

Enduring Learning Odyssey: A Case Study on the Resilience of Learners in a Remote Sitio of Davao City

Cindy H. Celda¹

¹Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.

Publication Date: 2025/09/30

Abstract: This case study investigated how learners in a remote sitio of Davao City demonstrate resilience in the face of socio-economic and geographic challenges that influence their persistence in education. Utilizing a combination of in-depth interviews, observations, field notes, and documentary analysis, the study identified key motivational factors, including strong family support and personal aspirations, which enable students to navigate adversity. These personal and relational motivators foster exceptional determination, allowing learners to cope with difficulties such as long, unsafe commutes and limited resources. Despite their perseverance, systemic obstacles compel students to adopt extreme coping mechanisms, underscoring the necessity for institutional interventions that support emotional resilience and adaptive strategies. The findings further highlight that resilience is not solely an individual trait but is closely tied to community networks, indicating that local-level empowerment can enhance educational outcomes. To address these challenges, the study advocates for bolstering family and community support structures and implementing flexible learning approaches tailored to the realities of specific sitios. Overall, the results emphasize the importance of converting individual resilience into broader educational equity through localized programs and policy initiatives. By embedding these supports into the educational system, stakeholders can transform resilience from a mere survival strategy into a sustainable, supported pathway to equitable learning opportunities for marginalized students.

Keywords: *Enduring Learning Odyssey, Case Study, Resilience of Learners, Remote Sitio.*

How to Cite: Cindy H. Celda (2025) Enduring Learning Odyssey: A Case Study on the Resilience of Learners in a Remote Sitio of Davao City. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10 (9), 2150-2153. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25sep1222>

I. INTRODUCTION

Learners in remote areas often demonstrate remarkable resilience as they contend with significant educational challenges. These challenges commonly include limited access to resources, insufficient infrastructure, and the constraints of geographical isolation. Despite such barriers, many students exhibit the capacity to adapt and persist, reflecting a form of resilience shaped by multiple factors. Family support, strong community ties, and intrinsic motivation are particularly influential in sustaining this persistence. At the same time, the role of teachers in implementing responsive strategies and creating adaptive learning environments further strengthens students' ability to cope with difficulties. This study seeks to examine the dynamics of resilience among learners in remote settings by exploring the interaction of these factors in supporting their academic progress. Gaining insight into these influences is crucial for designing targeted interventions that reinforce resilience and contribute to equitable access to quality education.

The resilience of learners has emerged as a global concern that significantly influences educational outcomes across diverse contexts. Kassymova et al. (2023) emphasized that fostering student resilience is increasingly viewed as a critical component of teaching worldwide, with particular attention in countries such as Kazakhstan, Russia, Austria, and the United Kingdom. From a global perspective, student resilience underscores the need to recognize and address the varied challenges that hinder access to education. Learners in marginalized and remote areas often grapple with barriers such as geographic isolation, socio-economic instability, and exposure to conflict. UNESCO (2020), for example, reported that millions of children remain out of school due to poverty and political unrest, particularly in conflict-affected regions. In response, various organizations have introduced resilience-building strategies that integrate community support, culturally relevant curricula, and innovative learning approaches.

In India, where rural education is hampered by socio-economic barriers and inadequate infrastructure, innovative solutions such as mobile schools have been developed. Hossain (2024) noted that buses converted into classrooms

have brought education to remote villages, serving as transformative models of access. Similarly, in Georgia, Teston (2022) reported that the Department of Education implemented statewide professional development initiatives for teachers in rural areas, aiming to strengthen academic resilience and improve student performance. Smith (2019) further highlighted that such programs were designed to mitigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) among learners. In Africa, Mitchell (2024) documented that initiatives such as Camfed empower girls through education, thereby breaking cycles of poverty and reshaping communities. Programs by the Rural School and Community Trust have also been credited with raising graduation rates, boosting college enrollment, and contributing to local economic revitalization. Collectively, these international cases demonstrate how innovative models and policies can enhance resilience in rural education.

The Philippine context reflects similar struggles in extending education to learners in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities. Bai (2023) observed that the government's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) provides financial assistance to families, enabling students to meet basic school-related expenses and sustain their educational pursuits. Among indigenous communities, Talikan et al. (2024) emphasized that family support and community empowerment play vital roles in fostering resilience, particularly among Tausug learners. Similarly, the Department of Education's Alternative Learning System (ALS) provides flexible and community-based learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults. De Dios et al. (2020) revealed that ALS has proven effective in addressing local challenges by offering mobile classrooms and adapting learning to the needs of marginalized students.

Despite these efforts, however, pursuing education in rural areas remains arduous. Aquino (2019) as cited in Quiño & Villocino, (2024) reported that teachers in Samar must cross rivers, climb mountains, and walk long distances to reach schools, reflecting the obstacles also endured by their students. In Davao del Sur, Asan (2021) described hunger, fear, and anxiety as the most pressing difficulties faced by rural learners, rooted largely in poverty. Firsthand experiences likewise confirm these challenges; in rural areas of Davao City, some students travel several kilometers daily to attend classes. Witnessing such persistence and resilience has inspired this study, which seeks to explore the factors that sustain learners' determination, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the types of support that can be extended to strengthen their educational resilience. Research of this nature is crucial to complement government initiatives aimed at keeping school-aged children in formal education, while also offering insights that promote equity and access for marginalized communities.

II. METHOD

This study examined the resilience of learners in a remote sitio of Davao City who, despite encountering considerable challenges such as long travel distances to school, limited educational resources, socioeconomic

constraints, and cultural barriers, continued to pursue formal education with determination. It adopts a qualitative case study research design, which is well-suited for examining complex and context-dependent issues such as the resilience of students in remote rural areas. Case study research is inherently adaptable, enabling the researcher to focus on contextual factors that shape students' experiences and responses. This makes it possible to explore not only what resilience looks like in remote areas but also why and how it develops in response to specific circumstances.

Conducting a case study requires direct and meaningful engagement with participants, which makes it important to strictly follow ethical principles. In this research, the focus is on two junior high school students living in a remote sitio of Davao City. Because of their unique situation, it was essential to ensure that their rights, dignity, and safety were always protected. Following the guidance of both international and local ethical standards, this study was carefully designed to respect the voices and lived experiences of the participants while preventing any form of harm or exploitation.

To capture the experiences of the participants, multiple instruments were used: in-depth interviews, observations, and field notes. The interviews served as the primary tool, giving the students an opportunity to share their personal stories, challenges, and coping strategies in their own words. Observations were conducted to complement the interviews, allowing the researcher to directly witness the learners' environments and behaviors. This helped provide a fuller picture of the conditions in which they study and the ways they adapt to these challenges. Field notes, including references to school attendance records and relevant community documents, were also maintained to strengthen the findings and ensure data triangulation. Together, these instruments created a more holistic account of the students' educational journeys.

In this study, my role as researcher was central to facilitating the entire process of data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. I served as the primary instrument of the research, conducting interviews, recording narratives, and ensuring that the participants felt safe and comfortable in sharing their stories. I carefully framed questions and used follow-up probes to encourage the students to express their thoughts openly and meaningfully.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Access to education remains a critical challenge for learners in remote and socio-economically disadvantaged communities, where geographical barriers and financial constraints often hinder consistent schooling. Despite these obstacles, many students demonstrate remarkable resilience, driven by personal determination, family support, and community solidarity, to pursue their academic goals. On the theme sustaining resilience in acquiring education amid socio-economic and geographical challenges, the following are the themes that emerged from the narrations of participants:

Strong Family Motivation. The participants highlighted strong family motivation as a primary driver for learners to persist in education, going to school despite socio-economic and geographical challenges. Participants emphasized how familial support fuels their determination, directly impacting their ability to overcome obstacles and stay committed to schooling. Families provide both tangible resources, such as school supplies and financial support, and intangible forms of encouragement, including pride, affirmations, and guidance. These acts of support enable students to view challenges as surmountable and temporary rather than permanent barriers. The findings of this study are consistent with recent scholarship emphasizing the pivotal role of family in student resilience. Patterson et al. (2021) highlight that strong family and community relationships provide both emotional reassurance and practical assistance, enabling learners to navigate adversities effectively.

Personal Dreams and Aspirations. From the participants' accounts, this study found that personal dreams and aspirations served as a powerful driving force behind their resilience as learners in the remote sitios. Both students consistently described their persistence in education as being anchored in future-oriented goals, finishing their studies, securing stable employment, and ultimately improving their family's living conditions. These aspirations were not vague ideals but deeply tied to their view of education as a transformative pathway that could reframe challenges into opportunities. Özden and Atasoy (2020), drawing from Tugade and Fredrikson (2004), explain that resilience reflects an individual's ability to cope and adapt effectively, even when confronted with hardship or adversity.

Meanwhile, attending school in remote sitios entails considerable challenges such as navigating steep and muddy terrain, dealing with financial limitations, and enduring weather-related disruptions that test learners' perseverance on a daily basis. This study examined the coping strategies of two junior high school students from a remote sitio in Davao City who continued their education despite these socioeconomic and geographical hardships. The themes developed from the coping strategies of participants were the following:

Cultivate Emotional Resilience. The findings of this study reveal that learners in remote sitios cultivate emotional resilience through three interconnected strategies that consistently emerged from their narratives. This resilience manifests in their ability to reframe struggles as temporary setbacks rather than insurmountable barriers, often drawing strength from familial support and personal aspirations. While this adaptive mindset fosters endurance, the constant need to 'tough it out' can also impose emotional burdens, particularly when systemic barriers persist unchecked. These findings are strongly supported by existing literature. Teach for the Philippines (2020) notes that students in marginalized contexts often develop self-discipline and self-motivation as survival strategies. Segbenya and Anokye (2022) emphasize the importance of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies in overcoming barriers to learning.

Employ Adaptive Strategies. This study reveals that learners in remote sitios employ highly adaptive strategies to cope with the daily challenges of schooling. In the absence of reliable infrastructure and resources, participants demonstrated resourcefulness in navigating their environment. They described using banana leaves or cellophane as makeshift rain protection, adjusting their travel schedules to avoid heavy rains, and even walking barefoot to preserve their only pair of footwear. These practices reflect not only ingenuity but also the ability to transform ordinary materials and routines into survival mechanisms that lessen the risks of long, difficult commutes. Poultney and Forbes (2020) emphasize that flexible teacher practices, such as accommodating attendance concerns, foster resilience among marginalized learners, aligning with the experiences of this study.

Drawing from both the motivations and coping practices of the participants, this study offers evidence-based recommendations grounded in their lived realities. This study recommends strengthening community-based solutions, such as establishing localized learning hubs and parent empowerment programs, alongside implementing flexible education models that accommodate the realities of sitio life, including modular or offline learning.

Overall, this study concludes that learners in remote sitios of Davao City display extraordinary resilience in their pursuit of education. The findings support Masten's (2001) theory of resilience, showing how protective factors like family support and self-motivation act as buffers against adversity. Likewise, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory helps contextualize these results, emphasizing that resilience is shaped not only by individual and familial influences (microsystem and mesosystem) but also by broader systemic conditions like inadequate infrastructure (exosystem). Together, these perspectives highlight that resilience thrives through individual and relational efforts but must be reinforced by institutional reforms that address root causes.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Asan, R. (2021). A phenomenological study on the battle of students of rural areas from poverty and COVID-19 crisis. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied and Basic Subjects*, 1 (4), 37-44. <https://visnav.in/ijabs/article/a-phenomenological-study-on-the-battle-of-students-of-rural-areas-from-poverty-and-covid-19-crisis/>
- [2]. Bai, N. (2023) Educational Challenges in the Philippines. Philippine Institute for Development Studies. <https://pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/educational-challenges-in-the-philippines>
- [3]. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press.
- [4]. De Dios, J. M., Rodriguez, S., & Pineda, A. (2020). Flexible learning options in the Philippines: The Alternative Learning System. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 76, 102-109.

- [5]. Kassymova, G., Podberezniy, V., Arpentieva, M., Zhigitbekova, B., Schachl, H., Aigerim, K., Aganina K., Vafazov, F., Golubchikova, M., Korobchenko, A. (2023). Building Resilience in Students: Managed and Minimised Stress in Students. DO - 10.21926/obm.neurobiol.2304193
- [6]. Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary Magic: Resilience Processes in Development. *American Psychologist*, 56, 227-238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227>
- [7]. Mitchell, S. (2024) Revolutionizing Rural Education: The Transformation of Schools in Remote Communities. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/revolutionizing-rural-education-transformation-remote-d>
- [8]. Özden, C. and Atasoy, R. (2020) Socioeconomically Disadvantaged and Resilient Students' Characteristics and Their Perceptions about School. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, Volume 16 Number 5. https://ijpe.inased.org/files/2/manuscript/manuscript_1696/ijpe-1696-manuscript-235229.pdf
- [9]. Patterson, A., Smith, L., & Thompson, R. (2021). Teachers' perceptions of resilience in rural education. *Rural Education Research*, 39(1), 34-47.
- [10]. Poultney, R., & Forbes, D. (2019). A whole-school approach to developing resilience: Resources and suggestions for New Zealand schools. *Teachers and Curriculum*, 20(1), 43-50. <https://doi.org/10.15663/tandc.v20i1.351>
- [11]. Quiño, M J and Villocino, R, 2024) Come Hell or high Water: Teaching in Far Flung Schools from the Narratives of Elementary Teachers. Vol-10 Issue-4 https://ijariie.com/AdminUploadPdf/COME_HELL_OR_HIGH_WATER_TEACHING_IN_FAR_FLUNG_SCHOOLS_FROM_THE_NARRATIVES_OF_ELEMENTARY_TEACHERS_ijariie24509.pdf?srlt id=AfmBOoo6LmUp-a-Vwzgz35mZqHCvEfRUAoY5bLtU0v9dFAZQQcoUMyy1
- [12]. Segbenya, M., & Anokye, F. A. (2022). Challenges and coping strategies among distance education learners: Implication for human resources managers. SpringerLink.
- [13]. Talikan, A., Ajan, R., Mami, W., Mohammad, A., Salapuddin, R. Busaña, M., Radjuni, A. Undug, N., Jayani, P. & Samain, W. (2024) Educational Resilience among Tausug Indigenous People in Remote Communities: Basis for Policy Formulation. research Square. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-4195591/v1>
- [14]. Teach for the Philippines. (2020). "Perspectives from the Frontlines of Rural Public Education in the Philippines." Teach for the Philippines, Inc. Retrieved from Teach for the Philippines.
- [15]. Teston, M.K (2022) How Teachers Promote Academic Success of Primary Grade Students in Rural Schools by Supporting Their Resilience. Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at Scholar Works. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=15097&context=dissertations>
- [16]. UNESCO. (2020). "Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>