



How Does Emotion Regulation Drive Personal Growth? Exploring the Mediating Pathways of Resilience Among Taiwanese University Students

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Objective

Personal growth is a dynamic psychological process in which individuals pursue self-actualization, realize their potential, and continuously transcend themselves. For university students in the critical phase of self-identity exploration and career development, personal growth is not only a key indicator of mental health but also a core foundation for building future resilience and adapting to societal changes. However, empirical research on the internal mechanisms driving personal growth among Taiwanese university students remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore how emotion regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression) affect individuals' resilience and further guide the enhancement of personal growth among college students. By clarifying the path relationships between these variables, this study expects to provide empirical research recommendations for strengthening personal growth in college counseling and guidance practices.

Methods

This study utilized a questionnaire survey method, recruiting 1,275 students from universities in Taiwan. After excluding invalid questionnaires, the final sample consisted of 1,163 valid responses ($N = 1,163$). Participants were aged between 18 and 24 years ($M = 20.65$, $SD = 1.42$). The research instruments included the Personal Growth subscale from Ryff's Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale, the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS with Hayes' Process Macro Model 4 to perform mediation model testing and bootstrapping significance tests.

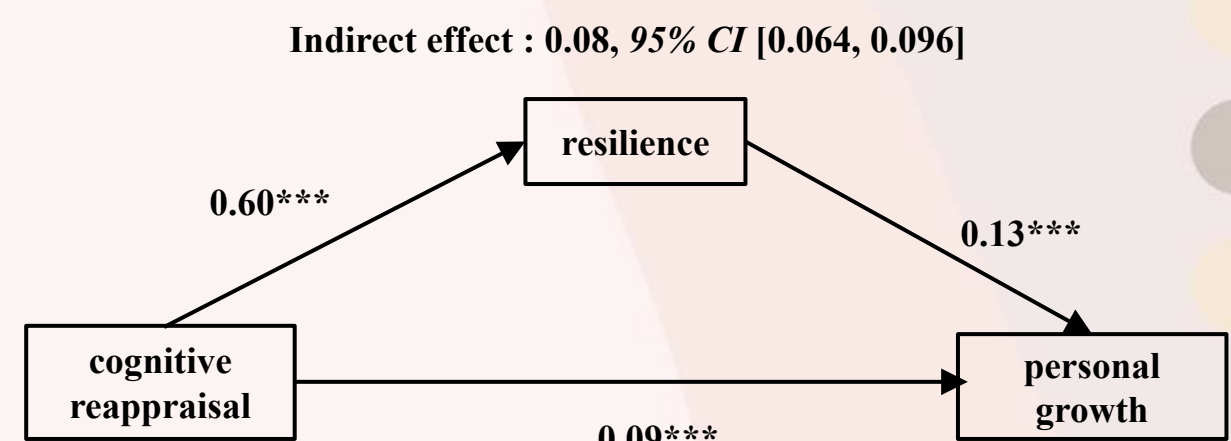
Results

The results indicated that resilience played a significant partial mediating role between cognitive reappraisal and personal growth (indirect effect = 0.08, 95% CI [0.064, 0.096]). Concurrently, cognitive reappraisal had a significant positive direct effect on personal growth ($b = 0.09$, $p < .001$), suggesting that this strategy not only directly promotes personal growth but also exerts an indirect influence by strengthening resilience. Conversely, the pathway involving expressive suppression exhibited a unique "competitive mediation" pattern. Although expressive suppression significantly and positively predicted resilience ($b = 0.30$, $p < .001$), thereby producing a positive indirect effect on personal growth (indirect effect = 0.052, 95% CI [0.035, 0.070]), it had a significant negative direct effect on personal growth ($b = -0.03$, $p = .034$). Because the direct and indirect effects operated in opposite directions, they offset each other, resulting in a non-significant total effect ($p = .128$).

References

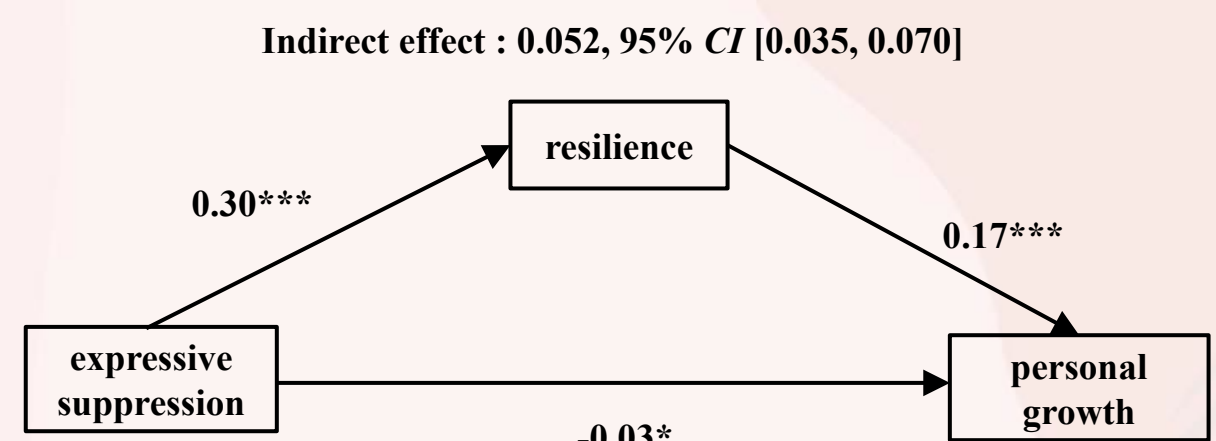
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Results



Notes: *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 1. The Partial Mediating Effect of Resilience on the Relationship Between Cognitive Reappraisal and Personal Growth



Notes: * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 2. The Competitive Mediating Effect of Resilience on the Relationship Between Expressive Suppression and Personal Growth

Conclusion

In summary, this study found that emotion regulation strategies exhibit heterogeneous influence mechanisms on the personal growth of university students. Cognitive reappraisal was verified as a stable adaptive strategy for promoting personal growth. In contrast, expressive suppression demonstrated a significant "competitive mediation" effect; that is, while it can enhance the sense of personal growth by strengthening resilience (positive indirect effect), it also directly hinders an individual's perception of self-growth (negative direct effect). The mechanism may stem from the East Asian cultural context, where "suppression" serves an adaptive function in maintaining interpersonal harmony and reducing impulsive behavior, which in turn transforms into resilience and strengthens the psychological state of personal growth. Therefore, this study suggests that psychological counseling practice should prioritize strengthening university students' cognitive reappraisal abilities to establish stable growth momentum. For clients accustomed to using expressive suppression, the focus of counseling should not be limited to reducing suppressive behavior; instead, they should be guided to perceive the direct negative impact of suppression on their sense of self-growth, and assisted in transforming suppressed emotional energy into concrete resilient actions to achieve a dual balance between cultural adaptation and self-development.

Disclosure of conflict of interest
Name of first author: Ya-Chi Chen
I have no COI with regard to the presentation