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## OVERCOMING ENTITLEMENT IN STEMM EDUCATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW ON CULTIVATING RESILIENCE AMONG FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates entitlement attitudes among first-year STEM students, examining the belief that academic success is deserved regardless of effort or engagement. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research assesses how these attitudes impact academic resilience and integrity, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data from educator feedback and student surveys. These surveys reveal expectations for unearned academic success and a resistance to rigorous evaluation (Cassidy, 2015; Könings et al., 2005). Simultaneously, the study evaluates 'resilience'—students' ability to overcome academic challenges, a vital trait for adapting to the rigorous demands of higher education. Resilience is measured through responses to adversity scenarios specifically designed for the STEM context.

The research aims to develop strategies that recalibrate student expectations to align with the realities of academic life, thus promoting resilience and accountability. The study also seeks to refine teaching methodologies in response to prevalent student attitudes (Olsen, 2014), emphasising the creation of educational environments that foster both personal growth and academic excellence. By exploring the prevalence of fixed mindsets and their contribution to entitlement attitudes, and by mapping student readiness against academic performance and engagement, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how such attitudes may detract from educational outcomes. Overall, this work employs comprehensive methods to examine the interplay between student attitudes and academic experiences in STEM, aiming to enhance both educational practices and student preparedness.

**KEYWORDS:** Entitlement Attitudes, STEM Education, Academic Resilience, Growth mindset  
Pedagogical practices

### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of entitlement attitudes among university students has become a pressing concern within higher education, prompting a re-evaluation of teaching and learning paradigms. This study addresses the critical juxtaposition between students' expectations of guaranteed academic success

and the inherent educational value found in confronting and overcoming academic challenges. The prevalence of such attitudes threatens to undermine the integrity of academic achievements and poses significant challenges to the cultivation of resilience among learners. Rooted in theoretical perspectives that emphasise the importance of resilience and adaptability in educational success (Dweck, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012), this investigation seeks to uncover the impact of entitlement perceptions on students' academic resilience. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the study aims to offer actionable insights into realigning students' expectations with the realities of academic life, thus contributing to the development of more effective teaching methodologies and supportive educational environments (Olsen, 2014; Cassidy, 2015).

In the context of STEM education, entitlement is characterised by first-year university students' presumption that they are owed success, irrespective of their effort or engagement. This is identified through a blend of qualitative feedback from educators and quantitative student surveys, which highlight resistance to rigorous assessment and expectations for unearned academic accolades. Concurrently, the study investigates 'resilience'—the capacity of students to persist through academic challenges and setbacks, crucial for adapting to the rigorous demands of higher education. Resilience is assessed using responses to structured adversity scenarios, specifically designed for the STEM context (Cassidy, 2015).

This comprehensive approach aims to map student readiness against academic performance and engagement metrics, providing a nuanced understanding of how entitlement attitudes and a lack of resilience may undermine educational outcomes. Through this investigation, the study leverages mixed methods to explore the dynamic interplay between student attitudes and their academic experiences, guided by the theoretical frameworks of Dweck (2006) and Yeager & Dweck (2012). The expected outcomes include detailed insights into the manifestation of entitlement attitudes among first-year STEM students, strategic recommendations for fostering a growth mindset, and the development of pedagogical practices that enhance student engagement and academic integrity (Olsen, 2014).

By addressing these issues, the study aspires to enhance the educational experience in STEM disciplines, contributing effectively to the cultivation of an academic environment that supports personal and academic growth. This research not only aims to clarify the relationship between student attitudes and academic performance but also seeks to realign student expectations with the realities of academic effort and learning processes, thereby promoting a more resilient and adaptable student body.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The pervasive issue of academic entitlement among university students has increasingly become a focal point of concern within the scholarly community, particularly as it relates to its impacts on the learning environment and overall educational outcomes. This literature review delves into the various

dimensions of entitlement, examining its manifestations and repercussions within higher education. It further explores the constructs of resilience and growth mindset as pivotal elements in countering detrimental entitlement attitudes. The review integrates foundational theories and empirical research to articulate a comprehensive understanding of how these dynamics interact and influence both student behaviour and academic success. By synthesising insights from various studies, this review aims to provide a detailed exploration of the current landscape of entitlement in education and the effective strategies that can mitigate its negative effects while promoting a culture of resilience and continuous learning among students.

### ***The Challenge of Academic Entitlement***

Academic entitlement, which manifests as student expectations for unearned success irrespective of effort or achievement, poses a significant challenge within higher education. Characterised by a demand for rewards without corresponding effort, entitlement attitudes can undermine the integrity of academic environments (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Such expectations are increasingly prevalent among university students and are linked to detrimental behaviours including decreased engagement, confrontational interactions with faculty, and an overall erosion of academic ethos (Greenberger et al., 2008). These behaviours not only disrupt classroom dynamics but also challenge educators' ability to uphold rigorous academic standards.

### ***Detrimental Impacts on Educational Outcomes***

The consequences of entitlement are profound, affecting both classroom dynamics and broader educational outcomes. Boswell (2012) details how entitlement leads to academic dishonesty and reduced perseverance among students when faced with challenges. This shift in student attitudes necessitates a re-evaluation of educational strategies to foster environments that emphasize academic merit and personal growth, rather than entitlement.

### ***Promoting Growth Mindset as a Countermeasure***

Central to reversing the negative impact of entitlement is the promotion of a growth mindset. Dweck (2006) differentiates between fixed and growth mindsets, advocating for the latter as essential for academic and personal development. A growth mindset encourages the belief that abilities and intelligence can develop through personal effort and learning. Yeager and Dweck (2012) have demonstrated that growth mindset interventions significantly enhance student engagement and performance, effectively countering entitlement by refocusing student values on effort and resilience rather than predetermined success.

### ***Empirical Validation of Growth Mindset Strategies***

Further empirical support for growth mindset strategies is provided by Claro, Paunesku, and Dweck (2016), who show that these interventions mitigate the adverse effects of entitlement. By promoting resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to effort, these strategies align student expectations with the realities of academic achievement and foster an educational climate that values learning and development over mere achievement.

***Beyond Mindset: Comprehensive Educational Approaches***

While fostering a growth mindset is crucial, building resilience and academic integrity extends beyond this single approach. Innovative pedagogical strategies, including challenge-based learning, reflective practices, and feedback-oriented assessment, have proven effective in building resilience and integrity. Martin and Marsh (2006) argue for the integration of these resilience-building strategies within the curriculum to better prepare students to navigate both academic and personal challenges. Borman and Overman (2004) also highlight the importance of resilience in achieving academic success, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, advocating for inclusive educational practices that support all students.

***Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors in Entitlement and Resilience***

The interplay between entitlement and academic resilience is influenced by socioeconomic and cultural factors, necessitating pedagogical approaches that are adaptable and sensitive to diverse student backgrounds. Stephens, Hamedani, and Destin (2014) stress the importance of considering these factors when designing interventions, as the impact of entitlement and the effectiveness of mindset interventions may vary across different student populations.

The comprehensive analysis of academic entitlement and its interplay with resilience and growth mindset within higher education reveals several critical findings. This review methodologically synthesizes data from qualitative feedback and quantitative measures, drawing from diverse academic sources to construct a robust understanding of these phenomena.

Firstly, the literature clearly identifies academic entitlement as a growing concern within university settings, characterised by students' expectations for success without corresponding effort (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). This attitude is closely associated with decreased engagement, confrontational interactions with faculty, and an overall decline in academic ethos (Greenberger et al., 2008). Furthermore, entitlement has been linked to detrimental behaviors such as academic dishonesty and reduced perseverance in the face of challenges, complicating the delivery of effective pedagogy and the maintenance of academic integrity (Boswell, 2012).

Conversely, the promotion of a growth mindset has been shown to significantly mitigate these negative effects. Growth mindset interventions encourage students to perceive intelligence and abilities as qualities that can develop through dedication and hard work (Dweck, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Empirical studies by Claro, Paunesku, and Dweck (2016) further reinforce the efficacy of these interventions, demonstrating their capacity to enhance student resilience, adaptability, and overall academic engagement.

Moreover, incorporating resilience-building strategies such as challenge-based learning, reflective practices, and feedback-oriented assessment has proven effective in supporting academic integrity and fostering an environment conducive to genuine learning (Martin & Marsh, 2006; Borman & Overman, 2004). These strategies are essential for empowering students to navigate both academic and personal challenges effectively.

In sum, addressing entitlement through the cultivation of growth mindsets and resilience-building practices offers a promising avenue for enhancing educational outcomes. These findings underscore the necessity for educational policies and practices that prioritise effort, adaptability, and continuous learning, particularly in diverse and socioeconomically varied settings (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). As such, the methodologies employed in this review—integrating both qualitative and quantitative research—provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and improving student attitudes and behaviours in contemporary educational landscapes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In the dynamic landscape of higher education, understanding the intricate interplay between entitlement attitudes, academic resilience, and integrity is crucial. This study embarks on an empirical journey, employing a literature-based approach to delve into the impact of entitlement attitudes on university students. By meticulously reviewing existing empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and pedagogical research, with aim to shed light on this multifaceted phenomenon.

### ***The Research Focus***

#### ***Entitlement Attitudes: Unveiling the Underlying Dynamics***

Academic entitlement is a complex phenomenon that reflects a significant shift in student perceptions within higher education. Defined as the expectation of certain privileges, such as unearned rewards or special treatment, entitlement can profoundly impact the academic environment. Chowning & Campbell (2009) highlight that these attitudes often result in demands for grade inflation, lenient assessment standards, and preferential treatment, which pose challenges to maintaining academic integrity. This sense of entitlement may stem from various factors, including cultural shifts towards consumer-oriented views of education, where students perceive themselves as customers who expect certain outcomes from their educational investment.

#### ***Academic Resilience: Navigating Challenges***

Resilience in academic contexts refers to the ability of students to persevere through setbacks and challenges in their educational journey. This trait is crucial for success in higher education, where students often face rigorous coursework, complex problem-solving, and the need to adapt to diverse learning environments. The resilience of students is tested when entitlement attitudes clash with academic realities, such as receiving lower than expected grades or dealing with constructive criticism. Understanding how resilience can be fostered amidst these challenges is vital for educators aiming to nurture a capable and adaptable student body. The development of resilience is often hindered by entitlement attitudes, making it essential to explore educational strategies that promote perseverance and growth (Martin & Marsh, 2006; Borman & Overman, 2004).

#### ***Integrity in Academia: A Precious Ethical Currency***

At the heart of academic pursuits lies the principle of integrity, characterised by honesty, fairness, and a strong ethical stance against misconduct. Entitlement attitudes can erode this foundation, leading students to justify unethical behaviours like plagiarism or cheating as means to achieve their entitled

ends. This degradation of academic values necessitates a robust response from educational institutions to reaffirm the importance of integrity in all scholarly activities (Boswell, 2012).

#### Methodological Approach to Studying Entitlement and Resilience

Instead of primary data collection, this research employed a literature-based approach, systematically reviewing empirical studies to examine how entitlement and resilience manifest across diverse student populations. This method allows for an in-depth analysis of existing data to identify patterns and variances in entitlement attitudes and their impacts on academic resilience and integrity.

#### Synthesizing Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical frameworks from psychology, sociology, and educational theory provide lenses through which to understand entitlement and resilience. These theories suggest that entitlement may be linked to broader psychological traits such as narcissism or self-esteem issues, or cultural factors that emphasise individual success over communal learning objectives (Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Claro, Paunesku, & Dweck, 2016). Integrating these frameworks helps to uncover the complex interrelations between student attitudes and their learning outcomes.

#### Pedagogical Insights: Strategies for Mitigation

The review extends to examining effective pedagogical strategies that can counteract entitlement and enhance resilience. This includes fostering a growth mindset, promoting ethical behaviour, and emphasising the value of effort over inherent ability. Such strategies are crucial for realigning student expectations with the realities of academic life, encouraging a more diligent and ethical approach to education (Dweck, 2006).

#### Broader Contextual Influences

Finally, this review considers how external factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural background, and institutional policies influence entitlement and resilience. Understanding these broader contexts is essential for designing interventions that are culturally and socially sensitive, thus more likely to be effective in diverse educational settings.

This incorporated approach underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to address the intertwined issues of entitlement, resilience, and integrity in higher education. This approach, deeply rooted in the principles of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), facilitated a thorough investigation into these phenomena without the constraints associated with primary data collection.

The methodology designed to align with SoTL's emphasis on enhancing educational practices through evidence-based research. Achieved through the use of comprehensive review of existing empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and pedagogical research across a variety of disciplines. This broad yet focused scan of literature allowed for an in-depth examination of how entitlement manifests among first-year STEM students, the factors that contribute to such attitudes, and their impact on students' ability to cope with academic challenges.

Central to this approach is the application of diverse theoretical perspectives from psychology, sociology, and education to parse the complex layers of entitlement and resilience. Theories related to narcissism, self-esteem, and cultural impacts on education were particularly instrumental. These frameworks provided insights into the psychological and sociocultural underpinnings of entitlement, revealing how these attitudes might be linked to broader trends such as the consumerisation of education, where students view themselves more as customers than learners.

### **Synthesizing Data for Pedagogical Insights**

The synthesis of data from the literature review was critical in identifying patterns and discrepancies in entitlement attitudes across different student demographics and educational contexts. This analysis illuminated that entitlement can significantly undermine academic resilience, leading to a reduction in student engagement and an increase in unethical academic behaviors. The insights gained were crucial for proposing effective educational interventions aimed at reducing entitlement perceptions and enhancing resilience.

Drawing from SoTL's goal to directly inform teaching practices, the study proposed several strategic interventions tailored for the STEM education context. These included fostering a growth mindset, promoting ethical behavior, and emphasizing the importance of effort over inherent ability. The educational strategies recommended were directly informed by the research findings and designed to address the specific challenges faced by first-year STEM students, ensuring that they are practical and relevant.

### **Broadening the Contextual Understanding**

Consistent with SoTL's holistic view, the study also considered broader contextual factors that could influence entitlement and resilience, such as socioeconomic status, cultural backgrounds, and institutional policies. This comprehensive approach ensured that the suggested interventions were culturally and socially sensitive, enhancing their applicability and effectiveness across diverse educational settings.

In summary, the literature-based methodology employed in this research was instrumental in enabling a deep and rigorous analysis of the dynamics between entitlement, resilience, and integrity within the specific context of STEM education. By leveraging SoTL principles, the study not only provided a detailed exploration of these educational phenomena but also offered practical, evidence-based recommendations for overcoming entitlement attitudes and cultivating resilience among first-year university students. The conclusions and strategic recommendations derived from this methodological approach have significant implications for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance the educational experience in STEM fields, thereby preparing students to meet both current and future academic challenges effectively. This study exemplifies how SoTL can bridge research and practice, providing actionable insights that significantly impact educational outcomes and student development.

**RESULTS**

The systematic review of existing literature on entitlement and resilience in higher education yields distinct patterns that demonstrate how entitlement attitudes are manifested across various student demographics. Notably, the prevalence of entitlement attitudes varies significantly across different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, which suggests that such attitudes may be influenced by external societal values and the increasing perception of education as a consumer good (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Studies highlight a direct correlation between entitlement attitudes and negative academic behaviours, such as reduced engagement and academic dishonesty, which ultimately compromise the educational process and outcomes (Boswell, 2012).

Furthermore, the review indicates that resilience serves as a critical buffer against the adverse effects of entitlement. Students who exhibit higher levels of resilience are better equipped to handle academic challenges and are less likely to engage in unethical behaviours. However, the development of resilience is often obstructed by entitlement, which can foster a mindset that is resistant to effort and personal growth (Martin & Marsh, 2006; Borman & Overman, 2004).

**DISCUSSION**

In the context of higher education, particularly within STEM disciplines, the complex interplay between student entitlement attitudes and the cultivation of resilience poses significant pedagogical challenges. The study "Overcoming Entitlement Attitudes in STEM Education: Cultivating Resilience Among First-Year University Students" utilizes a robust literature-based methodology, deeply informed by the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), to explore these dynamics. This approach is aligned with SoTL's commitment to understanding and improving postsecondary education through empirical research and theoretical insight, focusing on the complexities of teaching and learning as articulated in the SoTL grand challenges.

The methodology integrates SoTL principles by examining how entitlement and resilience, as dual facets of the student academic experience, interact to shape educational outcomes. The research delves into the nature of entitlement, defined as the expectation by students of certain privileges like unearned rewards or special treatment, which can severely impact academic integrity and the educational climate. This exploration is supported by literature that highlights how such attitudes result from broader cultural shifts towards a consumer-oriented view of education, where students perceive their educational journey in transactional terms.

Parallel to this, the study investigates academic resilience, which is crucial for students' success and their ability to navigate the inherent challenges of rigorous academic environments. The resilience of students is often compromised by prevailing entitlement attitudes, making it critical to explore strategies that enhance this attribute. The intersection of these factors underscores the necessity of fostering environments that promote not just academic perseverance, but also integrity and ethical behaviour.



Utilising a literature-based approach, the study systematically reviews empirical research and theoretical frameworks to understand how entitlement impacts student behaviour and academic resilience. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of existing findings across various demographics and educational contexts, enabling the identification of patterns and anomalies in student attitudes. The integration of theoretical frameworks from psychology, sociology, and educational theory helps in understanding the underlying causes of entitlement and devising effective pedagogical responses.

Based on the synthesized data, the research proposes several interventions aimed at mitigating entitlement and bolstering resilience. These include the promotion of a growth mindset, which encourages students to value effort and learning over innate ability, and the implementation of strategies that emphasize ethical behaviour and the importance of academic effort. The interventions are designed to realign student expectations with the realities of academic life, ensuring they are more prepared to handle challenges and less likely to engage in unethical practices.

Recognising the influence of broader socioeconomic and cultural factors on student attitudes, the study also considers how these elements might affect the prevalence and impact of entitlement and resilience. This consideration is crucial for tailoring interventions that are culturally and socially sensitive, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in diverse educational settings.

In conclusion, the methodological framework employed in this study provides a detailed and structured examination of how entitlement and resilience interact within the academic sphere of STEM education. By leveraging SoTL principles and focusing on the grand challenges of teaching and learning, this research not only contributes to the academic discourse but also offers practical strategies for educators to enhance resilience and integrity among students. This approach is pivotal in preparing a new generation of students who are equipped to face academic challenges ethically and resiliently, ultimately enhancing both individual and collective educational outcomes.

## **CONCLUSION**

The insights gained from this work affirms the critical need to address entitlement attitudes and cultivate resilience among first-year STEM students, as highlighted in the study, by dissecting the origins and impacts of entitlement within educational settings, this review has laid a foundation for developing targeted interventions that foster a growth mindset and resilience, aligning closely with the study's objectives.

These interventions are vital for realigning student expectations with the rigorous demands of STEM disciplines. They not only uphold academic integrity but also encourage a more engaged and persistent student body. Implementing and continuously refining these educational strategies across diverse contexts will ensure their effectiveness in fostering environments that value effort and learning.

Ultimately, the goal is to nurture an academic atmosphere that supports both personal and academic growth, thereby preparing students to tackle future challenges effectively. By addressing the issues of

entitlement and enhancing resilience as detailed in this study, educators can significantly improve educational outcomes and contribute to the development of ethical and adaptable individuals ready to thrive in their academic and professional journeys.

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