

Presenting a Resilient School Model Based on the Impact of Social Support and the Perception of Competence in Students

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The present study aims to propose a model for resilient schools based on the impact of social support and perception of competence among students. The research methodology is descriptive and correlational. The statistical population includes all female middle school students in District 2 of Zahedan's Department of Education during the 2022-2023 academic year. Based on Morgan's table and stratified random sampling, 367 students were selected as the sample. The research tools consisted of standardized questionnaires, including the Resilience Scale by Silva et al., the Social Support Questionnaire (SS-A), and the Perception of competence Questionnaire by Harter. The findings revealed a significant direct relationship between social support, perception of competence, and resilient schools. Additionally, an indirect and significant relationship was observed between social support and resilient schools through the mediating role of perception of competence. The results further indicated a meaningful relationship between perception of competence and resilient schools.

Keywords: Resilient school, Social support, Perception of competence

Positive psychology focuses on the study of positive emotions (such as happiness and hope), positive traits (such as creativity and kindness), and positive institutions (such as families, communities, and workplaces) (Tavajohi & Tamanaifar, 2023). One of the key constructs within the framework of positive psychology is resilience. Resilience can be defined as a process that, despite the presence of threatening conditions, involves the ability to adapt successfully or achieve positive outcomes (Howard & Johnson, 2004).

In the context of psychology, resilience is often considered an individual trait associated with characteristics such as strength, flexibility, problem-solving skills, intelligence, humor, and social aptitude (Iarocci et al., 2009). However, resilience is influenced not only by individual attributes but also by broader systemic, social, and environmental factors. The interplay of

adaptability, responsiveness, and perseverance within connections formed by families, schools, communities, or wider social networks constitutes systemic resilience (Qi & Yang, 2024).

Schools play a critical role in mitigating the impact of disasters due to their ability to address and effectively resolve problems during and after such events. Furthermore, it is the social responsibility of educational institutions to foster a culture of disaster awareness and enhance the resilience of their members (Ungara et al., 2023).

The school and classroom environment can often present conditions that expose students to various threats, including bullying, rejection, criticism, and inappropriate teaching practices. Such challenges highlight the fundamental need to strengthen resilience within school settings and establish resilient classrooms to support students effectively (Margalit & Aidan, 2003).

After the family, schools are the most important setting for fostering and strengthening resilience in students. Resilience in schools is regarded as a key concept for enhancing both educational quality and students' mental health. It refers to students' ability to face challenges and psychological pressures and can be influenced by various factors. Specifically, resilience in schools highlights students' capacity to cope with life's hardships and adverse conditions. By creating an environment conducive to building supportive personal relationships, schools can actively enhance students' resilience (Ataï et al., 2021).

One of the most effective ways to boost students' motivation to develop resilience appears to be the establishment of secure and supportive foundations. Such an approach ensures that the educational process becomes more accessible for students, fostering a sense of safety and stability. Social support is considered a critical tool for enhancing resilience in schools. It encompasses instrumental, emotional, informational, and tangible assistance, along with active social interactions, affection, and respect. Previous findings underscore the importance of social resources and emphasize the need for effective intervention programs (Yamamoto et al., 2023).

Social support plays a vital role in helping students cope with academic pressures by fostering a sense of security, appreciation, and emotional encouragement. It strengthens students' confidence and optimism. Rahmawati and Supraka (2021) emphasize that social support not only provides practical assistance but also ensures psychological comfort, contributing to students' well-being (Nikmah et al., 2024). Research suggests that the more social support students receive, the higher their resilience and adaptability within school environments. Social support enhances feelings of belonging, security, and

control over the environment, thereby boosting self-esteem. This, in turn, enables students to demonstrate greater resilience when facing challenges in school settings.

In addition to the direct impact of social support on fostering resilient schools, perception of competence also significantly influences students' resilience. According to Deci and Ryan, individuals have an inherent need to feel competent, engage effectively with their environment, and seek recognition from others (Deci, 2000). Believing that one performs better than others and receiving positive feedback can enhance perception of competence. Bandura posits that individuals with high self-efficacy are better equipped to handle threatening situations and approach them with composure. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy aligns conceptually with Harter's notion of perception of competence, which refers to individuals' judgments of their own abilities (Bandura, 1988; Harter, 1981).

Harter's Competence Motivation Model explains how perception of competence influences academic resilience (Harter, 1981). Moreover, the emphasis on these efforts fosters a self-reward system in learners, which drives intrinsic motivation. This intrinsic motivation is independent of external validation, allowing students to evaluate their performance against internal standards rather than relying on teacher assessments. In this scenario, learners persist in their efforts until they achieve their goals—becoming resilient individuals (Panadero, 2017).

The primary advantage of resilience programs lies in their ability to foster a protective environment and increase the abundance of protective factors. This shift encourages teachers to move away from a deficit-based perspective and adopt a broader view that recognizes the talents and capacities of individuals (Harlington, 2010).

Despite the extensive literature on resilience, social support, and perception of competence, no study has specifically aimed to develop a model of resilient schools based on the impact of social support and students' perception of competence. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by proposing a model for resilient schools grounded in the influence of social support and perception of competence among students.

Hypotheses

This study, based on its objectives and hypotheses, is applied in nature and employs a descriptive-correlational method. The statistical population consisted of all female middle school students in District 2 of Zahedan during the 2022-2023 academic year, with a total of 7,986 students according to the statistics provided by Zahedan's Department of Education.

- H1: There is a direct and significant relationship between social support and students' resilient schools.
- H2: There is a direct and significant relationship between social support and students' perception of competence.
- H3: There is a direct and significant relationship between perception of competence and students' resilient school.
- H4: There is an indirect and significant relationship between social support and resilient school through the mediating role of perception of competence.

Method

Sample

The sample size was determined based on structural equation modeling (SEM) studies, which recommend a minimum of 300 participants (Sarmad et al., 2015; Lucas,

2002). To minimize error, the population was divided into three educational levels (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades), and stratified random sampling was employed. Ultimately, according to Morgan's table, 367 students were selected as the sample.

Instruments

Silva et al. Resilience Scale (2022). This questionnaire assesses resilience among youth and is primarily used in border regions. It contains 17 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for this scale was reported as 0.922 in Silva et al.'s study. The scoring is based on the total sum of the responses, with a minimum score of 17 and a maximum score of 85.

Social Support Questionnaire (SS-A). This questionnaire was developed in 1986 by Phillips, Wax, Williams, Stewart, and Thompson, based on Cobb's definition of social support. According to this definition, social support refers to the extent to which individuals benefit from affection, assistance, and validation provided by family members, friends, and others. The SS-A consists of 23 items. Ebrahimi Ghavam (1992), in a study guided by Delavar, modified the scoring method to a binary system (0 and 1), citing its suitability for calculating Cronbach's alpha (Hemmatirad & Sepahmansour, 2008).

Social support involves interpersonal relationships that protect individuals from the negative effects of stressful situations. The questionnaire comprises three subscales: family support, friend support, and support from others, which can be easily identified by reviewing the questions. Ebrahimi Ghavam (1992) administered the test to 111 university students and 211 school students. The reliability of the test in the student sample was reported as 0.91 for the total scale, 0.71 for the school students, and 0.81 for test-retest reliability after six weeks. Shahbakhsh (2010) calculated internal

consistency reliability coefficients at 0.66 in a sample of 311 university students from Allameh Tabataba'i University. Additionally, in a study by Khabaz and colleagues (2012), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the SS-A was 0.74 (Khabaz et al., 2012).

Competence Perception Questionnaire (Harter, 1985). The purpose of this questionnaire is to assess the perception of competence across various dimensions (behavioral competence, social competence, academic competence, physical competence) (Appendix 3). This questionnaire contains 27 questions, divided into four components:

Behavioral competence: items 1 to 13

Academic competence: items 14 to 18

Social competence: items 19 to 22

Physical competence: items 23 to 27

The questionnaire is scored using a four-point Likert scale. A score of 4 is assigned to indicate a high perception of competence, and a score of 1 indicates a low perception of competence. Additionally, a score of 3 reflects a moderate-high perception of competence, and a score of 2 indicates a moderate-low perception, with these ratings applied to the two categories of "true for me" and "not true for me." The reliability coefficients for the subscales of behavioral, academic, social, and physical competence are 0.61, 0.68, 0.66, and 0.61, respectively, while the overall reliability for the entire test is 0.70.

For data processing and analysis, SPSS and LISREL software (version 10.2) were used.

Results

The results of Table 1 indicate that the correlation coefficient between social support and resilient school is 0.778, the correlation between social support and perception of competence is 0.698, and the correlation

between perception of competence and resilient school is 0.770. All correlations are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$), indicating positive and meaningful relationships.

Table 1. Pearson's correlation coefficient matrix between social support, resilient school, and perception of competence

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|---|
| Social support | 1 | | |
| Resilient school | 0.778 | 1 | |
| Perception of competence | 0.698 | 0.770 | 1 |

N = 367, $p < 0.01$

To test the first to fourth hypotheses of the research, path analysis was used. The results of the calculated t-values and the standardized estimates related to the path analysis of the variables are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

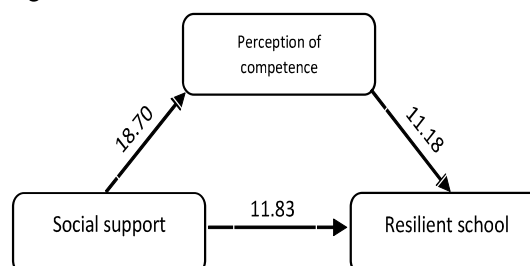


Figure 1 depicts the pathway model output associated with the path coefficients of the conceptual model of the research.

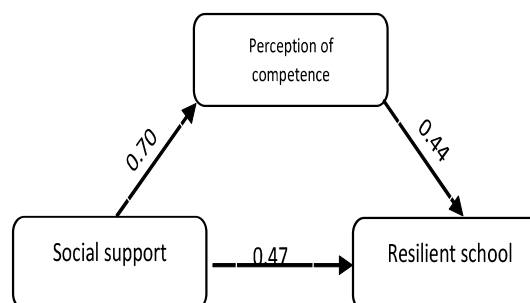


Figure 2. Pathway Model Output Related to the Standardized t-Values of the Conceptual Model of the Research

Table 2. Indicators of Fit for Social Support with Resilient School through Perception of Competence

| Fit Indices | AGFI | GFI | RFI | IFI | CFI | NNFI | NFI | RMSEA | χ^2/df |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------------|
| Observed Value | 0.95 | 0.96 | 0.98 | 0.97 | 0.98 | 0.97 | 0.98 | 0.058 | 2.21 |

As shown in Table 2, the overall goodness-of-fit indices in the path analysis suggest that the proposed model fits well. Specifically, a chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) less than 3 is considered desirable. Additionally, when the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is below 0.10, the model demonstrates an acceptable fit. Furthermore, the closer the indices GFI (Goodness of Fit Index), AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index), NFI (Normed Fit Index), CFI (Comparative Fit

Index), and NNFI (Non-Normed Fit Index) are to 1, the better the model fit is considered to be.

According to the indices obtained in the table, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) was found to be 2.21. Additionally, the fit indices, including GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI, and NNFI, were within a range close to 1, indicating that these indices meet the required standards. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model has a good fit and is confirmed.

Table 3. Estimating the direct effect of social support and perception of competence on a resilient school

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | Path Coefficient | | Significance Coefficient (t) | | Result |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------|------------------------------|-------|----------|
| | | value | P | value | P | |
| Social Support | Resilient School | 0.47 | 0.001 | 11.83 | 0.001 | accepted |
| Social Support | Perception of competence | 0.70 | 0.001 | 18.70 | 0.001 | accepted |
| Perception of competence | Resilient School | 0.44 | 0.001 | 11.18 | 0.001 | accepted |

The results from Table 3, as well as Figures 1 and 2, indicate that the path coefficient between social support and resilient school among students is 0.47, with a t-value of 11.83, which is significant at the 99% confidence level ($P < 0.01$). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship between social support and a resilient school for students.

The results from Table 3, as well as Figures 1 and 2, demonstrate that the path coefficient between social support and perception of competence among students is 0.70, with a t-value of 18.70, which is significant at the 99% confidence level ($P < 0.01$). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship

between social support and perception of competence in students.

Similarly, the findings from the table and figures regarding the path coefficient between perception of competence and resilient school among students indicate that the path coefficient is 0.44, with a t-value of 11.18, which is also significant at the 99% confidence level ($P < 0.01$). Thus, it can be concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship between perception of competence and a resilient school among students.

Table 4. Estimating the indirect effect and the total effect of social support with resilient school through the perception of competence

| Independent Variable | Mediator Variable | Dependent Variable | Indirect Effect | | Total Effect | | Result |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------|--------------|-------|-----------|
| | | | value | P | value | P | |
| Social Support | Perception of Competence | Resilient School | 0.206 | 0.001 | 0.676 | 0.001 | Confirmed |

The calculation of the structural path effects in Table 4 indicates that social support is directly associated with resilient school (0.47) and the perception of competence is also directly related to resilient school (0.44). Subsequently, the indirect effect of social support on resilient school through the mediating role of perception of competence was estimated to be 0.206. Considering the t-value results obtained from the paths under investigation and the p-value, which is smaller than 0.05, the indirect effect is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an indirect and significant relationship between social support and resilient school through the mediating role of perception of competence.

Validity Assessment

To assess the validity of the questionnaire, content validity was used. For this purpose, the questionnaire was provided to experts in the field, who were university faculty members. The content validity was then confirmed by these experts.

Reliability Assessment

After preparing the questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability of the research instrument. Thirty students completed the research questionnaires, and reliability coefficients were obtained using Cronbach's alpha for each of the three research variables. The reliability of the questionnaires was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is presented in the table below.

| Variables | Number of Questions | Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Resilience | 17 | 0.89 |
| Social Support | 23 | 0.90 |
| Perception of competence | 27 | 0.83 |

Discussion

The present study aimed to present a model of resilient school based on the influence of social support and perception of competence in students. The results of the first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1: There is a direct and significant relationship between students' social support and resilient school) indicated that the path coefficient between the social support variable and resilient school was significant. Based on this, it can be concluded that social support has a direct and significant relationship with resilient school in students. These findings are consistent with the research by Yamamoto et al. (2023), Tavajohi et al. (2022), Sepehrnush et al. (2018), and Paknahad et al. (2017).

Yamamoto et al. (2023) in their study showed that support systems may play an important role in fostering resilience in students, and factors such as family and community contribute to the development of children's resilience. Therefore, it can be expected that support systems play a role in enhancing students' resilience, alongside factors like home and community, which also play significant roles in strengthening children's resilience. Furthermore, resilient

students are aware of the resources available within their families and schools.

Sánchez de Miguel et al. (2023) also demonstrated in their research that there is a positive and significant relationship between perception of competence and resilience.

Tavajohi et al. (2022) showed that social support has a direct relationship with academic resilience and argued that when students receive support and encouragement from their families, teachers, peers, friends, and other supportive groups, their resilience in facing challenges increases.

Sepehrnush et al. (2018) demonstrated that perceived social support explains 31% of the variance in academic resilience. These researchers believed that social support is one of the key factors in strengthening resilience and creating a resilient school. Paknahad et al. (2017) also showed that social support increases resilience in students at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels. In other words, the more social support an individual receives, the greater their resilience.

In explaining the obtained results, it can be said that support systems may play a crucial role in enhancing student resilience, and factors such as family and society play a role in strengthening resilience in children. Moreover, the results suggest that resilient students may have greater awareness of the support resources available at home and school, indicating that fostering resilience in students may be facilitated through increased social support (Yamamoto et al., 2023). In fact, the support students receive acts as a shield against psychological stress, and resilience is enhanced by reducing this stress, serving as a source for enduring challenges.

For the second hypothesis (there is a direct and significant relationship between

social support and students' perception of competence), path analysis was used to examine the relationship between social support and perception of competence. The results showed that the path coefficient between social support and perception of competence is significant; therefore, it can be concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship between social support and perception of competence in students. The findings of this part of the research align with the results of several studies. Ixy et al. (2011) showed that children with higher resilience scored higher in perception of competence, and there was a significant difference in perception of competence between resilient and non-resilient children. Also, according to the IAT, resilient children tended to consider themselves more competent than non-resilient individuals. Bai et al. (2019) also found a positive and significant relationship between social support and perception of competence in female students. These researchers also concluded that as parental social support for girls increases, the psychological aspect of these individuals is strengthened, which in turn enhances their self-perception of competence.

The results of path analysis for the third hypothesis (there is a direct and significant relationship between perception of competence and students' resilient school environment) showed that the path coefficient between perception of competence and resilient school environment is significant; therefore, it can be concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship between perception of competence and resilient school environment in students. These findings are consistent with the research by Liu et al. (2023), Mirzaei et al. (2020), and Gömre et al. (2020). Liu et al. (2023) demonstrated that a positive perception of external social resources is the most important factor for recognizing individuals' resilience. The

impact of resilience interventions can be more rapidly achieved by changing the individual's sense of hope. Mirzaei et al. (2020) showed that academic resilience can be predicted not only through motivating assignments but also through perception of competence, and perception of competence contributes to increasing academic resilience. Örkayzger Gömre et al. (2020) found a positive and significant relationship between perception of competence and resilience. Moreover, these researchers showed that as the educational level increases, this relationship becomes even more significant.

In explaining the results obtained, it can be stated that resilience, by guiding individuals toward progress and fostering a sense of control, enhances their commitment and effort, enabling them to become more resilient in the face of challenges. Furthermore, striving to master adaptive behaviors makes the environment more predictable for students. Being in such environments strengthens their sense of competence. The internalization of this mastery fosters independence in students. Consequently, this internal perception of control and mastery encourages students to stay committed through their efforts, thereby fostering resilience.

Fallah et al. (2021) also demonstrated a significant and direct relationship between perception of competence and perceived parental support. They argued that perceived parental support is one of the critical factors influencing students' sense of competence, emphasizing that parents should provide the necessary social support to nurture their children's competencies.

The results of the path analysis for the fourth hypothesis (there is an indirect and significant relationship between social support and resilient schools through the mediating role of perception of competence)

revealed that the mediating effect was estimated at 0.206 after calculating the product of the direct effect of social support on resilient schools and the direct effect of perception of competence on resilient schools. Given the reported significance level, which is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that an indirect and significant relationship exists between social support and resilient schools through the mediating role of perception of competence.

It appears that when individuals feel competent and believe in their ability to accomplish tasks, they continue their responsibilities and efforts even under adverse conditions. Competence refers to the need to feel effective in interacting with the environment, characterized by pursuing optimal challenges and mastering them using one's talents and skills. Therefore, the more support students receive, the greater their resilience in tackling challenges. Evidence also suggests that students perform better in subjects taught by teachers they like and feel connected to. Interestingly, when students feel socially supported and understood in school, they are more likely to achieve and demonstrate better academic outcomes.

Thus, promoting and understanding social support for students is essential to reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience. As widely acknowledged, social structures are like droplets that form an ocean; indeed, socializing any issue strengthens its solution. Accordingly, when individuals receive adequate social support from relevant sources, they are more likely to feel competent, leading to greater resilience in school settings.

The present study, given its reliance on questionnaires, carries the inherent limitations of this data collection method. Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that in educational contexts

where students face significant challenges, fostering resilience in challenging academic situations and providing social support from family, friends, and other key individuals in students' lives is of critical importance. Strengthening these two variables contributes to students' perception of their own competencies. Supportive resources for students, such as teachers, parents, school administrators, and educational policymakers, should establish frameworks for providing social support to students, thereby improving resilience in schools and enhancing students' sense of competence.

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