

## Literature's Impact on Emotional Resilience and Stress Reduction in Generation Z

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### ABSTRACT

Generation Z faces constant access to curated content and can be victims of cyberbullying and pressured to maintain a perfect cyber persona, which can further anxiety, depression, and feelings of insufficiency. In this environment, examining alternative strategies for coping, improving emotional resilience, and reducing stress is essential for Generation Z. Literature can provide comfort, foster empathy, and introduce new ways of understanding the world, so it has great potential for helping Generation Z manage stress. Literature provides Generation Z with an emotionally safe environment to explore and process complicated emotions. In literature, they have a space that allows them to avoid the reality of their everyday lives. Through stories, poems, and drama, individuals can meet many different human experiences and vicariously experience the struggles and achievements along with the characters.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Generation Z, also known as the Generation or Post-Millennials, is the name given to those born from the late 1990s to the early 2010s. This generation uniquely relates to technology and digital media (Ranieri et al., 2021). Since they were small, they have grown rapidly with non-existent technology and connectivity. They live in a world flooded with information and online interactions every moment (Yoesoef, 2020). Social media platforms become part of daily life; they influence how we communicate, search for information, and form our identity (Turner, 2015; Vidani & Jaiswal, 2024).

However, even though social media brings many benefits, it also impacts the mental health of the generation. This cannot be ignored (Turner, 2015). Exposure to content that has been curated very neatly risks cyberbullying, and pressure to maintain the image of the perfect self in cyberspace often triggers anxiety, depression, and feelings of not being enough. In good condition, looking for alternative methods to face stress and pressure to build emotional resilience among Generation Z is important.

One possible avenue to address this is literature. Literature, in a digital universe, has generally been a refuge, a means of emotional development, and an opportunity to acquire a different angle on life. As we understand how social media usage and mental health are intertwined, this understanding will become increasingly important in making options for the public good (Yakobus et al., 2023). Promoting literature in this way can make a difference for the younger generation through empowerment, reassurance, and diminishment of stress.

In this regard, the theory of positive psychology that emerged in the late 20th century was important. Positive psychology exposes strengths, happiness, and big and little positives without pretending individuals do not face struggles (Dwidienawati et al., 2025). Literature can become an easy means of accessing positive growth among the young generation.

Literature is a form of entertainment and a platform for exploring complex emotions. Literature immerses readers in various situations ranging from joy to sorrow alongside a fictitious character, whether that fictional piece is a story, poem, or drama (Barcellos & Gil, 2020). This context allows readers to recognize and respond to their feelings deliberately. Readers can also build empathy by meeting characters from different lives and perspectives to understand others better.

When a reader observes a character overcoming obstacles, that can create a sense of hope and resilience - a belief that wounds can heal and barriers can be surmounted (Setia et al., 2024). Also, literature acts as a mirror. It reflects experiences to the reader, allowing their feelings to be seen as real and validated. If a reader finds a story that mirrors their experience, this can help them feel that they are not isolated (Egan et al., 2024). Furthermore, literature is a means to build emotional intelligence, understanding, managing, and expressing emotions, as well as good self-awareness and understanding of others. Thus, literature is not only a tool for education, but also a medium for healing, which is very relevant to Generation Z.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional resilience, the ability of an individual to adapt emotionally when facing pressure or difficult situations, plays an important role as a protector from the negative impact that appears as a consequence of experiencing whole stress ( Dolcos et al., 2021). Several studies show that *emotional intelligence* (intelligence) and resilience are closely related (Collado-Soler et al., 2023). In this context, resilience is about survival, learning, and growing from every challenge (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023).

Literature can also play an important role in forming a community with values together, which in the end supports the development of individual resilience (Maulana & Wardah, 2023). Literary works that raise themes like tolerance, work, and the importance of a strong system support a strong social community. There is no direct emphasis on the importance of involvement in the community to help individuals overcome difficulties. This is a growing sense of responsibility to answer together and trust that problems can be faced together (Edward & Warelow, 2005; Fu & Wang, 2023).

Increasing resilience can be done through reading reflective literature. When people read and reflect on literary works, they can understand and experience themselves from a new perspective and gain deep insight (Cheung, 2016).

Literary ability in growing resilience also aligns with research highlighting the importance of supporting social and community engagement in guarding mental health (Macdonald et al., 2013; Maulana & Wardah, 2023). The approach aims to awaken positive emotions, increase psychological welfare, and support the mental recovery ( Zautra et al., 2010).

Studies show that secure attachment, positive emotions, and a sense of purpose are important foundations for resilience (Rutten et al., 2013). According to empirical findings, one of the main factors of protection for teenagers is the existence of perceived social support in a real way. This strengthens their ability to face pressure and increases psychological welfare ( Surżykiewicz et al., 2022).

Reading literary works, then imagining oneself as part of the story or as a figure in the narrative, can become a strong reflection. Through this process, the reader not only understands the story but also can give meaning to their personal experience in a more profound way, making literature a medium of formation of a resilient, effective, and meaningful self.

## METHODOLOGY

Literature review qualitative. This highlights the importance of language as a tool for communication and reflection, particularly in building resilience in the face of various challenges in life ( Ichsano et al., 2024). Through the medium of language, literary works provide room for emotional exploration that allows the reader to become involved with various inner experiences, contributing to the development of emotional competence ( Mella & Munita, 2018). Interaction with literary text helps individuals understand the emotional condition of a figure in a way implicit through actions, motivations, and social relationships (Pérez et al., 2023). Thus, literature becomes an effective means in managing stress and coping with a situation full of pressure in an emotional way.

## **RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Through reflection on challenges and successes in the story, the reader can obtain a personal perspective on the situation, which can increase emotional outlook and build resilience (Zabka, 2016). Literature introduces various survival strategies and examples of perseverance. The character developed with Good often arouses a strong emotional response from readers, encouraging a deeper bond with the narrative (Mbira, 2024). When the reader sees aspects of themselves reflected in struggle and growth figures, the experiences read become more meaningful personally and can even change their view of life.

Many literary works feature a figure who can endure suffering, face difficulties, and grow personally. Stories like this can become a strong source of inspiration, showing that perseverance, fortitude, and inner strength can overcome obstacles in life (Pahwa & Khan, 2022). The characters that represent toughness provide a mental model for the reader to form a powerful stance on emotional life in real life (Fenwick-Smith et al., 2018). With shared themes such as love, loss, grief, and redemption, literary works help readers understand the complexity of human emotions and introduce mechanisms for healthy coping. In addition, literature also fosters empathy and appreciation of the experience of life as a universal human nature.

Apart from being a means of entertainment, literature also functions as a window into psychological factors that allow the reader to explore possible feelings that are difficult to express directly. In the reading process, individuals often find a safe room to confess wounds, inner anxiety, or fragility that has been buried. Through identification with figures in the story, the reader can realize that the emotions they feel are not a personal burden alone, but rather a part of the dynamic life of a universal human being. This strengthens the power of healing emotions offered by literary works.

Function reflective, this can also be done to expand understanding of trauma, mainly when the reader originates from a background that has experienced similar experiences. In this context, literature becomes a means of processing collective and individual trauma, opening up room for narrative healing that is not always available in conventional therapy. Stories that depict figures rising from a downturn become a tool, a catalyst for the reader to grow hope and imagine a better future.

Furthermore, the involvement of an emotional reader with the narrative also impacts the development of empathy towards other people. When someone reads a story from a corner view with different characters' backgrounds behind him, he trains to understand feelings, struggles, and motivations that do not always align with his values. This strengthens social skills and expands sensitivity to diverse experiences.

In education, the literature-based approach has been used to hone emotional intelligence in students (Ghosn, 2001). Learning programs integrating reading literary texts with discussion and reflection have increased self-awareness, the ability to manage emotions, and healthy interpersonal relationships. Literature is not only an instrument of cognitive enrichment but

also a means of affective enrichment in class, and it encourages personal transformation.

Generation Z, who grew up amid digital disruption and high social pressure, urgently need to process healthy and constructive emotions (Kassymova et al, 2023). Literature can become an answer to the anxieties of today. In a world of everything fast and fragmented narrative, fiction precisely offers integrity, a story that gives pauses, meaning, and space to reflect. This aligns with the view that involvement with work narrative can strengthen one's identity, especially during transition.

Literary works that describe the struggle with identity, social pressure, and the search for a relevant meaning for young people building a foothold in their lives. In terms of these, the characters in a novel or short story can become mirrors, helping the reader to formulate and repeat who they are and where they are going, the life you want targeted. Literature becomes a psychologically safe room for experimentation, before real decisions are taken in daily life.

In a way, the psychospiritual experience of reading is also possible, becoming a means of contemplation. Many stories contain existential questions and journey into the character, inviting the reader to ponder the essence of suffering, forgiveness, and the objective life. This is in line with the approach of bibliotherapy used in clinical and non-clinical settings, for individuals emotionally going through hard times. Involvement in active reading is also proven to strengthen the capacity of regulatory emotions. When readers study and understand feelings in fiction, they also learn to recognize and manage their emotions alone. This gives a strong base for forming a resilient person, not in understanding hard or being injured, but in the ability to rise and stay empowered despite various challenges.

Literature plays a role in forming the collective imagination of a community, not only for individuals. Stories about courage, solidarity, and recovery become a narrative that strengthens the social bond. In a post-disaster situation, literature can become a tool to connect wounds and socialize, provide room for hearing and being heard. In this case, literature is entertainment and a cultural and spiritual survival strategy. Also important to note that diverse forms of literature – from novels, poetry, drama, to lyrics – allow various types of readers to find the door to enter the most appropriate emotional state. Flexibility. This strengthens Power's literary reach to grow toughness, emotional, across age and background, and behind culture. Therefore, that's important for institutions' education and culture. Keep going, push access and engagement to literature work.

Thus, the power of literature is not only located in the groove of the story or the language style, but especially in the power to touch a man's soul. In an increasingly advanced world, technology often offers an unforgettable experience, replacing the need to become a man in an intact way. Reading is not just an intellectual activity, but also trains empathy, self-recognition, and sustainable mind growth.

Research also shows that reading literature has contributed enormously to the development of emotional children. For example, Kumschick et al. (2014)

found that involvement with literature can increase the emotional competence of children. The behavior that appears in momentary activity, reading, and writing reflects emotional involvement and understanding of the child, which shows a close connection between literacy and emotional growth (Glazer, 1991). Further, activities tell a story that is important in building a tough community, especially after traumatic incidents (Nagamatsu et al., 2021).

In general overall, value therapeutic of literature lies in its ability For give comfort, understanding, and inspiration – especially for Generation Z. Literature does not only grow resilience emotional, but also helpful reduce level stress in an increasingly global world complex and full pressure ( Ghanouni et al., 2024; Manning & Bouchard, 2019; Terrana & Al-Delaimy, 2023).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

An individual can expand their understanding of the human experience by reading literature, helping someone build empathy, loving and valuing a dear one, and hopefully gaining a different lens through which to understand the world around them. The function of a reader has become more important now than ever before in developing emotional resilience or toughness and decreasing stress levels. For Generation Z in particular, literature can become a mirror and at the same time a guide, with figures with characteristic positive and challenging qualities as inspiration in the face of life pressure. Therefore, Generation Z is recommended to read literary works to build toughness personally and to obtain inspiration in the face of daily life stress.

## **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

Studying advanced topics is required to explore the long-term impact of innovation in the literature, learning, and developing scalable and adaptable models applied in various educational contexts. In addition, it is important to research how various literary genres, customs, reading, and literary education programs influence the psychological welfare of Generation Z.

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