

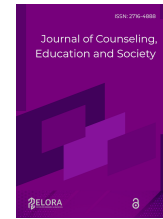


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Resilience among bullying victims in coastal areas: examining gender differences

Rober Sandra^{*)}, Nurfarhanah Nurfarhanah

Guidance and Counseling Department, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Bullying remains a significant issue among adolescents due to its negative impact on psychological well-being and social adjustment. Resilience is an important protective factor that helps students adapt to and recover from bullying experiences. However, limited research has examined gender differences in resilience among bullying victims living in coastal areas, which are often characterized by unique social and environmental challenges. This study employed a quantitative comparative design involving 237 high school students in coastal areas who had experienced bullying victimization. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using a resilience scale based on emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, causal analysis, empathy, self-efficacy, and reaching out. Data were analyzed using the Rasch model and Welch test. The findings revealed significant differences in resilience based on gender, with male students demonstrating higher resilience than female students. These findings contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence on gender-based differences in resilience among bullying victims in coastal communities. The results highlight the importance of considering both individual and contextual factors in understanding resilience and developing support strategies for students who experience bullying.



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Corresponding Author:

Rober Sandra,
Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia
Email: robbersandra@student.unp.ac.id

Introduction

The phenomenon of bullying among students remains a serious problem in education. Bullying, whether verbal, physical, or socio-psychological, still frequently occurs in schools and tends to recur without optimal treatment (Mutiasari & Yarni, 2023; Nurfarhanah & Karina, 2023). Research conducted across 50 countries indicates that the prevalence of bullying is influenced by social, cultural, and educational system factors (Johansson et al., 2022). Previous studies have reported varying prevalence rates of bullying victimization among students, ranging from 17.7% in Greece and 38.8% in several Sub-Saharan African countries to 71.5% in China (Aboagye et al., 2021; Spyropoulou et al., 2026; Zhao et al., 2024). Similarly, research in Indonesia found that 18.05% of junior high school students were frequently bullied, while the majority reported having experienced bullying at least occasionally (Kusuma et al., 2023). This condition not only impacts academic aspects but also students' psychological health. Victims of bullying tend to experience decreased self-confidence, anxiety, and difficulties in establishing social relationships (Munandar et al., 2021). These challenges highlight the importance of resilience, which refers to an individual's ability to adapt positively, recover from adversity, and maintain healthy

psychological functioning when facing stressful experiences such as bullying (Abate et al., 2024; Sisto et al., 2019; Virlia et al., 2024).

Furthermore, in the educational context, resilience contributes to students' ability to maintain academic performance, improve self-regulation, and remain engaged in learning despite various pressures and challenges (Li et al., 2024; Nurfarhanah et al., 2022b; Nurfarhanah & Karina, 2023). Resilience is also associated with students' capacity to adapt to academic difficulties and achieve optimal learning outcomes, making it an important factor in educational success (Steel et al., 2024).

Previous studies have shown considerable variation in students' resilience levels across countries. For example, 36% of students from 18 European countries were classified as having low resilience (Chua et al., 2023), while within the European Union, the proportion of students with low resilience ranged from 5.96% in Belgium to 40.57% in Italy (García-Crespo et al., 2021). In contrast, 35.7% of students in Peru demonstrated high resilience (Zila-Velasque et al., 2024). In Indonesia, 63% of students were categorized as having high resilience and 37% as having moderate resilience (Tarigan, 2021), which is consistent with meta-analytic evidence indicating that Indonesian students generally exhibit moderate levels of resilience (Manullang et al., 2024).

Previous findings indicate substantial variation in resilience levels among students across different educational contexts (Chua et al., 2023; García-Crespo et al., 2021; Manullang et al., 2024). Such differences suggest that students possess varying capacities to cope with adversity, including bullying experiences. Students with high levels of resilience tend to be able to manage psychological stress, develop adaptive coping strategies, and maintain optimal social and academic functioning. Conversely, students with low resilience are more susceptible to emotional distress and difficulty adapting after experiencing bullying (Bowes, 2025). These differences in resilience levels indicate that not all students have the same adaptive abilities in dealing with stress. This variation is thought to be influenced by various factors, one of which is gender (Dewi et al., 2023).

Characteristic differences between males and females, particularly in emotional management and coping strategies, contribute to variations in how they deal with psychological stress. Males tend to use problem-focused coping, such as confronting or resisting the source of stress, while females are more likely to use emotion-focused coping, such as seeking social support or expressing feelings. These differences in coping patterns suggest that responses to stressful situations, including bullying, are influenced by gender (Cava et al., 2021). Furthermore, other research has shown that coping styles play different roles in males and females in the context of bullying, ultimately influencing individual resilience (Xia et al., 2023). Therefore, these differences have the potential to influence students' resilience, particularly those who have experienced bullying.

In addition to individual factors, environmental conditions may also influence resilience development. Coastal areas represent a unique context characterized by economic uncertainty, dependence on marine resources, limited access to educational facilities, and various social challenges (Y. Chen & Su, 2024; Nurzaman et al., 2020). These conditions may affect students' psychosocial development and access to support systems, which are important factors in building resilience.

Therefore, examining resilience among bullying victims in coastal communities provides a valuable opportunity to understand how environmental contexts shape students' adaptive capacities. Previous studies have demonstrated that bullying experiences are associated with students' resilience levels, while other studies have reported gender-related differences in coping and adaptation among bullying victims (Agatha et al., 2025; Cyndi, 2024; Tsabita & Ruby, 2025). However, studies that simultaneously examine bullying victimization, resilience, and gender differences within coastal communities remain limited. In addition, research that considers coastal environmental characteristics as a contextual factor influencing student resilience is still scarce (Chen et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2022). Consequently, little is known about whether resilience differs between male and female bullying victims in coastal areas, highlighting the need for further investigation.

Therefore, this research is important given the limited number of studies that simultaneously integrate bullying experiences, resilience, gender differences, and coastal environmental characteristics (Bowes, 2025; J & Jose, 2026). While previous studies have examined these variables separately, little is known about gender-based differences in resilience among bullying victims living in coastal communities. Accordingly, this study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from a coastal context, thereby extending existing understanding of resilience among bullying victims and the role of gender within a unique environmental setting.

Based on the above explanation, this study aims to analyze differences in resilience levels between male and female students who have experienced bullying in coastal areas. The results are expected to contribute to the development of more targeted interventions to improve student resilience, particularly for victims of bullying.

Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a comparative model to identify differences between groups. This study aimed to determine gender differences between males and females in the resilience of students who were victims of bullying and lived in coastal areas.

This study was conducted among high school students residing in coastal areas of Pesisir Selatan Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Pesisir Selatan Regency was selected because it is geographically characterized by coastal communities located along the western coastline of Sumatra. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling method, which determines the sample based on specific criteria in accordance with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2023). The sample criteria were students who had experienced bullying victimization and resided in coastal areas of Pesisir Selatan Regency. Based on these criteria, a sample of 237 students was obtained, consisting of 129 male students (54.43%) and 108 female students (45.57%).

Resilience was measured using an instrument developed by the researchers based on the resilience theory proposed by Reivich & Shatté (2002), consisting of seven dimensions: emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, causal analysis, empathy, self-efficacy, and reaching out. Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent expert review to evaluate the relevance and clarity of the items. Validity plays a fundamental role in instrument development because it is closely related to the accuracy and appropriateness of a test in representing the construct being measured. The higher the validity of an instrument, the more accurately it reflects the phenomenon under investigation (Syahputra et al., 2025). This instrument is a Likert scale with a scale of 1-5 with answer choices namely very appropriate, appropriate, quite appropriate, inappropriate, and very inappropriate. Consisting of 33 items that have been declared valid and reliable. Rasch analysis showed satisfactory psychometric properties, including person reliability of 0.80, item reliability of 0.94, and Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating good measurement quality. The raw variance explained by the measures was 48%, exceeding the minimum criterion for unidimensionality (Linacre, 2017). The INFIT MNSQ (+1.08) and OUTFIT MNSQ (+0.95) values were within the recommended range, indicating acceptable model fit. This indicates that the bullying victim resilience instrument has excellent quality for the measurement conditions used. Data analysis in this study was conducted to determine differences between the two groups, namely gender. This was conducted using the Welch test analysis technique using the Winstep application (Linacre, 2009). This was done to answer the research hypothesis.

Results and Discussions

This study used two analyses: a descriptive test of bullying victim resilience based on gender and a test of differences in bullying victim resilience based on gender. The descriptive test based on gender is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive Test of Bullying Victim Resilience Based on Gender

Person Count	Mean Score	Mean Measure	S.E. Mean	Median	Model Separation	Model Reliability	RMSE	SD	Mean Outfit	Code
237	119.4	.64	.03	.60	1.74	.75	.19	.34	1.01	*
108	115.6	.49	.03	.49	1.21	.59	.19	.23	.99	F
129	122.6	.76	.04	.67	1.84	.77	.20	.37	1.02	M

* = Total; F = Female; M = Male

Table 1 indicates that male students demonstrated higher resilience than female students, as reflected by their higher mean measure scores (0.76 vs. 0.49). In general, the descriptive results suggest a tendency for male students to exhibit stronger resilience when facing bullying experiences in coastal areas. Figure 1 is a Wright Map used to analyze the resilience trends of bullying victims by gender, and clearly shows significant differences between males and females in this regard.

The left side of the Wright map shows that the distribution of resilience levels among female students who are victims of bullying in coastal areas tends to be concentrated in the low to medium categories. Meanwhile, on the right side of the map, male students show a more dispersed distribution, reaching higher levels of resilience. This finding indicates that, in the context of adolescent victims of bullying in coastal areas, male students tend to have relatively higher levels of resilience than female students. This is further supported by the mean position, where the average resilience of male students is at a higher logit value than that of female students.

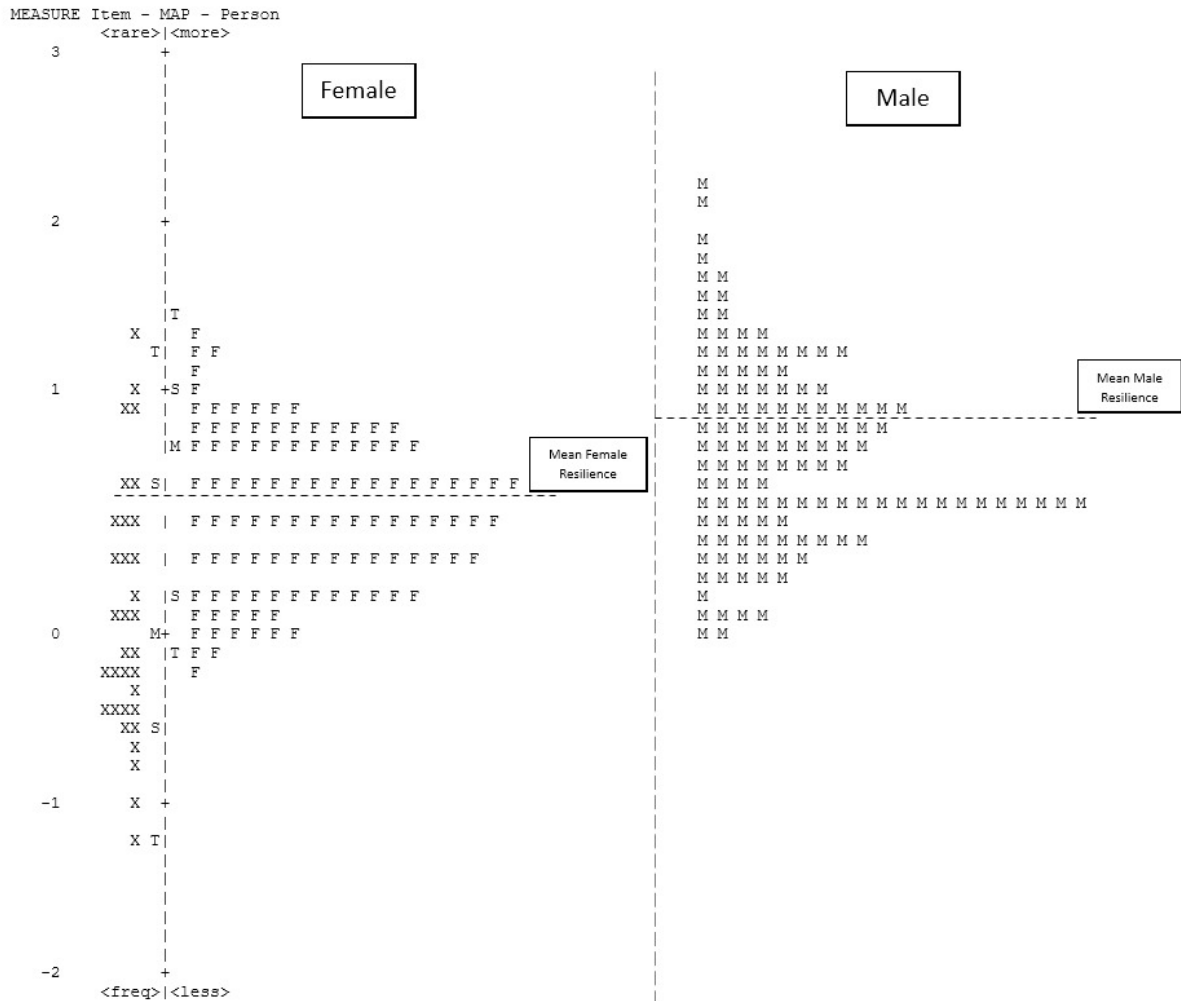


Figure 1. Wright Map Resiliensi Based on Gender

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of resilience distribution across gender groups. The Wright Map shows that male students were generally located at higher logit positions than female students, indicating higher resilience levels. In addition, the distribution of male students was more dispersed across the higher logit range, suggesting greater variability and a tendency toward stronger adaptive capacities when dealing with bullying experiences. The results of the Welch test to determine differences based on gender are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Difference Test of Resilience Based on Gender (Welch Test)

Comparison	Mean Difference	S.E.	t	d.f.	Sig.
Female – Male	-0.27	0.05	-5.81	229	0.000

Table 2 shows a significant difference in resilience between male and female students. The Welch test revealed that male students demonstrated significantly higher resilience levels than female students, $t(229) = -5.81, p < .001$. This finding is consistent with the descriptive results, where male students obtained a higher mean measure ($M = 0.76, SD = 0.37$) than female students ($M = 0.49, SD = 0.23$). Furthermore, the effect size analysis indicated a large practical effect (Cohen's $d = 0.86$), suggesting that the observed gender difference was not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. In addition to presenting the results of the Welch test analysis, to provide a clearer picture of differences in resilience based on gender, a visualization of the average item scores is presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 illustrates the average item scores across gender groups. Consistent with the Welch test results, male students obtained higher average scores on most resilience items, further supporting the observed gender differences in resilience.

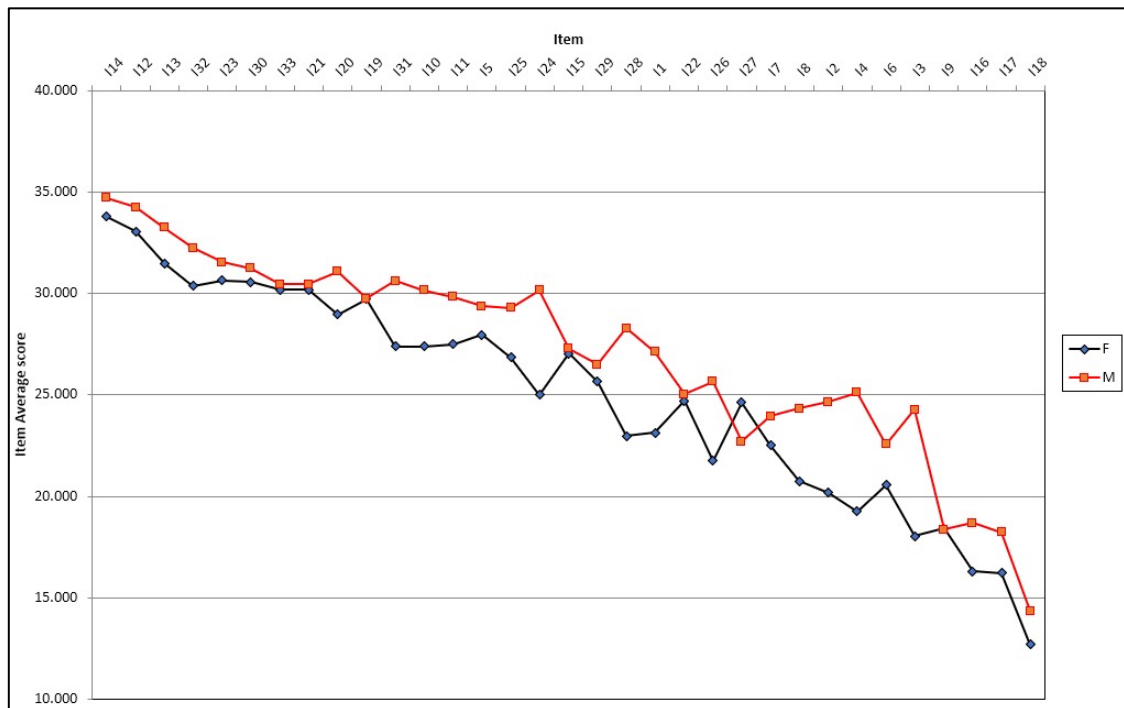


Figure 2. Comparison of average item scores by gender

The finding that male students demonstrated higher resilience than female students suggests that gender-related differences in coping and emotional regulation may influence how adolescents respond to bullying experiences. Resilience is not merely the ability to recover from adversity but also reflects the capacity to regulate emotions, maintain self-control, and adapt effectively to stressful situations. Therefore, the observed differences may indicate variations in psychological processes that support adaptation among male and female students.

The results of this study can be explained by Resilience Theory, which states that resilience is an individual's ability to adapt positively in the face of stress, challenges, and unpleasant events (Honor, 2017; Southwick et al., 2014). From this perspective, resilience is influenced not only by external conditions but also by internal characteristics that differentiate one individual from another, including differences based on gender. From the perspective of Resilience Theory, exposure to adversity does not automatically produce negative outcomes because individuals possess different protective factors that facilitate adaptation. In the present study, male students may have benefited from coping mechanisms that emphasize problem-solving and emotional control, enabling them to recover more effectively from bullying experiences. This interpretation supports the view that resilience develops through the interaction between personal resources and environmental demands rather than through exposure to adversity alone. Emotional regulation is considered an important psychological resource because it enables individuals to manage negative emotions and respond more adaptively to stressful situations (Haryono et al., 2026). Therefore, students with stronger emotional regulation skills may be better equipped to recover from bullying experiences and maintain psychological well-being.

The results of this study also show that males have higher levels of resilience, demonstrating a better ability to maintain psychological stability when faced with bullying experiences. This indicates that they tend to be better able to manage stress and maintain optimal social and academic functioning. Conversely, female students tend to be more vulnerable to psychological stress, making the process of adapting to bullying experiences more challenging. These differences demonstrate that resilience capacity is not uniform but varies across individuals. One possible explanation is that male adolescents are more likely to employ problem-focused coping strategies, which emphasize actively dealing with stressful situations and reducing the source of distress. In contrast, female adolescents often rely more heavily on emotion-focused coping, making them more vulnerable to prolonged emotional reactions following bullying experiences. As a result, differences in coping strategies may contribute to variations in resilience levels between male and female students. This interpretation is consistent with previous findings showing that coping strategies contribute to students' emotional adjustment and adaptive functioning when facing stressful situations (Arfanie & Wulandari, 2026). Consequently, differences in coping patterns may partly explain the observed gender differences in resilience among bullying victims.

The results of this study align with previous research showing differences in resilience levels based on gender, with males tending to have higher resilience levels than females (Dewi et al., 2023). Similar findings were

reported by (Oktasari et al., 2025), who found significant gender-based differences in resilience among Indonesian students using the Rasch model. These findings suggest that resilience may be shaped differently across gender groups, reflecting variations in coping patterns and adaptive resources. Furthermore, other research confirms that gender is a factor that significantly influences resilience in adolescent victims of bullying (Sujadi et al., 2021). These findings reinforce the assumption that biological and psychological differences between males and females can contribute to variations in individual adaptability. This finding is also supported by research by Ifdil et al. (2018) which shows differences in resilience levels based on gender, with male and female students having different adaptation characteristics in dealing with stress. Furthermore, family environmental factors also reinforce these differences. As stated by Fauziah et al. (2023), the family plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, including developing resilience skills. Emotional support, parenting styles, and quality communication within the family can help adolescents, especially victims of bullying, build psychological resilience. Thus, differences in resilience levels between male and female students are influenced not only by individual factors but also by the surrounding social and family context (Fauziah et al., 2023). Furthermore, gender differences are also evident in various aspects of student behavior. Research shows that males and females have different tendencies in expressing responses to stress, including aggressive behavior and social interactions (Alizamar et al., 2018)

However, not all studies have reported consistent findings. Shemesh & Heiman (2021) found that gender did not significantly influence resilience, suggesting that resilience may develop similarly among males and females under certain conditions. Differences between these findings and the present study may be related to variations in cultural background, social support systems, family environments, and exposure to stressful experiences. In the context of the present study, students were drawn from coastal communities, which may present unique environmental and socioeconomic challenges that influence resilience development differently across gender groups. Furthermore, previous studies have shown that gender differences in bullying experiences and psychological responses are often shaped by broader social and environmental factors (Cosma et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2025). Therefore, resilience should be understood as a multidimensional construct influenced by the interaction of gender, individual characteristics, and contextual factors rather than by gender alone.

Furthermore, the coastal context provides an important perspective for understanding the findings of this study. Coastal areas are often characterized by various external pressures, including climate change, economic instability, and limited facilities that support adolescent development, all of which may indirectly affect psychological well-being. Adolescents living in such environments are therefore required to cope not only with bullying experiences but also with broader social and environmental challenges. This study suggests that these contextual pressures may increase the importance of resilience as a protective factor that enables students to adapt to adversity and maintain psychological functioning. These findings are consistent with the study by J and Jose (2026), which reported that students living in coastal areas experience higher levels of social and environmental pressure, creating additional challenges for maintaining psychological well-being. Consequently, resilience becomes particularly important for bullying victims in coastal communities because it helps them manage both interpersonal difficulties and environmental stressors.

The research findings indicate that resilience is a crucial factor, acting as a protective mechanism that helps individuals cope with and manage environmental stress and negative experiences such as bullying. These findings are supported by Lin et al. (2022) who demonstrated that resilience plays a significant role in mitigating the psychological impacts of bullying, such as depression and emotional distress, and helps individuals maintain adaptive functioning despite adverse circumstances. Furthermore, research by Thorvaldsen et al. (2024) confirmed that students with high levels of resilience tend to demonstrate better adjustment skills and greater psychological resilience in the face of bullying compared to students with low levels of resilience. Therefore, in the context of coastal areas, which are fraught with various limitations and pressures, students with higher levels of resilience are better able to adapt, maintain psychological well-being, and persevere in the face of various challenges, including bullying.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be seen that resilience plays a crucial role in helping students cope with bullying, particularly those living in coastal areas with various limitations and environmental pressures. Therefore, the results of this study provide practical implications for the world of education, particularly for teachers and school counselors, to pay greater attention to developing student resilience as part of efforts to prevent and address bullying. These efforts can be implemented through the provision of guidance and counseling services that focus on strengthening adaptive skills, managing emotions (Nurfarhanah et al., 2022a; Nurfarhanah & Karina, 2023; Sinaga et al., 2026), and developing student self-confidence. Furthermore, schools need to create a supportive and safe environment so that students feel protected and have the space to develop optimally. Interventions should also consider differences in student characteristics, including gender, so that the approach provided can be more targeted and effective in increasing student resilience.

Although this study provides insight into gender differences in resilience levels among students who are victims of bullying in coastal areas, it still has several limitations. First, the study was conducted only in a specific coastal area, so the results cannot be broadly generalized to a more diverse population. Second, the study focused solely on gender without considering other factors that could potentially influence resilience, such as family support, school environment, socioeconomic conditions, and more specific individual experiences. Third, the use of quantitative methods in this study was unable to deeply explore students' subjective experiences of bullying. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine other factors that influence resilience and use a more diverse approach to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

Conclusions

This study concludes that resilience differs between male and female students who have experienced bullying in coastal areas, with male students demonstrating higher levels of resilience. These findings indicate that gender is an important factor associated with students' ability to adapt to and cope with bullying experiences, particularly within the challenging context of coastal communities. This study contributes to the literature by extending understanding of gender-based differences in resilience among bullying victims in coastal areas, a context that has received limited attention in previous research. The findings emphasize that resilience should be understood not only as an individual characteristic but also as a construct shaped by the interaction between personal and environmental factors. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted with caution because the study was conducted within a specific coastal population using purposive sampling, which may limit broader generalization. Future research is encouraged to examine additional factors that may influence resilience, such as family support, school climate, and socioeconomic conditions, and to employ more diverse methodological approaches to gain a deeper understanding of resilience among bullying victims.

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