

FRONTLINE EDUCATORS' RESILIENCE DURING EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTIONS: A REVIEW
* **Dr. Zarina Shaikh**

* Associate Professor, Poona Institute of Management Sciences & Entrepreneurship.

Abstract:

Education systems worldwide have been disrupted by events such as pandemics, natural disasters, armed conflicts, and rapid technological advancements. During these periods, frontline teachers must continue their teaching duties under challenging and uncertain conditions. Educator resilience is therefore essential to ensure that learning continues without major interruption. This paper reviews secondary sources to examine how educators respond to and manage educational disruptions. The analysis shows that resilience develops over time and is influenced by multiple factors rather than being a fixed personal trait. Individual commitment, emotional strength, and the ability to adapt to new teaching methods contribute to resilience. Support from peers, school leadership, and local communities further enables educators to manage challenges. Institutions play a critical role by providing professional development opportunities, digital tools, and clear leadership. Persistent challenges, including increased workload, emotional strain, infrastructure gaps, and unequal access to resources, particularly in disadvantaged settings, remain significant barriers. The paper concludes that strengthening educator resilience requires coordinated efforts from individuals, institutions, and policymakers to better prepare education systems for future disruptions.

Keywords: educator resilience, emotional strength, professional development, emotional strain, unequal access to resources

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Introduction:

Education systems globally have faced repeated disruptions due to pandemics, natural disasters, armed conflicts, and rapid technological change. During such crises, teachers operate as frontline professionals who must sustain learning under conditions of uncertainty, limited resources, and heightened emotional stress. Their ability to maintain educational continuity depends largely on resilience. Current research increasingly recognizes resilience not as a fixed personal trait but as a dynamic capacity shaped by individual, institutional, and contextual factors. This review synthesizes secondary literature to explore how frontline educators respond to and manage educational disruptions, focusing on factors that enable or constrain resilience. By integrating empirical studies, policy frameworks, and documented cases of past disasters,

the review identifies patterns that can inform the development of more resilient education systems.

Gu and Day (2007) provide a foundational understanding of teacher resilience, conceptualizing it as a dynamic and evolving process rather than an innate trait. They argue that resilience is essential for sustained professional effectiveness, particularly in challenging contexts, and emerges from teachers' moral purpose, commitment to students, and professional identity, alongside support from leadership and policy environments. This aligns with the research that resilience develops over time and is shaped by multiple interacting factors.

Building on this, Mansfield et al. (2016) emphasize that resilience can be intentionally cultivated through teacher education and professional development. Their

evidence-informed framework highlights personal resources such as emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and adaptability, alongside contextual supports including mentoring, collegial relationships, and positive school cultures. This supports that institutions play a critical role in fostering resilience through professional development and supportive environments.

The social dimension of resilience is explored by Beltman, Mansfield, and Harris (2011), who demonstrate that school communities reinforce resilience when teachers can share professional and emotional burdens with colleagues. This has focus on peer support, school leadership, and community involvement as mechanisms that help frontline educators manage challenges. Their work also highlights that the absence of such support increases vulnerability to emotional exhaustion, reflecting ongoing problems.

Papatraianou and Le Cornu (2014) problematize resilience by emphasizing structural and contextual constraints, particularly for early career teachers. They argue that resilience discourse often places undue responsibility on individuals, overlooking systemic pressures such as workload intensification, accountability demands, and unsupportive organizational cultures. This resonates with the research's identification of work pressure, emotional strain, and resource inequality as persistent challenges during educational disruptions, especially in under-resourced settings.

Evidence from pandemic contexts further illustrates resilience in action. Kim and Asbury (2020) document teachers' experiences in England during COVID-19 school closures, highlighting uncertainty, stress, and sudden changes to instructional practices. Despite these challenges, teachers displayed adaptability, professional commitment, and concern for student wellbeing, supporting the abstract's emphasis on the

importance of emotional strength and the ability to adapt to new teaching methods. However, unclear guidance, expanded workload, and inequities constrained resilience, reflecting the continuing problems outlined.

Similarly, Anderson and Brown (2021) show that during emergency remote teaching, teachers rapidly adapted pedagogical and technological approaches to sustain learning continuity. Their findings reinforce the abstract's point that adaptability and emotional strength are central to resilience, while also documenting heightened stress, burnout risk, and blurred work–life boundaries, consistent with the review's discussion of emotional strain and work pressure.

Flores and Gago (2020) provide a national and institutional perspective by examining teacher education systems in Portugal during COVID-19. They show that resilience was supported when institutions provided professional development, digital tools, and clear leadership, enabling teachers to adjust to remote teaching. However, inequalities in access to resources and infrastructure, particularly in disadvantaged contexts, limited resilience. This reflects the identification of unequal access to resources and infrastructure gaps as persistent challenges.

From a policy perspective, Reimers and Schleicher (2020) highlight that educator resilience is a system-level concern. Their global framework emphasizes coordinated leadership, investment in digital infrastructure, and teacher professional learning as essential to sustaining teaching during crises. Further strengthening resilience requires coordinated efforts across individuals, institutions, and policymakers.

Kirk and Winthrop (2007) examine resilience in extreme disruption contexts, focusing on home-based teachers in Afghanistan. These educators sustained teaching amid armed conflict through moral commitment, community support, and concern for student wellbeing, despite severe infrastructure

limitations and personal risk. This study supports the authors focus on disadvantaged and fragile contexts, demonstrating that while community and individual resilience are critical, institutional and policy support is also necessary to sustain educational continuity.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that frontline educator resilience is multifaceted, dynamic, and context-dependent. Key factors include individual commitment, emotional strength, adaptability, peer and community support, institutional leadership, and policy-level coordination. Teachers consistently demonstrate remarkable resilience across diverse crises, yet persistent challenges—such as increased workload, emotional strain, limited infrastructure, and unequal access to resources—undermine their capacity to maintain teaching and learning. These findings directly align with the research and emphasize that sustaining resilience requires coordinated action by individuals, institutions, and policymakers to build more robust, equitable, and crisis-ready education systems.

Conclusion: Frontline educator resilience is essential for ensuring educational continuity during disruptions caused by pandemics, disasters, armed conflict, and rapid technological change. Resilience emerges as an evolving capacity shaped by personal commitment, emotional strength, professional adaptability, peer and institutional support, and policy environments. While educators demonstrate remarkable dedication during crises, persistent challenges—including workload intensification, emotional strain, infrastructure gaps, and inequities—highlight the limitations of relying solely on individual effort. Strengthening resilience requires integrated efforts at individual, institutional, and policy levels, including investment in professional

development, leadership support, digital infrastructure, and equitable policies. By fostering these factors, education systems can better prepare for future disruptions while safeguarding both teacher wellbeing and learning continuity.

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Cite This Article:

Dr. Shaikh Z. (2026). *Frontline Educators' Resilience during Educational Disruptions: A Review.* In **Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal**: Vol. XV (Number II, pp. 18–21)