionals, employees, or entrepreneurs. This process often involves reassessing personal values, career aspirations, and long-term life goals. Uncertainty regarding professional identity may lead to confusion, reduced self-confidence, and hesitation when making career decisions. **Fear of failure and performance anxiety** commonly affect individuals during career transitions. Job interviews, competitive recruitment processes, probationary employment periods, and performance evaluations often create psychological pressure. Many graduates worry about making mistakes, meeting employer expectations, or failing to achieve career goals. Excessive fear of failure may reduce motivation, increase avoidance behaviors, and negatively influence decision-making and overall psychological well-being. The increasing influence of **technology and digital transformation** has introduced additional challenges for career development. Automation, artificial intelligence, remote work, digital communication platforms, and rapidly changing workplace technologies require continuous learning and adaptation. Graduates must remain technologically competent while simultaneously developing interpersonal and creative skills that cannot easily be automated. Individuals who struggle to adapt to technological change may experience greater career insecurity and reduced employability. **Work-life balance concerns** have become increasingly relevant during career transitions. Many young professionals experience difficulty balancing workplace responsibilities with personal relationships, health, family commitments, and continuing education. Long working hours, demanding organizational cultures, and expectations of constant digital availability may contribute to stress, fatigue, and burnout. Establishing healthy boundaries between professional and personal life is therefore an important challenge for individuals entering the workforce.

Conclusion

Career transitions represent a critical phase in the lives of university students, marked by opportunities for professional growth as well as significant psychological, emotional, and social challenges. The movement from higher education to the workforce requires students to adapt to changing environments, make important career decisions, and cope with uncertainty

regarding employment and future professional development. In this context, resilience emerges as a vital psychological resource that enables individuals to navigate transition-related challenges while maintaining positive mental health and overall well-being. This paper demonstrates that resilience and psychological well-being are closely interconnected. Students with higher levels of resilience are better equipped to manage stress, recover from setbacks, adapt to changing circumstances, and maintain optimism during periods of career uncertainty. The various dimensions of psychological well-being, including self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relationships, and personal growth, collectively contribute to students' ability to achieve successful educational and career outcomes. These dimensions not only enhance emotional stability but also strengthen confidence, motivation, and long-term career adaptability. Career transitions are influenced by multiple challenges, including employment competition, skill gaps, financial pressures, technological advancements, workplace adjustment, identity development, and changing labor market expectations. While these challenges may increase stress and psychological vulnerability, they also provide valuable opportunities for learning, self-reflection, and personal development. Students who possess resilience, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and effective coping strategies are more likely to transform these challenges into opportunities for growth and professional success. Higher education institutions play a fundamental role in preparing students for career transitions by providing comprehensive academic, psychological, and professional support. Universities should strengthen career counseling services, mentoring programs, internship opportunities, employability training, life skills education, and resilience-building initiatives. Integrating social-emotional learning, career development courses, and mental health support into higher education curricula can enhance students' confidence, decision-making abilities, and readiness for the evolving workplace. Faculty members, career counselors, families, and employers should collaborate to create supportive environments that encourage lifelong learning, adaptability, and psychological well-being. Future research should investigate the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being across diverse educational contexts, cultural settings, and occupational sectors. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine how resilience develops throughout different stages of career progression and how emerging trends such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, remote work, and the gig economy influence career transitions and mental health. Further exploration of protective factors, including social support, emotional intelligence, and career adaptability, would also contribute to the development of more effective educational and psychological interventions. Resilience is a key predictor of psychological well-being during career transitions and plays a central role in helping university students successfully adapt to professional challenges. By fostering resilience, emotional competence, and career readiness, higher education institutions can support students in managing uncertainty, maintaining positive mental health, and achieving sustainable personal and professional success. Promoting resilience should therefore be regarded as an essential component of higher education, ensuring that graduates are well prepared to thrive in an increasingly dynamic and competitive world of work.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.
- Caza, B. B., Brower, H. H., & Wayne, J. H. (2015). Effects of a holistic, experiential curriculum on business students' satisfaction and career confidence. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 13(1), 75–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2015.01.006>
- Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. T. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety*, 18(2), 76–82. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.10113>
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), 79–122. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027>
- Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227–238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227>
- Masten, A. S. (2014). *Ordinary magic: Resilience in development*. Guilford Press.
- Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069–1081. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069>
- Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 719–727. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719>
- Savickas, M. L. (2013). Career construction theory and practice. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (2nd ed., pp. 147–183). John Wiley & Sons.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press.
- Super, D. E. (1990). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (2nd ed., pp. 197–261). Jossey-Bass.
- World Health Organization. (2022). *World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338>
- Youssef-Morgan, C. M., & Luthans, F. (2015). Psychological capital and well-being. *Stress and Health*, 31(3), 180–188. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2623>