# Resilience and Mental Health among Underprivileged Youth: A Mini Review

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## ABSTRACT

This mini review aims to synthesize current research on the relationship between resilience and mental health among underprivileged youth, emphasizing how adaptive capacity serves as a protective yet complex psychological construct. Notably, a comprehensive literature search was conducted in the Scopus database (search date: 27 October 2025) using the keywords "mental health," "resilience," "underprivileged," "disadvantaged," "marginalized," and "youth." Studies included were peer-reviewed articles, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and case studies focusing on resilience frameworks and interventions relevant to youth mental health, while non-English and gray literature were excluded. Accordingly, findings reveal that underprivileged youth exposed to chronic trauma such as poverty, violence, and discrimination experience significant mental health challenges. However, resilience can mitigate these effects through mechanisms such as emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and social support. Despite this, resilience may also coexist with maladaptive coping behaviors, questioning its uniformly positive role. The literature further highlights the critical influence of familial, community, and cultural factors on resilience development, alongside the growing use of digital and school-based interventions. In conclusion, resilience should be viewed as a dynamic process that shapes mental well-being collectively and contextually, rather than simply an individual trait. Thus, future research should adopt inclusive, community-based models to promote sustainable mental health outcomes among underprivileged youth.

**Keywords:** Resilience; Mental Health; Underprivileged Youth; Trauma; Social Support

## INTRODUCTION

Resilience, defined as the ability to adapt positively in the face of adversity, has become a fundamental concept in the developmental and psychological fields (Ungar, 2004; Cunningham et al., 2017). The evolving circumstances of social and economic disparities have renewed interest, particularly from a psychological perspective, in understanding how underprivileged youth maintain psychological well-being despite adverse exposure to poverty, violence, discrimination, and family instability (Boyd et al., 2022; Mahantamak et al., 2025; Anderson, 2018). Additionally, this issue has become more prominent in the post-COVID-19 period, as the pandemic has widened socioeconomic gaps. This situation intensified psychological distress and vulnerability among marginalised youth (Ziou et al., 2025; Liverman et al., 2025). The purpose of this mini review is to synthesise emerging evidence on the complex relationship between resilience and mental health among underprivileged youth.

Resilience has traditionally been conceptualised as an inherently positive trait that supports coping and recovery. Recent scholars suggest a more context-dependent and layered understanding (Anona et al., 2025; Elena et al., 2025; Kousar & Bhutto, 2025). On the other hand, some studies revealed that emotional suppression, selfreliance, or coping exhaustion are some undesirable adaptive behaviours that may coexist, leading to further question whether resilience always results in positive psychological outcomes (Eisman et al., 2015; Mathias et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2015 ). These observations highlight a key conceptual gap: distinguishing healthy resilience from defensive or costly forms of adaptation, especially among disadvantaged youth. The paper discusses three main

ideas: (1) impact of trauma; (2) factors influencing mental health; and (3) resilience-building strategies. This review supports the argument that resilience is best understood as a dynamic and evolving process shaped by individual capabilities and environmental resources (Marçal & Maguire-Jack, 2022; Vostanis et al., 2025; Robinson et al., 2016 ). Therefore, to enhance the mental health of underprivileged youth, it is important to consider both protective resilience factors and other influences. The mixed findings on resilience may serve as a reference point for developing more effective and culturally appropriate interventions and policies.

## METHODS

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using the Scopus database with keywords such as ("mental health" AND "resilience" AND (underprivileged OR disadvantaged OR marginalized) AND youth) Date of search 27 October 2025

Various article types, including original research, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and case studies, were considered for this mini review. Below are the inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies in this review article.

### Inclusion Criteria

1. Studies discussing the psychological construct of resilience among underprivileged youth emphasize its multifaceted role as a protective factor against adverse mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation.
2. Studies focusing on the application of resilience frameworks and intervention models in psychological and educational settings.
3. Studies analyzing the strengths, limitations, and potential applications of resilience as a concept in mental health reveal both promise and complexity.
4. Studies published in English.

### Exclusion Criteria

1. Studies published in languages other than English were excluded.
2. Studies that discussed youth mental health or socio-emotional development without explicit reference to the concept of resilience were excluded.
3. Grey literature, for example, conference abstracts, unpublished reports, and articles in press, was excluded.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

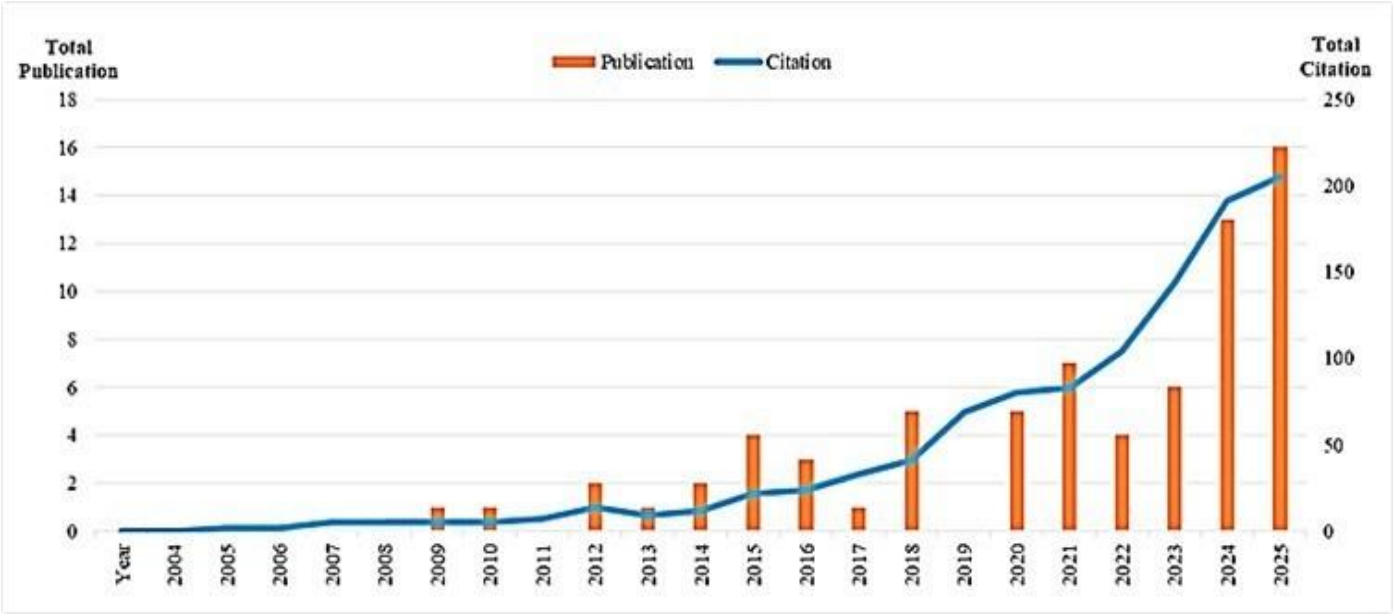


Figure 1: Total Publication and Citation from 2004 to 2025. Source: Scopus Database, extracted 27 October 2025

The above graph illustrates steady growth in publications and citations from 2004 to 2026, with a marked surge in recent years, particularly from 2022 to 2026. The surge occurred from 2022 to 2025, peaking in 2025 with 16 publications and 205 citations. In essence, this upward trend highlights the growing academic attention and research interest in the topic.

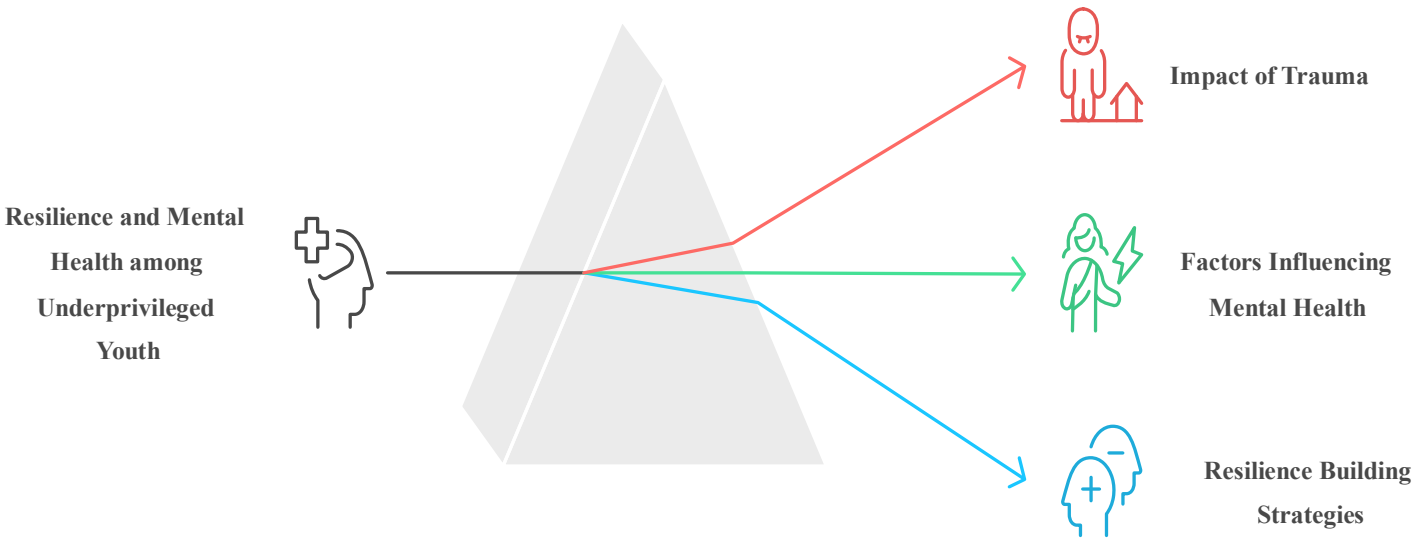


Figure 2 : Concept Map for Resilience and Mental Health among Underprivileged Youth Impact of Trauma

Youth who go through traumatic life events may experience an effect on their mental health and academic performance. For underprivileged youth, these effects can be even more severe, as many live under consistent stress, poverty, and systemic inequalities that hinder their emotional development and psychological well-being (Eisman et al., 2015; Anderson, 2018). Although they have experienced adverse situations and life stressors, some underprivileged youth can develop self-resilience by practicing positive coping strategies, such as engaging in activities they enjoy, receiving strong peer support, and having caregiver involvement (Ungar, 2004; Boyd et al., 2022). Moreover, current findings reveal that schools are beginning to implement trauma-informed psychoeducation and resilience programs, which have helped underprivileged students feel safe and build resilience, though the effectiveness may vary across contexts (Rich et al., 2023; Im et al., 2018; Mendelson et al., 2020). Thus, to address this issue, technologies such as digital wellness apps and game-based socialemotional learning have been used to expand access, yet long-term sustainability remains debated (Liverman et al., 2025; Altaf Dar et al., 2023). Similarly, evidence from urban low-income communities shows that groupbased activities elevate resilience among youth, though at a minimal rate. Hence, ongoing support is required, with greater attention to tackling unfair systems and addressing stigma, for sustainable results (Srinivasan et al., 2025; Mathias et al., 2018; McCormick et al., 2018). Moving forward, trauma-exposed youth require consistent psychosocial care and deeper community involvement that can provide equitable and culturally responsive pathways for recovery (White & White, 2025; Barker et al., 2025).

**Factors Influencing Mental Health**

Factors affecting mental health among less privileged youth are interrelated to their stage of psychological resilience in the face of social and economic pressures (White & White, 2025; Pumariega et al., 2022). Studies suggest that resilience serves as a protective factor against adverse impressions such as depression and anxiety, especially among adolescents experiencing social isolation, discrimination, and poverty (White & White, 2025; Pumariega et al., 2022). Some other identified protective factors include family support, strong and open family communication, as well as optimistic and high-aspirational traits that help stabilize emotional well-being (Ungar, 2004; Godoy-Casasbuenas et al., 2025; Marçal & Maguire-Jack, 2022). Nevertheless, there are also risk factors such as experiences of trauma and enculturation stress that include mental well-being, particularly among refugees and marginalized communities (Im et al., 2018; Zettler & Craig, 2024; Anderson, 2018). Current findings suggest that resilience factors may vary across all cultural contexts. For example, familial obligation may worsen into an emotional burden when early adversity is not supported by appropriate care and a supportive environment (Srinivasan et al., 2025; Somefun et al., 2023). Consequently, future research should explore

community activities and digital tools that help build resilience and improve mental health support for underprivileged youth (Rich et al., 2023; Bassi et al., 2024; Kubo et al., 2018).

**Resilience Building Strategies**

Resilience-building strategies are often cited as important initiatives to improve the psychological and academic well-being of disadvantaged adolescents who are often exposed to socioeconomic stressors and repeated trauma (Cunningham et al., 2017; Mathias et al., 2018; White & White, 2025). Nowadays, a major focus is on preventive and mental health awareness during the developmental phases of childhood and adolescence, which offer the best opportunities for school-based interventions (Dray et al., 2014; Marçal & Maguire-Jack, 2022). Evidence demonstrates that structured resilience program, such as the Resilience Builder Program®, promotes emotional awareness and increase participation in learning among marginalised youth (Rich et al., 2023; Perry et al., 2014). Likewise, positive outcomes, such as increased self-confidence, were observed among girls from disadvantaged South Asian communities who participated in group learning activities (Mathias et al., 2018). Nonetheless, progress is often slowed by cultural barriers, resource constraints, and challenges in adapting programs to local needs (Srinivasan et al., 2025; Xaba & Hadebe, 2025). Therefore, future investigations need to assess the effectiveness of cross-cultural approaches and psychosocial support technologies to ensure more inclusive, caring resilience-building strategies for underprivileged youth (Robinson et al., 2016; Kousar & Bhutto, 2025; Frauenholtz et al., 2017; Elena et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

This mini review emphasizes that resilience is a dynamic process that shapes the psychological well-being of youth exposed to poverty, violence and social inequality. In particular, key findings suggest that social and economic trauma exert a profound effect on mental health. However, resilience through emotional guarding, self-efficacy and social support can act as critical protective factors against psychological stress. In line with this, family, friends, and community serve as a support system that strengthens adaptability, thereby improving emotional and social well-being. Nevertheless, available studies are still limited in terms of longitudinal design and culturally context-specific. In particular, controversy also centers on whether all forms of resilience lead to positive outcomes or simply mask inner suffering. Hence, future studies involving underprivileged youth across different groups and social contexts should adopt a unified approach that integrates community and inclusive education to foster resilience and positive mental health.

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