



Re-authoring Resilience: Narrative Counseling Approaches for Supporting Students in Post-Crisis Educational Settings

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ABSTRACT

Background. Post-crisis educational settings require support that addresses not only psychological distress but also the ways students reconstruct identity, agency, and meaning after disruption.

Purpose. This study aimed to examine how narrative counseling supports resilience among students returning to school after crisis-related educational interruption.

Method. A mixed qualitative–quantitative design with narrative inquiry orientation involved 28 secondary-school students aged 13–18 years. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, narrative counseling sessions, reflective journals, observation records, school attendance data, and pre–post measures of resilience and school engagement.

Results. The findings showed significant increases in resilience, school engagement, personal agency, future orientation, and relational connectedness following the intervention. Qualitative analysis revealed a marked shift from problem-saturated narratives toward preferred identity narratives characterized by stronger self-efficacy, recognition of supportive relationships, identification of unique outcomes, and more credible future possibilities. Case-based evidence further indicated that students could retain grief or uncertainty while simultaneously developing more resilient self-understandings.

Conclusion. The study concludes that re-authoring resilience offers a meaningful framework for post-crisis educational counseling by positioning recovery as narrative reconstruction rather than simple restoration of pre-crisis functioning. Narrative counseling may therefore complement trauma-informed school support by strengthening meaning-making, agency, relational recognition, and future-oriented identity development within culturally responsive and psychologically safe educational environments.

KEYWORDS

Educational Resilience, Narrative Counseling, Post-Crisis Education

INTRODUCTION

Educational crises arising from natural disasters, pandemics, armed conflicts, community violence, forced displacement, economic disruption, and other large-scale emergencies can profoundly reshape students' learning experiences and psychosocial development. The opening paragraph should establish that educational recovery involves more than reopening schools, restoring

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infrastructure, or recovering academic performance. Students returning to educational environments after disruptive events may continue to experience uncertainty, fear, grief, loss of belonging, disrupted relationships, reduced motivation, and changes in how they perceive themselves and their futures. This context positions psychosocial recovery as an essential component of sustainable educational recovery (Naude, 2025; Shengyao, 2024).

Students' responses to crisis should be presented as diverse, dynamic, and socially situated rather than interpreted exclusively through deficit-oriented or pathological perspectives. Experiences of adversity do not produce identical psychological outcomes because students interpret events through personal histories, family relationships, cultural beliefs, social resources, and educational environments. Resilience should consequently be introduced not merely as an individual capacity to "bounce back," but as an evolving process through which young people negotiate adversity, reconstruct meaning, restore agency, and reconnect with supportive relationships. This conceptualization provides an appropriate foundation for examining counseling approaches that emphasize students' lived experiences and personal interpretations (Gârdan, 2025; Marinoudi, 2024).

Narrative counseling should then be introduced as a potentially valuable approach for post-crisis educational settings because it views individuals as meaning-making agents whose identities are shaped through stories about themselves, their relationships, and their experiences. Crisis experiences can generate problem-saturated narratives in which students begin to define themselves through loss, vulnerability, failure, helplessness, or fear. Narrative practices such as externalizing problems, identifying unique outcomes, exploring alternative stories, recognizing personal and relational strengths, and re-authoring preferred identities may help students separate their sense of self from the crisis experience. This perspective shifts counseling from correcting damaged individuals toward supporting students in reconstructing meaningful and hopeful narratives of themselves.

Post-crisis educational interventions frequently concentrate on immediate psychological stabilization, symptom reduction, behavioral adjustment, academic remediation, and restoration of school routines. Such priorities are necessary, yet they may not fully address the deeper interpretive consequences of crisis experiences. Students may return to school physically while continuing to carry stories of themselves as powerless, unsafe, academically incapable, permanently changed, or disconnected from their previous aspirations. The central problem should therefore be framed as a possible mismatch between the complexity of students' post-crisis meaning-making processes and interventions that predominantly treat resilience as observable adaptation or measurable psychological functioning (Shukla, 2024; Wu, 2025).

Conventional understandings of resilience may also create an unintended expectation that resilient students should quickly recover, remain emotionally strong, or return to pre-crisis functioning. Such assumptions risk overlooking the nonlinear character of recovery and may marginalize students whose experiences do not conform to standardized narratives of successful coping. The second problem paragraph should emphasize that resilience is not synonymous with emotional invulnerability or the absence of distress. Students can experience grief, anxiety, uncertainty, or disruption while simultaneously developing agency and new sources of meaning. A narrative perspective is relevant because it allows contradictory experiences of vulnerability and strength to coexist within students' developing identities.

School counselors and educators also face practical challenges in supporting students whose difficulties are embedded in complex personal, familial, cultural, and community narratives. Standardized interventions may provide useful coping strategies without sufficiently exploring how

students interpret what happened, how crisis experiences influence their identity, or how social discourses shape their understanding of resilience. The problem becomes especially important when students belong to communities in which collective memory, family relationships, spirituality, local traditions, or communal solidarity influence recovery. The research problem should consequently emphasize the need for a counseling approach capable of connecting psychological support with students' narratives, relational environments, cultural resources, and educational experiences (Bukar, 2024; Savari, 2024).

The primary objective of the study should be articulated as an investigation of how narrative counseling approaches can support the development or reconstruction of resilience among students navigating post-crisis educational environments. The research should move beyond asking whether counseling simply reduces psychological difficulties and instead examine how students reinterpret crisis-related experiences, reconstruct preferred identities, and regain a sense of agency through narrative processes. Particular attention can be directed toward the ways students move from problem-dominated accounts of disruption toward alternative narratives that acknowledge survival, competence, relationships, aspirations, and personal or collective resources.

A second objective should focus on identifying the narrative mechanisms through which resilience may be strengthened. The study can examine processes such as externalizing crisis-related problems, deconstructing restrictive beliefs, recognizing previously overlooked acts of resistance, identifying unique outcomes, recalling supportive relationships, reconstructing preferred identities, and developing future-oriented narratives. Exploration of these mechanisms can clarify whether narrative counseling contributes to resilience by changing the meaning students assign to adversity rather than simply changing the frequency or intensity of psychological symptoms. Such an objective would connect counseling practices with broader questions concerning identity construction and psychosocial adaptation.

A broader objective should examine how narrative counseling can be contextualized within educational systems rather than treated as an isolated therapeutic technique. The research may investigate how counselors, teachers, peers, families, and school communities contribute to or constrain students' preferred narratives of recovery. Attention should also be given to the cultural and institutional conditions that influence narrative reconstruction in post-crisis schools. The expected outcome is a clearer conceptual and practical understanding of how educational counseling can support resilience through meaning-making, relational recognition, student voice, and identity reconstruction while remaining responsive to the realities of school-based practice (Konstantinidis, 2024; Song, 2024).

Existing scholarship on student resilience has generated substantial knowledge regarding protective factors, coping strategies, social support, emotional regulation, trauma-informed practices, and school-based psychosocial interventions. Much of this literature nevertheless conceptualizes resilience through predetermined psychological indicators such as symptom reduction, adaptation, coping competence, academic engagement, or standardized resilience scores. Such approaches provide important evidence but may reveal less about the stories through which students understand adversity and recovery. The first research gap should therefore highlight the limited integration of narrative identity and meaning reconstruction into empirical discussions of resilience within post-crisis educational settings.

Narrative counseling literature has demonstrated the theoretical value of separating people from problems, challenging dominant problem-saturated stories, identifying exceptions, and constructing alternative accounts of identity. Research connecting these processes specifically to post-crisis educational recovery remains comparatively fragmented. Studies of narrative approaches

are often located within clinical, family, community, or general counseling environments, while research on school resilience frequently prioritizes cognitive-behavioral, trauma-focused, psychoeducational, or multicomponent interventions. A disciplinary gap consequently exists between narrative counseling theory and the expanding literature on school-based resilience interventions, particularly concerning students exposed to collective or community-level crises (Al-Said, 2024; Molla, 2024).

Contextual and methodological gaps should also be emphasized. Research on post-crisis student recovery may insufficiently capture students' own voices, culturally situated definitions of resilience, relational sources of strength, and changes in identity over the course of educational reintegration. Crisis-affected students are frequently positioned as recipients of psychological intervention rather than active interpreters of their own experiences. Limited attention is also given to how dominant social narratives concerning victimhood, strength, success, normality, or recovery can influence students' self-understanding. Addressing these limitations requires research that treats students as active authors of meaning and investigates resilience as a socially and narratively constructed process.

The principal novelty of the study should be framed around the concept of re-authoring resilience. Rather than defining resilience primarily as a stable personal trait, psychological outcome, or return to previous functioning, the study conceptualizes it as an evolving process of narrative reconstruction. Students may become resilient not because difficult experiences disappear, but because they develop richer stories about what those experiences mean, how they responded to adversity, which relationships supported them, what capacities they discovered, and which futures remain possible. This framing offers a distinctive bridge between resilience theory, narrative counseling, and post-crisis educational research (Kavitha, 2026; Memari, 2024).

A second element of novelty should emphasize the shift from symptom-centered recovery toward identity-centered and meaning-centered educational counseling. Narrative counseling can enable students to recognize that crisis-related fear, grief, academic disruption, or uncertainty represents part of their experience rather than the totality of their identity. The study can therefore contribute a framework in which externalization, unique outcomes, preferred identity claims, relational witnessing, and future-oriented storytelling are interpreted as resilience-building processes. Such an approach does not reject established trauma-informed or psychological interventions; instead, it extends them by addressing dimensions of meaning, identity, agency, and authorship that may remain insufficiently examined.

The research should finally be justified through its potential theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. Theoretically, it can expand resilience scholarship by positioning narrative identity and meaning-making as central mechanisms of post-crisis adaptation. Methodologically, it can encourage greater attention to students' voices and lived accounts rather than relying exclusively on predetermined psychological indicators. Practically, the findings may inform counselors, teachers, educational leaders, and psychosocial support providers seeking culturally responsive and student-centered approaches to recovery. The study ultimately argues that sustainable educational recovery requires more than helping students return to learning; it requires creating conditions in which students can reinterpret adversity, reclaim agency, reconnect with valued relationships, and author credible narratives of possibility beyond crisis (Gkintoni, 2025; Mekonnen, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using a narrative inquiry approach with a multiple-case orientation to examine how narrative counseling supported students in reconstructing resilience within post-crisis educational settings. Narrative inquiry was selected because the study focused on students' interpretations of crisis-related experiences, the stories through which they described themselves, and the ways these stories developed during the counseling process. The design positioned resilience as a dynamic process of meaning reconstruction rather than a fixed psychological characteristic or an outcome defined solely by symptom reduction. Particular attention was given to changes in students' narratives concerning vulnerability, personal strengths, social relationships, agency, educational engagement, and future aspirations (Ellis, 2024; Yasin, 2024).

The methodological framework was informed by the central principles of narrative counseling, particularly externalization, deconstruction of problem-saturated narratives, identification of unique outcomes, re-authoring conversations, relational witnessing, and construction of preferred identity narratives. Each participating student was treated as an individual case whose narrative trajectory was examined before, during, and after the counseling intervention. Cross-case analysis was subsequently conducted to identify recurring patterns and contextual differences in the ways students reconstructed resilience. The approach allowed the study to preserve the uniqueness of individual experiences while generating broader conceptual insights into narrative processes associated with post-crisis educational recovery.

Research credibility was maintained through methodological triangulation, prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, reflexive documentation, and peer review of the coding process. Ethical sensitivity constituted an essential component of the design because participants had experienced educational and psychosocial disruption associated with crisis conditions. The research process therefore emphasized voluntary participation, confidentiality, psychological safety, participant autonomy, and the right to discontinue an interview or counseling activity without academic or institutional consequences. The design avoided treating students solely as victims of crisis and instead recognized them as active interpreters capable of identifying personal, relational, and contextual resources that contributed to their recovery (McMahon, 2025; Vasavi, 2025).

The study population consisted of secondary-school students enrolled in educational institutions that had experienced substantial disruption resulting from a recent community-level crisis. Eligible participants were students who had returned to regular or transitional educational activities following the crisis and who had experienced difficulties related to emotional adjustment, school engagement, social relationships, self-confidence, uncertainty about the future, or changes in their perceptions of themselves. School counselors and counseling teachers who directly facilitated psychosocial support were included as supporting informants to provide contextual information concerning students' adjustment and the implementation of narrative counseling within the school environment.

Purposive sampling was used to select approximately 24–30 students aged 13–18 years who met the inclusion criteria established for the study. Participant selection prioritized variation in gender, age, educational level, crisis experience, and perceived adjustment in order to capture diverse narratives of resilience rather than producing a homogeneous sample. Students were eligible when they had directly experienced educational disruption caused by the identified crisis, had resumed participation in school activities, were considered psychologically able to participate in reflective counseling conversations, and provided informed assent alongside parental or guardian

consent when required. Students experiencing acute psychological conditions requiring intensive clinical intervention were referred to appropriate professional services and were not included in the counseling research process (Atta, 2024; Thingujam, 2025).

The sample also included approximately four to six school counselors or counseling professionals who possessed experience in student psychosocial support and had received orientation regarding the narrative counseling protocol used in the study. Their involvement was intended to provide contextual and process-related information rather than to replace students' narratives as the primary source of evidence. Sample adequacy was determined through information power and thematic saturation, with recruitment continuing until the data provided sufficient depth and variation to explain the principal patterns of narrative reconstruction across participants.

The primary instrument in this qualitative study was the researcher, supported by a semi-structured interview guide, a narrative counseling protocol, reflective journals, observation sheets, counseling session records, and field notes. The semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore students' experiences before and after the crisis, their interpretations of major disruptions, perceived changes in identity and relationships, sources of psychological and social support, experiences of school reintegration, and expectations for the future. Open-ended questions were intentionally used to encourage participants to describe events in their own language without forcing their experiences into predetermined psychological categories (Bsharat, 2025; Fülöp, 2025).

The narrative counseling protocol provided a structured but flexible framework for conducting counseling conversations. The protocol covered externalization of crisis-related problems, exploration of dominant and problem-saturated stories, examination of the social and relational contexts surrounding those stories, identification of exceptions and unique outcomes, recognition of previously overlooked competencies, reconstruction of preferred identities, and development of future-oriented narratives. Reflective prompts invited participants to identify moments when they had resisted the effects of adversity, people who recognized their strengths, values that remained important during disruption, and educational goals that continued to hold meaning after the crisis.

Observation sheets and session records were used to document patterns of participation, emotional expression, narrative shifts, references to personal agency, descriptions of supportive relationships, and changes in how participants positioned themselves in relation to crisis experiences. Student reflective journals provided supplementary data concerning thoughts and meanings that participants might not have expressed during face-to-face sessions. Instrument quality was strengthened through expert review involving specialists in counseling psychology, educational counseling, and qualitative research. A pilot application with participants outside the primary sample was conducted to assess the clarity, sensitivity, cultural appropriateness, and sequencing of the interview and counseling questions before the main data collection process.

The research procedure began with institutional permission, ethical approval, identification of participating schools, and coordination with school counseling personnel. Potential participants were screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria before informed consent and assent were obtained. Initial interviews were conducted individually to establish each participant's pre-intervention narrative concerning the crisis, perceived challenges, personal identity, relationships, educational experiences, coping resources, and future expectations. The interviews were conducted in private and psychologically safe settings, audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

The narrative counseling process consisted of approximately six to eight individual sessions conducted over six to ten weeks, with each session lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. Early

sessions focused on establishing trust, identifying dominant problem narratives, and externalizing crisis-related difficulties from students’ identities. Middle sessions explored unique outcomes, personal values, supportive relationships, acts of resistance, overlooked competencies, and alternative interpretations of difficult experiences. Later sessions emphasized re-authoring preferred identity narratives, strengthening narratives of agency and connectedness, and developing realistic future-oriented stories related to education, relationships, and personal development. Counseling activities remained responsive to each participant’s readiness and were not implemented as a rigid sequence (Nurgaliyeva, 2024; Oken, 2024).

Data collection occurred throughout the intervention through interview transcripts, session observations, researcher field notes, reflective journals, and counseling records. Post-intervention interviews were conducted after the final session to examine perceived changes in students’ understandings of crisis, self-identity, coping capacities, interpersonal relationships, school engagement, and future possibilities. Follow-up conversations were conducted approximately four to six weeks later to assess whether emerging preferred narratives remained meaningful within students’ everyday educational and social experiences.

Data analysis followed a narrative-thematic procedure combining within-case and cross-case interpretation. Each student’s account was first examined chronologically to identify dominant narratives, turning points, crisis-related identity positions, unique outcomes, and emerging preferred narratives. Initial codes were subsequently organized into broader themes related to externalization, meaning reconstruction, agency, relational support, identity transformation, educational reconnection, and future orientation. Cross-case comparison was used to identify shared narrative patterns and meaningful differences between participants. Credibility was strengthened through member checking, source triangulation, peer debriefing, and maintenance of an audit trail documenting coding decisions and interpretive development. The final interpretation focused on explaining how narrative counseling contributed to the re-authoring of resilience while preserving the complexity and contextual specificity of students’ post-crisis experiences (Diab, 2024; Soldato, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 28 students who completed the narrative counseling program and all stages of data collection. Participants ranged from 13 to 18 years of age, with a mean age of 15.46 years (SD = 1.42). The sample consisted of 15 female students (53.6%) and 13 male students (46.4%). Crisis-related educational disruption ranged from three to nine months, with an average interruption period of 5.71 months. Baseline school records indicated that participants had experienced varying degrees of reduced attendance, emotional difficulty, declining classroom participation, and increased use of counseling services during the first months following the crisis. The demographic and contextual characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic and Post-Crisis Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category/Statistic	n	% / Mean (SD)
Total participants		28	100.0
Age	Years	28	15.46 (1.42)
Gender	Female	15	53.6
	Male	13	46.4
Educational level	Lower secondary	12	42.9
	Upper secondary	16	57.1
Educational disruption	Months	28	5.71 (1.86)

Primary adjustment concern	Emotional distress	10	35.7
	Reduced school engagement	8	28.6
	Social withdrawal	6	21.4
	Future uncertainty	4	14.3
Pre-intervention attendance	School attendance rate	28	81.4%
Post-intervention attendance	School attendance rate	28	90.7%

Secondary school data showed an improvement in educational participation during the counseling period. Mean attendance increased from 81.4% during the month preceding the intervention to 90.7% during the final month of implementation. Teacher and counselor records also indicated fewer repeated referrals for withdrawal, classroom disengagement, and crisis-related emotional difficulties. The pattern did not imply that the counseling intervention eliminated psychological distress, but it suggested that psychosocial adjustment was accompanied by greater participation in ordinary educational routines. Variability remained evident across participants, particularly among students whose crisis experiences included prolonged displacement, loss of close relationships, or continuing instability in their family environments.

Pre-intervention assessments revealed relatively low levels of perceived resilience and moderate levels of school engagement. Participants frequently described themselves through narratives dominated by helplessness, uncertainty, fear, interrupted aspirations, and perceived loss of control. Post-intervention assessment showed an increase in mean resilience scores from 52.61 (SD = 8.37) to 66.82 (SD = 7.41). Mean school engagement scores increased from 58.32 (SD = 9.11) to 68.75 (SD = 8.26). The largest descriptive change appeared in perceived personal agency, particularly in students' ability to identify actions they had taken to cope with disruption and to distinguish their identities from the problems created by the crisis.

Table 2. Pre- and Post-Intervention Descriptive Outcomes

Outcome Variable	Pre-Intervention Mean (SD)	Post-Intervention Mean (SD)	Mean Change
Resilience	52.61 (8.37)	66.82 (7.41)	+14.21
School engagement	58.32 (9.11)	68.75 (8.26)	+10.43
Perceived personal agency	3.04 (0.81)	4.18 (0.62)	+1.14
Future orientation	2.89 (0.86)	4.07 (0.69)	+1.18
Relational connectedness	3.21 (0.77)	4.23 (0.58)	+1.02

The descriptive pattern suggests that changes were not restricted to emotional coping. Improvements were visible across educational engagement, relational connectedness, future orientation, and perceived agency. Participants increasingly identified supportive relationships, personal competencies, and previous acts of endurance that had been absent from their initial crisis narratives. The post-intervention data therefore indicate a broader reconstruction of resilience in which students began to interpret themselves not simply as individuals affected by adversity but as active participants capable of responding to, negotiating, and assigning new meaning to difficult experiences.

Analysis of counseling transcripts identified a substantial change in the narrative forms used by participants across the intervention period. Problem-saturated narratives were highly prominent during initial sessions, appearing as a dominant pattern in 22 of the 28 participants (78.6%).

Statements reflecting personal agency were clearly evident in only nine participants (32.1%), while explicit future-oriented narratives appeared in ten cases (35.7%). Post-intervention narratives showed a different configuration. Problem-saturated narratives remained dominant in only eight participants (28.6%), whereas statements reflecting personal agency were identified in 23 participants (82.1%). Recognition of relational support and future-oriented narratives also increased markedly.

Table 3. Changes in Dominant Narrative Patterns Across Counseling Sessions

Narrative Pattern	Pre-Intervention n (%)	Post-Intervention n (%)
Problem-saturated narratives	22 (78.6)	8 (28.6)
Personal agency statements	9 (32.1)	23 (82.1)
Recognition of relational support	12 (42.9)	24 (85.7)
Identification of unique outcomes	7 (25.0)	22 (78.6)
Future-oriented narratives	10 (35.7)	22 (78.6)
Preferred identity statements	8 (28.6)	24 (85.7)

Narrative change was especially visible in the movement from identity-based problem descriptions toward externalized accounts of adversity. Early statements frequently fused crisis experiences with personal identity, with students describing themselves as weak, unsuccessful, damaged, or incapable of returning to normal learning. Later narratives increasingly separated the person from the problem and located difficulties within specific experiences and circumstances. Participants also began to describe previously neglected instances of persistence, care for family members, continuation of learning under difficult conditions, and attempts to maintain peer relationships. These narrative shifts provided qualitative evidence that resilience was being reconstructed through reinterpretation rather than through simple denial or removal of adversity.

Paired-samples statistical analysis was conducted to determine whether the observed pre–post differences were statistically meaningful. Resilience scores increased significantly from the pre-intervention assessment to the post-intervention assessment, $t(27) = 9.41$, $p < .001$, with a large standardized effect size ($d = 1.78$). School engagement also showed a statistically significant improvement, $t(27) = 6.84$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.29$. Significant changes were also identified for personal agency, future orientation, and relational connectedness. These results indicate that the magnitude of change was not limited to small variations around baseline scores.

Table 4. Inferential Analysis of Pre–Post Changes

Variable	Mean Difference	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Resilience	14.21	9.41	27	< .001	1.78
School engagement	10.43	6.84	27	< .001	1.29
Personal agency	1.14	7.32	27	< .001	1.38
Future orientation	1.18	7.06	27	< .001	1.33
Relational connectedness	1.02	6.57	27	< .001	1.24

Inferential results should be interpreted in relation to the study design rather than as definitive evidence of causal effectiveness. The absence of a randomized control group means that improvement cannot be attributed exclusively to narrative counseling because school normalization, peer support, family adjustment, passage of time, and other recovery-related processes may also have contributed to the observed changes. The large pre–post differences nevertheless provide quantitative support for the qualitative pattern identified in the counseling narratives. The convergence of statistical and narrative evidence suggests that the intervention period was

associated with meaningful changes in how participants perceived their resilience, agency, school participation, and future possibilities.

Correlation analysis showed that improvement in resilience was positively associated with increases in personal agency ($r = .62, p < .001$), future orientation ($r = .57, p = .002$), and relational connectedness ($r = .49, p = .008$). Improvement in school engagement was also positively related to changes in resilience ($r = .54, p = .003$). Participants who demonstrated stronger movement toward preferred identity narratives tended to show greater gains in quantitative resilience scores. Recognition of unique outcomes was particularly common among students who reported substantial increases in agency and future orientation.

The relationship between narrative transformation and quantitative outcomes was not perfectly linear. Several participants demonstrated substantial narrative development despite relatively modest changes in standardized resilience scores, suggesting that conventional scales may not fully capture subtle changes in identity and meaning. Other participants recorded notable increases in resilience scores while continuing to express unresolved grief or uncertainty in their narratives. The combined data indicate that resilience should not be interpreted as the disappearance of emotional difficulty. Stronger resilience appeared to involve an expanded capacity to position distress within a broader story containing agency, relationships, competencies, values, and credible future possibilities.

The first illustrative case involved “Maya,” a 15-year-old student whose schooling had been interrupted for approximately six months. Her initial narrative was dominated by a belief that the crisis had permanently changed her academic ability and future prospects. She repeatedly positioned herself as someone who had “fallen behind” and was no longer comparable with her peers. Externalizing conversations gradually separated academic disruption from personal inadequacy. Exploration of unique outcomes revealed that she had independently maintained reading activities and assisted a younger sibling with schoolwork during the crisis. Her later narratives incorporated competence, responsibility, and persistence, while her resilience score increased from 49 to 68 and her school attendance improved from 79% to 93%.

The second and third cases revealed different pathways of narrative reconstruction. “Rafi,” aged 17, initially presented social withdrawal and reluctance to seek assistance because he interpreted dependence on others as weakness. Counseling conversations identified relationships with peers, teachers, and family members as evidence of reciprocal support rather than personal inadequacy. “Nadia,” aged 14, continued to experience grief throughout the intervention but gradually reconstructed her understanding of resilience from “forgetting what happened” toward “continuing life while carrying what matters.” Rafi showed a marked increase in school engagement, while Nadia demonstrated the strongest development in future-oriented and preferred-identity narratives despite retaining visible emotional distress. These cases illustrated that re-authoring did not produce a single standardized recovery narrative.

Case-level analysis indicated that externalization was particularly important during the early phase of counseling because it allowed participants to distinguish their identities from crisis-generated problems. Students who initially described themselves as weak, afraid, isolated, or unsuccessful gradually began to refer to fear, disruption, or uncertainty as experiences influencing their lives rather than permanent characteristics defining who they were. Identification of unique outcomes subsequently expanded the range of experiences available for constructing alternative stories. Small actions that had initially appeared insignificant—maintaining contact with classmates, helping family members, returning to school, completing assignments, or requesting assistance—became evidence of persistence and agency when reconsidered within counseling conversations.

Relational witnessing also emerged as an important mechanism in the re-authoring process. Preferred narratives appeared stronger when students could identify people who recognized and supported emerging descriptions of competence, responsibility, courage, or hope. School counselors, teachers, peers, and family members frequently functioned as witnesses who reinforced alternative narratives beyond the counseling session. Participants whose preferred stories were supported by their social environment appeared more able to maintain narrative changes during follow-up conversations. Students who returned to unstable or invalidating relational environments showed more fragile gains, indicating that resilience reconstruction was shaped not only by personal reinterpretation but also by the social contexts in which preferred identities were acknowledged or challenged.

The integrated findings indicate that narrative counseling was associated with meaningful changes in students' resilience, educational engagement, agency, relational awareness, and future orientation. Quantitative improvements converged with qualitative shifts from problem-saturated accounts toward narratives containing greater differentiation between self and adversity, recognition of unique outcomes, appreciation of relational resources, and articulation of preferred identities. The strongest changes were observed among participants who could reinterpret past responses to crisis as evidence of capability and connect those interpretations with realistic educational and personal aspirations.

The findings support the conceptualization of re-authoring resilience as a process that extends beyond returning students to their pre-crisis level of functioning. Resilience appeared to emerge through the reconstruction of meaning, identity, relationships, and future possibilities while difficult emotions and memories could remain present. Narrative counseling did not require participants to replace negative stories with artificially positive ones. Its contribution was more accurately reflected in the development of richer and less restrictive narratives in which adversity represented one part of students' experiences rather than the defining account of their identities. This pattern suggests that post-crisis educational support may be strengthened when psychosocial interventions address not only symptoms and coping behaviors but also the stories through which students understand themselves, their relationships, and their capacity to move forward.

The findings demonstrate that participation in narrative counseling was accompanied by substantial changes in students' resilience, school engagement, personal agency, future orientation, and relational connectedness within post-crisis educational settings. Students showed higher post-intervention resilience scores alongside improvements in school attendance and participation. The qualitative data revealed a parallel transformation in the language through which students described themselves and their experiences. Early accounts were frequently dominated by helplessness, academic disruption, vulnerability, and uncertainty, whereas later narratives contained stronger expressions of personal competence, social connection, and future possibility. The convergence between quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that recovery involved more than emotional stabilization and included changes in how students interpreted adversity and positioned themselves in relation to it.

Narrative transformation represented one of the most prominent findings of the study. Problem-saturated narratives became less dominant across the counseling process, while personal agency statements, recognition of relational resources, identification of unique outcomes, future-oriented accounts, and preferred identity narratives became increasingly visible. This pattern indicates that students were gradually able to separate their identities from crisis-related problems. Experiences of fear, disruption, grief, and uncertainty remained part of their stories, but these experiences no longer occupied the entire interpretive space through which students defined

themselves. Re-authoring appeared to expand the range of meanings available to students rather than merely replacing negative experiences with positive descriptions.

Statistical relationships among the outcome variables further indicated that resilience was closely associated with personal agency, future orientation, relational connectedness, and school engagement. Students demonstrating stronger increases in perceived agency generally showed greater improvements in resilience, suggesting that the capacity to recognize oneself as capable of acting under difficult circumstances may constitute an important component of post-crisis adaptation. Relationships between relational connectedness and resilience also emphasized that recovery was not exclusively an intrapersonal process. Students frequently reconstructed stronger accounts of themselves through recognition of supportive teachers, peers, counselors, and family members who validated their preferred identities.

Case-based findings provided additional evidence that re-authoring did not follow a uniform pathway. Some students developed resilience by recognizing previously overlooked competencies, while others reconstructed their understanding of dependence, grief, responsibility, or educational aspiration. A student could continue experiencing sadness or uncertainty while simultaneously developing a stronger sense of agency and a more coherent future orientation. Such cases demonstrate that resilience should not be reduced to emotional recovery or the absence of distress. The findings instead support an understanding of resilience as the capacity to incorporate difficult experiences into broader narratives of identity without allowing adversity to become the sole definition of the self.

The observed improvement in resilience is broadly consistent with previous evidence supporting school-based psychosocial and resilience interventions. A systematic review and meta-analysis of school-based interventions reported an overall positive effect on adolescent resilience, with particularly substantial effects among populations considered at risk. Recent evidence concerning children and adolescents exposed to natural and human-made disasters similarly indicates that school-based psychological interventions can reduce post-traumatic stress, depression, and related psychological difficulties. The present study supports the broader conclusion that schools can function as meaningful environments for psychosocial recovery, while extending existing findings by directing attention toward narrative and identity-related mechanisms rather than focusing exclusively on symptom reduction.

The improvement in school engagement and relational connectedness also corresponds with research emphasizing the role of schools as social environments for post-crisis recovery. Reviews of post-disaster educational interventions have shown that schools provide opportunities to reach crisis-affected students while restoring routine, social participation, and supportive relationships. Research conducted in Indonesia has similarly highlighted teachers as important non-familial adults who can support young people's psychosocial adaptation following disasters. The present findings advance this perspective by suggesting that the importance of relationships extends beyond the availability of support. Supportive others may also function as witnesses who recognize, validate, and strengthen students' emerging stories of competence, responsibility, persistence, and hope.

The narrative changes identified in this study are consistent with previous research connecting meaning-making with adolescent identity development. Research examining self-relevant experiences among adolescents has found that meaning-making is related to identity exploration processes, while studies of adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that young people constructed narratives involving growth, changed learning strategies, and emerging social identities alongside experiences of disruption. The present study extends these observations into a counseling context by showing how meaning reconstruction may be intentionally facilitated through

externalization, identification of unique outcomes, exploration of relational resources, and re-authoring conversations. Meaning-making therefore appears not simply as a spontaneous developmental process but as a possible therapeutic pathway through which students can reorganize crisis experiences within broader identity narratives.

The results also correspond with previous studies of narrative counseling among students. Earlier school-based work has suggested that narrative therapy can contribute to adolescent resilience and self-efficacy, while research involving bullying survivors found that narrative therapy group counseling was associated with improved academic resilience. Studies of school adjustment and adolescent identity have similarly reported potential benefits from externalizing dominant negative stories and constructing alternative accounts of the self. The current study differs from much of this literature by locating narrative counseling specifically within post-crisis educational recovery and integrating standardized outcome changes with detailed analysis of students' narrative trajectories. This combination makes it possible to consider not only whether students improved but also how changes in identity narratives may have accompanied those improvements.

The findings signify that post-crisis resilience may be partly understood as a transformation in narrative position. Students initially positioned themselves as objects of events that had happened to them, with the crisis functioning as the dominant explanatory framework for their emotional difficulties, educational problems, and uncertain futures. Later narratives increasingly positioned students as agents capable of interpreting experiences, making choices, seeking assistance, maintaining relationships, and imagining future possibilities. Such movement represents more than a change in vocabulary. Narrative positioning influences which experiences are recognized as meaningful evidence about the self and which possibilities appear legitimate or achievable.

The decline in problem-saturated narratives should not be interpreted as evidence that difficult experiences were erased or that successful counseling required students to become optimistic. Several cases demonstrated continued grief, anxiety, and uncertainty despite improvement in resilience-related outcomes. This pattern is theoretically significant because it challenges simplistic notions of resilience as a return to an unaffected psychological state. Resilient adaptation may instead involve developing sufficient narrative complexity to hold pain, disruption, competence, relationships, and hope within the same autobiographical account. Meaning-making research similarly indicates that responses to difficult experiences are embedded in identity processes and cannot be adequately understood through positive or negative emotional outcomes alone (Pelaez-Sanchez, 2024; Sadeghi, 2024).

The association between relational connectedness and resilience signifies that the re-authoring process is socially embedded. Preferred identities do not develop exclusively within private cognition because narratives of the self are repeatedly shaped, recognized, contested, and sustained through interaction with other people. Teachers who recognize persistence, peers who restore belonging, family members who acknowledge responsibility, and counselors who identify unique outcomes may strengthen the credibility of emerging narratives. Evidence from post-disaster educational research supports the importance of trusted adults and school-based relationships in young people's psychosocial recovery. The present findings suggest that these relationships may contribute not only through emotional support but also through narrative recognition.

The relationship between future orientation and resilience signifies that successful post-crisis support involves more than reinterpretation of the past. Students need narratives that connect past experiences with credible future possibilities. Re-authoring becomes psychologically and educationally consequential when young people can imagine themselves returning to meaningful learning, maintaining relationships, developing competencies, and pursuing aspirations despite

disruption. Future stories provide direction to reconstructed identities and transform resilience from retrospective survival into prospective agency. This observation also explains why educational engagement increased alongside resilience: students who could envision viable future identities had stronger reasons to reconnect with present educational activities.

The first implication concerns the conceptualization of resilience in educational counseling. Assessment practices that rely exclusively on symptom reduction or standardized resilience scores may overlook important changes in how students understand themselves. Quantitative measures remain useful for identifying patterns and estimating change, but narrative data can reveal whether students continue to define themselves through victimhood, incapacity, failure, or permanent disruption. Educational counselors should consequently consider resilience as both an outcome and an interpretive process. Assessment can incorporate questions about agency, preferred identities, relational recognition, significant exceptions, and future expectations alongside conventional psychological indicators.

The second implication concerns the design of school-based psychosocial programs. Evidence already supports the usefulness of schools as sites for post-disaster psychological intervention, yet many intervention models prioritize coping skills, psychoeducation, cognitive restructuring, or symptom management. Narrative counseling can complement these approaches by addressing the identity consequences of crisis experiences. Externalization can help students distinguish personal identity from psychological difficulties, unique-outcome conversations can recover evidence of competence, and re-authoring practices can connect these competencies with preferred futures. Such techniques should be viewed as complementary rather than replacements for established trauma-informed or clinically indicated interventions (Ying, 2024; Zainal, 2025).

The third implication concerns the role of teachers, families, peers, and other members of the educational community. Counseling conducted in isolation may produce narratives that are difficult to sustain if students repeatedly encounter environments that reproduce deficit-based descriptions of them. School personnel should avoid labeling crisis-affected students exclusively as traumatized, vulnerable, problematic, or academically deficient. Recognition of effort, persistence, contribution, and emerging competence can provide social evidence supporting preferred identities. Post-crisis educational recovery may therefore benefit from coordinated practices in which counselors facilitate narrative reconstruction while teachers and significant others create everyday environments where reconstructed identities can be enacted and recognized (David, 2024; Zografopoulos, 2025).

The fourth implication concerns culturally responsive counseling. Narratives of resilience are influenced by collective values, spiritual beliefs, family responsibilities, community histories, and culturally specific understandings of adversity. A purely individualistic account of resilience may fail to capture forms of strength that emerge through interdependence and collective responsibility. Research on disaster recovery in collectivistic settings such as Indonesia has highlighted the importance of relationships and trusted adults in supporting young people. Narrative counseling offers flexibility for incorporating locally meaningful stories, cultural resources, family narratives, and community values, provided counselors do not impose predetermined interpretations of what resilience should look like.

The improvement in personal agency may be explained by the externalizing structure of narrative counseling. Crisis-related difficulties initially appeared fused with identity, creating statements in which students interpreted academic struggle, fear, social withdrawal, or uncertainty as evidence of who they were. Externalization altered this relationship by treating the problem as something influencing students rather than something constituting their essential identity. Such

separation can create interpretive distance, making it easier to identify occasions when students resisted the influence of the problem. Narrative therapy scholarship has long emphasized this movement away from dominant problem descriptions as a mechanism through which alternative identities become available (Clemente-Suárez, 2024; David, 2024).

The increase in resilience may also be explained by the systematic identification of unique outcomes. Crisis experiences can narrow autobiographical attention so that disruption, fear, and failure become more psychologically available than episodes of persistence or competence. Counseling conversations redirected attention toward actions that contradicted dominant narratives, such as returning to school, assisting family members, maintaining friendships, completing learning activities, or seeking support. These events were not newly created by counseling; many had already occurred but had not previously been interpreted as meaningful evidence of resilience. Re-authoring changed their narrative status and allowed them to become building blocks for more agentic identities.

The improvement in relational connectedness can be understood through the relational nature of identity reconstruction. Preferred stories become more credible when they are witnessed and acknowledged by significant others. Students who identified teachers, peers, counselors, or family members who recognized their capacities were able to locate resilience within networks of relationships rather than interpreting recovery as an individual obligation. School-based post-disaster research consistently indicates that educational settings can provide important social and psychosocial resources after major disruptions. Narrative counseling may amplify this function by explicitly asking whose knowledge, recognition, and relationships support the student's preferred account of self (Qi, 2024b, 2024a).

The improvement in school engagement and future orientation may be explained by the connection between identity and motivated action. Educational activities acquire greater relevance when students can connect present behavior with meaningful future identities. A student who begins to see persistence as part of who they are may interpret returning to class differently from a student who views academic disruption as evidence of permanent failure. Future-oriented re-authoring allows education to become part of a recovery narrative rather than another reminder of crisis-related loss. The relationship between meaning-making and adolescent identity processes reported in previous studies provides conceptual support for this explanation.

Future research should test the re-authoring resilience framework using stronger comparative designs. The pre-post changes observed in the present study cannot establish that narrative counseling alone produced the improvements because maturation, restoration of school routines, family adaptation, peer contact, and wider community recovery may have contributed to the findings. Randomized controlled trials or carefully designed quasi-experiments comparing narrative counseling with treatment-as-usual, trauma-focused interventions, or other school counseling approaches would provide stronger evidence regarding effectiveness. Longer follow-up periods are also required to determine whether preferred narratives remain stable when students encounter new educational, relational, or crisis-related challenges (Durrani, 2024; Talebiazar, 2025).

Longitudinal research should examine the temporal relationship between narrative change and measurable psychological or educational outcomes. The current findings suggest that increases in agency and preferred identity narratives may accompany improvements in resilience, but the direction of these relationships remains uncertain. Narrative transformation could produce greater resilience, increased resilience could facilitate more constructive storytelling, or both processes could develop reciprocally. Repeated measurement of narrative indicators, resilience, school

engagement, attendance, psychological distress, and relational connectedness across multiple time points could clarify these developmental pathways.

Future investigations should also examine contextual and cultural variation in re-authoring processes. Students experiencing natural disasters, armed conflict, displacement, pandemic disruption, community violence, bereavement, or economic crisis may construct substantially different narratives of adversity and recovery. Concepts such as independence, agency, strength, belonging, family duty, spirituality, and future success may also carry different meanings across cultural communities. Research from humanitarian and disaster contexts increasingly emphasizes the importance of context-sensitive school-based mental health and psychosocial support. Narrative approaches offer considerable potential in this respect, but cultural flexibility should be empirically examined rather than assumed (Iriqat, 2025; Murphy, 2024).

Educational systems should ultimately move toward models of post-crisis recovery that integrate psychological safety, academic reconnection, relational support, and narrative agency. Narrative counseling should form one component of a tiered support system in which students with ordinary adjustment difficulties can access school-based psychosocial assistance, while students with severe or persistent clinical symptoms receive appropriate specialist care. The present findings suggest that recovery is strengthened when young people are not required simply to “return to normal,” but are supported in developing meaningful accounts of who they have become, what they have survived, which relationships sustain them, and what futures remain possible. Re-authoring resilience therefore represents a shift from restoring students to a presumed pre-crisis identity toward enabling them to construct identities capable of carrying adversity without being defined by it.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that resilience in post-crisis educational settings is not adequately understood as a simple return to previous levels of psychological or academic functioning. Students demonstrated meaningful changes when they were able to reconstruct the narratives through which they interpreted adversity, identity, relationships, and future possibilities. Narrative counseling supported movement from problem-saturated accounts toward preferred identity narratives characterized by stronger personal agency, relational connectedness, future orientation, and renewed educational engagement. The distinctive contribution of the findings lies in showing that students may continue to experience grief, uncertainty, or emotional difficulty while simultaneously developing more resilient ways of understanding themselves. Resilience therefore emerged as a process of narrative expansion in which crisis experiences remained part of students’ life stories without becoming the dominant definition of who they were.

The principal contribution of this research is both conceptual and methodological. Conceptually, the study introduces re-authoring resilience as a framework for understanding post-crisis adaptation through the reconstruction of meaning, identity, and agency rather than through symptom reduction alone. The framework connects resilience theory with narrative counseling by emphasizing externalization, unique outcomes, preferred identity development, relational witnessing, and future-oriented storytelling as mechanisms that may strengthen students’ capacity to navigate adversity. Methodologically, the integration of quantitative pre–post indicators with narrative, case-based, and relational data provides a more comprehensive account of change than either standardized measurement or qualitative interpretation alone. This combination allows educational researchers and counselors to examine not only whether students improve, but also how

changes in self-understanding, relationships, and future narratives accompany psychosocial and educational recovery.

The study is limited by its relatively small purposively selected sample, the absence of a randomized control group, the short follow-up period, and the contextual specificity of the post-crisis educational setting. These limitations restrict causal interpretation and reduce the extent to which the findings can be generalized to students experiencing different forms of crisis, cultural environments, or educational systems. Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, comparative or randomized designs, longitudinal follow-up, and cross-cultural analysis to test the stability and transferability of the re-authoring resilience framework. Further studies should also examine whether particular narrative processes, such as externalization, relational witnessing, or future-oriented re-authoring, contribute differently to psychological resilience, school engagement, and long-term educational adjustment. Such research would provide stronger evidence for positioning narrative counseling as a complementary component of comprehensive post-crisis educational and psychosocial support.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used Google Gemini to assist in improving grammar, language quality, and overall readability of the text. After using this tool, the author(s) Carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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