

From Stress to Strength: Gender Dynamics in Academic Resilience of Senior Secondary School Students

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Abstract:

Academic resilience is the most vital ability of students, which promotes positive growth and helps students in dealing with academic failure and setbacks, although it is often overlooked. Several research investigations have revealed dynamic views on numerous demographic factors that affect academic resilience among students. Gender is one of them. Therefore, this investigation examines the impact of gender roles on the 'academic resilience' of senior secondary school students (classes XI and XII) from Kaimur district, Bihar. 'Academic Resilience Scale' by Chutia and Swargiary (2024) was employed for data collection. To examine gender dynamics in overall academic resilience as well as across its dimensions, namely confidence, control, communication, competence, connection and cooperation, a quantitative research approach was used. The study revealed a significant gender difference in overall academic resilience as well as across its dimensions. Female students were found to be more resilient in coping with academic stress than their male counterparts, as they scored higher on overall academic resilience and across most dimensions, except the control dimension. Therefore, it is concluded that gender has a crucial role in developing students' ability to manage the stress of studying and bounce back to normal life. The findings highlighted the importance of educational interventions, which will strengthen students' academic resilience, particularly by supporting male students. Encouraging supportive learning environments through collaboration among schools, teachers, and parents may contribute to enhancing students' resilience and overall academic well-being.

Keywords: Academic Resilience, Gender Dynamics, Senior Secondary Students, Coping Strategies, Academic Wellbeing.

Introduction:

Education plays a great role in the development of the nation, and it is a fundamental right of an individual to be educated (Bukhari & Khan,2023). In today's competitive world, a student's educational journey is filled with a complex landscape of academic, social and personal challenges, which play an important role in affecting their mental health as well as academic pressure (Abdelrahman et. al., 2025). The academic journey of an individual is always filled with numerous hurdles which examines the various cope up techniques related to different situations which comes towards them, In this journey resilience is a way by which an individual can cope up with the toughest situations they face and achieving positive developmental outcomes instead of experiencing worst events, it is the process of adapting to major stressors and negative factors (Nair & Kumar, 2024, Shen et al.,2024). Resilience can be defined as the ability to stay strong and how quickly a person can recover from difficulties, challenges and failures (Shen et al., 2024). In the context of academia, resilience can be understood as the student's ability to successfully deal with pressure, barriers and challenges in a school setting, with the student's ability to overcome the challenges, stress or setbacks in their studies as well as regulating themselves to work towards their goal in an effective way (Mallick & Kaur, 2016; Radhamani & Kalaivani, 2021). Academic resilience is "the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments, despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions and experiences" (as stated in Amoadu et. al.,2024), and students' belief in their ability to improve, seek help when needed and keep trying until they achieve success (Mallick & Kaur, 2016). The academic phase is always filled with hurdles that shape the development of the student. Multiple factors influence academic resilience, such as learning environment, school environment, family support, peers and socio-environment, etc. (Mallick & Kaur, 2016). Across several factors that affect academic resilience, gender is one of the crucial factors that affect academic resilience.

Evidence revealed that boys and girls differ in terms of academic resilience (Mwangi & Irei, 2017). There are several studies that imply that gender is an important factor that influences as well as determines the resilience of a person. Investigations state that gender roles shape the way of perceiving the situation as well as the ways adopted to overcome them. Social role theory (SRT) recommends that expectations and norms of society have a great role in shaping gender roles, and these roles significantly influence people's behaviour as well as build their knowledge and skills (As stated by Amoadu et.al.,2024). Social role theory also states that the way of approaching the solution to a challenge is also contributed to by the gender role and the expectations of society (as stated by

Amoadu et. al., 2024). Another theory, named social identity theory, also explains that gender differences influence the way of thinking and an individual's role (as stated by Vera Gil,2024). The theoretical background provides an important insight into how gender, as well as their role expected by the societal norms, shapes the psychology of a person and the way to tackle the challenges related to several fields (Vera Gil, 2024). In terms of academic resilience, the role of gender plays an important role as it contributes to shaping the thinking of a person. In the context of gender differences, studies (Rutter,1970; Werner,1996; Morales, 2008; Sun & Steward,2012; Rationan & Phlainoi,2014; Yavuz & Kutlu, 2016; Kader & Abad,2017; Mwangi & Ileri, 2017) found that females show more academic resilience than males in the context of the academic environment.

In contrast to the mentioned findings, several studies have concluded that man shows high academic resilience than women (Sarwar et. al., 2010; Erdogan et.al.,2015; Uygur et. al., 2020; Amoadu et. al., 2023), whereas several studies which concluded that gender has no significant effect on determining the level of academic resilience (Tefera & Missaye,2014; Latif & Amirullah,2020; Futurrohmah & Sagita, 2023).

The review indicated a dynamic view of the topic, which didn't provide any specified direction. Therefore, the investigation will explore the answers to the questions-

1. Does academic resilience differ significantly with respect to gender?
2. Do male and female senior secondary school students differ significantly in their levels of academic resilience across various dimensions of academic resilience?

Objectives

- To compare the mean score of 'academic resilience' of senior secondary school students with respect to gender.
- To compare the mean score of 'academic resilience across dimensions' with respect to gender.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean score of 'academic resilience' of senior secondary school students with respect to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean score of 'academic resilience across dimensions' with respect to gender.

Methodology

The current investigation utilized the 'descriptive survey design' to explore the role of gender in 'academic resilience' among senior secondary school students. To examine the role of gender in determining students' academic resilience, a sample of 343 students from Bihar was selected. The participants were categorised into strata through stratified random sampling by gender (male and

female) and selected from various senior secondary government schools in Kaimur district, Bihar. The current study utilises the 'Academic Resilience Scale' developed by Chutia & Swargiary (2024) for data collection. This scale is further divided into six dimensions: Confidence, Control, Commitment, Competence, Connection, and Co-ordination. The dimensions of the Academic Resilience scale have the distinguish meaning and their own role in making the tool meaningful and comprehensive in nature. The meaning of the dimensions is as follows: -

Confidence: It is the belief of the student in their potential to complete their academic work and achieve good academic outcomes. The student believes they will perform well, manage the pressure of academic work, and achieve proper academic success.

Commitment: It is the determination of the students to complete their academic work, whether it is dealing with difficult questions or schoolwork. It is the determination of the student to keep doing their best and have the attitude of never giving up during their academic venture.

Coordination: It is the phase of the academic journey that includes the planning as well as the procedure in which a student plans their academic phase in a systematic manner, as well as assessing their progress in the journey and maintains a proper track of it.

Control: It is the control and regulation of emotions. It is the way through which a student control as well as regulate their emotions when they face any type of hurdle in their academic journey, and the way through which a student keeps themselves motivated in a tough situation, or when they face any setback in their academics. It is the ability of the students to think in a logical as well as critical manner to maintain and regulate their emotions in a constructive way during their academic venture.

Competence: Students' potential to critically observe and examine their study content, complete their work on time, analyse the difficult questions, answer their examination questions well, complete their exams on time, manage their time during examinations and submit their work on time.

Connection: It is the relationship a student builds in their academic journey with their teachers, classmates and parents. By building a good relationship with the teachers, peers, and parents, students build the ability to manage their academic journey in a healthy way as the learning environment becomes supportive for them and ensures the success of the student as well as a healthy mental status.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As the sample size of this study exceeded 300, normality was assessed using the absolute value of skewness and kurtosis (Kim 2013; West et al., 1995). According to Kim (2013), for large sample sizes ($N > 300$), the normality of distribution can be evaluated using the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis without relying on z-values. A distribution may be considered substantially non-normal if the

absolute value of ‘skewness (proper)’ exceeds 2 or the absolute value of ‘kurtosis (proper)’ exceeds 7.

Table 1. Descriptive Measures for the ‘Normal Distribution’ of ‘Academic Resilience Scores of Senior Secondary School Students’

N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	Sk	Std. Error Sk	Z value of Sk	Ku	Std. Error Ku	Z value of Ku
342	166.37	9.647	.522	-0.302	.132	2.28	-1.184	0.463	2.47

In the present study, the obtained skewness value (-0.302) and kurtosis value (-1.184) were well within the acceptable limits ($Sk < 2$ and $Kr < 7$), indicating that the scores were distributed approximately normally. Therefore, the ‘assumption of normality’ was fulfilled, and parametric statistical techniques were considered suitable for further analysis.

Moreover, the data is approximately normally distributed as the Z-value of skewness (2.28) and Z-value of kurtosis (2.47) are presented in Table 1, which comes under the standard z-value, i.e. ± 2.58 (Ghasemi & Zahediasi, 2012). Therefore, considering the large sample size, the distribution is regarded as approximately normal in line with the recommendations of Kim (2013) and West, Finch, and Curran (1995) and the use of an independent t-test, i.e. parametric statistical techniques, is justified for further analysis.

Objective 1

- To compare the mean score of ‘Academic Resilience’ of senior secondary school students with respect to gender.

Table 2. Gender wise comparison of Academic Resilience of Senior Secondary Students

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig.	Level of significance
Academic Resilience	Male	100	161.19	8.905	340	-6.773	.000	Significant at 0.01
	Female	242	168.49	9.134				

From Table 2, it can be seen that the t-value is -6.773, and $p < 0.01$, which is significant at the 0.01 level with $df = 340$. It is indicated that the mean score of ‘academic resilience’ of female students is 168.49, which is notably higher than that of male students, whose academic resilience mean score is 161.19. Therefore, it can be interpreted that female students were found to have remarkably higher ‘academic resilience’ than male students.

Objective 2

- To compare the mean score of ‘Academic Resilience across its Dimensions’ with respect to gender.

Table 3. Gender-wise comparison of Academic Resilience across its Dimensions

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig.	Level of Significance
Confidence	Male	100	33.55	3.183	340	-3.384	.001	Significant at 0.01
	Female	242	34.70	2.708				
Control	Male	100	33.51	3.486	340	-.475	.635	Not Significant
	Female	242	33.71	3.584				
Communication	Male	100	28.76	3.334	340	-3.472	.001	Significant at 0.01
	Female	242	29.97	2.753				
Competence	Male	100	15.97	2.385	340	-5.816	.000	Significant at 0.01
	Female	242	17.31	1.731				
Connection	Male	100	18.63	3.259	340	-6.130	.000	Significant at 0.01
	Female	242	20.68	2.612				
Cooperation	Male	100	30.77	3.709	340	-3.000	.003	Significant at 0.01
	Female	242	32.12	3.799				

To determine whether any statistical difference exists between both genders, an ‘independent t-test’ was employed across the six dimensions of academic resilience, namely confidence, control, communication, competence, connection, and cooperation.

The results can be seen from Table 3 that the t-value is -3.3843, and $p < 0.01$, which is significant at the 0.01 level with $df = 340$. It is indicated that the mean score of the ‘confidence dimension of academic resilience’ of female students is 34.70 ($SD = 2.71$), which is remarkably higher than that of male students, whose mean score of the same dimension is 33.55 ($SD = 3.18$). Therefore, it can be said that female students were found to have higher ‘academic resilience’ than male students, and females possess a relatively stronger level of confidence and belief in their abilities as compared to males.

Similarly, a notable difference is seen in the ‘communication dimension of academic resilience’, where t value is -3.472, and $p < 0.01$ which is significant at the 0.01 level with $df = 340$, and mean score of female students is 29.97 ($SD = 2.75$), which is higher than that of male students, whose mean score is 28.76 ($SD = 3.33$) which indicates that female students possess relatively stronger communication related traits.

A marked difference was noticed in the ‘competence dimension of academic resilience’ with $t = -5.816$ and $p < 0.01$ level of significance. Females’ mean score is = 17.31 ($SD = 1.73$), scored higher

on this dimension compared to male participants, with a mean of 15.97 (SD=2.39), indicating that females have a comparatively stronger perception of competence than males.

The ‘connection dimension of academic resilience’ also revealed a substantial difference between the two groups, having $t = -6.130, p < .001$. Female participants’ mean score is 20.68 (SD = 2.61), which is a higher score than the mean score of 18.63 (SD = 3.26), which also affirms that females possess sound abilities towards interpersonal connectedness and relational management.

Furthermore, the ‘cooperation dimension of academic resilience’ also showed a remarkable gender difference with $t = -3.000, p = .003$, which is less than the 0.01 level of significance. The mean score of female participants (M = 32.12, SD = 3.80) was higher than that of male participants (M = 30.77, SD = 3.71). This indicates that female respondents displayed relatively greater cooperative orientation. Finally, in contrast, no substantial gender difference was seen in the ‘control dimension of academic resilience with a t -value of $-0.475, p = .635$. The mean scores of female participants (M=33.71, SD=3.58) and males (M=33.51, SD=3.49) were closely comparable. This indicates that the perceptions of control or self-regulation were relatively similar across both genders.

In conclusion, the results indicate that female students consistently obtained higher mean scores across all the dimensions of academic resilience, namely confidence, communication, competence, connection, and cooperation, except in the dimension of control, on which gender did not show any remarkable difference. This implies that certain behavioural attributes may remain stable irrespective of gender differences. Overall, the study highlights that females possess strong, resilient abilities compared to males, which is further confirmed by Cohen’s d effect-size estimates (See Table 4).

Table 4. Effect Size Estimates (Cohen’s d , 2007) for Gender Differences in Academic Resilience and Its Sub-Dimensions

Independent Samples Effect Sizes					
		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Academic Resilience Total	Cohen's d	9.068	-.805	-1.045	-.564
Confidence	Cohen's d	2.854	-.402	-.637	-.167
Control	Cohen's d	3.556	-.056	-.289	.177
Communication	Cohen's d	2.934	-.413	-.648	-.177
Competence	Cohen's d	1.944	-.691	-.930	-.452
Connection	Cohen's d	2.816	-.729	-.968	-.489
Cooperation	Cohen's d	3.773	-.357	-.591	-.122

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes. 'Cohen's 'd' uses the pooled standard deviation.

The effect size with 95% confidence interval was examined to know the magnitude of the difference between males and females (Cohen, 2007). The results indicated a large effect for total academic resilience score ($d = -0.81$, 95% CI = -1.05 , -0.56). Similarly, a large effect was also found for competence ($d = -0.69$, 95% CI = -0.93 , -0.45) and connection ($d = -0.73$, 95% CI = -0.97 , -0.49). Moderate effects were observed for confidence ($d = -0.40$, 95% CI = -0.64 , -0.17), communication ($d = -0.41$, 95% CI = -0.65 , -0.18), and cooperation ($d = -0.36$, 95% CI = -0.59 , -0.12). However, the effect size for control was negligible ($d = -0.06$, 95% CI = -0.29 , 0.18), as the confidence interval included zero. Overall, the findings suggest meaningful differences were found in both genders for academic resilience and its sub-dimensions. Moreover, the negative effect size values indicate that the second gender, i.e., female students, have higher mean scores than male students on the academic resilience and its respective sub-dimensions.

Results and Discussion:

The present study is focused on the role of gender as an influencing and determining factor of academic resilience among senior secondary school students. The study examined the role of gender in determining the ways through which an individual tackles as well as regulate themselves in an academic context. Results found a significant difference between males and females in overall academic resilience. Female students show a higher level of academic resilience than male students, as the mean score of female students was higher than that of male students, which indicates that females are more capable than males in regulating and tackling the academic hurdles, stress and setbacks in their academic journey. The findings of this study are coinciding with several studies conducted which also founded that females show higher level of academic resilience than males and capable of coping with the academic stress as well as challenges (Ratoran & Phlainoi, 2014; Yavuz & kutlu, 2016; Mwangi & Ireri, 2017; Morales, 2008; Werner, 1996; Rutter, 1970; Sun & Stewart, 2012; Kader & Abad, 2017). In the context of academic resilience, girls are more resilient than boys in academics. Previous studies have indicated that female students frequently exhibit higher emotional control, determination, and help-seeking behaviours, all of which are helpful to their resilience and academic success. Students' approaches to academic obstacles may also be influenced by gender norms and social expectations. In academic settings, female students tend to be encouraged to be more structured and disciplined, which may enhance their resilience. Further, the studies' results are contradictory with the results of the studies that have concluded that man shows high academic resilience than women (Sarwar et. al., 2010; Erdogan et.al., 2015; Uygur et. al., 2020; Amoadu et. al.,

2023), whereas several studies concluded that gender has no significant effect on determining the level of academic resilience (Belay & Missaye,2014; Latif & Amirullah,2020; Futurrohmah & Sagita, 2023).

Recommendations:

The study concluded that females are more resilient academically than males in various parameters. As males show a lower level of academic resilience than female there is a need to take several significant steps to improve their academic resilience and make them capable of handling the situations related to the academic environment. There is a need to incorporate some intervention programs to improve the capacity of males to tackle and cope with the academic setbacks as well as challenges. emphasise the value of individualised programs that support students' entire development by developing self-awareness, promoting decision-making and stress-reduction techniques, and strengthening resilience to improve emotional and psychological well-being. There should be organisation of events like workshops, seminars, counselling services, etc., to improve the psychological awareness, which will eventually help in building strong academic resilience of the students. There should be continuous support and mentoring through teachers of the students to boost the morale of the students and prepare them for tackling the situations related to the academic environment. The parents should also watch their children and be aware of the strengths as well as the weaknesses of their children, which makes them capable of handling the stressful environment healthily. Overall, there should be an implication of the needed steps to improve the well-being of the students and assist them in managing the challenges related to the academic environment.

Conclusion:

The study's findings conclude that gender is an important factor in determining academic resilience and how individuals tackle various academic challenges. Moreover, female students show better coping strategies than males to ensure academic success. Therefore, the study pinpointed the importance of encouraging resilience in students to help them handle the academic environment well and succeed.

Limitations:

There are several significant outcomes of the study, which provide important points related to the role of gender in determining the 'academic resilience' of the senior secondary students. The study has certain limitations which may limit the scope of the study, such as the current investigation conducted on the government senior secondary schools of Kaimur district, Bihar, included only the

senior secondary school's students of standard 11th and 12th and was limited to the gender that are male and female students.

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