

Research Paper

Does Type of Residence Influence Resilience in Students? A study on the Association between Exam Stress and Resilience of Adolescents Living in Hostels and with Family

Bakyalakshmi^{1*}, Vishanth Anton Menezes², Sebastin K V³

ABSTRACT

Adolescents face significant stress during exams, that impacts their well-being and academic performance. Resilience is an important factor that aids wellbeing but no empirical evidence has been found on the role of environment with regard to exam stress and adolescent resilience. This study builds on previous literature by investigating the relationship between residence type (hostel living versus living with family), exam stress, and resilience among adolescents. Furthermore, this study reinvestigates gender differences on stress and resilience. A total of 159 adolescents were chosen to participate by means of purposive sampling. Data was collected using an online form containing questions on demographic information and two questionnaires (Perceived Stress Questionnaire and Resilience Questionnaire). Using Descriptive, T- Tests, and Correlational statistics, results revealed similar resilience levels between hostel residents and those living with families but the level of perceived stress was slightly higher in hostel population although the difference was not significant. This was further supported by correlational analysis that showed non-significant correlations between residence type-stress and residence type-resilience. Notable gender difference did emerge, with males exhibiting significantly higher resilience levels than females. Furthermore, correlational analysis showed perceived stress having a negative significant correlation with resilience. These findings underscore the importance of considering individual factors beyond accommodation type in fostering resilience during exam periods. The study suggests further exploration of complex dynamics influencing adolescent resilience, taking into account multidimensional determinants affecting mental well-being. Understanding these factors can aid interventions to support adolescents during challenging academic periods.

Keywords: Exam Stress, Resilience, Adolescents, Residence

In today's fast-paced and demanding world, stress has become an increasingly prevalent aspect of daily life for individuals of all ages. Adolescents, in particular, face a unique set of stressors as they navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood. According to

¹PhD Scholar, MSW Dept. School of Social Work Roshni Nilaya, Mangalore, India

²Student Counsellor, Department of Counselling, St Aloysius PU College, Mangalore, India

³Research Guide, School of Social Work Roshni Nilaya, Mangalore, India

*Corresponding Author

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a recent survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 12–13% of Indian students struggle with behavioural, emotional, and psychological issues. The issue was also highlighted by a UNICEF report titled "The State of the World's Children," which stated that one in seven Indian youths between the ages of 15 and 24 suffer from poor mental health, including signs of indifference and despair (Shukla, 2023).

Teenagers frequently struggle with academic stress and exam anxiety as a result of external pressure to perform well academically and live up to high standards. Anxiety about test performance is reported high as higher grades are seen as determinants of the IQ of an individual in the lay scenario. Hence the pressure of proving and performing is instilled in young minds, and they accumulate exam pressure, which affects students' performance and well-being and shows up as extreme anxiety before, during, and after exams. It was surveyed and reported that 82% of the student population grappled with high stress just a week before their exam, though stress can be positive and productive, it pushes humans to work hard and achieve higher (Kalkod, 2022). If the individual expectation exceeds their capacity, then they feel stressed and feel helpless. Chronic stress can lead to several mental health concerns including self-harming among adolescents. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau, 1,058 committed suicide over examination issues between 2017 to 2021, quoting Karnataka though there is a reduction in the no of students taking away their life due to study and exam reasons, still 117 students took the extreme step in 2021, is still challenging and concerning (Kalkod, 2022b).

A person's capacity to handle stress is determined by several factors, including intelligence, individuality in personality, and natural or constitutional resources, and a holistic strategy that includes teaching stress management skills, encouraging productive study habits, offering academic support, and creating a resilient nurturing atmosphere that prioritizes progress over perfection can be effective (Kalkod, 2022c). Resilience which is the capacity to rise above adversity is essential in assisting teenagers in navigating the stress of school. When help is needed, resilient people use their own, their families, and other resources to solve problems, control their emotions, and seek them out (Kumar, 2019). Research indicates that analysing the internal and external determinants and positively fostering them would help the adolescent to cope effectively with life adversities and developing resilience in adolescence influences one's capacity for critical thought and decision-making as a growing adult. The persistent issue of adolescent mental health prompts the question: what external factors nurtures and hinder the development of resilient youth, and how can we ensure their well-being, ultimately fostering a thriving community?

Studies on exam stress and resilience in students showed exam stress increasing from the time before exam and continued throughout the exam period but then after exams ended, stress levels decreased way below pre-exam periods ((Fritz et al., 2021). Certain factors such as teachers were found to be significant contributors to exam anxiety (Sakka et al., 2020). Other factors discovered that contributed to exam stress was the education system itself. Stress and anxiety towards doing well in academics and concern about the future were found to be significant contributors towards problems in students. Location of residence was another factor that influenced stress with students living in urban areas showed higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress as compared to those living in rural areas (Kanagasabapathy & Raj, 2017).

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Studies that incorporated gender differences in perceiving stress and resilience show mixed results, although most report females having higher stress levels than males (Graves et al., 2021; Núñez-Peña et al., 2016; Jillani et al., 2023; Jain & Das, 2021; Singh et al., 2022; Mishra et al., 2023). Some studies found males showing higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress (Kanagasabapathy & Raj, 2017). Resilience differences also showed mixed results with male resilience seen to be either higher or similar to female resilience (A. Singh et al., 2021).

To conclude, previous literature shows several factors that contribute to exam stress such as teachers, academics, concern about the future, and so on. Stress levels were high going into the exam period and then significantly decreased after the exam. When resilience was concerned, studies showed moderate to high levels of resilience among students. Both stress and resilience varied between gender with studies showing mixed levels between the two genders.

The aim of this study is to explore the level of exam stress and its association effects on student resilience between the two genders. This study builds on previous A. Singh et al. (2021) by introducing a new variable termed “type of residence” to understand its influence with regard to exam stress and resilience. The researchers believe the type of residence that students live in can be an active contributor towards stress and resilience. Hence the following hypotheses are devised:

1. Females would have higher levels of exam stress.
2. Males would have higher levels of resilience.
3. Students living in the college hostel show higher levels of exam stress and lower levels of resilience.
4. There is some association between exam stress, resilience, and type of accommodation.

METHODS

Aim

To understand the association between perceived exam stress and adolescent resilience depending on the type of residence the adolescent lives in.

Objectives

- To understand the differences in perceived exam stress- resilience of students living in hostel and with family residences.
- To understand the differences in perceived exam stress- resilience between male and female students
- To understand the association between perceived exam stress and student resilience.
- To understand the association between perceived exam stress, student resilience and type of residence among the students.

Variables

- **Independent variables:** The independent variables taken for this study are “Perceived Stress” (3 levels: Low/ Moderate/ High), “Gender” (2 levels: Male/ Female) and “Residence” (2 levels: Hostel/ with Family).
- **Dependent variable:** The dependent variables taken for this study is “Resilience”.

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Operational Definitions

- **Perceived Stress:** Perceived stress is defined as the extent to which events in an individual's life are taken as unpredictable, stressful, and uncontrollable. Perceived Stress can lead to many psychological conditions and is often a symptom of many common disorders.
- **Resilience:** Resilience is an individual's ability to adapt to tense situations and bounce back. It consists of having emotional, mental and behavioral flexibility and the ability to adjust to both internal and external demands.

Population

Students pursuing their education at Pre-University level in India.

Sample

A total of 179 responses were obtained using purposive sampling from a pre university college in South India, out of which 19 did not consent to participate or pass through inclusion checks. The final sample taken for the study consisted of 159 responses out of which 84 responses was from the male gender and 75 responses was from the female gender. Furthermore, from the 159 responses, 83 were from those living with family and 76 were those living in hostel/ pg.

Inclusion Criteria

- Students must belong to the age group between 16 years to 19 years.
- Students must be going through their examinations or are going to have their examinations in two weeks.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students who are below 16 years and above 19 years of age.
- Students who are not undergoing any examinations either at the moment or in the near future.

Tools

- **Demographic information sheet:** This section contained questions about the socio-demographic details of the participant. Questions were asked about the age, gender, resident type, previous experience living in a hostel, and the amount of experience (in years) living in a hostel.
- **Perceived Stress Questionnaire (PSQ):** The perceived Stress Questionnaire is a 30-item pencil and paper test developed by (Levenstein et al., 1993). It measures an individual's reaction to stressful life events and incidents that cause or exacerbate disease symptoms. Answering the PSQ can take up to 15 minutes and it contains statements such as "You feel rested", "You are irritable or grouchy", "You feel tense", and so on. Test-takers have to choose from 4 options (Almost, Sometimes, Often, Usually) based on what they feel about the statements. The internal consistency of this test ranges from .90 to .92 and a has a test-retest reliability of .82. Furthermore, results from PSQ correlated highly with trait anxiety and with scores on Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale.
- **Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ):** The Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire is a 12-item Index created by McBride (*Test Your RQ / Nicholson McBride*, n.d.). It contains statements such as "I am calm in a crisis", "I

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trust my intuition”, “I manage my stress levels well”, and so on. Test takes choose from 5 options (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree) based on what they feel about the statements. The reliability estimated by Cronbach’s Alpha was .76.

Research Design

This descriptive study aims to show the relationship between perceived exam stress and resilience based on the type of accommodation the student is living in. This study will also check the differences in stress levels- resilience between those who live in hostels and those who live in an independent house with their families, during the exam period. Furthermore, gender differences will also be studied for the above conditions as well.

Procedure

The entire study is conducted offline. Participants will first be briefed about the study and a sheet will be given containing participant information and those who wish to consent to the study will be asked to sign the sheet. Participants who consent to the study will then be asked to input their demographic information. The first question of this section asks the participants to give a unique code that will help the researcher identify their data. Participants can use this code to then withdraw their data at a later date if they wished to do so. The next series of questions asked the participants about their age, gender, their residence type (Hostel or with Family), experience living in hostels, and the total number of years they have lived in a hostel, if they have lived so at any point in their lives.

After the demographic section, the next section would consist of the Perceived Stress Questionnaire where participants had to choose from 4 options based on their feelings towards the statements they read. Once participants completed the PSQ, they were then taken to the next section where they answered the Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire. Here they were asked to choose from 5 options based on their feelings towards the statements they read. Once both questionnaires were completed, participants were taken to the debrief section. Once participants finished reading the information in the debrief section, they were asked to submit their response.

After required number of responses was obtained, the questionnaires were scored. From the PSQ, the Perceived stress level was obtained by adding all the scores. Questions 1,7, 10, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29 had their scores inverted. 30 was subtracted from the total score and the result was divided by 90. After this, the interpretation was made on the perceived level of stress as follows: <0.45- Low Level of Perceived Stress; >0.45 and <=0.60- Moderate Level of Perceived Stress; and >0.60- High Level of Perceived Stress. From the NMRQ, overall resilience was obtained by adding the scores. Data was then organized, required analysis was run using SPSS, and interpretation of results was done accordingly.

Ethical Considerations

Permission will be taken from the college principal for students’ participation. Participation is voluntary in the research and the participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they wish to do so. Informed consent will be taken from the participants after fully explaining to the participants the implications of being a participant. The participant will be informed of the free will to participate and will not be pressured or coerced in any way to do so. Privacy and anonymity of respondents are of paramount importance and the same will be informed to the participants and maintained. All works of other authors used in

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any part of the dissertation with the use of the Harvard/APA/Vancouver referencing system according to the Dissertation Handbook will be acknowledged. The highest level of objectivity will be maintained in discussions and analyses throughout the research.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected from the present study was entered in MS Excel to organize and then it exported to the trial version of SPSS IBM 20 for analysis. The descriptive data was analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Through inferential statistics consisting of T-Tests and Correlations, inferences/ predictions will be made. After analysis, the results obtained will be generalized across the population.

RESULTS

Test for Normality

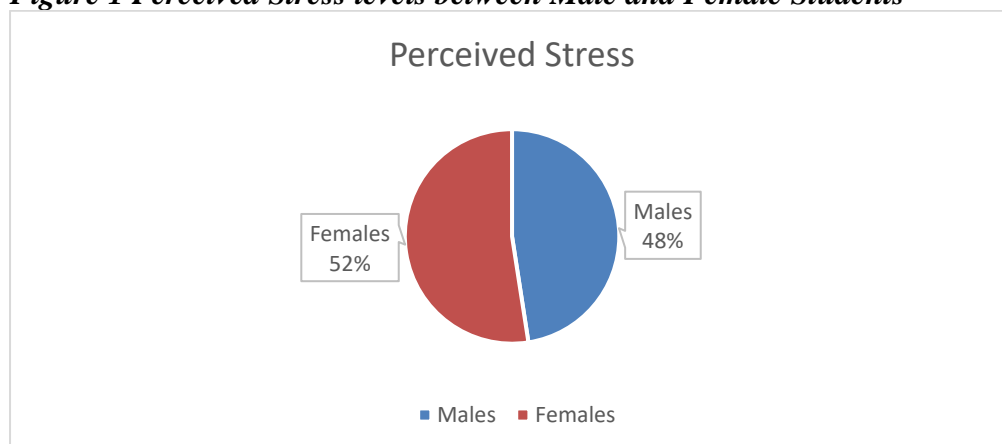
Table 1 Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality

Shapiro-Wilk Test			
Variable	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Age			
16 years	.989	106	.550
17 years	.977	48	.446
18 years	1.00	3	1.00
Gender			
Male	.991	84	.863
Female	.980	74	.296
Type of Residence			
With Family	.986	83	.526
Hostel/ PG	.984	75	.474
Perceived Stress			
Low	.980	63	.378
Moderate	.972	58	.190
High	.956	37	.151

Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted for all variables to check for normality. Results show all variables, that is, Age, Gender, Type of Residence, and Perceived Stress have satisfied the conditions for Normality ($P > .05$).

Descriptive Statistics and T Tests

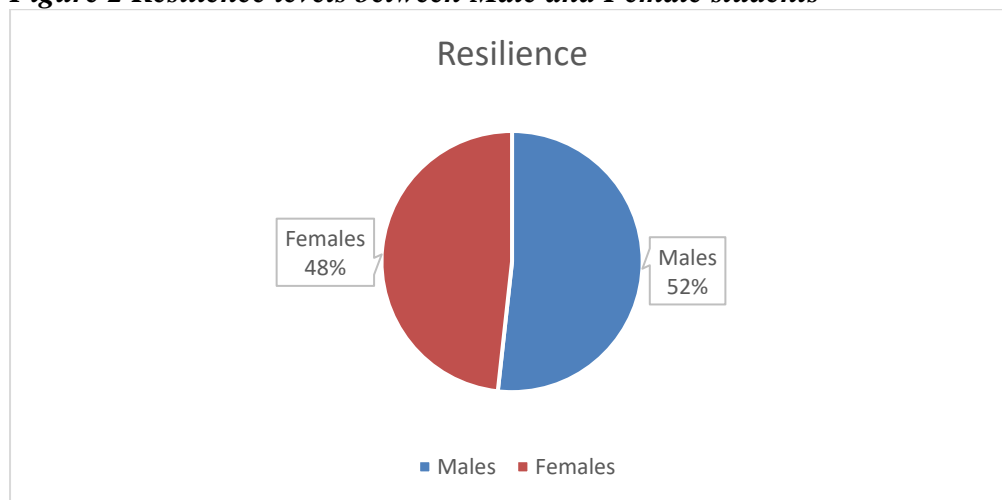
Figure 1 Perceived Stress levels between Male and Female Students



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Descriptive Statistics show Female students having slightly higher levels of Perceived Stress (M= 1.93 SD= .78) as compared to Male students (M= 1.75 SD= .77).

Figure 2 Resilience levels between Male and Female students



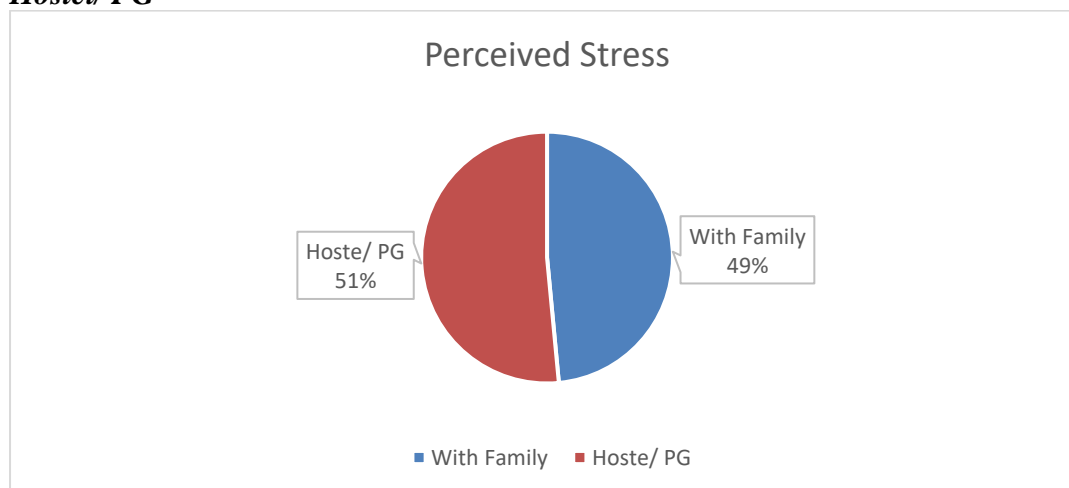
Descriptive Statistics show Male students having higher levels of resilience (M= 41.29, SD= 5.47) as compared to Female students (M= 38.51, SD= 6.20).

Table 2 T-Tests to check for differences in Perceived Stress and Resilience across Gender

	T	DF	Significance
Perceived Stress	-1.471	156	.143
Resilience	2.997	156	.003

T-tests show a non-significant difference between males and females with regard to perceived stress $t(-156) = -1.471$ $p = .143$ and a significant difference between males and females with regard to Resilience $t(156) = 2.997$ $p = .003$.

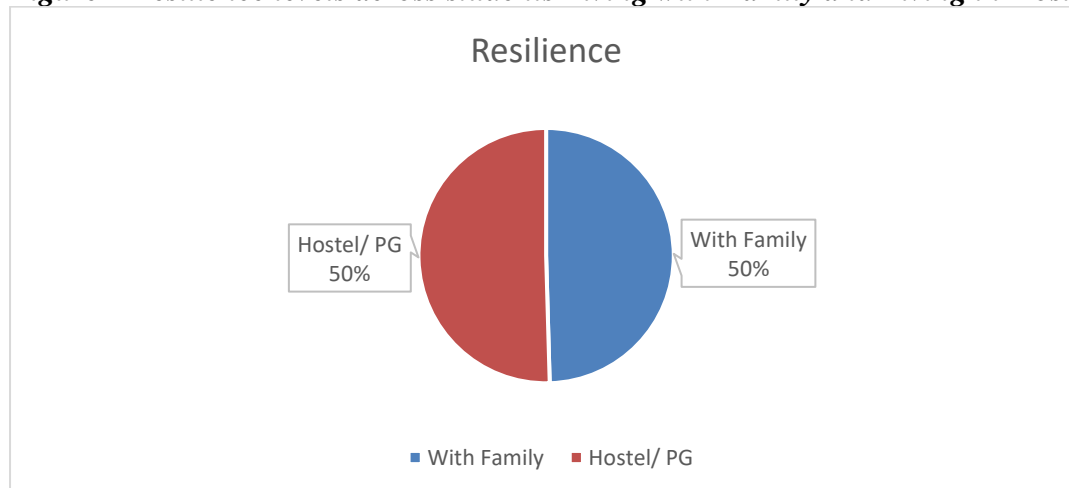
Figure 3 Perceived Stress levels across students Living with Family and Living in the Hostel/ PG



Descriptive Statistics show students Living in a Hostel/ PG show slightly higher levels of Perceived Stress (M= 1.89 SD= .78) as compared to students Living with Family (M= 1.78 SD= .78).

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Figure 4 Resilience levels across students Living with Family and Living in Hostel/ PG



Descriptive Statistics show students Living with Family have similar Resilience levels (M= 39.65 SD= 6.15) as compared to students Living in a Hostel/ PG (M= 40.37 SD= 5.7).

Table 3 T-Tests to check for differences in Perceived Stress and Resilience across Residence

	T	DF	Significance
Perceived Stress	-.885	156	.377
Resilience	-.758	156	.449

T-tests show a non-significant difference between those living with families and those living in hostels with regard to perceived stress $t(156) = -.885$ $p = .377$ and a non-significant difference between those living with families and those living in hostels with regard to resilience $t(156) = -.758$ $p = .449$.

Association between Type of Residence, Perceived Stress, and Resilience

Table 4 Coefficient Quotient and Significance level between Type of Residence, Perceived Stress, and Resilience

Pearsons R			Type of Residence	Perceived Stress	Resilience
Type of Residence	Correlation	1		.071	.061
	Coefficient				
	Sig (2 Tailed)			.377	.449
Perceived Stress	N	158	158	158	158
	Correlation	.071	1		-.282**
	Coefficient				
Resilience	Sig (2 Tailed)	.377			.000
	N	158	158	158	158
	Correlation	.061	-.282**	1	
	Coefficient				
	Sig (2 Tailed)	.449	.000		
	N	158	158	158	158

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- Tailed)

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Pearsons Correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between Type of Residence, Perceived Stress, and Resilience. Results show a non-significant correlation between Type of Residence and Perceived Stress $r(156) = .377$ $p = .071$; a non-significant correlation between Type of Residence and Resilience $r(156) = .449$ $p = .061$; and a significant weak negative correlation between Perceived Stress and Resilience $r(156) = -.282$ $p = .000$.

DISCUSSION

Gender Differences in Perceived Stress and Resilience

Descriptive statistics reveal that female students exhibit higher levels of perceived stress and have lower levels of resilience as compared to male students. This finding supports the first and second hypothesis suggesting that males generally experience less stress and demonstrate greater resilience, whereas females tend to experience more stress and exhibit lower levels of resilience. Furthermore, these results are in line with previous literature as findings underscore the significant role of gender in shaping adolescents' resilience (Graves et al., 2021; Núñez-Peña et al., 2016; Jillani et al., 2023; Jain & Das, 2021; G. Singh et al., 2022; Mishra et al., 2023; A. Singh et al., 2021). Higher levels of resilience in male adolescents may be due to genetic formation. Indian adolescents are predominantly shaped by differences in the process of socialization and they may benefit from factors like social maturity and robust social support networks, which enable them to vocalize their need for assistance from their immediate social circles (Prabhu & Shekhar, 2017). Furthermore, lower levels of resilience in female adolescents may be related to societal stereotypes and concerns of safety. Unfortunately, females in India do face issues with opportunities, neglect, and so on in their respective families. Furthermore, lower resilience and higher stress levels in females can also be explained due to genetic factors with females generally experience higher levels of emotional sensitivity than men. While Perceived stress did not show a significant difference between the two genders, resilience was seen to be significantly different and this may be attributed basically to the coping ability of the individuals. Previous research also declares type of school to be a factor in resilience. Studies have found girls coming from Co-educational schools have lower resilience levels than boys (Kulkarni & Velhal, 2023).

Relationship between Perceived Stress, Resilience, and Type of Residence

Results on the difference of perceived stress and resilience based on type of residence partially support the third hypothesis as while hostel students did show slightly higher levels of stress as compared to those who stayed with their families, resilience levels were found to be similar between the two groups. Furthermore, both differences were found to be non-significant. Results from Pearsons correlation show a non-significant correlation between residence- perceived stress and residence- resilience but a significant negative correlation between perceived stress- resilience. These results partially support the fourth hypothesis and can be inferred that If there exists a relationship between residence- stress and residence-resilience, then it is non-linear in nature. These results further support previous T-tests results which showed non-significant differences between residence-stress and residence-resilience. While Kanagasabapathy and Raj (2017) found residence to have some influence on levels of stress, their study focused more towards urban and rural residences while in this study, both residences were from urban environments. The lack of association between the groups of residence- stress and residence- resilience can be explained from the results of the T- tests. The researchers believe external factors may explain slightly higher levels of perceived stress in the hostel population such as hostel rules, distance from families, and so on. Amin and Ramzan (2023) observed higher levels of stress in hostel

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population due to hostels having a structured routine, rules, guidelines. Furthermore, even separation from home can evoke a range of emotions, including happiness, stress or a blend of both, with varying degrees of intensity (Amin & Ramzan, 2023). When highlighting similar resilience levels between the two groups that were observed in the results, this may be because of various promotive factors for fostering resilience. This reasoning can also be used to understand the negative relationship between resilience and stress. While this result does support previous literature (Fritz et al., 2021), researchers observed that in this context, the strength of this negative relationship between perceived stress and resilience was weak. Further research into the colleges academic support structure showed plenty of remedial/preparation classes and counselling for students during exam periods. Students are taught study skills, counselling is provided, teachers revise topics well in advance and remedial classes are given to those who are weak/ fail in certain subjects. Moreover, adjustments are made from the college and board level for students who have impairments. When we consider hostel students, though they may be physically away from their families and a change of environment could lead to lots of stress, we have to consider that support is still provided for these students. The presence of mentors, social caregivers, and the presence of peers, in the college and in the hostel, ensure that these students are not neglected (Zimmerman et al., 2013; Rambod et al., 2023).

Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

Results from this study show that intense support for academics and resilience in the form of mentors, remedial classes, counselling, and so on are a step in the right direction in increasing resiliency in students. This can be further improved if educational institutions introduce programs that specifically target resilience, such as occasional lessons on healthy coping, stress management, and the like. While this may already be done by school counsellors, it may be more helpful if this is incorporated into the academic syllabus of the students. Future research could explore the significance of developing specific resilience-based lesson plans for students and incorporate it into their academics. This study did not consider the socio-economic background of the students, something which may hold a high influence in terms of exam stress and resilience. Future research could explore the relationship between the socio-economic background of the students along with residence and its influence on exam stress- resilience.

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Conflict of Interest

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