

Examining the Academic Resilience of Grade 6 Learners in a School District

Ma. Rita N. Santiana^{1,*}, Runato A. Basañes²

¹Department of Education, Schools Division of Antique, San Jose, Antique, Philippines.

²Department of Educational Management, College of Teacher Education, University of Antique, Sibalom, Antique, Philippines.

marita.santiana@deped.gov.ph¹, runato.basan@antiquespride.edu.ph²

Abstract: Academic resilience is a vital construct in positive psychology, aimed at enhancing learners' ability to thrive and compete despite facing challenges. This descriptive-correlational study assessed the academic resilience of Grade 6 learners. A total of 150 students from a school district in the Philippines, as part of the Department of Education, were randomly selected for participation. The study utilized a researcher-developed, validated, and reliability-tested instrument: The Academic Resilience Questionnaire. Statistical analyses, including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test for independent samples, One-Way ANOVA, Least Significant Difference (LSD), and Pearson's *r*, were performed using SPSS software (version 26.0) at a 0.05 significance level with two-tailed tests. The results indicated that the overall academic resilience of the learners was low, regardless of whether they were grouped by sex, family size, family income, parental presence, or parents' educational background. However, a significant difference in academic resilience was observed based on social media use, with students who reported higher social media engagement showing varied levels of resilience. No significant differences in academic resilience were found when learners were grouped by sex, family size, family income, parental presence, or parents' educational background. These findings suggest that while social media use may influence academic resilience, other demographic factors, such as sex and family background, do not significantly affect resilience levels. Further research is recommended to explore other variables that might contribute to academic resilience.

Keywords: Academic Resilience; Statements of Demand and Challenge; Interdependent Relationships; Fundamental Direction; Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS); Least Significant Difference (LSD); Family Monthly Net Income.

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1. Introduction

Learning is one of the most challenging aspects of life, particularly when learners encounter various difficulties that affect their academic performance and overall learning experience. In addition to external challenges, such as academic pressure, changes in learning modalities—particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic—require learners to adapt quickly to new

*Corresponding author.

environments and expectations. This includes adjusting to online or hybrid learning, managing academic tasks such as homework, projects, and assessments, and navigating social dynamics with peers [8]. The ability to cope with and adapt to these challenges is known as “resilience.” Specifically, academic resilience refers to a student’s capacity to achieve academic success despite adversity, through a dynamic process that enables individuals to overcome barriers that impede their peers’ success [6].

In addition to personal characteristics such as resilience and motivation, socio-economic and environmental factors also significantly affect students’ academic performance. Students facing economic hardship may be driven to develop academic resilience and motivation as a means of overcoming challenges. Still, the lack of basic resources, unhealthy family dynamics, and food insecurity can contribute to frustration and disengagement from school [26]. These socio-affective factors—such as peer relationships, parental expectations, and teacher support—further shape academic resilience and motivational intensity [26]. Notably, the lack of these resources or a supportive environment can lead to detrimental outcomes, including increased risk for mental health issues and suicidal ideation, especially among young learners [17]. In 2022, nearly 20% of young Filipinos reported considering suicide, a concerning statistic in ASEAN regions like Antique Province [17].

The current study draws upon Martin’s [4] Model for Student Enhancement, which distinguishes between “boosters” (factors that enhance motivation and resilience) and “guzzlers” (factors that hinder them). This model categorizes boosters and guzzlers into thoughts and behaviors, providing a practical framework for understanding and improving students’ resilience and motivation. According to Martin [3], booster thoughts encompass self-belief and the value of education, while booster behaviors include persistence and effective study management. In contrast, guzzler thoughts, such as anxiety and low control, and behaviors like failure avoidance, can detract from students’ academic resilience and motivation. By applying this model, educators can identify and intervene more effectively to support students [4].

Furthermore, Becker’s [16] work on academic resilience highlights the importance of both individual and environmental factors in fostering resilience and motivation in learners. Understanding how students perceive and respond to stressors and challenges in their learning environment is crucial for promoting persistence and achievement, even in the face of adversity [16]. Given the diversity of student backgrounds and experiences, this study seeks to examine the academic resilience of Grade 6 learners in a school district in Antique, Philippines. The goal is to understand how these factors relate to academic performance and the ability of learners to thrive in the face of challenges.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Academic Resilience

Resilience is a multifaceted concept, defined in various ways across disciplines. Rajendran and Videka [20] describe resilience as an individual’s competence and ability to thrive despite significant stressors. Truebridge [25] offers a more comprehensive definition, describing resilience as a dynamic and negotiated process that unfolds both within individuals and in their interactions with the environment. This process involves acquiring resources and support that enable individuals to adapt and maintain their sense of well-being in the face of adversity, trauma, or everyday stress. Similarly, Howe et al. [18] emphasize resilience as a dynamic process of positive adaptation in the face of significant adversity.

Resilience can be viewed from both psychological and sociological perspectives. From a psychological viewpoint, resilience is considered a trait that reflects an individual’s capacity to cope with stress and adversity [14]. In contrast, a sociological perspective sees resilience as shaped by a range of social and environmental factors, including individual and collective experiences. This broader view theorizes that resilience is influenced by social contexts and opportunities for personal development [19]. White et al. [23] highlight resilience as a key individual difference that explains why some individuals can outperform others when facing challenges.

Jowkar et al. [7] further categorize resilience into three types: behavioral, emotional, and academic. In the context of education, resilient learners can overcome stress and maintain strong mental fortitude despite challenges [11]. Specifically, “academic resilience” refers to the capacity to attain academic success despite significant obstacles. Morales and Trotman [6] define academic resilience as the process through which students overcome difficulties that might hinder their peers from succeeding. Thomsen [15] also asserts that educational institutions play a critical role in fostering learners’ resilience, helping to develop their abilities and capacity to succeed academically despite hardships.

2.2. Influencing Factors on Academic Resilience

The concept of resilience, particularly academic resilience, has been widely studied concerning its influence on learners’ performance and motivation. Kotzé and Kleynhans [5] found that resilience is significantly associated with teaching enjoyment,

suggesting that resilience not only affects learners but also influences the enjoyment and effectiveness of teaching. In a study on academic resilience and buoyancy, Martin [3] highlighted the distinction between the two constructs, noting that academic resilience—unlike buoyancy—significantly predicts negative outcomes in learning environments, underlining its importance in determining learners' academic success under adversity.

Research on academic resilience in language learning has also been extensive. Nguyen et al. [12] explored the relationship between resilience and language learning, specifically among second language (L2) learners. Their findings revealed a significant correlation between increased resilience and L2 learners' engagement in storytelling, identifying protective factors such as problem-solving skills, social competence, purpose, and autonomy that contribute to improved resilience. Çelik et al. [9] further expanded on this by studying 1,169 Turkish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. They found that personal issues, family support, and environmental context were key protective factors that influenced the development of hope, self-esteem, and academic resilience, ultimately affecting academic achievement.

Similarly, Kim and Kim [22] examined the resilience of secondary EFL learners, focusing on their perceived happiness, sociability, perseverance, and self-regulation. They concluded that perseverance and happiness were the primary factors explaining resilience in language learning. In their 2021 study, Kim and Kim [22] extended their research to show that academic resilience is closely related to various issues in second language education, including learning motivation. Rodríguez-Fernández et al. [24] also affirmed the significant influence of academic resilience on linguistic performance among Spanish learners, demonstrating its broad applicability across different languages and cultures. In the context of socio-economic challenges, Fallon [2] studied 150 Latino high school learners from low socio-economic backgrounds and found a significant positive correlation between academic resilience, academic optimism, and academic achievement. This supports the idea that resilience can be a crucial factor in overcoming socio-economic barriers.

De la Fuente et al. [13] further elaborated on this, reporting a strong correlation between academic resilience, a deep learning approach, and academic achievement. Their study suggests that resilience is not only linked to overcoming challenges but also to adopting more effective learning strategies that enhance academic outcomes. Finally, Haibin [10] highlighted the role of parental supervision and school expectations in reducing problematic behaviors and enhancing academic resilience and achievement. Their study highlighted the importance of supportive family and school environments in fostering resilience, which in turn improves academic outcomes in challenging situations.

2.3. Studies Related to Academic Resilience

Academic resilience is a key factor in understanding how learners overcome challenges and persist in their studies despite adversities. Martin [3] investigated the academic resilience and buoyancy of Australian high school learners, noting that these two constructs are distinct yet interconnected. His study revealed that academic resilience, unlike buoyancy, significantly predicted major negative outcomes in learning contexts. Academic resilience, therefore, plays a more critical role in determining long-term academic success than buoyancy, which refers to short-term emotional recovery. In a similar vein, Nguyen et al. [12] explored the relationship between resilience and second language (L2) learning, highlighting that resilience significantly correlated with L2 learners' experiences in storytelling. Their study identified key protective factors for resilience, including problem-solving skills, social competence, and purpose, all of which can be enhanced through practices like storytelling, which also promotes learner autonomy.

Morales and Trotman [6] investigated the role of academic resilience and self-esteem in predicting academic achievement among undergraduate students in Hospitality and Tourism. Their findings indicated that both self-esteem and academic resilience significantly predicted academic success, suggesting that personal and psychological factors contribute to academic outcomes in diverse fields of study. Similarly, Kotzé and Kleynhans [5] found that academic performance among African junior students was significantly predicted by academic resilience, emphasizing the importance of resilience in overcoming challenges faced by learners in varied cultural contexts.

Çelik et al. [9] examined the relationships among academic resilience, self-esteem, locus of control, hope, and academic achievement in a study of 1,169 Turkish EFL learners. They found that personal issues, family support, and environmental context acted as protective factors, significantly influencing hope, confidence, academic resilience, and, ultimately, academic achievement. Their study reinforces the idea that resilience is shaped not only by individual traits but also by external social and environmental factors. De la Fuente et al. [13] further explored the relationship between academic resilience, learning strategies, and academic achievement. Using structural equation modeling, they identified a strong and significant correlation between resilience, deep learning approaches, and academic success. This finding underscores the importance of adopting deep learning strategies to enhance resilience and academic outcomes. Rodríguez-Fernández et al. [24] supported this by demonstrating that academic resilience significantly predicts linguistic performance among Spanish learners, highlighting the broad applicability of resilience across educational contexts.

In a more recent study, Karabiyik [21] found that adaptive help-seeking and reflective practices, as components of academic resilience, significantly predicted learners' Grade Point Average (GPA), a measure of academic achievement. This finding suggests that learners who seek help when needed and reflect on their learning processes are more likely to achieve academic success. Ayala and Manzano [1] also supported this view, asserting that academic resilience, as assessed by indices such as hardiness and resourcefulness, is a predictor of academic achievement among Spanish learners. Finally, Kim and Kim [22] emphasized the role of academic resilience in addressing various L2 educational issues, particularly learning motivation. Their study found that resilience is closely linked to motivation, suggesting that learners who possess higher levels of resilience are more likely to remain motivated and engaged in the learning process, even in challenging circumstances.

3. Methodology

This descriptive research aimed to examine the levels of academic resilience among 150 randomly selected Grade 6 learners from a school district in the province of Antique, Philippines. The researcher-made, duly validated, and reliability-tested instrument used was the Academic Resilience Questionnaire. Statistical tools used were frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation for descriptive statistics. In contrast, the t-test for Independent Samples, One-way ANOVA, and the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test were used for inferential statistics (Table 1). All inferential statistics were set at a 0.05 level of significance at a two-tailed test computed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, version 26.0. The respondents of the study were distributed according to the following variables:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to variables

Variables	f	%
Entire group	150	100
Sex		
Male	80	53
Female	70	47
Family Size		
3 and below	115	77
4 and above	35	23
Family monthly net income		
Php 15,000 and below	111	74
Php 15,001 to Php 30,000	27	18
Php 30,001 and above	12	8
Parental presence		
Living with both parents	88	59
Living with my mother only	32	21
Living with father only	13	9
Living with guardians	17	11
Parents' educational background		
Elementary Level	23	15
High School Level	72	48
College Level	55	37
Social media use		
Everyday	58	39
Once a week	38	25
Seldom	35	23
Never	19	13

This study utilized a customized research questionnaire for the respondents, tailored to their comprehension level. Kinaray-a language and visual accompaniments to the questions, if necessary, were used for easier comprehension. The research instruments were assessed for validation by identified validators in the fields of education and psychology to ensure that the instruments are effective and appropriate for the respondents. This study employed a researcher-designed questionnaire checklist on academic resilience to collect the necessary data for the study. An accompanying information sheet was used to gather personal data, including sex, family size, family monthly net income, parental presence, parents' educational background, and social media exposure.

Academic Resilience Questionnaire: To assess the learner's level of academic resilience, the Academic Resilience Questionnaire was used. The instrument is a four-point Likert-type scale consisting of 30 items that measure the academic resilience of learners.

To answer the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to mark (✓) to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement of each of the given items with following options: 1 – if you are sure that you will do the action that the sentence is saying 2 – if you will first think if you will do the action or not, but later will do it anyway 3 - if you will first think if you will do the action or not, but later will not do it anyway, and 4 -if you are sure that you will not do the action in the sentence. Kinaray-a language and visual accompaniments to the questions, if necessary, were used for easier comprehension. Results of the reliability test showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.850. To determine the score of the individual respondent on the learner's level of academic resilience, the numerical equivalents of the options the respondents selected are added, and the mean for the particular area is computed (Table 2). The mean was translated into a numerical scale with a corresponding verbal description shown below:

Table 2: Interpretation scale for weighted mean scores

Scale	Description
3.26 - 4.00	Very High
2.51 - 3.25	High
1.76 – 2.50	Low
1.00 - 1.75	Very Low

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Level of Academic Resilience of Learners

The level of academic resilience of Grade 6 pupils, when considered as a whole group and categorized according to identified variables, was determined using the mean and standard deviation. Findings in Table 3 revealed that, as an entire group, the level of academic resilience among Grade 6 learners was low, as indicated by a mean score of 2.06 (SD = .32). This mean score is supported by the 22 out of 30 items with very low to low means. In comparison, only eight items got a mean score of High to very high. The learners believed they had the potential and the capabilities to survive and realize their goals, but these were overpowered by negative thinking and feelings, which manifested in certain behaviors and practices. Among the resilient items that got very low means include "I would seek help from my teachers/try different ways to study; I would look forward to showing that I can improve my grades and many others.

The stated resilient items that received very low scores were not considered or manifested by the learners, resulting in no positive adaptations being applied within the context of significant adversity, as believed by Jowkar et al. [7]. The only items that obtained very high mean and high mean include: I would not accept the teacher's feedback; I would give up; I would change my career plans; I would probably get annoyed; and I would blame the teacher. The thoughts and feelings of the learners stemmed from their personality and external factors, such as teachers and other people.

Regarding variables, the learners' academic resilience levels, when grouped according to the variables, were generally low, as indicated by the obtained means from the 30 items on academic resilience. When grouped by sex, males had a mean score of 2.05 (SD = .38), while females had a mean score of 2.06 (SD = .30); both groups demonstrated low academic resilience. This observation held when respondents were grouped by family size, family monthly net income, parental presence, parents' educational background, and social media use, all of which were associated with low academic resilience.

Table 3: Level of academic resilience of learners as an entire group and according to variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Entire group	2.06	.32	Low
Sex			
Male	2.05	.38	Low
Female	2.06	.30	Low
Family Size			
3 and below	2.15	.37	Low
4 and above	2.03	.33	Low
Family monthly net income			

Php 15,000 and below	2.06	.33	Low
Php 15,001 to Php 30,000	2.01	.35	Low
Php 30,001 and above	2.15	.45	Low
Parental presence			
Living with both parents	2.04	.36	Low
Living with my mother only	2.12	.28	Low
Living with father only	1.89	.29	Low
Living with guardians	2.15	.36	Low
Parents' educational background			
Elementary Level	2.17	.35	Low
High School Level	2.03	.34	Low
College Level	2.04	.34	Low
Social media use			
Everyday	2.06	.32	Low
Once a week	1.93	.28	Low
Seldom	2.13	.37	Low
Never	2.19	.39	Low

The data showed that all six variables, to some extent, influenced the low academic resilience of the learners. The findings support Haibin's [10] study, which highlighted that each learner faces unique risks and struggles based on their background, and the way these risks and struggles impact learners also varies. This statement also supports White et al.'s [23] idea that the concept of resilience is a significant individual difference feature that explains the outperformance of some individuals over others when facing problems. Since Grade six learners were still less experienced and less mature members of society, and were still considered children, they were probably expected to demonstrate their academic resilience when confronted with problems and challenges in their studies and lives.

4.2. Differences in the Level of Academic Resilience of Learners

The differences in the academic resilience of learners categorized according to the identified variables were also determined in this study. The test used to determine significant differences was the t-test for Independent Samples. As to sex, findings revealed that no significant difference existed in the learners' academic resilience as to sex ($t=.179$; $p<0.05$). In other words, both males and females exhibited the same or similar level of academic resilience. A scrutiny of Table 4 revealed that the t-value derived for both males and females was 0.179 ($df = 148$), which was less than the t-tabular value of 1.860; hence, the decision was to accept the null hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the learners' academic resilience based on sex. Most probably, the learners involved in the study were those who rejected the stressors, challenges, and problems. Their focus was on reaching their goals and realizing their dream to finish, so that they could overcome the stressors using the appropriate coping mechanisms, with support coming from both internal and external environments.

Regarding family size, when the respondents were classified according to family size ($t = 1.746$; $p < .05$), the independent samples t-test showed a computed value of 0.083; hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Learners, whether they had family members of three and below or four and above, manifested the same level of academic resilience. Regardless of sex, students demonstrated high academic resilience. Most likely because children of this age were friends, playmates, not only classmates, so they have learned with each other the strategies to cope with their personal, academic, socio-economic, and environmental stressors and that even amid these stressors they still performed academically, still positive in everything they do and would never give up. Regarding family size, the null hypothesis was rejected; thus, family size can make significant differences in students' academic resilience, considering the number of siblings or children in the family.

Table 4: T-Test results of the differences in academic resilience as to variables

Variables	Mean	t-value	df	Sig level
Sex				
Male	2.05			
		.179	148	.859
Female	2.06			
Family size				
3 and below	2.15			
		1.746	148	.083
4 and above	2.03			

Table 5 shows the differences in the learners' academic resilience when they are classified according to family monthly net income, parental presence, parents' educational background, and social media use. No significant differences were noted in academic resilience to family monthly net income, parental presence, and parents' educational background; hence, the null hypothesis for the specified variables was not rejected. This implies that, regardless of a family's income, presence, and educational background, learners do not vary in their academic resilience. However, learners vary in their academic resilience in terms of social media use, as indicated by the F-value of 3.503 ($p < .05$).

Academic resilience is a dynamic process; as such, it's affected by several factors. Individual learners are affected by varied stressors and struggles based on their backgrounds. In support of this statement, Schunk and Zimmerman discussed how learners' differences lead to changes in the concept and evaluation of achievement, which are elucidated based on learners' efficient handling of their cognitive capabilities, self-regulation, and autonomy skills. Of the four selected variables and factors influencing the academic resilience of students, the use of social media had the greatest impact on the learners' academic resilience. In the literature review, it was noted that social media has a general impact on students' lives at their present age.

Once the use of social media was regulated among children, it could be a good avenue for relieving stress for students to counteract the stressors, as students need more constant reminders from teachers and families. Accordingly, some students use social media for school or academic-related purposes. However, many times, parents did not give importance to their parental guidance or supervised the use of social media to the extent that the children stayed late at night on the internet or in computer shops or centers. The teacher's role still holds importance in this care to keep motivating learners. Still, although social media use has proven to be helpful and useful, it should not be disregarded in favor of the value and importance of books, library resources, and research in developing academic resilience.

Table 5: ANOVA results of the significant differences in the academic resilience of learners as to identified variables

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig level
Family monthly net income	Between Groups	.155	2	.078	.658	.519
	Within Groups	17.312	147	.118		
	Total	17.468	149			
Parental presence	Between Groups	.626	3	.209	1.808	.148
	Within Groups	16.842	146	.115		
	Total	17.468	149			
Parents' educational background	Between Groups	.322	2	.161	1.379	.255
	Within Groups	17.146	147	.117		
	Total	17.468	149			
Social media use	Between Groups	1.173	3	.391	3.503*	.017
	Within Groups	16.295	146	.112		
	Total	17.468	149			

To further explore the significant differences between means, a posteriori test shown in Table 6 using the LSD was utilized. Results showed that the significant differences lie in the following: between those who use social media once a week and seldom (mean difference = -0.20649) and those who use it once a week and never (mean difference = -0.26728).

Table 6: LSD results of the significant differences in the academic resilience of learners as to social media use

Dependent Variable	(I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Social media use	Once a week	Seldom	-.20649**	.009
	Once a week	Never	-.26728**	.007

5. Conclusions

From the findings discussed above, the following were the conclusions of the study:

- The low academic resilience of Grade 6 learners can be explained from both psychological and sociological viewpoints. Every individual faces different risks and struggles based on their background, and the way these risks and struggles affect learners varies. They have protective factors that serve as a buffer, but for the learners, these protective factors cannot overcome the negative effects of risks and struggles, which eventually lead to the assimilation of behavior risk factors and consequences, ultimately reducing academic resilience.

- Sex, family size, family monthly net income, parental presence, and parents' educational background do not affect the learners' academic resilience in any way, but social media use does.

5.1. Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions provided above, the following were the recommendations:

- The Department of Education, particularly the one in Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP) and Values Education, should include in its action plan the development and enhancement of learners' academic resilience journals.
- To review its programs and projects and to check if there are topics that cater to the needs of learners, considering academic resilience as a basic ingredient in learners' success. The programs and projects should be implemented and monitored at the grassroots school level.
- The district office and other DepEd programs should collaborate to have a unified direction in resolving problems and addressing learners' needs in terms of academic resilience.
- Notably, the school's sports and cultural activities should incorporate these important matters concerning learners' achievement.
- The school head should formulate in their School Improvement Plan (SIP) programs, projects, and activities that cater to the needs of strengthening learners' motivation in both academic and non-academic areas.
- Guidance Advocates can utilize this study in designing seminars, workshops, and symposia to improve and strengthen students' resiliency in dealing with personal, family, and academic challenges, especially during the new normal situation.

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