



## **Navigating Hardships: A Mixed Method Approach of Academic Resilience amid Catastrophes among First Generation Learners of Kashmir**

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### **Abstract**

This study was intended to examine the impact of catastrophes among first generation learners of Kashmir and consequently how they responded the adversities. The study employed the descriptive and explanatory design. In the descriptive survey method 300 first generation learners were used as sample by means of purposive sampling with 150 male and 150 female pupils. The academic resilience was measured by means of Academic Resilience scale by Mihir Kr. Mallick and Simranjit Kaur (2017). The statistical techniques employed to measure the academic resilience are Percentage and t-Test. The results revealed that that out of 300 first generation learners of Kashmir 12, 75, 151, 38, 9, 9, and 6 have extremely high, high, above average, average, below average, low and extremely low academic resilience respectively i.e. 4%, 25%, 50.33%, 12.67%, 3%, 3% and 2%. Besides a significant difference was observed between male and female first generation learners of Kashmir, males were found to be more resilient than females. The in-depth analysis by means of interview suggested that most of the first generation learners of Kashmir are having sound academic resilience and they manage successfully the adversities like covid-19 lockdown by means of their personal positive efficacy beliefs and strong social cohesion.

**Keywords:** Catastrophes, Academic Resilience, First generation learners, Kashmir.

### **Introduction**

Catastrophes are terrible occurrences that result in extensive pain and devastation. These are extraordinary occurrences that drastically alter the globe and people's lives, like earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, flu outbreaks, wars, genocide, famines, and pandemics (Dole et al., 2016). With the result of these catastrophes life comes to standstill, education system too becomes the causality as the first site. Among the catastrophes; pandemic like Covid -19 affect all the domains of life worldwide (Takona, 2024). The World Health

Organization has proclaimed the novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) a global public health emergency (Thomeer et al., 2024). Worldwide lockdowns were instituted in response to the disease's high infectivity in an effort to flatten the epidemic curve. This has caused the closure of schools in more than 150 nations around the world, having an impact on the education of about 1 billion students (Sahu, 2020). India was in complete lockdown from 24 March to 5 May 2020, and while there have been attempts to gradually reopen public services since then, the majority of educational institutions, including schools and colleges, remain shuttered without a clear plan for when they will reopen. According to Xiang et al. (2020), the COVID-19 epidemic had a terrible effect on human life and wrecked businesses all over the world. It also caused a significant shockwave to the educational systems of both industrialized and developing nations. With government directives to practice social segregation, the COVID-19 pandemic swiftly caused the closure of universities and colleges all across the world (Weyant, 2022). This could help to flatten the infection curve and lower the overall number of fatalities from the disease. The most crucial pandemic measure, "social distance" or "physical separation," aims to lessen interpersonal contact and, as a result, to decrease the kind of community transmission that could arise fast in dense social networks like the university campus (Weeden & Cornwell, 2020). Resilience is often understood to be the action, potential for, or result of successful adaptation in the face of difficult or dangerous situations (Howard & Johnson, 2000). It is described as "the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life successes despite environmental challenges brought about by early qualities, environments, and experiences" in the academic setting (Wang, Haertal, & Walberg, 1994). Students who "maintain high levels of attainment motivation and performance despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that leave them at danger of doing poorly in school and eventually dropping out" are said to be academically resilient (Alva, 1991). While many students struggle academically and do not improve (Dauber, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1996), a sizable portion of students do succeed in improving their academic standing (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999).

The system of education in Kashmir was not an exceptional; it became the casualty as the first sight of lockdown was imposed. The paper discusses the impact of lockdown on the first generation learners of Kashmir and subsequently their bounce back capabilities to survive the heat of adversities due to closure of educational institutes in physical form.

## **Literature Review**

The double lockdown in Kashmir due to Covid and conflict has brought the education system into a standstill. Before Covid Kashmir was already grappling with unprecented glitches in the education sector. Conflict has a tremendous impact on the education in Kashmir, as the watering down of Article 370 in August 2019 and the subsequent shutdown in response led to the closure of educational institutes for months. In the first quarter of 2020 the school were again shut due to pandemic and by this time mode of education was chosen to be online (Kurtaliqi et al., 2024). Though the education become the most causality in Kashmir still there are numerous stories where Kashmiri students achieved the higher feats (Bhat, 2020). Due to conflict in Kashmir and the shutdown of schools thereof the marginalized section was the worst

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hit in terms of education (Syrjä et al., 2019). The poorer section could not compete with the new learning opportunities they had to rely on human resources thus the tuitions was the way to keep them up (Mannan, 2019). The challenges of home schooling for parents during pandemic was multifold and the parents find themselves responsible as tutor to their children. Digital learning became an unfamiliar terrain to the untrained and the highest challenge was to cater the needs of special children (Mahapatra, 2020). The catastrophe like Covid-19 pandemic highlights major issues and presents a chance to further assess alternative strategies in the educational field; the most effective strategy was the employment of a smartphone and laptop (Chaturvedi, 2020). The university students were analyzed and it was found high or solid levels of resilience among them under the confinement conditions (Sarmiento, 2021).

### *Objectives;*

- 1) To explore the levels of academic resilience among first generation learners of Kashmir.
- 2) To compare male and female first generation learners of Kashmir on academic resilience.
- 3) To draw some case studies on various themes of catastrophe like Covid-19 lockdown and academic resilience among first generation learners of Kashmir.

### *Hypothesis;*

1. There is no significant difference between male and female first generation learners of Kashmir on academic resilience.

## **Research Method**

### **Sample and Procedure:**

The sample for the present study consisted of 300 students who were first generation learners of their families selected purposively from three districts of Kashmir with 150 Male students and 150 Female students with age ranging from 7 to 16 years. A mixed method approach was employed in which percentage and t-test statistics was employed as quantitative method and interview was framed as qualitative method for an in depth analysis.

### *1.2 Tool Used:*

1. Academic Resilience scale by **Mihir Kr. Mallick and Simranjit Kaur (2017)** was used. The scale consists of 52 items divided into five dimensions as Academic confidence, Sense of well-being, Motivation & Ability to get Goals, Relationship with Peers & Adults, Emotional Regulation & Physical Health.
2. In-depth Interviews.

### *1.3 Statistical analysis and interpretation:*

**Table 1. Frequency and percentage of different levels of academic resilience**

| S.No  | Level of academic resilience       | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1.    | Extremely High Academic Resilience | 12        | 4          |
| 2.    | High Academic Resilience           | 75        | 25         |
| 3.    | Above Average Academic Resilience  | 151       | 50.33      |
| 4.    | Average Academic Resilience        | 38        | 12.67      |
| 5.    | Below Average Academic Resilience  | 9         | 3          |
| 6.    | Low Academic Resilience            | 9         | 3          |
| 7.    | Extremely Low Academic Resilience  | 6         | 2          |
| Total |                                    | 300       | 100        |

The Table 1 provides the description of total respondents on different levels of academic resilience among first generation learners of Kashmir. The said table reveals that out of 300 first generation learners of Kashmir 12, 75, 151, 38, 9, 9, and 6 have extremely high, high, above average, average, below average, low and extremely low academic resilience respectively i.e. 4%, 25%, 50.33%, 12.67%, 3%, 3% and 2%.

**Table 2. Mean comparison of male and female first generation learners of Kashmir on academic resilience.**

| Gender | N   | Mean  | S.D | df  | t-value |
|--------|-----|-------|-----|-----|---------|
| Male   | 150 | 83.92 | 7.4 | 298 | 4.03*   |
| Female | 150 | 76.51 | 6.8 |     |         |

According to Table 2, the sample's t-value is 4.03, and its degrees of freedom (df) are 298 at a significance level of 0.01. The hypothesis H01, which states that there is no statistically significant difference in academic resilience between male and female first generation learners in Kashmir, is therefore rejected because of this statistically significant difference. Since the assumption was incorrect, it can be said that first generation learners in Kashmir differ in terms of academic resilience based on gender. It is evident from the table that boys in Kashmir are more academic resilient than girls.

### **Qualitative analysis: Based on the case study method:**

#### *Case 1: Family sacrifice and top down processing.*

Sikander Hayat Khan lives in Noorabad area of Kulgam District. He has to feed 7 members of family daily. The source of income in his family is the daily work of Sikander in his fields. He earns Indian rupees of 3000 on monthly basis. Besides he owns a goat that is source of milk in his family. Three children's of Sikander Hayat Khan were attending the school; two sons one in class 10<sup>th</sup> another in class 8<sup>th</sup> and a daughter in class 6<sup>th</sup>. As the lockdown was imposed; for the first two months' children of Khan as habitual of school closure in Kashmir due to conflict were occasionally self studying. But as soon as the mode of education was shifted to online, Khans children worried as none of them owns any electronic

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gadget or smart phone necessary for virtual learning. Khan on his own holds a key paid mobile with 2G technology was informed by school authorities to prepare their children for attending the classes via online. In order to cope the requirement and as low on income Sikander Hayat Khan sold off his goat and purchased a smart phone for his elder son to attend the classes. As smart phone can accommodate one person at a time to attend the classes it was Khans elder son who was preferred over younger ones as he has to prepare for upcoming board examinations. It was decided at family level to prefer elder one over younger ones as the responsibility of younger one's education was shouldered on elder sibling. In Khans family only elder son was able to attend the virtual classes during day time and during morning and evening time he has to take care of his younger sibling. In this way Hayat's family survived during the covid-19 lockdown and subsequent closure of schools.

### ***Case 2: Kashmiriyat; A frontline unique approach to keep the adversities at bay.***

Mohammad Abdullah Dar has 5 family members including his wife and three children's; two daughters and a son. Mohammad Abdullah Dar is a season laborer. His source of income is daily work which fetches him of Indian rupees 4500 per month. During winters when there is no work in Kashmir due to extreme weather conditions. Dar moves to Ghaziabad area of UP India for work in sugar factory. At home his children elder daughter studies in class 7<sup>th</sup> second daughter studies in 4<sup>th</sup> and a son in 2<sup>nd</sup> class. When the covid-19 lockdown was imposed in March 2020 Dar was still working in sugar factory and he was standared there sitting idle as no work was left due to shutdown of factories. Dars half of earned money was spend on his two time meals. It was after fortnight an SOS was made to drive Dar and other labors were sent back to Kashmir. This all travel lump sums half of earned money on travel expenses. As the method of teaching was shifted to online Dar could not afford to purchase a Smartphone for his children. During this turbulent times Miss Kaur, a college student in the vicinity of Dars house offered free tuitions to Dars siblings one by one at the morning, afternoon and evening. This strong case of social bonding rescues the Dars children from leaving behind the studies and competing with those who attend the classes via virtual learning.

### ***Case 3: The Widows brilliance and the Samaritan feeling.***

Mumtaz Begam a widow has four children; two sons and two daughters. Her husband got killed in a conflict zone of Kashmir. Among the 4 children's, two sons who are eldest are studying in 12<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class respectively. Her two younger daughters are adopted by their maternal uncles at a distance of 5 Kms away from their home in another village of respective district of Shopian Kashmir. The source of income for Mumtaz Begam is the government window pension and apple production on her 2 kanals of orchards which fetches her around 1 lakh rupees annually. In the winter tutorials Mumtaz's elder son has opted for physics and chemistry tuition only and other three subjects i.e. General English, Biology and Environmental Science are too be self studied. In the Physics and Chemistry subjects the local coaching centre has offered a half discount to Mumtaz's elder son on Samaritan accounts. The younger son of Mumtaz who is in class 10<sup>th</sup> was offered 100% fee waiver by a local tuition centre in his village. As the lockdown was imposed to curb the spread of covid-19 and subsequently the school and tuition centers were physically closed. The two sons of Mumtaz too had to stay at their home

and later on when classes were shifted via online Mumtaz Begam could not afford a smart phone for her children. In the backdrop of this scenario the two sons of Mumtaz Begam relied on notes and text books collected before lockdown for self learning at home to prepare handmade notes for the final examination.

## **Results**

The cases reveal that despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and lockdowns, the family unit, community bonds, and individual sacrifices are the pillars that sustain children's education in Kashmir. While economic hardship and the digital divide remain significant obstacles, the resilience of individuals, both within the family and the community, ensures that children are not left behind in their education (Creswell & David Creswell, 2018). The Samaritan spirit and collective responsibility are key features in overcoming the educational setbacks imposed by the pandemic, providing a hopeful example of community solidarity in difficult times.

## **Discussion**

The paper was aimed at how the first generation learners of Kashmir are coping and competing with the adversities they face in acquiring the education in the sensitive zone of Kashmir. Though the conflict has ravaged each sector of valley Kashmir but the double hit of conflict and pandemic like covid-19 lockdown has affected the collective education system to a greater extent. Physical classes due to covid-19 were shut and virtual learning become affordable only for economically well off families. Besides the pupils from educated parents retain their pace by attending the classes at home. It was the first generation learners whose education was at stake both at personal level and at economical level (Syrjä et al., 2019). But thanks to their high resilience skills and the strong cultural knot which had rescued the first generation learners of Kashmir not only due to covid-19 lockdown but due to the turmoil and conflict from last three decades. Most of the first-generation learners of Kashmir were found to be high on academic resilience. The male first generation learners of Kashmir were having more academic resilience than female pupils.

## **Conclusion**

The present study explored the academic resilience of first-generation learners in Kashmir amid the dual challenges of conflict and the pandemic like Covid-19. Quantitative findings reveal that a significant proportion of these learners demonstrated above-average to high levels of academic resilience, with male students showing greater resilience compared to females. The qualitative case studies further illuminate how personal sacrifice, community support, and cultural solidarity enabled students to continue their education despite limited resources and digital barriers. These findings underscore the importance of resilience as a critical factor in educational continuity during crises and highlight the need for targeted policy

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interventions to support vulnerable learners, especially in conflict-affected and economically marginalized regions like Kashmir.

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