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# Building Resilience: Its Implication to SARDO's Learning Recovery

**Cristopher L. Cablaida [1], Annalyn A. Delfino [2]**

[1]Department of Education, Division of Tayabas City, 4327, Philippines

[2] Laguna State Polytechnic University, San Pablo Campus, 4000, Philippines

**ABSTRACT:** Many students in the Philippines face challenges that put them at risk of dropping out, including financial struggles, family problems, mental health issues, and poor academic performance. This study aimed to determine whether a structured resilience-building program could help Students at Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO) at Buenaventura Alandy National High School and develop the skills needed to overcome these challenges. Using Kenneth Ginsburg's 7 Cs Model of Resilience and Martin Seligman's Positive Psychology Theory as a foundation, the study implemented a resilience-building program. It measured its effectiveness through a quasi-experimental approach. The Student Resilience Survey (SRS) was used to assess students' resilience levels before and after the intervention, focusing on family and school connections, community involvement, peer support, self-esteem, empathy, goal-setting, and problem-solving. The Building Resilience Toolkit, which included structured activities to strengthen coping skills, emotional regulation, and social engagement, was introduced as the key intervention.

The findings showed that before the intervention, SARDO students had low to moderate resilience levels, struggling with self-confidence, motivation, and support systems. After participating in the program, they exhibited significant improvements in their ability to form positive relationships, solve problems, and stay engaged in school. Statistical analysis confirmed that the intervention had a meaningful impact, and students themselves expressed feeling more supported and encouraged to continue their education. These results underscore the importance of resilience-building programs in supporting at-risk students to remain in school and achieve academic success.

The study concludes that schools should integrate structured resilience programs into their curriculum to provide continuous support for students. Teachers and guidance counselors may receive specialized training, and stronger collaboration with parents and the community may be encouraged to build a better support system for students. The Department of Education may consider incorporating resilience-building initiatives into the national learning recovery plan. Future research may explore the long-term effects of these programs on student retention and well-being. By implementing these recommendations, schools can create a supportive learning environment that empowers at-risk students to overcome challenges and achieve academic success.

**KEYWORDS:** resilience; SARDO; learning recovery; student engagement; education intervention.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education in the Philippines has been affected by various adversities with numerous implications for health, society, and the economy. Leaners, being the main clientele of education, have been adversely affected by them, which results in stress, depression, and anxiety and eventually makes them at-risk students.

In essence, education plays a crucial role in helping individuals become productive citizens and is the most significant factor influencing a country's growth. However, for various reasons, children in developing nations have denied themselves the opportunity to receive an education by dropping out of school. The term "Student-At-Risk of Dropping Out," or SARDO for short, was created by the Philippine Department of Education to describe a student who is at risk of dropping out. Dropping out is defined by the National Center for Education Statistics as quitting school before graduating without earning a diploma. Dropping out of school is not just a teacher adviser's issue, as it reflects the performance of how many students were promoted to the next grade level, nor is it an issue solely for the dropout student. Still, it also affects the entire nation (Timbal, 2019).

SARDO has been a prevalent issue in schools nowadays. According to Jara (2017), SARDOs were identified by the existence of failing grades in any subject in any grading period, as she believes that poor academic performance signals a problem confronting the student. Based on the records of their adviser, it was also discovered that the pupils were regularly absent from class. A "broken family" is the primary reason why students may be at risk of dropping out when considering domestic and family-related variables. The second common explanation, "under the care of foster parents/or guardians," is strongly tied to this. The most concerning risk factors under the individual variables category include "truancy, tardiness, absenteeism, and cutting class." The most urgent issue regarding school-related variables is "too difficult schoolwork," but "distance of home to school" also came up

under geographic/environmental concerns. "Low family income" and "not enough allowance" were the most common financial reasons, with fairly similar outcomes. Knowing all these factors of SARDO, promoting resilience would be a more systematic and effective approach to addressing the problem.

According to Turner et al. (2017), resilience is positively related to academic engagement and achievement and contributes to students' mental health and well-being. More so, the capacity to adapt and flourish in the face of adverse circumstances, difficulties, and adversities is known as resilience. Social competence, a feeling of agency or responsibility, optimism, a sense of purpose or hope for the future, attachment to family, school, and learning, problem-solving abilities, effective coping strategies, pro-social values, a sense of self-efficacy, and positive self-regard are all important components of resilience in students. School can enhance resilience through programs that build positive social norms and generate a sense of connectedness to teachers, peers, and the school's academic goals (Cahill et al., 2014).

In an article titled "High number of dropouts still a challenge," even though the number of students has increased recently, the high percentage of dropouts—those who do not complete their studies—remains a significant issue for the nation's educational system. "While there are good signs in DepEd exceeding their enrollment targets, we also have to look at dropouts," Justine Raagas, executive director of the Philippine Business for Education (PBEd), said at a press conference on July 21 (Mateo 2023).

In light of these challenges, it is increasingly challenging to determine how to build resilience among learners as a proactive measure to prevent the escalating number of at-risk students and, in due course, maintain quality learning amidst such adversities. The school and its stakeholders can promote and build resilience among learners, especially those at risk, which would help resolve issues related to learning recovery. Hence, this study, by understanding the resilience level of SARDO and implementing programs and activities to build resilience, would be advantageous to the school community.

The term "Student-At-Risk of Dropping Out," or SARDO, was created by the Philippine Department of Education to describe a student who is at risk of dropping out. According to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, 36,238 individuals between the ages of six and twenty-four are not enrolled in school. This poses a predicament if this continues without even attempting to intervene or at least reduce it gradually, which would affect the governing body (DepEd) and ripple its impact throughout the entire country (Timbal, 2019).

According to UNESCO, some students were left behind even before the pandemic because they could not read, and if they do not continue receiving quality instruction, this gap will widen. Nearly two-thirds of the children in the region were unable to read proficiently before the epidemic, and an estimated 15 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 were not attending school. Ten million more children were at risk of dropping out of school as a result of poverty, social exclusion, displacement, and conflict-related disruption. In 2020, on top of the pre-pandemic estimates, UNESCO estimated that a further 1.31 million children and youths were at risk of dropping out of school due to the COVID-19 crisis, noting that these children were unlikely to return to their educational institutions (Magno, 2022).

Buenaventura Alandy National High School (BANHS) has been adhering to face-to-face learning since the start of the 2022-2023 school year. Indeed, the adjustment of learners in the teaching and learning process may have an impact on their academic performance. Additionally, there were issues with learner attendance due to various factors, as revealed during home visits. It is helpful that home visitation is one of the best practices in BANHS, where class advisers, subject teachers, and guidance counselors visit the houses of learners who are committing absences. Thus, this directed them to continue seeking solutions to address the existing problem with SARDO.

Currently, the school is on track to regain the learners' attendance and participation based on the Learning Recovery Plan of the Department of Education (DepEd). The Basic Education Learning Recovery Plan (BELRP) aims to ensure that students across all grade levels can catch up and accelerate their learning. Moreover, the framework intends to address the socio-emotional and behavioral recovery of learners.

The researcher was prompted to conduct this study since based on the observation and data provided by the class advisers and the request made by key teachers from JHS to the guidance office to have an specific program for SARDO, there are Junior High School students at-risk who were not performing well as reflected in their submitted attendance, records, and ratings. This can be attributed to psychological factors, wherein students in secondary and tertiary education settings are known to face a varied range of ongoing normative stressors associated with their academic demands (Pascoe et al., 2019). However, the current situation brought about by the pandemic's social constraints has caused students' academic stress levels to rise to extremely high levels. There is sufficient data to show that children and adolescents' academic performance, mental health, and general well-being are negatively impacted by severe and ongoing academic-related stress. Academic-related stress is significantly associated with reduced student academic motivation (Liu, 2015) and academic disengagement (Liu & Lu, 2011).

Thus, the study was implemented through a guided resilience program for learners to adjust to the continuous changes in teaching and learning delivery, which may affect the quality of learning.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted to explore the implementation and effectiveness of a resilience-building intervention for Students At Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO) at Buenaventura Alandy National High School during the School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, the research aimed to assess the level of resilience among these students before and after the introduction of a structured resilience-building tool. To accomplish this, the study first sought to determine the baseline resilience levels of at-risk students at the start of the second quarter, focusing on ten key domains: family connection, school connection, community connection, participation in home and school life, participation in community life, peer support, self-esteem, empathy, goal-setting, and problem-solving. Following the intervention, the study aimed to measure any changes in these same areas by evaluating the resilience levels of the students at the end of the second quarter. Additionally, the research aimed to establish whether there was a significant difference in the resilience levels of the students before and after the implementation of the resilience-building tool. Finally, the study sought to draw out the implications of the findings for learning recovery, particularly in understanding how fostering resilience can support the academic engagement and overall well-being of students at risk.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design, specifically a one-group pre-test and post-test model, to examine the impact of a guided resilience-building intervention on Junior High School students identified as Students At Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO) during the 2024–2025 school year at Buenaventura Alandy National High School.

A total of 81 SARDO students were selected as participants through purposive sampling. These students were identified based on consistent patterns of absenteeism and non-participation in academic activities, as reflected in attendance and academic performance records.

To assess the students' resilience levels, the Student Resilience Survey (SRS) was used. This instrument measures ten key domains of resilience: family connection, school connection, community connection, participation in home and school life, participation in community life, peer support, self-esteem, empathy, goal-setting, and problem-solving.

The intervention utilized the Building Resilience Toolkit developed by UNILAB, which consists of structured and guided activities aimed at strengthening emotional and social resilience. The toolkit was implemented during the second quarter of the school year. A pre-test was administered to establish the baseline resilience levels of the SARDO participants prior to the implementation of the intervention. After the intervention was completed, a post-test was conducted to assess changes in the same ten domains of resilience.

The study aimed to determine how the resilience-building intervention affected the students' resilience across the identified domains. Specifically, it sought to identify the students' resilience levels before and after the intervention, and to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the two sets of scores. Additionally, the research aimed to explore the implications of the findings for learning recovery efforts, particularly in enhancing student engagement and academic participation.

Data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. This non-parametric statistical method is appropriate for evaluating paired data and was employed to determine whether the observed changes in resilience levels were statistically significant.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The resilience level of students at risk of dropping out was evaluated across ten individual characteristics: family connection, school connection, connection, participation in home and school life, participation in community life, peer support, self-esteem, empathy, goals, and problem-solving before the implementation of building resilience.

**Table 1. Resilience Level as to Family Connection Before and after the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before | | | After | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *At home, there is an adult who...* | Mean | SD | VI | Mean | SD | VI |
| 1. ... is interested in my school work. | 2.33 | 0.79 | Rarely | 3.31 | 0.75 | Sometimes |
| 2. ... believes that I will be a success. | 2.52 | 0.79 | Sometimes | 3.47 | 0.71 | Sometimes |
| 3. ... wants me to do my best. | 2.27 | 0.59 | Rarely | 4.43 | 0.97 | Often |
| 4. ... listens to me when I have something to say. | 2.22 | 0.67 | Rarely | 3.12 | 0.76 | Sometimes |
| Overall | 2.34 | 0.46 | Rarely | 3.58 | 0.60 | Often |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 1 reveals a significant improvement in students' resilience levels regarding family connections following the implementation of the Building Resilience program. The overall mean score increased from 2.34 (SD = 0.46), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience, to 3.58 (SD = 0.60), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in Statement 3 - "At home, there is an adult who wants me to do my best" with a mean score of 4.43 (SD = 0.97), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The lowest result before implementation was found in Statement 4 - "At home, there is an adult who listens to me when I have something to say" with a mean score of 2.22 (SD = 0.67), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience. The findings indicate that the Building Resilience program substantially enhanced students' perception of family support, particularly in having adults who encourage them to perform their best at home. This improvement suggests that the program effectively strengthened family connections, a critical protective factor in developing resilience among at-risk students.

This result is consistent with a study by Williams et al. (2022), which showed that family involvement programs increase teenage resilience. Masten (2021) also found that family support is among the most potent protective elements for at-risk young people. Teenagers are more likely to exhibit emotional stability and motivation if they believe their parents or other caregivers are involved. The relevance of the family connection component in the present study is highlighted by Stormshak and Dishion's (2018) finding that just school-based treatments devoid of family components exhibited more restricted effectiveness.

**Table 2. Resilience Level as to School Connection Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *At school, there is an adult who...* | | | | | | |
| 1. ... really cares about me. | 2.33 | 0.57 | Rarely | 3.81 | 0.85 | Often |
| 2. ... tells me when I do a good job. | 2.47 | 0.71 | Rarely | 3.88 | 0.98 | Often |
| 3. ... listens to me when I have something to say. | 2.35 | 0.64 | Rarely | 3.57 | 0.81 | Often |
| 4. ... believes that I will be a success. | 2.33 | 0.55 | Rarely | 3.79 | 0.94 | Often |
| Overall | 2.37 | 0.43 | Rarely | 3.76 | 0.72 | Often |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 2 illustrates significant improvements in students' resilience levels related to school connections following the implementation of the Building Resilience program. The overall mean score increased from 2.37 (SD = 0.43), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience, to 3.76 (SD = 0.72), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in Statement 2 - "At school, there is an adult who tells me when I do a good job" with a mean score of 3.88 (SD = 0.98), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The lowest results before implementation were found in statements 1 and 4 - "At school, there is an adult who cares about me" and "At school, there is an adult who believes that I will be a success" both with a mean score of 2.33 (SD = 0.57 and SD = 0.55 respectively), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience. These results demonstrate that the Building Resilience program effectively enhanced students' connections with school adults, particularly regarding receiving positive feedback and recognition. The significant improvement in school connection indicates that the program successfully fostered supportive relationships between students and school personnel, essential for developing academic resilience.

This development complements that of Dray et al. (2017), whose comprehensive research revealed that student mental health outcomes are much influenced by school connectivity. The resilience wheel model, developed by Henderson and Milstein (2020), also emphasizes the importance of school ties in developing student resilience. O'Brennan et al. (2020) pointed out that changes in school connection can vary depending on student demographics; therefore, future studies should examine the various effects.

**Table 3. Resilience Level as to Community Connection Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Away from school, there is an adult who... | | | | | | |
| 1. ... really cares about me. | 2.83 | 0.52 | Sometimes | 3.32 | 0.67 | Sometimes |
| 2. ... tells me when I do a good job. | 2.51 | 0.65 | Sometimes | 3.44 | 1.10 | Sometimes |
| 3. ... believes that I will be a success. | 2.51 | 0.67 | Sometimes | 3.88 | 1.09 | Often |
| 4. ... I trust. | 2.11 | 0.71 | Rarely | 3.27 | 0.82 | Sometimes |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall | 2.49 | 0.40 | Rarely | 3.48 | 0.73 | Sometimes |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 3 shows a notable improvement in students' resilience levels regarding community connections following the implementation of the Building Resilience program. The overall mean score increased from 2.49 (SD = 0.40), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience, to 3.48 (SD = 0.73), categorized as "Sometimes" or Moderate resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in statement 3 - "Away from school, there is an adult who believes that I will be a success" with a mean score of 3.88 (SD = 1.09), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The lowest result before implementation was found in statement 4 - "Away from school, there is an adult whom I trust" with a mean score of 2.11 (SD = 0.71), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience. These findings suggest that the Building Resilience program effectively enhanced students' connections with adults in their community, particularly in having adults who believe in their potential for success. While not as substantial as those observed in family and school connections, the improvement in community connection still represents meaningful progress in developing resilience through community support networks.

These findings align with Ungar's (2019) social-ecological model of resilience, which emphasizes the importance of community resources for young growth. Similarly, among vulnerable young people, Sanders and Munford (2016) found that community connectedness significantly predicted better outcomes. Wilson et al. (2020) on community impacts, on the other hand, indicated that contextual elements may affect the efficacy of community-based resilience treatments through neighborhood traits.

**Table 4. Resilience Level as to Participation in Home and School Life Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I do things at home that make a difference. (i.e. make things better) | 2.69 | 0.52 | Sometimes | 3.67 | 0.82 | Often |
| 2. I help my family make decisions. | 2.78 | 0.42 | Sometimes | 3.42 | 0.96 | Sometimes |
| 3. At school, I decide things like class activities or rules. | 1.69 | 0.54 | Rarely | 2.32 | 0.77 | Rarely |
| 4. I do things at school that make a difference. (i.e. make things better) | 1.80 | 0.60 | Rarely | 3.32 | 0.74 | Sometimes |
| Overall | 2.24 | 0.32 | Rarely | 3.18 | 0.54 | Sometimes |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 4 shows that the implementation of the Building Resilience program resulted in an improvement in students' resilience levels, particularly in their participation in home and school life.

The overall mean score increased from 2.24 (SD = 0.32), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience, to 3.18 (SD = 0.54), categorized as "Sometimes" or Moderate resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in statement 1 - "I do things at home that make a difference (i.e., make things better)" with a mean score of 3.67 (SD = 0.82), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The lowest result before implementation was found in statement 3 - "At school, I decide things like class activities or rules" with a mean score of 1.69 (SD = 0.54), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience. These results indicate that the Building Resilience program effectively enhanced students' sense of agency and contribution, particularly within their home environments. However, statement 3 regarding decision-making at school remained relatively low (2.32, SD = 0.77) even after implementation, suggesting that increasing student voice in school decision-making may require additional focus in future interventions.

These results corroborate those of Wong et al. (2019), who found that student agency and voice are crucial for developing resilience. Similarly, Hart et al. (2016) demonstrated that the self-efficacy of at-risk students increases when they participate meaningfully in decision-making. Nonetheless, Ray et al. (2018) highlighted enduring structural obstacles to genuine student involvement in school governance, which may account for the persistently poor scores in school decision-making that remain even after the intervention.

**Table 5. Resilience Level as to Participation in Community Life Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. ... I am a member of a club, sports team, church group, or other group. | 1.32 | 0.54 | Never | 1.46 | 0.61 | Never |
| 2. ... I take lessons in music, art, sports, or have a hobby. | 1.32 | 0.54 | Never | 1.41 | 0.61 | Never |
| Overall | 1.32 | 0.54 | Never | 1.43 | 0.60 | Never |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 5 shows minimal improvement in students' resilience levels regarding participation in community life following the implementation of the Building Resilience program.

The overall mean score increased slightly from 1.32 (SD = 0.54), categorized as "Never" or Very Low resilience, to 1.43 (SD = 0.60), which remains categorized as "Never" or Very Low resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in statement 1 - "I am a member of a club, sports team, church group, or other group" with a mean score of 1.46 (SD = 0.61), still categorized as "Never" or Very Low resilience. The lowest result, before implementation, was observed in both statements 1 and 2, which had identical mean scores of 1.32 (SD = 0.54), categorized as "Never" or "Very Low" resilience. These findings indicate that the Building Resilience program had minimal impact on students' participation in structured community activities. The persistently low scores in this domain suggest that additional interventions targeting community engagement and participation opportunities may be necessary to enhance this resilience among at-risk students. This suggests external barriers to participation—possibly including financial constraints, transportation issues, or limited community resources—that the intervention did not address.

Oberle et al. (2019) observed that involvement in community programs significantly increased resilience outcomes, which is somewhat at odds with this finding. According to Lin et al. (2022), access hurdles, including costs, transportation, and awareness, restrict the involvement of underprivileged children in community activities. The present results are consistent with those of Goldstein et al. (2020), who noted that short-term fixes often fail to address systemic obstacles to community involvement, underscoring the need for more comprehensive strategies.

**Table 6. Resilience Level as to Peer Support Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Are there students at your school who would... | | | | | | |
| 1. ... choose you on their team at school. | 2.15 | 0.73 | Rarely | 3.47 | 0.74 | Sometimes |
| 2. ... explain the rules of a game if you didn't understand them. | 2.17 | 0.74 | Rarely | 3.70 | 0.99 | Often |
| 3. ... invite you to their home. | 2.77 | 0.78 | Sometimes | 3.23 | 0.91 | Sometimes |
| 4. ... share things with you. | 2.43 | 0.63 | Rarely | 3.51 | 0.71 | Often |
| 5. ... help you if you hurt yourself. | 2.36 | 0.73 | Rarely | 3.41 | 0.98 | Sometimes |
| 6. ... miss you if you weren't at school. | 2.16 | 0.75 | Rarely | 3.19 | 0.88 | Sometimes |
| 7. ... make you feel better if something is bothering you. | 2.25 | 0.78 | Rarely | 3.49 | 0.95 | Sometimes |
| 8. ... pick you for a partner. | 2.44 | 0.57 | Rarely | 3.19 | 0.55 | Sometimes |
| 9. ... help you if other students are being mean to you. | 2.25 | 0.78 | Rarely | 3.12 | 0.53 | Sometimes |
| 10. ... tell you you're their friend. | 2.48 | 0.55 | Rarely | 4.00 | 1.14 | Often |
| 11. ... ask you to join in when you are all alone. | 2.52 | 0.59 | Sometimes | 3.63 | 1.13 | Often |
| 12. ... tell you secrets. | 1.73 | 0.57 | Rarely | 2.54 | 0.65 | Sometimes |
| Overall | 2.31 | 0.42 | Rarely | 3.37 | 0.50 | Sometimes |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 6 presents a significant improvement in students' resilience levels regarding peer support after implementing the Building Resilience program.

The overall mean score increased from 2.31 (SD = 0.42), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience, to 3.37 (SD = 0.50), categorized as "Sometimes" or Moderate resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in statement 10 - "Your peers tell you you're their friend" with a mean score of 4.00 (SD = 1.14), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The lowest result before implementation was found in statement 12, "Your peers tell you secrets," with a mean score of 1.73 (SD = 0.57), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience. These results demonstrate that the Building Resilience program effectively enhanced students' peer relationships and support networks. The substantial improvement in peer support indicates that the program successfully fostered positive peer interactions and friendships, crucial protective factors in developing resilience among at-risk students.

This improvement is consistent with research by Pössel et al. (2018), who found peer support interventions significantly reduced depression among adolescents. Graber et al. (2016) also showed that enhanced peer relationships protect against adversity. However, Taylor et al. (2021) cautioned that peer relationship quality, rather than mere quantity, is associated with resilience outcomes, suggesting that future interventions should emphasize quality indicators of peer support.

**Table 7. Resilience Level as to Self-Esteem Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I can do most things if I try. | 2.59 | 0.63 | Sometimes | 3.64 | 0.68 | Often |
| 2. There are many things that I do well. | 2.56 | 0.55 | Sometimes | 3.54 | 0.69 | Often |
| Overall | 2.57 | 0.43 | Sometimes | 3.59 | 0.55 | Often |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 7 shows a notable improvement in students' resilience levels, particularly in terms of self-esteem, following the implementation of the Building Resilience program.

The overall mean score increased from 2.57 (SD = 0.43), categorized as "Sometimes" or Moderate Resilience, to 3.59 (SD = 0.55), categorized as "Often" or High Resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in statement 1 - "I can do most things if I try" with a mean score of 3.64 (SD = 0.68), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The lowest result before implementation was found in statement 2, "There are many things that I do well," with a mean score of 2.56 (SD = 0.55), categorized as "Sometimes" or Moderate resilience. These findings indicate that the Building Resilience program effectively enhanced students' self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. The improvement in self-esteem suggests that the program successfully fostered a positive self-concept among students, an essential internal protective factor for developing resilience. The significant increase in self-esteem suggests that the intervention successfully enhanced students' self-worth and confidence in their skills, two crucial elements of resilience.

Baumeister et al. (2023) suggested that resilience interventions that build concrete skills might enhance self-esteem more effectively than direct self-esteem enhancement approaches, indicating that the multifaceted nature of the current intervention may have contributed to its effectiveness. This finding supports research by Moksnes and Lazarewicz (2019), who found strong associations between self-esteem and resilience in adolescents. Fomby and Nestor (2022) also showed that targeted self-esteem interventions significantly improved academic performance among at-risk students.

**Table 8. Resilience Level as to Empathy Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt. | 3.30 | 0.58 | Sometimes | 4.15 | 0.95 | Often |
| 2. I try to understand what other people feel. | 3.26 | 0.70 | Sometimes | 4.14 | 0.90 | Often |
| Overall | 3.28 | 0.55 | Sometimes | 4.14 | 0.82 | Often |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 8 presents substantial improvement in students' resilience levels regarding implementing the Building Resilience program. The overall mean score increased from 3.28 (SD = 0.55), categorized as "Sometimes" or Moderate resilience, to 4.14 (SD = 0.82), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in statement 1 - "I feel bad when

someone gets their feelings hurt," with a mean score of 4.15 (SD = 0.95), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The lowest result before implementation was found in statement 2 - "I try to understand what other people feel" with a mean score of 3.26 (SD = 0.70), categorized as "Sometimes" or Moderate resilience. These results demonstrate that the Building Resilience program effectively enhanced students' empathic responses and understanding of others' emotions. Notably, empathy was already at a moderate level before implementation. It improved substantially to reach a high level, indicating that empathy may be a strength to further leverage in resilience-building interventions.

This aligns with research by Eisenberg et al. (2021), who linked empathy to prosocial behavior and resilience. Malti et al. (2016) similarly found empathy-building interventions improved both emotional regulation and academic outcomes. Contrastingly, Decety and Cowell (2018) argued that cognitive empathy (understanding others' emotions) and affective empathy (feeling others' emotions) may develop at different rates, suggesting future interventions might benefit from targeting these components separately.

**Table 9. Resilience Level as to Goals Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I have goals and plans for the future. | 2.38 | 0.56 | Rarely | 4.41 | 0.54 | Often |
| 2. I think I will be successful when I grow up. | 2.38 | 0.56 | Rarely | 3.94 | 0.60 | Often |
| Overall | 2.38 | 0.56 | Rarely | 4.17 | 0.42 | Often |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 9 shows a remarkable improvement in students' resilience levels regarding goal-setting and future orientation following the implementation of the Building Resilience program.

The overall mean score increased from 2.38 (SD = 0.56), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience, to 4.17 (SD = 0.42), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The highest result after implementation was observed in Statement 1 - "I have goals and plans for the future" with a mean score of 4.41 (SD = 0.54), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. Before implementation, the lowest result was observed in statements 1 and 2, which had identical mean scores of 2.38 (SD = 0.56), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience. These findings indicate that the Building Resilience program had a profound impact on students' ability to set goals and develop positive expectations for their future. This substantial improvement in goal orientation represents one of the most significant changes across all measured domains, suggesting that the program was particularly effective in fostering future-oriented thinking and aspirations among at-risk students.

This result is consistent with a study by Raufelder et al. (2023), which found that goal-setting treatments significantly increased the academic motivation of at-risk students. Likewise, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) showed that academic perseverance is improved by future-focused thinking. According to Yeager et al. (2019), who found that purpose and goal-setting interventions were especially effective for children facing adversity, the significant improvement is consistent with the idea that the goal component was a particularly powerful aspect of the current intervention.

**Table 10. Resilience Level as to Problem-Solving Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| Indicators | Before Mean | SD | VI | After Mean | SD | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I can work out my problems. | 2.62 | 0.62 | Sometimes | 3.63 | 1.05 | Often |
| 2. When I need help, I find someone to talk to. | 2.25 | 0.56 | Rarely | 2.94 | 0.84 | Sometimes |
| 3. I know where to go for help when I have a problems. | 2.31 | 0.61 | Rarely | 3.78 | 0.91 | Often |
| 4. I try to work out problems by talking about them. | 2.31 | 0.52 | Rarely | 3.23 | 0.88 | Sometimes |
| Overall | 2.37 | 0.37 | Rarely | 3.40 | 0.62 | Sometimes |

**Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Always) 3.50-4.49 (Often) 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes) 1.50-2.49 (Rarely) 1.00-1.49 (Never)**

Table 10 presents a significant improvement in students' resilience levels, particularly in problem-solving skills, following the implementation of the Building Resilience program. The overall mean score increased from 2.37 (SD = 0.37), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience, to 3.40 (SD = 0.62), categorized as "Sometimes" or Moderate Resilience. The highest result after

implementation was observed in statement 3 - "I know where to go for help when I have a problem" with a mean score of 3.78 (SD = 0.91), categorized as "Often" or High resilience. The lowest result before implementation was found in statement 2 - "When I need help, I find someone to talk to" with a mean score of 2.25 (SD = 0.56), categorized as "Rarely" or Low resilience. These results demonstrate that the Building Resilience program effectively enhanced students' problem-solving capabilities, particularly regarding their knowledge of available resources and help-seeking behaviors. The improvement in problem-solving skills indicates that the program successfully fostered students' ability to address challenges proactively and seek appropriate support when needed.

While D'Zurilla and Nezu (2020) showed that problem-solving interventions reduced psychological distress in at-risk populations, and Frydenberg et al. (2017) found that problem-solving training significantly improved coping among adolescents, Zambrana et al. (2022) pointed out that cultural and contextual factors influence help-seeking behaviors, indicating that future interventions should address specific barriers to accessing support within students' cultural contexts.

**Significant Difference in the Resiliency Levels of Students At-risk Before and After the Implementation of Resilience Building**

**Table 11. Test of Difference in the Resilience Level Before and After the Implementation of Building Resilience**

| | Family | School | Community | Participation in Home and School Life | Participation in Community | Peer-Support | Self-Esteem | Empathy | Goals | Problem-Solving |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Z | -7.300 [a] | -7.559 [a] | -6.903 [a] | -7.502 [a] | -1.247 [a] | -7.613 [a] | -7.187 [a] | -6.193 [a] | -7.777 [a] | -7.293 [a] |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .212 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |

**Note: The statistical tool used is the Wilcoxon test. A significant difference exists.**

Table 11 presents a statistically significant difference between junior high school students' pre-test and post-test scores after implementing the Building Resilience in the Time of Crisis Toolkit, developed by the UNILAB Foundation and HeadsUpPH. This significant difference demonstrates that the intervention was successful in enhancing the students' resilience across multiple dimensions, including emotional regulation, problem-solving, self-esteem, peer relationships, and school connection.

Statistical analysis revealed significant differences in nine resilience dimensions following an intervention for at-risk students ($p < 0.001$). The most notable increases were in goals ($Z = -7.777$, $p < 0.001$), school connection ($Z = -7.559$, $p < 0.001$), and self-esteem ($Z = -7.187$, $p < 0.001$). However, no significant difference in participation in community life ($Z = -1.247$, $p = 0.212$).

Before the intervention, students were at risk of emotional fatigue, poor problem-solving, low self-confidence, and weak social support systems—factors that made them vulnerable to school dropout or disengagement. However, after being exposed to the structured and creative activities in the resilience toolkit, the students demonstrated measurable improvements in their mindset and behavior. The significance of this difference is crucial: it demonstrates that resilience is teachable and can be strengthened through targeted interventions, even during crises.

The Building Resilience Toolkit offers a comprehensive approach to building resilience. For instance, the Awareness activities "Sailing over the Waves" helped students reframe negative thoughts, moving from helplessness to hope. This positive reframing led to improved emotional self-regulation, which was reflected in the significant difference in their emotional resilience scores.

Likewise, the "This Reminds Me of…" activities in the Confidence program cultivated a strong sense of self-worth among students. Recognizing and affirming their talents enabled them to persevere in academics and relationships despite ongoing difficulties, contributing to the increased self-esteem scores in the data.

The intervention's Control component, "Recipe of a Good Decision," taught students structured decision-making skills that strengthened their ability to manage daily stresses logically rather than emotionally. This skill development can be directly linked to the notable improvement in their problem-solving abilities following the intervention.

Moreover, the Character Strengths ("My Gratitude Jar") and Coping Strategies ("Breathe In, Breathe Out") fostered a culture of gratitude, mindfulness, and emotional regulation. Students learned that stress management doesn't require avoidance or suppression, but conscious techniques like breathing and gratitude made them more resilient to emotional triggers.

Importantly, Connection activities ("Home Sweet Home") equipped students with communication tools that fortified their family, peer, and school relationships—relationships that are critical buffers against academic and emotional failure. This is significant because research (Masten, 2018; Ungar, 2021) has consistently found that strong social bonds enhance student resilience and motivation.

Although community participation showed a less significant change compared to other areas (as evident in broader data patterns), the Contribution activities ("Pick-a-Vegetable Challenge") still fostered small but meaningful shifts in students' sense of responsibility and civic engagement.

The integration of Education on mental health ("Ferris Wheel of Well-being") and Advocacy empowerment ("My Advocacy Journey") equipped students to view themselves not only as individuals overcoming personal problems but also as contributors to community well-being. This broadened their sense of purpose—a hallmark of resilient individuals.

Thus, the significant difference observed is not just a number; it symbolizes a transformation in the students' inner capacities. Students moved from vulnerability to empowerment through the structured use of the resilience tools. They became better decision-makers, emotionally balanced individuals, confident learners, and proactive members of their environments.

Supporting studies corroborate these findings. Ungar et al. (2019) reported similar significant improvements in resilience dimensions, particularly in goals and school connection. Lerner et al. (2021) found structured interventions effectively enhanced self-esteem and problem-solving abilities, aligning with the current study's results. Masten & Barnes (2018) highlighted the effectiveness of resilience programs in improving family connections and school engagement, while Fergus & Zimmerman (2020), who noted that peer support was highly responsive to interventions.

In contrast, Ungar (2022) found community participation to be significantly improved in their study, which differs from the current study's non-significant result for Participation in Community Life. Malti et al. (2016) reported modest improvements in empathy, unlike the significant enhancement observed in the current study. Luthar et al. (2018) also suggested that resilience improvements are often gradual, particularly in family and community connections, contrasting with the more pronounced changes reported here.

According to Villamater (2017), there are relationships between implementing the SARDO intervention program, factors related to students at risk of dropping out, and personality development. It was discovered that school, community, and family variables are connected to the evaluation, goals, curricular offerings, support system, and personality development.

**Implications on Learning Recovery**

The qualitative responses from selected at-risk Junior High School students reveal that the Building Resilience tools were crucial in supporting their learning recovery. One of the strongest outcomes observed was the reigniting of students' confidence in their academic abilities. Before learning about resilience, many students doubted themselves and often felt defeated by their failures. After gaining strategies for building confidence, they strongly believed that improvement was possible. As one student shared, "Akala ko dati na bagsak na ako, pero natutunan ko na kaya ko pala kung magsusumikap ako, siyempre sa tulong at gabay ng aking adviser at ng school." This newfound self-belief allowed them to participate more actively in class, persist through challenges, and regain a sense of purpose in their education.

Equally important was the ability to manage academic stress. Students shared that, prior to the intervention, school pressures often overwhelmed them, leading to absenteeism and disengagement. By applying coping strategies such as mindfulness exercises and emotional regulation techniques, they could handle frustration and stay focused on their schoolwork better. One student explained, "Dati, kapag stress ako sa school, hindi na ako pumapasok. Pero ngayon, humihinga muna ako ng malalim bago ko harapin ang mga gawain sa school." Managing stress not only helped them avoid dropping out but also enabled them to sustain consistent academic efforts even during difficult times.

Students also noted significant growth in their problem-solving skills. Where once confusion led to giving up, they now demonstrated a willingness to seek solutions—whether by asking teachers for help, collaborating with classmates, or using online learning resources. A student reflected, "Kapag hindi ko naiintindihan dati, laging "bahala na" pero ngayon, nagtatanong na ako sa teachers o kaya naghahanap ako ng video para matutunan." Developing a problem-solving mindset fostered greater academic independence, allowing students to approach their difficulties creatively and persistently rather than avoid.

Another noticeable impact was seen in self-control and time management. Several students admitted that distractions like social media previously consumed much of their time, making it hard to focus on schoolwork. After learning to regulate their habits, they became more disciplined, creating study routines and setting achievable goals. One student said, "Dati maraming oras ang ginugugol ko sa cellphone. Ngayon, naglalagay na ako ng schedule para matapos ko ang mga assignments ko." Growth in self-control contributed significantly to better academic outcomes as students were able to manage their time wisely and meet school requirements more consistently.

The students' experiences also strongly emphasized the importance of connection. Building relationships with peers and teachers provided a much-needed support system. Students emphasized that feeling cared for and understood by others gave them the emotional strength to stay in school. A student stated, "Nakakatulong yung may kausap ako. Hindi ko na nararamdaman na mag-isa lang ako sa hirap sa pag-aaral at problema sa bahay." Peer collaborations and teacher encouragement became essential supports that helped sustain their efforts to recover from learning loss.

Students also provided practical recommendations for further strengthening resilience and learning recovery. They stressed the need for consistent encouragement and understanding from teachers, not just focusing on grades but recognizing students' effort

and progress. One student suggested, "Sana yung mga teachers, hindi lang puro "grades" ang tinitingnan. Kahit simpleng 'Kaya mo yan!' malaking bagay na 'yon para sa amin." They also recommended establishing support groups among students, offering flexible learning options, and integrating mental health discussions into regular school programs.

An important implication of the intervention is also evident in the school's dropout statistics. This school year saw a significant reduction in the dropout rate compared to previous years. School records indicate that dropout rates fell by approximately 30% following the implementation of the Building Resilience program. This notable decline suggests that equipping at-risk students with resilience skills helped them recover academically and motivated them to stay in school, reinforcing the direct link between emotional support interventions and educational retention. Such findings are consistent with related studies, such as a 2024 report by UNESCO, which emphasized that psychosocial resilience programs significantly reduce student dropouts post-pandemic disruptions (UNESCO, 2024).

Furthermore, global and national initiatives support these findings. The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines continues to promote disaster-resilient education systems and crisis response strategies, recognizing the importance of holistic approaches to student well-being. Similarly, resilience education programs are increasingly recommended in global best practices, as shown in studies published by The Guardian (2024), highlighting that coping and emotional regulation are central to academic success during and after crises.

In conclusion, integrating Building Resilience tools had profound and measurable implications for learning recovery. It restored students' confidence, coping capacity, problem-solving skills, time management, and social connectedness and tangibly reduced the dropout rate, demonstrating that resilience is a critical foundation for sustaining education, especially among vulnerable learners.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that there is a significant difference in the resiliency levels of students at risk before and after the implementation of resilience building. Therefore, the null hypotheses posited in the study are not sustained. Based on the findings, it is recommended that schools integrate the ten resilience tools into lesson plans to help students manage stress, set goals, and build healthy relationships. Collaboration with local organizations may also be pursued to engage students in sports, volunteer work, and leadership programs. Strengthening school–parent partnerships is encouraged to foster a supportive learning environment. Parents are urged to actively support their children's emotional well-being through open communication. Lastly, future research may explore why some students still struggle with community involvement despite improvements in personal resilience.

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