

The Lived Experience of Resilience Among Student- Mothers in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of resilience among student-mothers in Higher Education Institutions. Guided by a descriptive phenomenological design, the study aimed to uncover the essence of how student-mothers persist in their academic pursuits while fulfilling maternal responsibilities. A purposive sample of student-mothers who met the inclusion criteria participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's Method, which involved extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, and developing an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. Findings revealed that resilience among student-mothers is a dynamic and multifaceted process shaped by personal, relational, and contextual factors. Seven major themes emerged: (1) balancing motherhood and academic life as a continuous struggle, (2) resilience through adaptive coping strategies, (3) support systems as critical to survival and success, (4) children as the central source of motivation, (5) transformation and personal growth amid challenges, (6) unwavering commitment to educational attainment, and (7) living with emotional duality. The results highlight that student-mothers experience persistent role strain, yet actively employ coping mechanisms such as time management, prioritization, and self-discipline to navigate their dual roles. Support from family and significant others, along with strong motivation rooted in their children, sustains their academic persistence. The study concludes that resilience among student-mothers is a continuous process of enduring and becoming, characterized by adaptation, meaning-making, and personal transformation. Despite the challenges encountered, student-mothers demonstrate remarkable determination to complete their education as a means of securing a better future for their families. The findings underscore the need for Higher Education Institutions to develop inclusive and supportive policies that address the unique needs of student-mothers.

Keywords: resilience, student-mothers, higher education, phenomenology, academic persistence

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

The intersection of maternal responsibilities and undergraduate academic rigor presents a significant challenge to the holistic wellbeing of student-mothers. In the context of Health Sciences, the student-mother is often a *caregiver in training* who must simultaneously provide care for her child while meeting the clinical and theoretical demands of a Higher Education Institution (HEI). As Moreau (2020) describes, universities function as “greedy institutions” that frequently overlook the corporeal, emotional, and psychological labor of motherhood. For student-mothers, academic persistence is not merely an educational outcome but a complex, health-seeking behavior characterized by intentional decision-making, role negotiation, and resilience.

From a nursing perspective, this phenomenon is deeply rooted in the experience of chronic role strain. Globally, Gaganis et al. (2021) highlight how time poverty among student parents leads to sleep deprivation, emotional exhaustion, and compromised self-care—key determinants of maternal health. In the Philippine context, the cultural expectation of mothers as the *Ilaw ng Tahanan* (Light of the Home) intensifies psychosocial pressure. Local studies (Andres, 2021; Arabejo et al., 2024) reveal that although Filipino student-mothers demonstrate remarkable resilience, this often comes at the cost of diminished self-care agency.

This study focuses on undergraduate student-mothers, a population navigating simultaneous developmental, academic, and maternal transitions. Understanding how these women persist—mentally, physically, and emotionally—provides critical insight into maternal wellbeing, nursing education, and health-promoting academic environments.

Purpose of the Study

This descriptive phenomenological study aims to explore the lived experiences of resilience among student mothers in Higher Education Institutions.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this research hold transformative potential for several stakeholders:

Student-Mothers. The study provides a platform for student-mothers to articulate their lived realities, validating their experiences and affirming their resilience.

For School and Community Nurses This study serves as a clinical eye-opener for school and community health nurses to move beyond physical assessments and recognize the psychosocial "role strain" unique to student-mothers. The findings can guide nurses in developing "Maternal Support Protocols" within campus clinics, focusing on mental health screenings, stress-management counseling, and nutritional guidance for student-mothers facing chronic "time-poverty" and physical exhaustion.

For Families and Support Systems This research provides families with a deeper understanding of the "double-burden" their loved ones carry, reframing the mother's academic persistence as a collective family effort. It encourages a shift from traditional expectations toward more active emotional and instrumental support, recognizing that the mother's degree attainment is a primary driver for the family's future socioeconomic health.

Higher Education Institutions. Findings may guide the development of family-sensitive academic policies, flexible learning modalities, and supportive environments.

Academe. Insights from the study foster empathetic, holistic teaching approaches that recognize maternal role strain and self-care needs.

For Policy Makers and HEI Administrators The study offers evidence-based justification for administrators to implement "mother-friendly" institutional policies, such as flexible clinical rotations, designated lactation stations, and excused absences for pediatric emergencies. By identifying the specific barriers to persistence, policy makers can create inclusive educational frameworks that reduce dropout rates and support gender equity in Higher Education Institutions.

Health Sciences and Nursing Research. The study contributes to maternal health literature by conceptualizing academic persistence as a health-promoting adaptation rather than a purely academic outcome.

For Future Researchers This study provides a foundational qualitative baseline for investigating the specific intersection of resilience and persistence among student-mothers. It offers a refined phenomenological framework that future scholars can use to explore other demographics, such as student-fathers or student-mothers in non-health-related fields. Furthermore, the findings highlight critical gaps in current literature, serving as a springboard for longitudinal or quantitative studies aimed at measuring the long-term career outcomes of mothers who persist through the "double-burden" of undergraduate education.

Philosophical Underpinning

The philosophical foundation of this study is constructed as a multi-layered framework that integrates Husserlian Transcendental Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Pragmatism to capture the essence, the will, and the functional action of the student-mother's journey.

At the core of the study is Husserlian Transcendental Phenomenology, which provides the primary methodological rigor for uncovering the "universal essence" of academic persistence. By employing the process of *Epoché*, or bracketing, the researcher sets aside personal nursing assumptions to describe the "pure" lived experience of the participants (Husserl, 1931). This allows for the identification of the "Noetic-Noematic" structure of persistence, where the internal act of enduring (*noesis*) is inextricably linked to the academic degree as the intentional object (*noema*). Recent phenomenological studies affirm that for student-mothers, this "lived experience" is an ongoing negotiation between academic obligations and an evolving maternal identity (Delgado-Herrera et al., 2024).

Because the experience of a student-mother involves active struggle and self-definition, Existentialism is integrated to provide depth. Following Sartre's (1943) principle that "existence precedes essence," academic persistence is viewed as an "existential project." The student-mother exercises "radical freedom" by choosing to remain in school despite the "corporeal labor" and physical exhaustion inherent in motherhood (Beauvoir, 2011). Modern existential scholarship suggests that this persistence is a form of "becoming," where mothers find meaning and purpose through their educational pursuits, transforming their disorientation into a growth mindset (Cruz, 2025).

Finally, the framework incorporates Pragmatism to account for the functional, day-to-day realities of these women's lives. While phenomenology seeks the essence, pragmatism focuses on the "workability" and results of the experience (James, 1907). Drawing from Dewey's (1938) assertion that resilience is gained through practical application, student-mothers maintain persistence through constant testing of solutions—such as negotiating childcare or shifting schedules—to ensure educational success. Current research emphasizes that this pragmatic resilience is often driven by "ambition in life" and the practical utility of a degree in securing a family's future (Khorasani et al., 2025, Villones & Motus, 2023). Together, these philosophies create a cohesive narrative: Husserl captures the reflection, Existentialism captures the resolution, and Pragmatism captures the result.

2. Methodology

This chapter explains the systematic approach employed to uncover the lived experience of psychosocial resilience and academic persistence among student-mothers. It details the qualitative descriptive phenomenological design, the strategic selection of participants, the rigor of the instrumentation, and the robust ethical framework that guides the inquiry within the context of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design grounded in Husserlian Transcendental Phenomenology. This approach prioritizes the description of lived experience and the identification of invariant structures through phenomenological reduction.

This study utilizes descriptive phenomenology grounded in Husserlian philosophy, which aims to describe the universal essence of lived experiences free from researcher interpretation. Unlike interpretive (Heideggerian) phenomenology, which seeks to interpret meaning, descriptive phenomenology focuses on pure description through bracketing (epoché) (Moustakas, 1994). This approach is appropriate as the study seeks to capture the essence of resilience among student-mothers without imposing external interpretations.

Research Environment

The study was conducted in selected Higher Education Institutions in Bohol, which serve as the lifeworld where academic and maternal roles intersect.

Research Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who have direct and meaningful experience of the phenomenon under study. A final sample size of 13 participants determined through data saturation defined as the point at which no new themes or meanings emerge from participant narratives consistent with phenomenological research standards.

The selection of participants is guided by specific criteria designed to ensure that the individuals possess a rich, "lived experience" of the phenomenon being studied. To be eligible for inclusion, participants must be currently enrolled as full-time undergraduate students in a recognized Higher Education Institution (HEI) within the Philippines. They must be biological or legal mothers to at least one dependent child and must be actively performing maternal caregiving responsibilities while balancing their academic load. To ensure that the participants have had sufficient exposure to the rigors of university life, they must have completed at least one full academic year at their institution. Furthermore, participants must be willing and able to engage in an in-depth interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes and possess the ability to communicate their experiences clearly in either English, Bisaya or Filipino.

Conversely, certain conditions exclude individuals from participating in this inquiry. To maintain a focus on the specific

pressures of initial degree attainment, postgraduate (master's or doctoral) students are excluded, as their academic and financial demands differ significantly from those in undergraduate programs. Students who are currently pregnant but have not yet assumed active caregiving roles are also excluded, as the study focuses on the postnatal experience of student-motherhood. Additionally, student-mothers with less than one year of enrollment are ineligible due to their limited exposure to long-term academic persistence. The study further excludes those who are not the primary caregivers of their children, as the "double-burden" of caregiving is a central component of the research. Finally, for ethical safety, any student-mother currently experiencing acute psychological distress or a personal crisis that could be exacerbated by the reflective nature of a phenomenological interview will be excluded from the study.

Sampling continues until data saturation is achieved, ensuring depth and richness of the lived experience descriptions

Research Instrument

To gather the pertinent data for this study, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview as the primary data collection technique. Hence, an interview guide was carefully prepared and organized as the main instrument of the study to collect empirical data. This instrument ensures systematic procedure in gathering relevant information. In particular, the researcher makes use of the semi-structured type of interview where both closed and open-ended questions could be used. The semi-structured interview allows the informant to freely answer the given questions and permits the researcher to explore more information by asking for additional information when needed. The focus is allowing the interviewee to disclose and share his/her own story rather than just merely answering structured questions.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study commences upon securing ethical clearance from the Cebu Normal University Ethics Review Committee and obtaining formal permission from the Graduate School Dean and the respective Presidents of the selected HEIs in Bohol. The researcher begun with Epoché (bracketing), using a reflexive journal to set aside personal nursing biases and ensure an objective phenomenological stance. Participants were recruited through email invitations, posters, and voluntary sign-up, ensuring that recruitment is free from coercion. Faculty members were not involved in recruitment to avoid undue influence. Participation is strictly voluntary and will not affect academic standing or evaluation. The researcher secures an informed consent to the participants. Data collection involves one-on-one, in-depth interviews (60–90 minutes) in private settings using a digital recorder and field notes. To ensure rigor, member-checking will be performed, allowing participants to verify their verbatim transcripts for accuracy and "lived voice." The study has 3 months to finish.

In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) and National Ethical Guidelines (2022), all data will be treated as strictly confidential. Audio files will be transferred to password-protected cloud storage and encrypted external drives, then immediately deleted from the recording device. The researcher serves as the primary data custodian and owner. Data will be stored in encrypted, password-protected cloud storage (e.g., Google Drive servers compliant with international data protection standards) and backed up in encrypted external drives. Access is restricted to the researcher and sworn transcribers under non-disclosure agreements. All identifiers were replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Physical documents, including consent forms and transcripts, was kept in a locked, fire-proof cabinet. Following an audit trail retention period of five years, digital files will be permanently erased using secure wiping software, and physical records will be destroyed via cross-cut shredding.

Data Analysis

To transform the raw transcripts the study utilizes Colaizzi's (1978) Seven-Step Strategy for Phenomenological Analysis. This systematic process begins with a total immersion in the data through repeated reading to gain a "feeling" for the whole. Significant statements are then extracted and formulated into meanings that move beyond the literal words toward the underlying phenomenon. These meanings are clustered into invariant themes that represent the core structures of the experience. The final stage involves the synthesis of these themes into an exhaustive description of persistence, culminating in a definitive statement of the fundamental structure of being a student-mother in HEIs in Bohol Province academic context.

Rigor of the Study

To establish the rigor of this study, the researcher adheres to the four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility,

dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility is ensured through member-checking, where participants verify their transcripts, and prolonged engagement during in-depth 60 to 90-minute interviews. Dependability is maintained by following Colaizzi's Seven-Step Strategy for systematic data analysis and keeping an audit trail of verbatim audio-recorded transcriptions. Confirmability is achieved through the use of Phenomenological Epoché (bracketing) and a reflexive journal to set aside the researcher's personal nursing assumptions and biases. Finally, transferability is facilitated through thick description of the student-mother's "lifeworld" and a purposive sampling strategy that ensures participants have direct, lived experience of the phenomenon within the Philippine Higher Education context.

Ethical Considerations

In alignment with the Declaration of Helsinki and the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Health Research, the study prioritizes the protection of this potentially vulnerable population. Autonomy is ensured through a rigorous informed consent process where participants are made aware of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. No monetary compensation was provided; however, minimal transportation reimbursement may be offered to participants. Confidentiality is maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the redaction of identifying details to prevent any academic or social repercussions.

Most critically, the researcher adheres to the principle of non-maleficence by remaining sensitive to the emotional weight of maternal role strain. Should the discussion of maternal guilt or exhaustion cause distress, the researcher is prepared to pause the interview and provide the participant with access to established mental health and counseling resources within their respective institutions. In cases where emotional distress arises during the interview, the researcher will pause the session and refer the participant to institutional counseling services or licensed mental health professionals within their respective Higher Education Institutions.

No conflict of interest is declared by the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher acknowledges the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools solely for the purpose of refining grammar, enhancing clarity, and improving the overall coherence of the manuscript. The use of AI did not influence the study design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation of findings, thereby maintaining the integrity, originality, and ethical rigor of the research.

3.Result And Discussion

The lived experience of resilience among student-mothers in Higher Education Institutions is characterized by a continuous negotiation between the competing demands of academic responsibilities and maternal obligations. This dual-role existence produces a persistent state of role strain, where participants navigate time scarcity, physical exhaustion, and emotional burden.

Participants described their daily lives as structured around sacrifice and prioritization, often placing their children's needs above their own well-being. Despite these constraints, they actively construct adaptive coping mechanisms such as strategic time management, self-discipline, and task prioritization. These strategies are not static but evolve in response to the shifting demands of both academic and maternal roles.

A central element of this resilience is the presence of relational support systems. Family members, partners, and extended kin networks function as critical anchors, providing both emotional reassurance and practical assistance. At the same time, spirituality emerges as an internalized coping resource, reinforcing hope and endurance.

Moreover, the child occupies a central motivational role in the lived experience. Participants consistently frame their academic persistence as a future-oriented investment for their children, transforming hardship into purpose-driven action. This reframing allows them to reinterpret stress not as a deterrent but as a necessary component of their journey.

Through this process, student-mothers undergo significant personal transformation. They report increased maturity, emotional strength, independence, and a redefined sense of identity. Resilience, therefore, is not merely survival but a dynamic process of becoming—where adversity cultivates growth.

Emotionally, their experiences are marked by duality. Feelings of guilt, stress, and fatigue coexist with pride, fulfillment, and hope. This emotional complexity reflects the depth of their lived experience, where struggle and success are inseparable.

Ultimately, resilience among student-mothers is revealed as a multifaceted, relational, and transformative phenomenon sustained by internal determination, external support, and a deeply rooted commitment to achieving educational success for the betterment of their families.

The essence of resilience among student-mothers in Higher Education Institutions is a dynamic process of enduring and becoming, wherein the individual continuously negotiates the dual demands of motherhood and academic life through adaptive coping, relational support, and purpose-driven persistence, resulting in personal transformation and sustained commitment toward a better future for their children.

Theme 1: Balancing Motherhood and Academic Life as a Continuous Struggle

Participants described their experience as a constant tension between roles, leading to exhaustion and time deprivation.

"Lisod kaayo i-balance ang school ug pag-atiman sa bata, usahay kulang na kaayo akong tulog."

("It's very difficult to balance school and childcare, sometimes I barely get enough sleep.")

"Murag pirmi ko nagdali, walay pahulay kay kinahanglan ma-complete tanan."

("I always feel rushed, there's no rest because everything needs to be done.")

Discussion:

This finding supports the concept of *time poverty* discussed in (Gaganis et al., 2021), where competing roles lead to physical and emotional strain. In the Philippine context, this reflects the intensified expectations tied to the "Ilaw ng Tahanan," reinforcing chronic role strain.

Theme 2: Resilience Through Adaptive Coping Strategies

Participants demonstrated intentional coping through organization, sacrifice, and discipline.

"Gina-manage nako akong oras, usahay mag-study ko gabii na kung tulog na akong anak."

("I manage my time, sometimes I study at night when my child is already asleep.")

"Dili na ko laag, focus na lang sa priorities."

("I no longer go out; I just focus on my priorities.")

Discussion:

This reflects **pragmatic resilience**, aligning with your philosophical framework (Dewey, 1938), where resilience is enacted through practical, everyday problem-solving behaviors.

Theme 3: Support Systems as Critical to Survival and Success

Support from family and partners emerged as essential.

"Kung wala akong mama, dili gyud ko ka-eskwela."

("Without my mother, I wouldn't be able to continue studying.")

"Ang akong partner kay supportive kaayo, siya usahay magbantay sa bata."

("My partner is very supportive, he sometimes takes care of the child.")

Discussion:

This supports the concept of Collectivist Resilience (Torres et al., 2025), where persistence is relational rather than individual. However, this may also lead to *relational guilt*.

Theme 4: Children as the Central Source of Motivation

Children are the primary driving force behind persistence.

"Ang akong anak mao gyud akong rason nganong magpadayon ko."

("My child is the reason why I keep going.")

"Gusto nako mahuman para sa iyaha, para naa siyay better future."

("I want to finish for my child, so they can have a better future.")

Discussion:

This aligns with **existential meaning-making**, where persistence becomes a purposeful act (Sartre, 1943). The child becomes the “noema” (intentional object) in Husserlian terms.

Theme 5: Transformation and Personal Growth Amid Challenges

Participants reported significant personal development.

“Mas naging strong ko karon, dili na dali mo-give up.”

(“I’ve become stronger now, I don’t give up easily anymore.”)

“Nakat-on ko mahimong independent.”

(“I learned how to be independent.”)

Discussion:

This supports the idea of resilience as a process of becoming, consistent with existentialist philosophy and Psychological Capital (Luthans et al., 2015).

Theme 6: Unwavering Commitment to Educational Attainment

Despite hardships, participants remained determined.

“Bisan kapoy, padayon gihapon ko kay gusto gyud nako mahuman.”

(“Even when tired, I continue because I really want to finish.”)

Discussion:

Persistence is framed as a health-promoting behavior, consistent with your conceptual framing of education as a pathway to improved family wellbeing.

Theme 7: Living with Emotional Duality

Participants experienced both hardship and fulfillment.

“Usahay guilty ko kay dili ko pirmi naa sa akong anak.”

(“Sometimes I feel guilty because I’m not always there for my child.”)

“Pero proud sad ko sa akong sarili kay nakaya nako.” (“But I’m also proud of myself because I managed to do it.”)

Discussion:

This reflects the emotional complexity of resilience, where negative and positive emotions coexist, reinforcing the depth of the lived experience.

4. Review of Related Literature

In the Philippines, the experience of persistence is heavily moderated by the cultural archetype of the mother as the *“Ilaw ng Tahanan”* (Light of the Home). This role demands constant domestic presence and self-sacrifice. Andres (2021) and Arabejo et al. (2024) describe this as a “Two-Faced” reality where mothers must perform “Invisible Labor” at home while fulfilling the requirements of an HEI.

Unlike Western individualistic models, Filipino persistence is often rooted in Collectivist Resilience. Torres et al. (2025) found that local mothers draw their strength from “Familial Capital”—the emotional and logistical support provided by the extended family. However, Gaytos et al. (2022) warn that this reliance can lead to “Relational Guilt” if the mother feels her academic pursuit is a burden to her relatives, making her persistence a deeply emotional and moral negotiation.

The synthesis of global and local literature reveals a significant gap. While the barriers (financial, temporal, and social) are well-documented, there is a lack of descriptive data on the “Essential Structure” of Staying. Most studies focus on *why* mothers leave or the *struggles* they face. By focusing on Psychosocial Resilience through a descriptive phenomenological lens, this study fills a critical gap in Health Science education, providing a human-centered account of how these women maintain their “will to finish” while preserving their maternal and mental health.

Recent phenomenological evidence from the Philippine context further elucidates the multifaceted struggles of

mothers in pursuit of college education. Abon et al. (2023) identified that while student-mothers face significant hurdles in time management and financial stability, their ability to persist is heavily mediated by established Support Mechanisms. This suggests that resilience in the Philippine HEI setting is not an isolated psychological trait but a relational process involving family, peers, and institutional sub-structures. By exploring these lived experiences, Abon et al. underscore the necessity of moving beyond identifying struggles toward understanding the scaffolds that facilitate academic continuity."

A burgeoning theme in international literature is the "Inner Scaffolding" of the student-mother. Luthans et al. (2015) and Fatima et al. (2025) argue that persistence is driven by Psychological Capital (PsyCap): hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. For undergraduate mothers, "Self-Efficacy"—the belief in one's own ability to succeed—serves as a vital buffer against the stress of clinical duties and academic rigor. Persistence, therefore, is described as an intentional health-promoting behavior; mothers choose to remain in school because they perceive the degree as a "health intervention" that will secure a better quality of life for their children.

5. Summary of findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study explored the lived experiences of resilience among student-mothers in Higher Education Institutions using a descriptive phenomenological approach guided by Colaizzi's Method. Through in-depth analysis of participants' narratives, the study revealed that resilience is a dynamic and multifaceted process shaped by the interaction of personal, relational, and contextual factors.

Seven major themes emerged from the analysis. First, student-mothers experience a continuous struggle in balancing motherhood and academic life, characterized by role conflict, time constraints, physical exhaustion, and academic pressure. Second, resilience is demonstrated through adaptive coping strategies such as time management, prioritization, self-discipline, and personal sacrifice. Third, support systems, particularly family members and partners, play a critical role in sustaining their academic journey. Fourth, children serve as the central source of motivation, driving student-mothers to persist despite challenges. Fifth, the experience fosters transformation and personal growth, including increased maturity, independence, and emotional strength. Sixth, participants exhibit unwavering commitment to completing their education despite adversities. Lastly, the lived experience is marked by emotional duality, where feelings of stress, guilt, and fatigue coexist with pride, fulfillment, and hope.

These findings collectively illustrate that resilience among student-mothers is not merely an individual trait but a continuous process of adaptation, meaning-making, and transformation.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Resilience among student-mothers is a dynamic and relational process that is influenced by both internal coping capacities and external support systems. The dual roles of motherhood and academic life create persistent role strain, requiring continuous adjustment and negotiation. Student-mothers actively employ adaptive coping strategies to manage competing demands, demonstrating resilience through practical and intentional actions.

Furthermore, children serve as the primary source of motivation, shaping academic persistence as a purpose-driven endeavor. The experience of balancing these roles contributes to significant personal transformation, fostering maturity, independence, and emotional strength. Support systems, particularly family and partners, are essential in enabling student-mothers to sustain their academic journey.

The findings also reveal that resilience is characterized by emotional complexity, wherein negative experiences such as stress and guilt coexist with positive outcomes such as pride and fulfillment. Overall, resilience among student-mothers is best understood as a continuous process of enduring and becoming, anchored in purpose, sustained by relationships, and expressed through persistence toward educational attainment.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the lived experiences of resilience among student-mothers in Higher Education Institutions. The study affirms that resilience is not merely an individual psychological trait but a

dynamic and relational process shaped by contextual realities, social support systems, and culturally embedded expectations of motherhood.

From a nursing perspective, the results highlight the importance of recognizing academic persistence as a health-related behavior. The chronic role strain experienced by student-mothers—manifested through physical exhaustion, emotional burden, and time deprivation—suggests a need for holistic health interventions that extend beyond traditional clinical care. School and community nurses are thus positioned to play a critical role in addressing not only the physical but also the psychosocial needs of student-mothers through targeted support programs.

In the context of higher education, the findings underscore the necessity for institutions to adopt inclusive and flexible academic structures. The persistence of student-mothers reflects a strong commitment to educational attainment; however, the lack of institutional support may hinder their academic success and overall well-being. These insights call for a paradigm shift toward more responsive and family-sensitive educational environments.

Socially, the study reinforces the importance of collectivist support systems within the Philippine context. Family and partner involvement emerged as essential in sustaining the student-mothers' academic journey, highlighting the need to strengthen shared responsibility in caregiving roles. At the same time, the presence of emotional duality suggests that resilience involves both strength and vulnerability, which must be acknowledged in both academic and healthcare settings.

Finally, the study contributes to the body of knowledge in nursing and maternal health by framing resilience as a transformative process of enduring and becoming. It provides a foundation for future research and program development aimed at supporting student-mothers in achieving both academic success and holistic well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby proposed:

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are encouraged to develop and implement responsive and inclusive policies that recognize the unique needs of student-mothers. Flexible academic arrangements, such as adjusted deadlines, blended or modular learning modalities, and reasonable consideration for childcare-related responsibilities, may help mitigate the effects of role strain. Furthermore, HEIs may establish support mechanisms within the campus, including accessible counseling services, designated spaces for maternal needs, and programs that promote the well-being of student-mothers. Faculty members are likewise encouraged to adopt a more empathetic and supportive approach in handling student-mothers through increased awareness and sensitivity to their lived experiences.

School and community nurses are recommended to extend their scope of care by incorporating psychosocial support interventions tailored to student-mothers. The implementation of maternal support programs within school clinics, focusing on stress management, mental health promotion, and self-care practices, is highly encouraged. Recognizing academic persistence as a health-promoting behavior may further enhance the delivery of holistic nursing care to this population.

Families and significant others are encouraged to provide continuous emotional, moral, and practical support to student-mothers. Active involvement in caregiving responsibilities and the provision of a supportive home environment may significantly reduce the burden associated with their dual roles, thereby contributing to their academic persistence and overall well-being.

Policy makers and educational administrators are urged to formulate and implement gender-responsive and inclusive educational policies that address the realities of student-mothers. The provision of financial assistance, scholarships, and supportive institutional programs for student-parents may enhance access to and retention in higher education, ultimately promoting educational equity.

Future researchers are encouraged to further explore the phenomenon of resilience among student-mothers using varied research designs. Quantitative and longitudinal studies may be conducted to examine the long-term outcomes of academic persistence. Additionally, future inquiries may include other populations, such as student-fathers and single parents, to broaden the understanding of resilience in diverse contexts.

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