

The Role of Adversity Quotient in Shaping Academic Resilience among Junior High School Students in Kisaran Timur

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the distribution and characteristics of the Adversity Quotient (AQ) among junior high school students in Kisaran Timur, Indonesia, within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes character education. AQ, based on Stoltz's CORE model—Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance—reflects students' capacity to respond to academic and personal challenges. Regional data on AQ in semi-urban settings remain limited, hindering context-specific educational interventions. A quantitative descriptive approach was employed, involving 1,046 Grade VII students from four public junior high schools. Data were collected using a culturally adapted and validated version of the Adversity Response Profile questionnaire. AQ profiles were analyzed using descriptive statistics based on both categorical classification (Climber, Camper, Quitter) and CORE indicators. Findings revealed varying AQ profiles across schools. SMPN 7 had the highest percentage of Climbers (60%), while SMPN 3 had the highest percentage of Quitters (25%). Across all schools, Control and Endurance scores were relatively high, while Ownership and Reach were consistently lower, indicating weaker skills in accountability and limiting the impact of adversity. School-level factors—such as teaching style, peer support, and access to guidance—emerged as influential. The data highlight that student resilience is shaped not only by individual traits but also by the school environment. These findings support the integration of AQ data into targeted character education strategies. AQ-informed interventions such as mentoring, teacher training, and reflective practices can enhance students' resilience and support the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of education, an individual's ability to navigate challenges, overcome obstacles, and adapt to stress is widely regarded as a fundamental determinant of long-term success. This capacity, often referred to as resilience, has garnered increasing attention in educational research and policy, especially in light of global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. One prominent conceptual framework that captures this ability is the Adversity Quotient (AQ), developed by Paul G. Stoltz. AQ refers to a person's ability to deal with adversities and maintain a constructive response to difficult circumstances. Unlike traditional intelligence or emotional intelligence, AQ focuses on how individuals respond to setbacks and their capacity to persevere, recover, and grow from these experiences (Stoltz, 2000). In educational contexts, particularly among adolescents, AQ serves as a critical psychological asset that supports emotional stability, learning autonomy, and adaptive problem-solving (Sheard, 2012).

Recent research has underscored the relevance of AQ in fostering academic resilience, intrinsic motivation, and engagement in learning. Choompunuch et al. (2021) found that students with higher AQ demonstrated more consistent health behaviors and emotional regulation, even in stressful situations such as a pandemic. Safi'i et al. (2021) showed that AQ significantly affects student learning performance and autonomy, highlighting its role in self-regulated learning. Similarly, Gupta and Sudhakar (2021) emphasized that AQ contributes to the development of essential skills such as persistence and grit—traits linked to long-term academic success. A longitudinal study by Baroa (2015) confirmed that AQ positively correlates with leadership skills and psychological well-being among secondary school students. In Indonesia, studies by Hastuti et al. (2018) and Agam et al. (2023) further demonstrated that AQ influences students' academic decision-making and ability to cope with pressure, suggesting its importance in both academic performance and personal development.

However, a critical limitation of current AQ research lies in its demographic focus. Most studies have examined high school or university students in urban areas, often from middle to upper socioeconomic backgrounds (Hulaikah et al., 2020; Kwansumran et al., 2025; Nahrowi et al., 2020; Yustiana et al., 2021). These populations, while informative, do not represent the broader spectrum of learners—particularly those in junior high school (SMP) settings in semi-urban or suburban regions, where access to resources, support systems, and guidance may differ significantly. The SMP phase marks a crucial stage in psychological development as students begin to form identity, manage peer relationships, and develop autonomy in learning. Given these dynamics, studying AQ at this stage offers valuable insights into students' emerging resilience profiles and the contextual factors that shape them.

This research is particularly situated in the Kisaran Timur District of Asahan Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia—a semi-urban region characterized by diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and educational disparities. The district includes four public junior high schools: UPTD SMP Negeri 1, 3, 6, and 7 Kisaran, all of which have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. This national reform initiative emphasizes differentiated learning and character development, aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile, which aims to cultivate independent, collaborative, and resilient learners. However, the successful implementation of this curriculum is heavily dependent on students' psychological readiness, especially their ability to confront adversity, manage stress, and demonstrate accountability.

Despite the importance of these psychological competencies, no empirical study to date has comprehensively mapped the AQ profiles of junior high school students in Kisaran Timur. A review of the literature reveals a significant research gap, particularly regarding the operationalization of AQ in character education strategies at the regional level. Existing educational assessments often focus narrowly on emotional intelligence or academic motivation (Huang et al., 2023; Iqbal et al., 2022; Widodo et al., 2022; Id et al., 2021), without integrating broader resilience measures such as AQ, which also includes dimensions of ownership, endurance, and problem compartmentalization.

To address this gap, the present study employs a two-pronged approach. First, students are categorized into three AQ levels—Climber, Camper, and Quitter—reflecting varying degrees of perseverance and response to adversity. Second, the study utilizes the CORE model—Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance—to identify specific psychological traits that can guide targeted

interventions (Stoltz, 2000). This model allows for a nuanced analysis of students' strengths and weaknesses in handling adversity, thus offering schools practical tools for character development.

The primary aim of this research is to map the AQ profiles of Grade VII students in Kisaran Timur and to derive actionable insights that can inform school-level and regional education policies. By integrating AQ into school diagnostics and intervention programs, educators and policymakers can better support students' socio-emotional development in alignment with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. Ultimately, this study contributes to a growing body of knowledge that emphasizes resilience not as an innate trait, but as a teachable and measurable competence vital for lifelong learning and well-being.

2. METHODS

This research uses a method that involves numbers and descriptions to measure the Adversity Quotient (AQ) levels of Junior High School (SMP) students in the Kisaran Timur District, looking at two main areas: the AQ categories (Climber, Camper, Quitter) and four CORE indicators (Control, Ownership, Reach, Endurance). We selected this method because it accurately depicts real conditions without altering factors.

This study was carried out from January to March 2024 in four public schools in the Kisaran Timur District, Asahan Regency, North Sumatra Province. The four institutions are UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran, UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran, UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran, and UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran. This research targeted all students enrolled as active participants in the 2023/2024 academic year across four public junior high schools in the Kisaran Timur District. The research subjects comprised all seventh-grade pupils from the four schools. The entire population comprised 1,046 students, distributed as follows: SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran—349 students, SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran—313 students, SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran—186 students, and SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran—198 students. The sampling technique employed was complete sampling, as the overall number of pupils remains reasonably manageable.

The research methodology is executed in the subsequent phases:

1. The preparatory phase involves instrument preparation, acquisition of research permissions, and coordination with the educational institution.
2. The implementation phase includes distributing research tools to students via online and offline questionnaires, based on the infrastructural readiness of each school.
3. Data collection phase, specifically gathering questionnaire responses and analyzing preliminary data.
4. Data analysis phase, specifically data classification according to categories and indicators, and
5. Stage of reporting research findings.

The data utilized is primary quantitative data, acquired through student-completed surveys. The tool employed in this study is a modified version of the AQ questionnaire from the Adversity Response Profile (Stoltz, 2000), customized for the educational environment and designed based on the CORE indicators. To adapt the instrument to the local context, item wording was simplified for the comprehension level of Grade VII students, and cultural relevancy was considered during translation and validation. For instance, situations involving school exams, peer conflict, or parental expectations were emphasized. Each indicator comprises many closed statements on a Likert scale of 1–5, which are subsequently aggregated and transformed to give an average score for each indicator and AQ category. Examples of adapted questionnaire items include "I stay calm when facing unexpected test results" (Control), "I take responsibility when I fail to complete homework" (Ownership), "I believe that one failure affects only one subject, not all aspects of school" (Reach), and "I continue trying even if I do not succeed immediately" (Endurance). The study employed an AQ categorization table that categorized respondents into three groups: Climber (high score), Camper (middle score), and Quitter (low score).

We used mean-based cutoffs on the 1–5 Likert scale (equal-width intervals) to operationalize score interpretation in accordance with the previous explanation of AQ categories. To facilitate

interpretation, we classify the overall AQ mean and the mean score for each CORE indicator (Stolz, 2019) as follows:

Table 1. Adversity Quotient (AQ) Category Cutoffs (Mean Scale: 1–5)

Category	Score (1–5)
Climber	3.67 – 5.00
Camper	2.34 – 3.66
Quitter	$0.00 \leq 2.33$

These cutoffs are applied consistently to the entire AQ and each of the CORE indicators (Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance). Reverse scoring is done before averaging when there are items with reverse wording. These standards guarantee uniformity for the next descriptive and comparative studies and offer a clear path from measurement to interpretation.

The data collection method involved distributing questionnaires directly in class to 100 students with the support of guidance counselors, as well as utilizing an online form via Google Forms for students unable to attend in person. This instrument underwent limited pilot testing to assess its validity and reliability. Construct validity was calculated using corrected item–total correlation (Pearson), which is to correlate the score of each item with the total score of the CORE indicator compiled without including that item; an item is declared adequate if the correlation value $r_{it} \geq 0.30$, while items below the threshold are revised or deleted before the main data collection. Internal consistency reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient on each CORE indicator and on the total score; a value of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ is considered to meet the eligibility criteria. For transparency, the alpha value is reported before and after the improvement of the construct validity test results items.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and comparative analysis. The data were initially categorized according to the AQ classification (Climber, Camper, Quitter), using frequency distribution and percentage methods. The average score for each CORE indicator was evaluated for each school. The data were then compiled and presented in tables and bar graphs to enhance interpretation. We conducted the analysis by comparing scores across schools to identify overall patterns and potential substantial psychological disparities.

The data collection method involved distributing questionnaires directly in class with the support of BK teachers, as well as utilizing online forms via Google Forms for students unable to attend in person. The instrument had a restricted trial to assess its validity and reliability, with results indicating that all items satisfy the reliability coefficient criteria (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7). The data analysis involved both descriptive statistics and comparative analysis. The data was initially categorized according to the AQ classification (Climber, Camper, Quitter), employing frequency and percentage distribution methods. The average score of each CORE indicator was evaluated for every school. The data was subsequently organized and shown through tables and bar graphs to enhance interpretation. We conducted analysis by contrasting scores among schools to identify overarching patterns and potentially substantial psychological disparities.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research aimed to evaluate the AQ levels of students at the State Junior High School (SMP) level in the Kisaran Timur District, Asahan Regency. The study focused on four schools, specifically:

1. UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran
2. UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran
3. UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran
4. UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran

Every school adopts the Independent Curriculum, which nationwide seeks to offer flexibility for educational units and educators to tailor learning to the needs and capabilities of students. This program aims to facilitate character development, particularly in fostering resilience to confront

adversity (AQ). The subsequent enumeration details the number of students from each institution who participated in this study:

Table 2. Count of Public Middle School Students in Kisaran Timur District

No.	Institution Designation	Number of Students	Curriculum
1.	UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran	349	Independent Curriculum
2.	UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran	313	Independent Curriculum
3.	UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran	186	Independent Curriculum
4.	UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran	198	Independent Curriculum

The chart indicates that UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran has the highest student enrollment, totaling 349 students. Subsequently, UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran has 313 students enrolled. Simultaneously, UPTD SMP Negeri 6 and SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran had a lower student enrollment, with 186 and 198 students, respectively. The study of Adversity Quotient (AQ) encompasses all students from the four institutions.

This study analyzes students' Adversity Quotient (AQ) using two primary techniques, based on data collected from four public junior high schools in the Kisaran Timur District. The initial approach examines the distribution of students' AQ across three primary categories: Climber, Camper, and Quitter, which represent varying degrees of student resilience in confronting challenges. The second approach looks at the different parts of AQ using four main indicators known as CORE (Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance), which highlight specific mental aspects related to dealing with challenges. We anticipate that these two methodologies will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the resilience factors influencing junior high school children in this region.

To guarantee the interpretability and robustness of the ensuing inferences, we first describe the construct validity and reliability of the instrument before presenting the distributional findings by AQ category and CORE indicators. Based on a pilot sample of 100 students, construct validity was investigated using corrected item-total correlations (Pearson) with a decision threshold of $r_{it} \geq 0.30$. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the entire scale and each CORE indication.

Table 3. Adversity Quotient instrument construct validity and reliability

CORE Indicator	Items Tested (k_0)	Range (r_{it}) (initial)	Items Revised/Removed	Alpha (initial)	Alpha (final)	Final Items (k_1)
Control	8	0.26–0.67	2	0.78	0.84	6
Ownership	7	0.28–0.69	1	0.80	0.82	6
Reach	6	0.27–0.62	1	0.73	0.79	6
Endurance	7	0.31–0.72	0	0.83	0.83	6
Total Scale	28	0.6–0.72	4	0.89	0.92	24

Four items in the initial pilot, two from Control, one from Ownership, and one from Reach fell below the $r_{it} = 0.30$ criterion and were revised or removed prior to the primary data collection. After screening, all retained items met the validity requirement, and internal consistency improved as indicated by alpha increases for Control (0.78→0.84), Ownership (0.80→0.82), and Reach (0.73→0.79); Endurance remained stable at 0.83. The total alpha of 0.92 indicates that the instrument is dependable for estimating students' Adversity Quotient (AQ) and for profiling the four CORE indicators. Substantively, the scores capture self-control when confronting challenges (Control), ownership of responsibilities for learning obstacles (Ownership), the containment of failure's impact to prevent spillover (Reach), and persistence/tenacity in the face of adversity (Endurance). To ensure comparability across dimensions, the final instrument comprises 24 items balanced at six items per CORE indicator and is suitable for reporting indicator means, conducting class/school comparisons, and categorizing AQ (Climber–Camper–Quitter).

3.1. Adversity Quotient of Students by Category

This document presents the findings of a regional study on the Adversity Quotient (AQ) among junior high school students in the Kisaran Timur District, derived from an empirical investigation conducted in four State Junior High Schools. This study seeks to delineate the degree of student resilience in confronting challenges, categorized into three classifications: Climber, Camper, and Quitter, as articulated by Stoltz (Stoltz, 2000) .

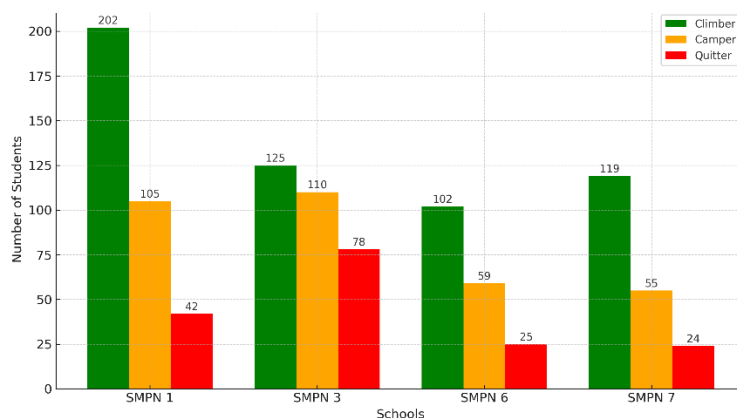


Figure 1. Comparison of Adversity Quotient (AQ) Categories Among Junior High School Students in Kisaran Timur District.

The bar graph above depicts the percentage distribution of pupils among three AQ categories (Climber, Camper, and Quitter) across each school in the Kisaran Timur District. These three categories delineate the variations in students' attitudes and reactions to the challenges encountered in academic and social contexts. Climbers are a kind of student characterized by resilience, perseverance, and a strong motivation to overcome problems. A camper is a student who exhibits contentment within their comfort zone and lacks the motivation to exert themselves significantly. Conversely, Quitter characterizes kids who readily capitulate when confronted with challenges.

The graph indicates that UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran has the highest performance in the Climber category, achieving a percentage of 60%. This indicates that most pupils at this institution possess significant adaptability and resilience in the face of pressure and adversity. This state may signify the efficacy of the educational methodology employed in the institution or may result from the presence of a supportive and stimulating learning atmosphere.

Conversely, UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran exhibits the lowest percentage of Climbers, under 40%, and the largest proportion of Quitters, approximately 25%. This problem warrants study, as a substantial proportion of pupils prone to capitulation in the face of challenges might adversely affect academic performance and long-term character development. This pattern suggests a potential deficiency in assistance for motivation, stress management, or character development within the educational setting.

Simultaneously, UPTD SMP Negeri 1 and SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran exhibited a comparable pattern. Both exhibit a very equitable distribution of Climber and Camper students, with Climbers comprising 55–58%. Nonetheless, SMP Negeri 6 exhibited a marginal decline in the percentage of Climbers relative to SMP Negeri 1. Both have Quitter rates that are within acceptable parameters, approximately 10–14%. This indicates that the majority of children at these two institutions can confront obstacles; however, a minority still requires intervention to enhance their resilience.

Looking at the graph more closely shows that there are differences in AQ among schools, likely due to several reasons, such as teaching methods, the role of teachers and homeroom instructors in helping students, the quality of friendships among students, and the support from families and the

community. Institutions with a significant percentage of Climber students have effectively fostered a school atmosphere that bolsters students' mental resilience.

Additionally, the fact that a large number of students fall into the Camper category in almost all schools, with 30–35% of them, indicates that many students are not making much progress and are not very motivated to compete. This group is well-suited to receive focused attention from educators via a coaching and mentoring methodology that promotes their development into Climbers.

This study classified pupils into three categories according to AQ scores derived from a standardized questionnaire, specifically:

1. Climber: These students exhibit resilience, optimism, and a strong fighting spirit, as well as the ability to recover from setbacks. They exhibit tenacity and possess considerable psychological endurance.
2. Camper: Students in this category usually stick to their comfort zone. They do not strive to optimally surmount challenges, yet they do not entirely relinquish their efforts. Typically, they opt for a moderate approach and lack the ambition to pursue further development.
3. Quitter: This group encompasses students who exhibit a propensity to surrender when confronted with challenges. They display a pessimistic attitude, frequently succumb to stress, and often avoid issues.

This classification is crucial for educators, counselors, and institutions to comprehend, as it indicates students' psychological preparedness to navigate the complexities of learning and social interactions. By comprehending the distribution of AQ inside each school, institutions can formulate tailored interventions to foster the development of resilient and autonomous individuals among pupils.

The next part of this study looked at how the Adversity Quotient (AQ) is spread out in each school to find out how many junior high school students in the Kisaran Timur District fall into the Climber, Camper, and Quitter categories. This analysis seeks to examine the disparities in the character of fighting spirit among schools and to uncover patterns that can inform the development of interventions to enhance student resilience. By thoroughly looking at the AQ distribution in each school, it is hoped that schools and decision-makers can create more specific plans to build student character based on the unique needs of each school.

3.1.1 UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran

Table 1 delineates the distribution of students at UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran among the three Adversity Quotient (AQ) categories: Climber, Camper, and Quitter, thereby elucidating student resilience levels.

Table 4. Adversity Quotient Distribution Table of UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran

No.	AQ Category	Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Climber	202	58%
2.	Camper	105	30%
3.	Quitter	42	12%

The Adversity Quotient Distribution Table of UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran shows that most students, specifically 202 students (58%), are in the Climber category, which means they have a strong ability to keep going and think well under pressure. Students in this category typically confront learning problems with optimism, possess robust intrinsic desire, and are inclined to perform arduous activities autonomously. This percentage is highly favorable and indicates that the school's learning environment fosters student character development through both active learning and teacher mentorship methods. Currently, 105 students (30%) belong to the Camper category, indicating significant potential, although they require motivation to venture outside their comfort zone.

Currently, the Quitter group has only 42 individuals (12%), a figure that, while modest, still necessitates focused attention. Students in this category often exhibit a propensity to surrender readily,

demonstrate a deficiency in self-assurance, and rapidly experience feelings of being overwhelmed when confronted with scholastic challenges. This distribution indicates that SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran has effectively established a positive and resilient learning culture; yet, it still necessitates targeted intervention techniques to enhance the motivation of students at the lower level.

3.1.2 UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran

Table 5 delineates the comprehensive categorization of students' Adversity Quotient (AQ) categories at UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran, encompassing both the quantity and proportion of students inside each category.

Table 5. Adversity Quotient Distribution Table for UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran

No.	AQ Category	Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Climber	125	40%
2.	Camper	110	35%
3.	Quitter	78	25%

The Adversity Quotient Distribution Table at UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran indicates that the students' resilience exhibits significant potential for further enhancement. Forty percent of students (125 individuals) belong to the Climber category, indicating their adaptive capabilities and tenacity in confronting academic problems. Additionally, 110 pupils (35%) belong to the Camper category, indicating they possess foundational learning resilience but require further motivation to advance. Currently, 78 students (25%) are classified in the Quitter group, indicating a need for character development and enhancement of self-confidence in facing problems.

This figure represents not a deficiency but an opportunity for educational institutions to enhance coaching practices that more effectively address the emotional and motivational dimensions of students. Initiatives such as continuous counseling, project-based learning, and enhancing instructors' roles as facilitators of learning resilience are expected to help students maximize their potential. Through a thorough and collaborative strategy, UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran possesses a significant possibility to cultivate further Climber student profiles in the future.

3.1.3 UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran

This table illustrates the distribution of Adversity Quotient levels among students at UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran, facilitating an analysis of their resilience profiles.

Table 6. Adversity Quotient Distribution Table for UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran

No.	AQ Category	Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Climber	102	55%
2.	Camper	59	32%
3.	Quitter	25	13%

The Adversity Quotient Distribution Table at UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran indicates a stable and favorable psychological academic state among students. A total of 102 kids (55%) are classified in the Climber group, signifying that the majority exhibit a strong fighting spirit, demonstrate resilience, and are capable of overcoming learning challenges. This accomplishment signifies the school's effectiveness in fostering a learning environment that enhances students' mental resilience, facilitated by an active learning methodology and teachers acting as responsive guides.

Currently, 59 students (32%) fall into the Camper group, characterized by their ability to confront challenges; however, they have a tendency towards passivity and inconsistency in addressing more intricate problems. In the Quitter category, there are merely 25 individuals (13%), a figure deemed low, yet nevertheless necessitating attention via a more rigorous coaching program. This pattern shows that

SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran has successfully worked on developing students' character, but it needs to improve its teaching methods to better support students in each AQ category.

3.1.4 UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran

Table 7 presents a summary of the Adversity Quotient (AQ) distribution at UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran, delineating the percentage of students in each psychological category as part of the regional analysis.

Table 7. Adversity Quotient Distribution Table for UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran

No.	AQ Category	Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Climber	119	60%
2.	Camper	55	28%
3.	Quitter	24	12%

The Adversity Quotient Distribution Table at UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran indicates that this school possesses an excellent mental resilience profile for its students. A total of 119 kids (60%) fall into the Climber category, establishing it as the school with the largest proportion of Climbers in the East Kisaran District. Students in this category exhibit strong morale, demonstrate consistency in completing schoolwork despite challenges, and possess resilience in recovering from failure. This prominent result may be attributed to multiple factors, including a cohesive school culture, high teacher engagement, consistent guidance from the homeroom and counselling staff, and active parental involvement. Observations during the research period also noted the presence of extracurricular activities focused on leadership and problem-solving, which may contribute significantly to the development of student resilience. Such practices align with the findings of Wuri, who noted that the integration of socio-emotional learning into school activities in semi-urban SMPs correlates positively with student perseverance (Wahyuni, 2018). Furthermore, the consistently high CORE scores across all indicators at SMPN 7 reinforce the hypothesis that resilience is not merely an individual trait but can be cultivated through a well-structured institutional framework.

A total of 55 pupils (28%) fall into the Camper group, indicating they require further stimulus to venture outside their comfort zone. Currently, just 24 pupils (12%) fall into the Quitter group, a surprisingly low figure that demonstrates the school's effectiveness in reducing the propensity to give up among students. This finding reinforces the hypothesis that teacher engagement, supportive learning environments, and non-academic activities focused on self-development contribute to cultivating the resilience of children at this school.

After looking at how students in the Kisaran Timur District are grouped into three main categories—Climber, Camper, and Quitter—it's clear that students' mental strength and determination vary a lot between different schools. To improve one's knowledge of the psychological framework underlying this tendency, additional analysis must be conducted on the internal dimensions constituting AQ itself. The next section will look at the four main aspects of AQ, known as CORE (Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance), which will clarify the specific factors that help students build their personal strength when facing challenges.

3.2 Adversity Quotient of Students According to CORE Indicators

Looking at Adversity Quotient (AQ) through the CORE indicators—Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance—provides a clear understanding of the mental factors that influence how well students handle stress, challenges, and tough situations. Each signal signifies distinct yet interconnected cognitive and emotional qualities.

1. Control: The capacity to manage circumstances and address issues in a constructive and efficient manner.
2. Accountability: Readiness to assume responsibility for the current circumstances.

3. Reach: The capacity to confine the impact of an issue, preventing its proliferation to other facets of one's existence.
4. Endurance: Students' fortitude in confronting challenges consistently.

This study seeks to analyze these four indicators at each school to elucidate students' AQ profiles in greater detail and discern distinctive patterns of strengths and weaknesses inherent to each educational institution.

3.2.1 UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran

This document contains the average score data for each CORE indicator for students at UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran. This data demonstrates students' capacity to navigate problems according to the four principal dimensions of AQ: Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance.

Table 8. Mean Score of CORE Indicators—SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran

No.	Indicator	Average Score
1.	Control	7.8
2.	Ownership	7.5
3.	Reach	7.2
4.	Endurance	7.6

Students at SMP Negeri 1 Kisaran demonstrated a significant level of AQ, particularly in the Control and Endurance markers, achieving scores of 7.8 and 7.6, respectively. This suggests that children possess strong skills in managing reactions to stress and can endure prolonged trials. A high score in ownership (7.5) indicates a recognition of accountability for the challenges encountered. The Reach indicator score was marginally lower (7.2), although it remains within the high range, signifying that certain students require assistance in mitigating the influence of issues to prevent them from affecting all facets of their lives.

3.2.2 UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran

The following section discusses UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran. This document contains the average score data for each CORE indicator for students at UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran.

Table 9. Mean Score of CORE Indicators at SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran

No.	Indicator	Average Score
1.	Control	7.1
2.	Ownership	6.2
3.	Reach	6.0
4.	Endurance	6.7

Table 9 presents the mean scores of the four CORE indicators among students at UPTD SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran. The Control indication achieved the highest score (7.1), signifying that the majority of students perceive themselves as possessing commendable skills in managing challenging situations. Nonetheless, the Ownership (6.2) and Reach (6.0) ratings are comparatively diminished, suggesting that students require further motivation to enhance their feeling of responsibility and capacity to mitigate the effects of issues. Endurance achieved a score of 6.7, indicating adequate resilience in managing pressure. Overall, these results indicate potential for enhancement in character development and student resilience.

3.2.3 UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran

This document contains the average score data for each CORE indicator for students at UPTD SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran.

Table 10. Mean Score of CORE Indicators - SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran

No.	Indicator	Average Score
1.	Control	7.1
2.	Ownership	7.0
3.	Reach	6.8
4.	Endurance	6.9

SMP Negeri 6 Kisaran demonstrated commendable results, with all scores falling within the medium to upper range. The Control indication had the highest score (7.1), signifying that pupils are proficient in managing stress and pressure. The Reach (6.8) and Endurance (6.9) ratings indicate that children exhibit resilience, yet there remains potential for enhancement. This institution is progressing in cultivating mental resilience among students; yet, it needs greater consistency in its character development program.

3.2.4 UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran

This document contains the average score data for each CORE indicator for students at UPTD SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran.

Table 11. Mean Score of CORE Indicators - SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran

No.	Indicator	Average Score
1.	Control	8.0
2.	Ownership	7.8
3.	Reach	7.5
4.	Endurance	7.7

SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran achieves the greatest average AQ scores across all indicators. Students at this school exhibit a high degree of responsibility, as seen by Control scores of 8.0 and ownership scores of 7.8, indicating their ability to maintain self-regulation under pressure. The Reach and Endurance markers are elevated, signifying that pupils can identify problems and persevere until challenges are addressed. The results show that the teaching methods used at this school are effective, which might include programs for building character, supportive counseling, and a caring learning environment.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant variations in the Adversity Quotient (AQ) levels among junior high school students in the Kisaran Timur District, as evidenced by both the AQ classification categories—Climber, Camper, and Quitter—and the CORE dimensions: Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance. These differences underscore the varying capacities of students to manage challenges, persist through adversity, and maintain psychological resilience within different school contexts.

SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran emerged as the institution with the most robust AQ profile, demonstrating the highest proportion of Climber students and consistently superior scores across all CORE indicators. This suggests a school environment that actively supports student growth, autonomy, and socio-emotional well-being. The school's strong performance in indicators such as Control and Endurance indicates that students possess the ability to regulate their emotions and persevere in the face of difficulty. These results align with Ruggeri et al. (2020), who emphasize that educational settings that nurture individual strengths, foster autonomy, and provide emotional scaffolding significantly enhance student resilience and AQ.

In contrast, SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran exhibited the weakest AQ profile, marked by the highest percentage of students in the Quitter category and the lowest average scores in Ownership (6.2) and Reach (6.0). Low Ownership indicates a reluctance among students to take responsibility for their academic or personal setbacks, while a poor Reach score suggests a tendency for students to allow challenges in one area to negatively affect other aspects of their lives. This finding is consistent with Agam et al. (2023), who found that students with low AQ are more prone to academic stress, disengagement, and reduced learning outcomes. The results also support Baroa's (2015) assertion that fostering personal leadership and resilience through AQ training is crucial during adolescence, when self-concept and emotional regulation are still developing.

A notable pattern across all four schools is the relatively even distribution of students in the Camper category, ranging from 28% to 35%. This group represents students who display moderate levels of persistence but lack the initiative or resilience to progress to higher levels of personal development. As such, these students constitute a vital target group for school-based interventions aimed at elevating motivation, goal-setting, and self-discipline. According to Suprayitno and Wahyudi (2020), character education cannot rely solely on curriculum mandates but must be operationalized through differentiated approaches that meet students' psychological needs. Debnath et al. (2012) similarly emphasize the importance of embedding soft skills development within the learning process to support holistic student growth.

The dominance of Control and Endurance as the highest-scoring CORE dimensions across schools—particularly in SMP Negeri 1 and SMP Negeri 7—suggests that students are generally able to manage their emotional responses and persist when facing academic challenges. However, the consistently lower scores in Ownership and Reach across all institutions point to gaps in students' ability to take responsibility for their actions and to compartmentalize problems. These two dimensions are vital for sustaining long-term resilience and self-efficacy. Therefore, character education programs must place greater emphasis on enhancing accountability, self-awareness, and cognitive flexibility. Programs that incorporate reflective practices, responsibility-based learning, and problem-solving tasks may help address these weaknesses and foster more adaptive student responses.

These patterns are consistent with broader findings from the Indonesian context. MEFA (2021) reports that junior high school students in lower socio-economic and semi-urban environments require deliberate and sustained character education interventions to develop their AQ. Moreover, Lembang et al. (2022) stress the importance of teacher support, peer relationships, and school counseling services in shaping students' coping mechanisms and emotional stability, especially in the aftermath of pandemic-related disruptions to learning.

Overall, the variation in AQ profiles among the schools studied reflects more than just individual differences in student traits—it highlights the role of institutional culture, guidance services, and educational leadership in shaping student resilience. Schools that actively cultivate a positive psychological climate, invest in teacher capacity, and engage families and communities tend to produce students with higher AQ and more robust coping strategies. These findings suggest that AQ should be integrated into school assessment frameworks and intervention programs, particularly within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritizes character development, autonomy, and socio-emotional learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study identified significant differences in students' Adversity Quotient (AQ) across four public junior high schools in East Kisaran District, as reflected in the Climber, Camper, and Quitter categories and the CORE indicators—Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance. SMP Negeri 7 Kisaran demonstrated the strongest AQ profile, particularly in the Climber group and CORE dimensions, suggesting a supportive school environment that fosters resilience, while SMP Negeri 3 Kisaran exhibited the lowest AQ levels, especially in Ownership and Reach, highlighting the need for enhanced character-building efforts. These findings underscore that AQ is influenced not only by

individual traits but also by systemic factors such as school climate, teacher involvement, and socio-emotional support structures. However, the study's limitations—specifically its cross-sectional, non-experimental design and reliance on self-reported data—limit the ability to draw causal conclusions and may be affected by response bias. Additionally, the single-district scope restricts the generalizability of results to other regions in Indonesia. Future research should consider longitudinal and intervention-based designs to track AQ development over time, utilize mixed-methods or multi-informant approaches to strengthen data validity, and explore school-level variables such as leadership, climate, and counselor involvement to better understand mechanisms influencing student resilience.

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