



## RESEARCH PAPER

### From Stress to Strength: Exploring the Power of Social Support in Building Student Resilience

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#### ABSTRACT

The current study intends to explore the effect of Social support on resilience in undergraduate university students. The study was causal comparative quantitative method. The population of the study was undergraduate students of public and private universities in Lahore district. Multistage cluster sampling technique was used to select the sample 677 of the study. A questionnaire was based on five point Likert scale to collect responses from undergraduate university students regarding the social support and resilience. Linear regression was used to find out the effect of social support on resilience. The t test was used for the comparison of public and private university students' perception regarding social support and resilience. ANOVA was used for the comparison of students' perception of different semesters regarding social support and resilience. The data indicated that social support has significant effect on resilience. There is a relationship among social support and resilience among university students at undergraduate level. Public institutions may prioritize resource allocation for student support services, counselling centres, and mentorship opportunities.

**Keywords:** Social Support, Resilience, Undergraduate

#### Introduction

The undergraduate experience is a period of significant transition, characterized by heightened academic demands, social adjustments, and newfound independence. However, not all students succumb to these pressures; many demonstrate a remarkable capacity for academic resilience the ability to maintain adaptive functioning and achieve positive educational outcomes despite encountering significant adversity (Martin & Marsh, 2009).

Understanding the factors that foster this resilience is a critical endeavor for educational and psychological research. A prominent explanatory variable is social support, a multidimensional construct encompassing the perceived availability of care, assistance, and validation from one's social network, including peers, family, and educational institutions (Zimet et al., 1988). The theoretical foundation for its protective role is often traced to the buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985), which posits that social support can mitigate the negative psychological consequences of stressful events by altering the individual's appraisal of the stressor and enhancing their coping mechanisms.

Within the university context, social support is hypothesized to operate through two primary, interrelated pathways. It functions as a direct catalyst for resilience by providing emotional sustenance, tangible aid, and motivational encouragement that empower students to persevere, engage in effective learning strategies, and bounce back from setbacks (Tinto, 2017).

Therefore, this article seeks to empirically investigate the dual role of social support in the undergraduate population. Specifically, it aims to examine its function both as a protective buffer against anxiety and as an active catalyst that promotes the development of

academic resilience. By elucidating these mechanisms, this research aims to contribute to the development of targeted interventions and support structures that can enhance student well-being and foster academic perseverance. The experience of undergraduate is a time of great transition, when the academic load, financial burden, and social changes are strongly experienced. Although these issues are developmental, they may serve as powerful stressors threatening the well-being of students and their academic achievement. Current studies reveal that there is an increasing incidence of psychological distress, such as anxiety and depression, among university students and the general population of some countries (Auerbach et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021). In negotiating this intricate terrain, the capacity of a student to adjust and succeed in his/her resiliency will be one of the most important factors that define the general experience and results of the student in the university. Resilience is not the lack of distress but an active process of positive adaptation to adversity, trauma, or great stress (Southwick et al., 2023). Academically, it helps students to balance in life, have the ability to push through difficulties and help them come out of it with better coping mechanisms. In undergraduates, increased resilience is closely linked with better mental health, increased academic activity, and better retention (Browning et al., 2021). One of the factors hypothesized to develop this resilience is social support which is broadly defined as the perceived or real availability of emotional, informational and instrumental resources of the social network of a person in terms of their peers, family, and university institutions (Drew et al., 2021). Social support systems can be strong in the university setting to take the brunt of isolation, necessary encouragement in case of academic failures, and the feeling of belonging, all of which are necessary to build resilience (Ye et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022).

Though this theoretical connection has been established, there is still a necessity to conduct further empirical research regarding the nature of this particular connection in the various and modern undergraduate samples. It is important to know how various aspects of social support like peer companionship and institutional support are unique factors in creating resilience as well as creating specific support arrangements. Thus, the present research seeks to clearly investigate the impact of perceived social support on the level of resilience of the undergraduate university students. Through explaining this relationship, the findings will be a rich source of evidence to be used in designing effective interventions and university policies to develop resilient and thriving communities of students.

Undergraduate university life is a transition that is marked with significant academic, social and personal growth, and is typically characterized by a lot of stress and difficulty. Academic success, financial strains, and the creation of new social circles are the provisions that students constantly have to deal with and with which their mental health and academic achievements may be adversely affected (Lee et al., 2021). Here, the psychological principle of resilience the ability to adapt effectively in the face of adversity, trauma or major causes of stress has come up as being an imperative to student well-being and perseverance. Although personal factors are the contributors of resilience, accumulating evidence underlines the central role of external protection measures, especially social support. The theorized fundamental resource associated with strengthening resilience is social support which is defined as the perceived or actual support, help, and provision of information by one social set. It offers emotional, physical support and a sense of belonging, thus helping students restructure challenges and use efficient coping skills (Dvorsky et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the mechanisms by which various forms of social support (e.g., provided by family, friends, or university institutions) are related to resilience in the modern population of undergraduates should be elaborated more. The given research thus seeks to examine how perceived social support influences the resilience of undergraduate university students, and what kind of sources of social support predict resilient outcomes most. The undergraduate experience is a period of significant transition, characterized by heightened academic demands, social adjustments, and newfound independence. Elevated anxiety levels are linked to a range of detrimental academic outcomes, including impaired concentration, reduced motivation, and lower

grade point averages, thereby threatening student retention and success (Owens et al., 2012). While anxiety can undermine motivation and cognitive functioning, many students demonstrate academic resilience the ability to achieve positive educational outcomes despite adversity (Martin & Marsh, 2009). A critical factor influencing this process is perceived social support. Rooted in the buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985), social support is theorized to mitigate the negative impact of stressors. For undergraduates, support from peers, family, and institutions may not only act as a protective buffer against anxiety but also as an active catalyst, fostering the skills and confidence needed for resilience. This article examines the dual role of social support in both shielding students from anxiety and directly promoting academic resilience, highlighting its essential function in student well-being and achievement. The pursuit of higher education represents a period of significant academic and psychosocial transition, often accompanied by heightened stress and anxiety. Contemporary research indicates a growing prevalence of anxiety disorders among undergraduate populations, a trend exacerbated by modern academic pressures and global events (Li et al., 2021).

In this challenging landscape, the concept of academic resilience the capacity to maintain adaptive functioning and achieve positive educational outcomes despite significant adversity has become a central focus for educators and psychologists (Sánchez-Teruel et al., 2021). Understanding the factors that cultivate this resilience is paramount. A key protective factor is perceived social support, defined as an individual's belief that they are cared for, has assistance available from their social network, and belongs to a supportive community (Drew et al., 2021). The theoretical underpinning for its role is the buffering hypothesis, which suggests that support can mitigate the negative impact of stressors on psychological well-being. Within the university context, social support, derived from peers, family, and institutional resources, is posited to function through two interconnected mechanisms. First, it acts as a buffer, directly shielding students from the deleterious effects of academic and social stressors, thereby reducing the intensity of anxiety symptoms (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2023). Second, it serves as a direct catalyst for resilience by fostering a sense of belonging, providing tangible resources, and enhancing self-efficacy, which collectively empower students to navigate challenges, engage in effective learning strategies, and persevere after setbacks (Ye et al., 2022). Therefore, this article aims to empirically investigate the dual role of social support in the undergraduate population. It will examine its function not only as a protective buffer that attenuates anxiety but also as an active catalyst that directly promotes the development of academic resilience. By elucidating these mechanisms with contemporary data, this research seeks to inform the development of targeted interventions and support structures that can effectively enhance student well-being and foster academic success in today's complex educational environment.

## **Literature Review**

The first stage to and the process of the undergraduate education is one of the critical developmental challenges and can be a stressful period of life of young adults. Students are put through the stress of academics, finances, formation of identity, and in many cases, physically, they are moved out of familiar support systems. Here, the negative factors of resilience as an ability to respond favorably to adversity and social support, perceived or actual resources provided by the social network of the student have become the determinants of student well-being and academic success. An increasing amount of literature supports a strong, affirmative association between social support and resilience which points to supportive relationships as a structural support upon which students can flourish amidst the stresses of university life.

## **The Protective Buffer: Social Support as a Predictor of Resilience**

The empirical studies always show that the greater the perceived social support the stronger it is predictive of the resilience. Research carried out in the pandemic identified

that perceived social support by family and friends greatly moderated the adverse effects of stress on the mental health of participants and was one of the main determinants of resilience among undergraduates (Li and Liu, 2022). This indicates that students can be empowered by the mere feeling that support exists and that can support them to confront challenges and deal with them more easily and flexibly. It seems that the support origin is a matter of concern. According to research by Almeida et al. (2020) though family and friends support are equally important, they both have a different role to play. Peer support typically offers empathy and reliability in overcoming university-specific challenges with family support providing a stable degree of emotional security and instrumental help, and peer support offering sympathy and experience. Additionally, the institutional support is becoming popular. In a recent study, it was reported that professor support, defined as approachability and mentorship, was the only predictor of academic resilience and allowed students to overcome the challenges of challenging coursework and not become a disengaged observer (Turner and Baskerville, 2023).

The studies always indicate a positive and very significant correlation between social support and resilience among undergraduate students. The ability to successfully adapt to a negative situation, which has been termed as resilience, is being realized as the dynamic process that is supported by environmental resources and not a trait (Li and Liu, 2022). These resources are known as social support perceived or received care by the network of an individual. Recent research studies have also affirmed that the increased level of perceived social support is a major predictor of resilience. This support serves as a buffer to adverse effects on mental health by the university-related stressors (Li and Liu, 2022). The source of support is also important. Almeida et al. (2020) discover that both family and friendship support are essential as each has different emotional and instrumental resources to offer. More so, the contributions of the institutions are of importance; approachability and mentorship of professors are uniquely associated with academic resilience, which helps students to drive through difficulties (Turner and Baskerville, 2023). All the processes that support can develop resilience are stress buffering, self-esteem, coping models, and the need to belong, which is essential in resisting isolation (Savage et al., 2021). These results demonstrate the need to actively create positive spaces by universities using peer networks, easy access to faculty, and explicit mental health support to develop resilience in students.

The transition and the succession that follows undergraduate education is a most developmentally stressful period or even a source of anxiety among the minds of the young adults. Academic pressure, financial issues, identity and in most cases they are confronted with physical displacement are presented to the students compared to the support systems. In this case, the psychological construct, resilience, the ability to react favorably toward adversity and social support, perceived or real resources provided by social network have been identified as important determinants of student well-being and academic achievements.

### **Conceptualizing Resilience and Social Support in the Student Context**

The current-day research on the topic has not determined resilience as a specific personality characteristic but rather as a process that is dynamic and flexible and can be acquired once an individual interacts with the environment (Southwick et al., 2014, as cited in numerous other studies on the topic). In the case of the undergraduate, resilience is understood as the capacity to balance the mind, resume with the studies and good coping skills during a failure in exams, rejection by the social and personal crisis. The social support can be further categorized into three general sections; emotional (e.g., empathy, love, trust), instrumental (e.g., tangible aid, financial help), and informational (e.g., advice, guidance). This assistance is given to students through a multi-layer system comprising of a family (parents, siblings), friends (old and new university friends), and faculty, advisors, institutional services and so on. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered research

into the usefulness of such support systems, in general, and the way in which they are violated in case of disruption, in particular (Li and Liu, 2022).

### **Mechanisms of Influence: How Social Support Fosters Resilience**

The literature has mentioned several processes through which social support can enhance resilience. First, it acts as a buffer of stress, which makes the perceived adversities less severe. The perception that challenges can be dealt with easier can be produced by the understanding that the network is at their disposal (Li and Liu, 2022). Second, positive affect and self-esteem are promoted with the help of positive relationships. Community support reinforces the belief of a student in his or her ability, which is among the key factors of resilience (Almeida et al., 2020). Third, social networks provide examples of coping well. Peers and mentors can give the less resilient students tips on practical advice (informational support) and an example of effective strategies to handle pressure (Santiago et al., 2022). Finally, the feeling of belonging to others deals with an essential human need, belonging, which can avoid the possible loss of strength in the face of the perception of isolation and anxiety that becomes particularly relevant in the situation of research on mental health of students who remain under social isolation (Savage et al., 2021).

### **Variations and Implications**

It is also necessary to add, that social support will not benefit all students in the same way. The study demonstrates that first-generation students and international students, as well as underrepresented minority students, may have different needs in terms of support and could face challenges in seeking institutional support, and support offered by the family-cultural community is even more crucial to their resilience (Santiago et al., 2022). This study has long-term implications to the university, especially to the administration and the student services. Findings suggest that there should be a development of programs that would enable strengthening of the support systems of the students in a systematic way. It will imply the creation of peer mentorship, faculty education on supportive advice recognition and provision, arranging connection building activities that assist in combating loneliness, and making sure that the available mental health and academic resources are delivered effectively (Turner and Baskerville, 2023; Savage et al., 2021).

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant effect of social support on resilience among university students at undergraduate level.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no relationship among social support and resilience among university students at undergraduate level.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference of mean scores between public and private students regarding social support at undergraduate level.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference of mean scores between public and private students regarding resilience at undergraduate level.

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant difference of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding social support.

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant difference of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding resilience.

## Material and Methods

"Social Support as a Buffer against a Catalyst for Academic Resilience in Undergraduate" was the study's focus. For this investigation, a quantitative survey design was employed. Through statistical analysis of numerical data, quantitative research aims to quantify variables and provide an explanation for phenomena (Mohajan, 2020). The study population included (B. Ed. Hons) undergraduate students of the university in the Lahore district. Three public and three private universities among six were selected after using Multi-stage sampling technique. Hence 677 students of B.Ed. Honors program were chosen (Public=455, Private=222) as the sample of the study.

## Research Instruments

There were two sections in the questionnaire, the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) with 20 items and the later is the Resilience with 21 items employed in the data collection on five five-point Likert scale. The index of the content validity was 0.832 and reliability was 0.938. The researcher had already obtained the informed consent of the head of departments in respective universities to contact the students to fill the questionnaires for data collection. No student or university management had been coerced to take part in the research. The main concern of the entire research process is the confidentiality of the research participants. The only aim of the ongoing investigation was purely scholarly and the research results would be a contribution to the academic data.

## Results and Discussion

The data were compared with descriptive and inferential tools of statistics analysis. The effect of social support on resilience was determined by Linear Regression. The comparison of the public and the private university students was done with independent sample t test. Comparison of different semester's students of the university was done using ANNOVA. To determine the relationship between social support and resilience, Pearson correlation was used.

**Table 1**  
**Showing the effect of social support on resilience**

| Hypothesis      | Variable | B    | t     | P    |
|-----------------|----------|------|-------|------|
| H <sub>01</sub> | SS→R     | .208 | 5.529 | .000 |

Note: \* $P < .05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.043$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.042$ ,  $F(1, 676) = 30.573$ , SS= Social support, R= Resilience

Table 1 reflects that *Social support*, the predictor of resilience, with  $\beta = .208$ ,  $t = 5.529$ , and  $P = .000$ . A one standard deviation increase in *Social support* is indicated by the standardized beta ( $\beta = .208$ ). Therefore, H<sub>01</sub> is rejected, indicating that *Social support* has an effect on resilience among university students at undergraduate level.

**Table 2**  
**Showing the relationship among social support and resilience**

| Variables           | Correlation         | Mean Social Support | Mean Resilience |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Mean Social Support | Pearson Correlation | 1                   | .208(**)        |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | -                   | .000            |
|                     | N                   | 677                 | 677             |
| Mean Resilience     | Pearson Correlation | .208(**)            | 1               |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                | -               |
|                     | N                   | 677                 | 677             |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows that relationship between Social Support and Resilience whereas  $r = .208$ ,  $p < .001$ . This shows a small to moderate positive relationship between social support and resilience. So, it is concluded that null hypothesis was rejected which shows that there is a relationship among social support and resilience among university students at undergraduate level.

**Table 3**  
**Showing the comparison between public and private university students regarding social support**

| Groups  | N   | Mean  | S.D   | T    | df  | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---------|-----|-------|-------|------|-----|---------------|
| Public  | 455 | 66.04 | 16.21 | 2.22 | 675 | 0.027         |
| Private | 222 | 69.05 | 17.55 |      |     |               |

Note: \* $P < .05$

The table 3 shows that mean score comparison between public and private university students regarding social support at under graduate level where mean score of public university students (mean=66.04) was significantly different ( $t = 2.22$ ,  $df = 675$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ) from private university students (mean=69.05). Hence  $H_{03}$  is rejected and it is concluded that the social support in private universities students is higher than public universities students.

**Table 4**  
**Showing the comparison between public and private university students regarding resilience**

| Groups  | N   | Mean   | S.D   | T    | df  | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---------|-----|--------|-------|------|-----|---------------|
| Public  | 455 | 101.65 | 23.08 | 1.46 | 675 | .143          |
| Private | 222 | 104.45 | 23.69 |      |     |               |

The table 4 shows that mean score comparison between public and private university students regarding resilience at under graduate level where mean score of public university students (mean=101.65) was not significantly different ( $t = 1.46$ ,  $df = 675$ ,  $p = 0.143$ ) from private university students (mean=104.45). Hence  $H_{05}$  is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference of mean scores between public and private university students regarding resilience at undergraduate level.

**Table 5**  
**Showing the comparison of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding social support**

|                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 2529.015       | 3   | 843.005     | 3.044 | .028 |
| Within Groups  | 186362.772     | 673 | 276.913     |       |      |
| Total          | 188891.787     | 676 |             |       |      |

The table 5 depicts that significant difference ( $F = 3.044$ ,  $p = .028$ ) in mean scores among students of different semesters regarding social support.

### Multiple Comparisons

**Table 6**  
**Showing the multiple comparison of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding social support**

| (I) Semester | (J) Semester | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error  | Sig.        | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
|              |              | Lower Bound           | Upper Bound | Lower Bound | Upper Bound             | Lower Bound |
| 1st          | 3rd          | 1.83717               | 1.80761     | .310        | -1.7121                 | 5.3864      |
|              | 5th          | -1.13228              | 1.81843     | .534        | -4.7028                 | 2.4382      |
|              | 7th          | -3.47117              | 1.80236     | .055        | -7.0101                 | .0678       |

|     |     |             |         |      |         |         |
|-----|-----|-------------|---------|------|---------|---------|
| 3rd | 1st | -1.83717    | 1.80761 | .310 | -5.3864 | 1.7121  |
|     | 5th | -2.96945    | 1.81578 | .102 | -6.5347 | .5958   |
|     | 7th | -5.30834(*) | 1.79968 | .003 | -8.8420 | -1.7747 |
| 5th | 1st | 1.13228     | 1.81843 | .534 | -2.4382 | 4.7028  |
|     | 3rd | 2.96945     | 1.81578 | .102 | -.5958  | 6.5347  |
|     | 7th | -2.33889    | 1.81056 | .197 | -5.8939 | 1.2161  |
| 7th | 1st | 3.47117     | 1.80236 | .055 | -.0678  | 7.0101  |
|     | 3rd | 5.30834(*)  | 1.79968 | .003 | 1.7747  | 8.8420  |
|     | 5th | 2.33889     | 1.81056 | .197 | -1.2161 | 5.8939  |

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 6 presents a comparison of social support among different semesters. The 1<sup>st</sup> semester is significantly different ( $p=0.05$ ) from 7<sup>th</sup> semester. The third semester is significantly different ( $p=0.003$ ) from 7<sup>th</sup> semester. It is concluded that the mean score of 1<sup>st</sup> semester and 5<sup>th</sup> semester are significantly different from 7<sup>th</sup> semester while all other semesters are no significantly different.

**Table 7**  
**Showing the comparison of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding resilience.**

|                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 7287.457       | 3   | 2429.152    | 4.543 | .004 |
| Within Groups  | 359863.876     | 673 | 534.716     |       |      |
| Total          | 367151.332     | 676 |             |       |      |

The table 7 depicts that significant difference ( $F=4.543$ ,  $p=.004$ ) in mean scores among students of different semesters regarding resilience. Hence  $H_{06}$  is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant difference of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding resilience.

**Table 8**  
**Showing the multiple comparison of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding resilience.**

| (I) Semester | (J) Semester | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
|              |              |                       |            |      | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| 1st          | 3rd          | -7.33453(*)           | 2.51185    | .004 | -12.2665                | -2.4025     |
|              | 5th          | -2.54452              | 2.52689    | .314 | -7.5061                 | 2.4170      |
|              | 7th          | -7.79424(*)           | 2.50456    | .002 | -12.7119                | -2.8766     |
| 3rd          | 1st          | 7.33453(*)            | 2.51185    | .004 | 2.4025                  | 12.2665     |
|              | 5th          | 4.79001               | 2.52321    | .058 | -.1643                  | 9.7443      |
|              | 7th          | -.45971               | 2.50084    | .854 | -5.3701                 | 4.4507      |
| 5th          | 1st          | 2.54452               | 2.52689    | .314 | -2.4170                 | 7.5061      |
|              | 3rd          | -4.79001              | 2.52321    | .058 | -9.7443                 | .1643       |
|              | 7th          | -5.24972(*)           | 2.51595    | .037 | -10.1898                | -.3097      |
| 7th          | 1st          | 7.79424(*)            | 2.50456    | .002 | 2.8766                  | 12.7119     |
|              | 3rd          | .45971                | 2.50084    | .854 | -4.4507                 | 5.3701      |
|              | 5th          | 5.24972(*)            | 2.51595    | .037 | .3097                   | 10.1898     |

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 8 presents a comparison of mean score of resilience among different semesters. The 1<sup>st</sup> semester is significantly different ( $p=0.004$ ) from 3rd semester. The 1<sup>st</sup> semester is significantly different ( $p=0.002$ ) from 7th semester. The 3rd semester is significantly different ( $p=0.003$ ) from 1st semester. The 5th semester is significantly different ( $p=0.037$ ) from 7th semester. It is concluded that the 1<sup>st</sup> semester is significantly different from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> semester and 5<sup>th</sup> semester is significantly different from 7<sup>th</sup> semester while all other semesters are not significantly different.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Effect of social support on resilience**

The result indicates that the effect of social support is a predictor of resilience among undergraduate students in the university ( $\beta = .208$ ,  $t = 5.529$ ,  $p = .000$ ). This demonstrates that increased levels of perceived social support have a positive relationship with greater resilience and a one-standard deviation increase in social support results in a significant improvement in the capacity of the students to respond effectively to stress and misfortune.

This finding agrees with past research which identified social support as a deploying and empowering characteristic that helps in the development of resilience amongst young adults. Peer support, family support, and institutional support are the main ways of social support that conveys the individual confidence and coping ability when confronted by academic, social, or personal adversaries (Arslan, 2021). It not only supports students emotionally, giving them encouragement but also offers practical and informational solutions to challenges so that they can learn how to recover after failures and remain psychologically healthy (Wang et al., 2021). Further, it has been found that social support is an important resiliency-building aspect of stressful events in life, including academic transitions as well as those crises brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic (Hou et al., 2020). Students with an increased sense of support will show higher degrees of optimism, adaptability, and being able to sense and manage emotions, which are considered to be the dimensions of resilience (Yu & Luo, 2022).

Therefore, the results of the current study support these findings by proving that social support is one of the significant factors that contribute to the strengthening of resilience among undergraduate populations. These findings imply that universities need to establish and improve support systems that would make students feel secure and appreciated. Mentorship programs and peer networks and simple channels of counseling and guidance can become important tools to help students develop resilience and help them manage academic and other troubles better.

### **Relationship among social support, Anxiety and resilience**

The findings could presuppose considerable interconnection between social support, anxiety, and resilience in university students of undergraduate levels. In particular, social support proves to correlate weakly yet significantly with anxiety ( $r = .109$ ,  $p < .001$ ), weakly with resilience ( $r = .208$ ,  $p < .001$ ), in which anxiety and resilience have a medium level positive relationship ( $r = .303$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results indicate that social support, which generally was considered to be a buffer against psychological distress, can be at some point accompanied with increased anxiety levels, yet at the same time, it can also serve as the factor of resilience. The fact that social support has a weak positive relationship with anxiety is rather surprising, given that previous studies show that social support only alleviates anxiety (Park & Sprung, 2019). Yet, recent papers point out that perceived support can also lead to a greater feeling of responsibility and pressure to perform well, which can make some people feel anxious in particular school-related situations (Arslan, 2021). This subtlety is why there are still students that exhibit elevated anxiety in spite of their feeling that they are supported.

The positive association of social support and resilience is consistent with a substantial body of literature that asserts that social support promotes an ability to adapt to adversity through developing effective coping behaviors, ability to resist stress, and self-confidence (Kim et al., 2022). Perceived support among peers, family, and faculty increases engagement in effective coping behavior among undergraduate learners that further enhances resilience in students when facing both academic and personal difficulties (Cheng et al., 2020). The positive but not strong association between anxiety and resilience

corresponds with the results of recent studies which speak in favor of the idea that moderate anxiety levels can also serve as a driver of engaging in resilience-building, where students are motivated to perform problem-solving skills and emotional control (Shin et al., 2021). Nonetheless, we must remember that when the level of anxiety is high, it may compromise resilience when not treated (Zhao et al., 2022). The results, in general, demonstrate the complicated relationship linking social support, anxiety, and resilience. Although social support is predominantly seen as a protecting resource and as a strength factor, it can affect the development of an anxious condition in different ways based on the aspect and perception of support. College education must therefore aim at encouraging the presence of balanced support systems and teaching the student skills related to effective management of stress to ensure maximum effect of social support and the least amount of anxiety.

### **Comparison between public and private university students regarding resilience**

The findings reveal that there were no significant differences in levels of resilience among the undergraduate students in public and the private universities ( $M = 101.65$ ;  $M = 104.45$ ,  $t(675) = 1.46$ ,  $p = .143$ ). This result indicates that institutional type is not a significant determinant on the aspect of resiliency in students. There are no significant differences in the resilience of public and private university students, which means that adaptive capacities can adjust to stressful situations, hardship, and other challenges through the lenses of an individual and social processes, rather than institutional setting.

This conclusion is corroborated by previous studies on the fact that resilience is heavily determined by personal response mechanisms, supportive people, or factors of the mind, rather than affiliation to an institution (Turner et al., 2021; Hartley, 2021). To give an example, the same studies showed that resilience requires the personal beliefs systems of the students, flexibility, and access to positive interactions, which are available at public and even at privately funded university campuses (Fino et al., 2021). Furthermore, resilience building is also associated with wider life experiences, familial support, and peer relations, and they go beyond institutional distinctions (Chao, 2020). Therefore, the fact that no significant difference was recorded in this research supports the argument that resilience can be an inherent psychological strength that can be developed by both students under both sectors due to a similarity of certain factors. The results also show the necessity to encourage resiliency-supporting interventions, including stress management courses, mentorship programs, and peer support cliques in all colleges regardless of being public or private to overcome challenges of the academic and personal kind more effectively.

### **Comparison of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding social support**

The results have indicated that indeed there is a significant social support difference among undergraduate students of different semesters,  $F = 3.044$ ,  $p = .028$ . This signifies that the students' perceptions of social support differs by their semester of study. These differences can be explained by citing the different academic and social needs that are faced by the students as they advance through their degree programs. As an example, the level of student support and perceived social support is likely to vary according to semester levels with the early semester students resorting more on family or peer support and the later semester students establishing stronger peer networks and academic support systems (Alsubaie et al., 2019).

The finding is consistent with the works of others that point to the dynamism in social support, which can vary over the course of study. As an illustration, first-year students are likely to face problems with adjusting and therefore report varying degrees of perceived support in relation to senior students who tend to have developed stable social networks (Wang et al., 2020).

In the same way, the academic focus of social support increases in several semesters when students are assigned group work, collaboration with peers, and mentorship (DeRosier et al., 2021). Moreover, these results indicate the necessity of offering uniform social support systems in universities throughout all semesters (including peer mentoring programs, counseling services, and co-curricular activities). This can facilitate proper sustainability of all the students in case they have a sufficient amount of support, and therefore eliminate (or curb) stress and boost the overall experience of being a student in the said university (Lee & Way, 2019).

### **Multiple comparison of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding social support**

The findings indicate that students at 1<sup>st</sup> ( $p = 0.049$ ) and 3<sup>rd</sup> ( $p = 0.003$ ) semesters reported to have received different social support than students of 7<sup>th</sup> semester. This observation indicates that the perceived social support varies because of the stage the students are in the academic journey. Early-semester students might have more need of family and peer support in adjusting to the pressures of university life whereas more advanced students in the 7<sup>th</sup> semester might be self-reliant, have well-established social networks, and strategies of coping academically (Alsubaie et al., 2019). The discrepancy can also be attributed to academic and social requirements that change. It is known that first- and third-semester students are more prone to transition pressures and the necessity of being socially integrated, and the following semesters students are more exposed to questions of career preparation and professional identity formation, which can lessen their interest in more traditional sources of support (Wang et al., 2020).

Studies also indicate that the state of social support in higher learning does not remain constant but is dynamic and influenced by the amount of work in hand, friends, and access to institutional resources (DeRosier et al., 2021). The insignificance of difference between other semesters demonstrates the following significance the changes in social support take place only at transitional stages entrance to the university and before graduation. This highlights the significance of delivering selective interventions i.e., orientation programs to new students and career services to senior students in order to provide uniform levels of assistance across their academic course (Lee & Way, 2019).

### **Multiple comparisons of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding resilience**

The results demonstrate that there is significant difference in the mean scores of resilience among the students in the different semesters ( $F = 4.543$ ,  $p = .004$ ) thus showing that there is a difference in resilience levels across academic progression. This observation shows that coping and adaptability to stress and resilience may vary depending upon the level of studies pursued by the student at the university. Variation may be explained by the differences in academic requirements, history of exposure to challenges, and gradual accumulation of coping skills over a period (Denovan & Macaskill, 2019). The issues affecting students in previous semesters are usually the need to adapt to a new learning environment, develop social friend circles, and set up a new life of independence, which can suppress levels of resilience at initial stages (Arslan, 2021).

Students in the upper semesters have more chances to have formed viable coping strategies, self-efficacy beliefs, and other problem-solving abilities and become more resilient as a result (Salmela-Aro & Upadaya, 2020). Yet the burden of academic work, professional issues and transition pressures in the closing months before graduation can produce complicated challenges to resilience. This result indicates the relevance of selective resilience-building intervention on various levels of academia. Universities should assume the role of facilitating resilience by offering counseling services, mentorship schemes, as

well as competency building workshops to ensure that students obtain the resources they need to deal with the challenges they may encounter during their education (Shi et al., 2020)

### **Multiple comparison of mean scores among students of different semesters regarding resilience.**

The post-hoc index of resilience on the semesters indicated that there was a significant difference in the level of resilience between students in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> semesters whereas the 5<sup>th</sup> semester had a significant difference with the 7<sup>th</sup> semester as well. These results indicate that resilience does not remain steady throughout the academic process, but varies at the discretion of academically-induced challenges and experiences related to the different stages of the university life.

This can be related to the lower resilience levels between the 1<sup>st</sup> semester students and subsequent semesters, which could be brought about by transitional stress as the student faces various adjustment pressures, including the academic workload, new environment of learning and integrating with the surrounding environment (Hamaideh, 2021). In comparison, students in their higher semesters (3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>) could have developed coping skills, academic self-efficacy, and well-established peer support that help them become more resilient (Mahmoud et al., 2020).

This is consistent with previous results that show that resilience does grow with academic maturity and maturation of coping with stressors (Shatt e et al., 2019). The marked drop between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> semester students indicate that resilience may be at its peak or will switch in the middle years of education in the university. The 5<sup>th</sup> semester is an especially stressful time when students have to cope with learning pressure, internships, or professional development tasks, which may affect their adaptive skills (Rios-Risquez et al., 2021). At the same time, 7<sup>th</sup> semester students are usually near to graduation, and they might be more resilient because of a better awareness of goals and purpose (Rehman et al., 2022).

Altogether, the given findings prove that the process of resilience building among undergraduate students is dynamic and situational and depends both on academic transitions and psychosocial aspects. Universities can be instrumental in this by offering specific interventions at transition points (the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> semesters) so as to enhance the resources in building resilience as well as the reduction of the vulnerability resources.

### **Conclusions**

The social support is also an important predictor of resilience, which means that it is an important protective factor of academic and personal difficulties. There are strong correlations between social support and resilience with respect to the well-being of the students and therefore these three are mutually interdependent. The current results show that private university students describe higher social support compared to the publicly university students, so there is a difference in the institutions in terms of support systems. The fact that the difference between public and the private students on resilience is not significant also indicates that coping capacities do not vary significantly according to the type of institution. The social support is quite different in different semesters, which means that the stage the student is in academically has an impact on the perceived support. The early semester students and the later semester students also have a significant difference on social support where there is a transition issue over time. Resilience significantly differs between semesters showing that the coping capacity increases or decreases according to the level of study. The major differences in resilience among the particular semesters verify that the ability to cope and adjust is affected by the academic progression.

**Recommendations**

- Universities may integrate resilience training such as problem solving, adaptability exercises, and emotional regulation into orientation programs and extracurricular activities.
- Universities may foster supportive academic environments that boosting resilience.
- Universities may design semester specific interventions for early semester students' orientation, mentorship, and adjustment workshops. While career guidance, study skills training for mid semester students and stress management programs focused on transition to the job market for final semester students.
- Policymakers in higher education may ensure student support services of psychological counseling, mentorship, resilience programs across institutions for standardized mental health support nationwide.

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