



Resilience of academically poor students of low socio-economic status-A case study of Jorhat town

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in two higher secondary schools from rural area of Jorhat town. The objective of the study was to assess the resilience of academically poor students from low socio-economic status. The sample comprised of one hundred twenty five school children studying in sixth standard to twelve standard who are academically poor in their school performance. A standardized scale to measure Resilience among students by Dr. Nasreen Banu (2014) was used in this research study. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents have higher level of resilience in both internal as well as external dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

People deal with difficult events that change their lives in different way. The death of a loved one, loss of a job, serious illness, terrorist attacks and other traumatic events: these are all examples of very challenging life experiences. Many people react to such circumstances with strong emotions and a sense of uncertainty.

Yet people generally adapt well over time to life-changing situations and stressful conditions. What enables them to do so? It involves resilience, an ongoing process that requires time and effort and engages people in taking a number of steps.

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant

sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means “bouncing back” from difficult experiences. Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. People commonly demonstrate resilience. Being resilient does not mean that a person doesn’t experience difficulty or distress. Emotional pain and sadness are common in people who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives. In fact, the road to resilience is likely to involve considerable emotional distress. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.

A combination of factors contributes to resilience.

Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust provide role models and offer encouragement and reassurance help reinforce a person's resilience.

Some variation may reflect cultural differences. A person's culture might have an impact on how he or she communicates feelings and deals with adversity-for example, whether and how a person connects with significant others, including extended family members and community resources. With growing cultural diversity, the public has greater access to a number of different approaches to building resilience.

Student resilience and well being are essential for both academic and social development and this is optimized by the provision of safe, supportive and respectful learning environments. Schools share this responsibility with the whole community.

Not only do confident, resilient children with a capacity for emotional intelligence perform better academically, these skills can also contribute to the creation of strong social bonds and supportive communities, and the maintenance of healthy relationships and responsible lifestyles.

Resilience can be defined as the set of attributes that provides people with the strength and fortitude to confront the overwhelming obstacles they are bound to face in life. When children quickly adapt to new environments that may require them to learn new skills, to be patient, to cope effectively with some challenges, frustrations and maybe even anxiety we say they are responsible and resilient. Researchers have discovered that these positive coping skills are learned and dependent upon the child having a bond with a caring adult who models, teaches and reinforces these positive skills. Resilience is dependent upon experience and is necessary for learning. Many children entering school have different degrees of resilience just as they have different degrees of experience in reading and numeration.

Just as we teach and establish the classroom structures for learning to read we can do the same for building and supporting resilience, a proactive skill in all our students. When teachers and schools establish resilient classrooms they support memorable experiences for children and higher academic achievement. According to the Institute of Medicine (2004) caring schools that foster high expectations and self autonomy have higher

academic achievement.

Wang *et al.* (1994) refer to academic resilience as an increased likelihood of (academic) success despite environmental adversities. Resilient students are described by Alva (1991) as those who maintain high motivational achievement and performance even when faced with stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of poor performance and by Waxman *et al.* (2003) as those who succeed at school despite the presence of adverse conditions.

Waxman *et al.* (2003) note that resiliency refers to factors and processes that limit negative behaviours associated with stress and result in adaptive outcomes in the presence of adversity. They discuss the value of resilience studies that identify differences between resilient and non-resilient students and that focus on alterable factors to design more effective educational interventions. They suggest that focusing on educational resilience and those factors that can be altered to promote resilience may help address the gap in achievement between those students who are successful and those who are at risk of failure. Like Wagnild (2009), Waxman *et al.* (2003) further suggest that rather than being fixed, academic resilience can be promoted by focussing on alterable factors including social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, a sense of purpose (Bernard, 1993), motivation and goal orientation, positive use of time, family life, and learning environment (McMillan and Reed, 1994). The potential for building resilience, together with Munro and Pooley (2009) suggestion that resilience may mediate adversity and success in university students and Hamill (2003) prioritizing of self-efficacy over other resilience factors, provides the major premise for the present study examining academic self-efficacy (ASE) as a factor influencing student responses to academic adversity.

Keeping all these in view an effort has been made to study the resilience of academically poor students who belong to low socio-economic status with following objectives:

- To measure the internal resilience of the academically poor students
- To measure the external resilience of the academically poor students

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample selection and locale of the study:

Selection of sample :

Keeping in view of the objective of the study, sample has been selected from school going children from sixth to tenth standard. Schools have been selected from sub urban areas of Jorhat district.

Principal of the schools were approached and purpose and aim of the research study was clearly explained to them. The class teacher of class VI to class X were also contacted and the list of students in the age group of 11-17 years (VIth –X class) was obtained from the class teachers. Merit list of the students were prepared on the basis of the results of last two consecutive years. From the merit list last 10-15% of students were selected and identified as academically poor. Teachers' opinions were also considered while selecting the academically backward students. A total of one hundred and twenty five (125) student age ranges from 11 to 17 yrs have been selected (Table A).

125 academically poor school students were selected as a sample from two schools of Jorhat district between the age group of 11-17 years were tested in various dimensions with the help of following tools:

Tools used:

Socio-economic status scale :

In order to collect the background information, socio-economic status Scale by Aggrawal *et al.* (2005) was used. The scale consisted of 22 various parameters to measure the socio economic status index. The maximum aggregate score of the scale was 100. Based on the final score, the socio-economic status of the family is divided into six socio-economic categories, namely upper high (combined score of more than 76), high (61-75), upper middle (46-60), lower middle (31-45), poor (16-30) and very poor (combined score less than 15).

Resilience scale :

In order to assess the resilience of the respondents a standardized tool developed by Dr. Nasreen Banu was used. The resilience inventory containing 33 statements about external resilience and 18 statements about internal resilience was administrated to measure resilience of

respondents. The Resilience scale is a comprehensive student self-report tool, which assesses external and internal assets associated with positive youth development and school success. External assets refer to meaningful and pro-social bonding to community, school, family and peers. Internal assets are personal resilience traits, such as self-efficacy and problem-solving skills etc.

Resilience of academically backward children :

Resilience refers to the ability of person to withstand or recover quickly from difficult condition so assessment of resilience of academically backward student was necessary so that interventions can be planned to enhance their capacity.

Scoring procedure:

The scale measures two types of resilience *i.e.*, external and internal resilience.

– External resilience measures 4 sub areas: School, Home, Community and Peer assets. Each sub area contains 9 statements each, except for peer asset which has only 6 statements. Altogether, external resilience consists of 33 statements, which are arranged on 5 point scale *i.e.*, strongly agree is marked as 5; Agree as 4; Not sure as 3; Disagree as 2 and Strongly disagree as 1. The total scores further grouped as low, average and high. Higher the score, higher is the external resilience. Based on which area the student has obtained low scores, intervention will be planned accordingly.

– Internal resilience measures 6 personal strengths of a resilient child-which include Empathy, Problem solving, Self-efficacy, Self-awareness, Co-operation and Communication, and Goals and aspirations. Each sub area contains 6 statements each. Altogether, Internal resilience consists of 30 statements, which are arranged on 5 point scale *i.e.*, strongly agree is marked as 5; Agree as 4; Not sure as 3; Disagree as 2 and Strongly disagree as 1. The total scores are further grouped as low, average and high. Higher the score, higher is the internal resilience. Based on which area the student has obtained low scores, intervention will be planned accordingly.

Table A : Distribution of sample						
Centre	No. of villages selected	No. of school selected	Total no. of student, Class VI- X (11-17 Years)	Academically poor student identified		Total sample
				Boys	Girls	
AAU	5	2	726	60	65	125

Method of selecting the sample :

Principal of the schools were approached and purpose and aim of the research study was clearly explained to them. Other teachers of the school, as well as the class teacher of the school from class vi to class xi were also contacted and purpose of the study was explained. The list of children in the age group of 11-17 years (VIth –XI class) was obtained from the class teachers. Out of the total students of the class 10-15% children who are poor in studies based on the teacher's opinion as well as academic result of last two to three consecutive years performance were taken into consideration while selecting the sample for the present study.

Characteristic of the sample selected :

The background information was gathered from the selected academically backward students. It was found that the majority of the selected sample was having least interest in their studies and is poor in all the subjects. The selected samples are mainly from low socio-economic status.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The background information about personal, social and economic characteristics of the respondents was measured with the help of socio-economic scale by Aggrawal *et al.* (2005). The scale measures the socio-economic background in terms of type of family, income, education, facilities available in the family, etc.

According to the range of score, Table 1 depicts

that majority (88%) of the respondents' falls in the category of lower middle class, whereas only 12 per cent of the respondents belonged to the category of lower middle class.

It was also found that none of the respondent belonged to upper high, high, poor or very poor category.

Resilience of academically backward students :

Findings (Table 2) revealed that majority (97.6%, 94.4%, 88% and 84%) of the respondents had high level of external resilience in all the four areas of home, peer, community and school assets. While, few of the respondents have shown average level of external resilience in all the four areas. In addition to individual attributes, resilience is also defined as existing in interpersonal dynamics; specifically, student resilience is fostered by support from family members, peers, educators, schools, as well as social and community organizations. For example, parents' high expectations pressure students to remain in school and work toward high achievement (McMillan and Reed, 1994). Along with family, Johnson (1997) highlights the significance of school and community "as potentially protecting students from risk factors or as potentially compensating for personal and social disadvantage". Westfall and Pisapia (1994) claim that the existence of support systems at home, school, and the community engender "the development of constructive personality traits such as self-efficacy, goals orientation, optimism, internal expectations, personal responsibility, and coping ability". In keeping with efforts to understand resilience processes,

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Upper high	0	0
High	0	0
Upper middle	15	12
Lower middle	110	88
Poor	0	0
Very poor	0	0

Area	Low		Average		High	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
School assets	0	-	20	16	105	84
Home assets	0	-	3	2.4	122	97.6
Community assets	0	-	15	12	110	88
Peer assets	0	-	7	5.6	118	94.4

Area	Low		Average		High	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
Co-operation and communication	2	5.6	25	20	98	78.4
Self efficacy	0	-	23	18.4	102	81.6
Empathy	0	-	3	2.4	122	97.6
Problem solving	0	-	10	8	115	92
Self awareness	0	-	9	7.2	116	92.8
Goals and aspirations	-	-	2	1.6	123	98.4

Pianta and Walsh (1998) also maintain, “resiliency is produced by the interactions among a child, family, peers, school, and community”. They caution against the dangers of “locating the successes of children in one (or even two or three) of these places [child, family, school], in the absence of an emphasis on the interactions, transactions, and relationships among these places”. As an arena wherein relationships among individuals, groups, and systems occur, schools have a significant role to play in creating environments conducive to resilience (Bethea and Robinson, 2007).

Data (Table 3) regarding the internal resilience of the students revealed that in the area of goals and aspiration almost all (98.4%) the respondents had high level of internal resilience, followed by, in the area of empathy (97.6%). In the area of self awareness and problem solving majority (92.8% and 92%) of the respondents too had high level of internal resilience. Table also revealed that 81.6 per cent and 78.4 per cent of the respondents had high internal resilience in the areas of self efficacy and co-operation and communication, respectively. Results further revealed that rest of the respondents had average resilience in all the six areas of internal resilience except a very meager per cent (5.6%) falls in the category of low in co-operation and communication dimension. It reveals that though the respondents have poor academic grades they are resilient in all the dimensions. Benard (1995) contends that “reciprocal caring, respectful, and participatory relationships are the critical determining factors in whether a youth feels he or she has a place in this society” (p. 3). Similarly, Smokowski *et al.* (1999) find that the “relational bonds” between teachers and resilient adolescents were important in buffering risks and facilitating adaptive development. Schools as sites of resilience include colleges and universities (Walker *et al.*, 2006) where resilience is seen as important for students success.

It may be concluded that as they possess higher level of resiliency in both external and internal dimensions there is a greater scope for them to improve in their academics too.

Conclusion :

Academic performance of children depends upon many factors right from academic reasons to physical and mental health status of the children. It may be influenced by familial factors as well as their economic status. Though sometimes they perform poor in their studies their general mental wellbeing with reference to resilience, they possess a high level which clearly indicates a greater scope for them to improve in their academics.

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