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A Comparative Study of Academic Resilience among Rural and Urban school Students

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ABSTRACT

Academic resilience is a student's ability to deal with academic challenges, stay motivated, and succeed despite difficulties. This study compares the academic resilience of rural and urban secondary school students in the North 24 Parganas District of West Bengal, India. A total of 112 students from Classes IX and X were selected through simple random sampling from four schools. The Academic Resilience Scale (ARS-30) developed by Cassidy (2016) was used to measure their resilience. The study looked at the role of gender and location (rural or urban) in students' resilience levels. The results showed that there was no significant difference in academic resilience between boys and girls in both rural and urban areas. However, urban students showed significantly higher levels of academic resilience than rural students. This may be due to better access to resources, facilities, and academic support in urban areas. The study highlights the need to improve support systems in rural schools to help students become more resilient and succeed in their education. The findings can help teachers, school leaders, and policymakers design better strategies to support students based on their specific needs and backgrounds.

Keywords: Academic resilience, secondary education, student success, gender differences, educational support.

Introduction

In the evolving educational landscape of the 21st century, academic resilience has gained recognition as a crucial determinant of student success and well-being. Academic resilience refers to a student's capacity to effectively deal with academic adversity, maintain motivation, and achieve positive outcomes despite challenges and setbacks (Martin & Marsh, 2006). It is not merely a fixed trait but a dynamic process influenced by both internal dispositions and external supports (Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003). In contexts where students are exposed to varying degrees of academic and socio-environmental stressors, understanding resilience becomes essential for promoting equitable educational outcomes. The significance of academic resilience lies in its direct connection to educational achievement, psychological health, and long-term life success. Resilient students are more likely to engage in learning, manage academic stress, and persist toward their goals, even when they face adverse conditions (Morales & Trotman, 2011). With rising concerns over school dropout rates, underachievement, and student mental health, especially in under-resourced communities, fostering academic resilience has become a central focus in educational research and practice.

In countries with significant rural-urban disparities, like many developing regions, resilience may manifest differently due to contrasting socio-economic, infrastructural, and educational conditions. Rural students often experience multiple disadvantages, including limited access to qualified teachers, inadequate learning facilities, and reduced exposure to educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2015). Despite these barriers, many rural students exhibit high levels of persistence and adaptability, often due to strong familial or community support systems. Conversely, urban students, while having greater access to resources, may face challenges such as increased competition, peer pressure, and emotional stress, which also test their resilience (Reyes et al., 2013).

The North 24parganas District presents a microcosm of these national educational contrasts. As a geographically and socioeconomically diverse area, it encompasses both rural villages with traditional schooling systems and urban centres with modern infrastructures. This setting provides a valuable opportunity to investigate the similarities and differences in how academic resilience is developed and sustained among students from distinct environments.

Despite global interest in academic resilience, limited empirical research exists comparing its presence and impact among rural and urban student populations in localized districts like North 24 parganas. Most existing studies either generalize resilience across populations or focus narrowly on urban stressors, neglecting the unique challenges faced by rural learners. Therefore, this study aims to fill a critical research gap by comparatively analyzing the levels, predictors, and expressions of academic resilience among rural and urban school students within the North 24parganas District of West Bengal.

The research will explore how individual, familial, and institutional factors contribute to resilience development, and how these differ across settings. By identifying key patterns and support mechanisms, the study seeks to inform educators and policymakers on strategies to foster resilience tailored to

specific contexts. Ultimately, enhancing academic resilience in all students, regardless of their background, is vital for achieving inclusive, high-quality education for all.

Literature Review

Academic resilience has been broadly defined in Western literature as a student's ability to achieve positive academic outcomes despite environmental adversities (Martin & Marsh, 2006). Rooted in positive psychology and educational research, resilience is seen not as a fixed personality trait, but as a dynamic process influenced by individual, familial, and institutional factors (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Scholars such as Waxman, Gray, and Padrón (2003) emphasized that resilient students often display higher motivation, engagement, and problem-solving abilities even when they face socio-economic disadvantages.Western models of resilience—such as those proposed by the American Psychological Association—place emphasis on social competence, autonomy, purpose, and adaptive coping strategies as key factors that support students in overcoming challenges. These studies primarily focus on resilience in contexts of urban poverty, immigrant stress, or family dysfunction (Morales, 2008), and often relate academic resilience to broader psychological well-being.In India, the discourse on academic resilience has gained momentum only in recent decades. Indian scholars have begun contextualizing resilience within the country's unique socio-cultural and educational settings. Resilience in Indian students is often linked with value-based upbringing, community support, and spiritual coping mechanisms (Kapoor, 2017). Given the vast rural-urban divide in India, resilience is interpreted differently across regions.

A study by Sinha and Singh (2009) found that students in rural India often develop emotional resilience due to early exposure to hardship, strong familial ties, and community-based learning. However, they face systemic barriers such as poor infrastructure, limited access to quality teaching, and socio-economic constraints, which hinder their academic progress.In contrast, urban students, while having better educational resources, report higher psychological distress due to academic pressure, parental expectations, and reduced emotional support systems (Gupta & Sethi, 2015). Thus, Indian literature increasingly highlights the paradox of urban advantage—greater opportunities often come with intensified stress. Western studies have extensively explored the rural-urban educational divide. According to Harmon and Schafft (2009), rural students in Western countries often face isolation, teacher shortages, and lower academic aspirations, which affect their resilience. However, small school communities and close interpersonal relationships sometimes act as protective factors. Similarly, urban students face the pressure of competition, overcrowded classrooms, and distractions, but often benefit from extracurricular opportunities and exposure.In India, these contrasts are sharper. Studies have revealed that rural students in states like Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha show strong internal resilience due to cultural coping strategies but lag in academic outcomes due to systemic neglect (NCERT, 2014). Urban students, particularly in metros, face the burden of academic excellence driven by competitive exams and societal expectations, often leading to anxiety and burnout (Chugh & Kaur, 2016).While there is growing literature on resilience in both Indian and international contexts, comparative research focusing on **rural and urban academic resilience within the same district or localized region** remains limited. Most Indian studies treat rural and urban populations in isolation or focus broadly on achievement gaps, overlooking how resilience is developed and displayed differently. Therefore, The findings will provide insights into how context-sensitive interventions can be designed to nurture resilience among all students, regardless of geographical location.

Objectives

- To assess significant difference in academic resilience among rural male and female school students .
- To assess significant difference in academic resilience among urban male and female school students .
- To compare the academic resilience between rural and urban school students .

Hypothesis

$H_{0\,1}$: There is no significant difference in the academic resilience between rural male and female school students.

$H_{0\,2}$: There is no significant difference in the academic resilience between urban male and female school students.

$H_{0\,3}$: There is no significant difference in academic resilience between rural and urban school students.

Methodology

The present study employed a **descriptive survey method** to investigate and compare academic resilience among secondary school students from rural and urban areas in the **North 24 Parganas district** of West Bengal, India. The approach is **quantitative in nature**, aiming to obtain objective and measurable data. A total of **112 students** from Class IX and X were selected through simple random sampling from four secondary schools across rural and urban regions of the district. The standardized **Academic Resilience Scale (ARS-30)** developed by Cassidy (2016) was used as the data collection tool. The scale consists of **30 items** and measures students' academic resilience in terms of perseverance, adaptive help-seeking, and emotional regulation in academic settings. It uses a Likert-type response format and has demonstrated high reliability and validity. Data were collected after obtaining necessary permissions and informed consent. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and **t-tests** to identify significant differences between rural and urban students' academic resilience levels.

$H_{0\ 1}$: There is no significant difference in the academic resilience between rural male and female school students.

	Rural Male	*Rural Female*
Mean	112.2667	112
Variance	139.3057	83.375
Observations	30	49
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	50	
t Stat	0.105865	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.458057	
t Critical one-tail	1.675905	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.916113	
t Critical two-tail	2.008559	

A t-test was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in academic resilience between rural male and female students. The average score for rural males was 112.27, while the average score for rural females was 112. The difference in their scores is very small. The p-value from the test was 0.916, which is much higher than 0.05. This indicates that the difference is not statistically significant. Additionally, the t-statistic (0.105) is smaller than the critical value (2.008), so we accept the null hypothesis. In simple terms, there is no significant difference in academic resilience between rural boys and girls. Both groups show a similar level of resilience in their academic life.

$H_{0\ 2}$: There is no significant difference in the academic resilience between urban male and female school students.

	Urban Male	*Urban Female*
Mean	122	120.92
Variance	120.6667	150.4933
Observations	4	25
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	4	
t Stat	0.179536	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.433122	
t Critical one-tail	2.131847	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.866245	
t Critical two-tail	2.776445	

A t-test was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in academic resilience between urban male and urban female students. The average score for urban males was 122, while for urban females it was 120.92. Although the male average is slightly higher, the difference is very small. The p-value (0.866) is much greater than 0.05, indicating that the result is not statistically significant. The t-statistic (0.18) is also less than the critical t-value (2.776), so the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in academic resilience between urban boys and girls. Both groups show similar levels of academic resilience.

$H_{0\ 3}$: There is no significant difference in academic resilience between rural and urban school students .

	Rural	*Urban*
Mean	111.8488	120.2692
Variance	101.071	155.4846
Observations	86	26
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	35	

t Stat	-3.14786
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.001677
t Critical one-tail	1.689572
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.003354
t Critical two-tail	2.030108

A t-test was conducted to compare the academic resilience of rural and urban school students. The average score for rural students was 111.84, while for urban students it was 120.26. The difference in means suggests that urban students scored higher. The p-value (0.003) is less than 0.05 indicating that the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This shows that there is a significant difference in academic resilience between rural and urban students. Urban students, on average, show higher academic resilience than rural students in this study.

Research Finding

- **$H_{0\ 1}$:** There is no significant difference in academic resilience between **rural boys and girls**.
  - Result: *True* — Boys and girls in rural areas have similar resilience levels.
- **$H_{0\ 2}$:** There is no significant difference in academic resilience between **urban boys and girls**.
  - Result: *True* — Boys and girls in urban areas also show similar resilience.
- **$H_{0\ 3}$:** There is no significant difference in academic resilience between **rural and urban students**.
  - Result: *False* — Urban students have **higher academic resilience** than rural students.

Conclusion

This study compared academic resilience between rural and urban students in the North 24 Parganas District. The findings showed that there was **no significant difference** in resilience between **male and female students**, meaning gender doesn't affect academic resilience in this context. However, there was a **significant difference** between **rural and urban students**, with urban students showing **higher academic resilience**. This suggests that urban students may have better access to resources, support, and opportunities that help them cope with academic challenges. The results highlight the need for **improving support systems in rural schools** to help students become more resilient and succeed academically.

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