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# Educational Resilience of Pupils and the Role of the School Counselor in Its Development

Liliana PETER<sup>1</sup>, Angela Luminița MOLDOVAN<sup>2</sup>

## *Abstract*

*From the resilient perspective manifested in the school environment, this manifests preponderant under the form of the children's capacity to overcome situations such as: bad grades, more difficult homework, tight deadlines for projects, exams and tests stress.*

*Regarding resilience, the success in a development area does not imply a positive adaptation in all the domains, thus being necessary the implementation of more specific terms such as emotional, educational and behavioral resilience.*

*The school counseling has an active and significant role in the development of the pupils' educational resilience, both through the interventions addressed directly to the, and through the programs for the teachers and parents, alongside the promoting activities of collaboration between the school and the community.*

**Keywords:** *educational resilience; school counseling; factors; resources.*

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## 1. Introduction

Resilience is an English term used in metallurgy and reflects the ability of steel to return to its original shape after being struck. Referring to people, resilience is especially associated not only with their ability to recover, but also to gain strength from disaster.

Resilience is a term derived from the Latin verb "to recover", which also means "to save" but can also be used with the meaning of protection.[1]

As it can be seen, the controversy focuses not on the origin of the notion, but rather on its content. The content of the notion extends and includes not only the response to trauma, but also the ability to protect oneself from its influence.

The concept of resilience has been a theme of scientific research for the last 60 years, being a notion frequently used both in psychology and educational sciences, as well as in economics, engineering, ecology and medicine. In essence, resilience is the ability of a dynamic system to withstand or recover from significant challenges that threaten its stability, viability or development.[2]

## 2. Theoretical Background

The phenomenon of resilience is a natural process that is part of many people's lives. People face severe hardships and even face a "steelwork" effect due to difficulties. Resilience is the ability of people, their ability to cope, to recover from extremely hard and traumatic events, making them even stronger. Resilience is a notion that reflects the ability of an individual or a system to grow and prosper in unfavorable conditions. The general context of understanding resilience is simple: "positive adaptation in the context of extremely difficult circumstances, waiting for the recovery of the functional or cognitive abilities of the individual to increase", "manifestation of competence in the context of adaptation to significant challenges".[3]

It is considered that, in order to identify resilience, on the one hand there must be a severe, prolonged trauma and on the other hand the absence of pathological functioning after the trauma.[4]

Educational resilience appears to be a necessity, in a society like ours, in which students face a multitude of situations that affect their school and professional development - from individual risk factors to systemic ones. It has been observed that students with educational resilience are those who manage to maintain their high learning motivation and school performance

even if the risk conditions that place them in a position of school vulnerability and failure are present.

School resilience consists in the ability of certain students to succeed from a school point of view, despite their difficult situation from a socio-economic, family, etc. point of view. In disadvantaged contexts, these children manage to achieve significantly better school results than other students in a similar situation or than other students who benefit from a much better situation.

### **3. Argument of the paper**

The practice of educational, pedagogical, socio-pedagogical and therapeutic work is still based on the belief in a perfect real knowledge. The family's practice of raising a child is still very much based on a rather authoritarian style of parenting, convinced of the power of rebuke and punishment - including physical punishment. Such an "ideology", even if not explicitly mentioned, very often defines relationships, behaviors, approaches and working methods in schools, social services, communities. Thus, children with difficulties have limited opportunities to receive support, and the risk of deterioration and development of destructive behavior increases. It seems that this "common" practice turns into a dogma, becomes rigid and, in this sense, does not respond individually to the child and his needs.

It is necessary to expand the knowledge, the capacity for reflection / self-reflection of parents, teachers, doctors, psychologists, school counselors, which would allow them to understand the child's suffering, anxiety, its manifestations and ways to respond and provide support.

The development of educational resilience is a necessity in our society, given that students face a multitude of adverse conditions - from individual to systemic risk factors - that affect their school and professional development. Students with educational resilience are those who maintain a high learning motivation and school performance despite the influence of risk conditions that make them vulnerable to school failure. School counseling has an active and significant role in the development of students' educational resilience, both through interventions addressed directly to them and through programs addressed to teachers and parents, along with activities to promote school-community collaboration.

#### **4. Arguments to support the thesis**

The process of child development is not uniform and linear. Frequently, there are moments of discontinuity and contrast, tensions and conflicts, critical and vulnerable moments: shyness and isolation, aggression, stubbornness and hostility, egocentrism and narcissism, frustrations, anger, trauma, fears and anxieties, developmental crises. The stimuli that act on the child / young person are numerous (family, school, society, the elderly, and members of the community). The child's attempts to successfully face the challenges of a life full of uncertainties, demands, rules and demands must be encouraged, in a supportive manner, stimulating his sincere, natural need to express himself, to assert and confirm his personality. The transition from cognitive, social, relational and then emotional skills are an important step in acquiring a skill more than necessary for the challenges of adult life: adaptive competence. Awareness of one's own feelings and those of others, commitment, free and open expression, empathic abilities, the ability to face obstacles, frustrations and conflicts and to resolve them in a creative way - all these are anchors in developing the child's resilience and adaptability; young.

#### **5. Arguments to argue the thesis**

In the literature, adverse conditions that threaten students' school success are called risk factors, namely those genetic, biological, demographic, behavioral, and socio-cultural characteristics that influence the likelihood of students' effective school progress. The main categories of risk factors identified through scientific studies are poverty, community and school violence, chronic diseases, single-parent families, drug use, family conflicts, loss of a loved one, belonging to an ethnic minority.[5]

Unfortunately, however, a multitude of students fail to overcome the adversities they face and abandon the educational system that does not provide them with the environment, help and opportunity to learn how to have the expected results. School counseling has an active and significant role in the development of students' educational resilience, both through interventions addressed directly to them and through those addressed to teachers, parents and through activities to promote school-community collaboration. Given the existence of a large number of students who need to develop their educational resilience, it is necessary for more and more specialists to become familiar with this concept and with the concrete ways of promoting it in the school environment. In the literature there are multiple programs built to develop resilience through school counseling.[6],

[12] which are organized with the participation of all educational actors: students, teachers, school counselors, parents, community. However, it must be taken into account that schools and classrooms are complex social systems, the programs for promoting and developing resilience must be adapted to specific contextual particularities.

The presence of risk factors does not guarantee the appearance of school or behavioral problems, but they increase the probability of manifesting such academic difficulties. Emotional support, belonging, close or extended family ties, community and school are extremely important elements. This belonging is the result of acceptance, investment, love, unconscious processes,[7] the relationship with an adult, the emotional relationship with a "guardian". Finding a purpose in life is both a criterion and a factor of resilience,[8] and this can be the result of emotional support, as well as individual abilities, coping strategies, talents, sense of humor, etc.

## **6. Dismantling the arguments against**

Many researchers emphasize the importance of the ability to be aware, to understand the idea of self.

The teacher, in his/her position as a counselor, can successfully approach the educational counseling, which also involves the elements of vocational, supportive, personal or informational development counseling, but cannot replace the specialist (psychologist) who has the necessary skills and expertise to solve situations, specifically in which the student would be. The tendency of some teachers to use psychological testing in counseling activities, by virtue of the purpose of students' knowledge, should also be avoided, as the use of psychological tests (intelligence, projections, personality), although it may appear as an easy activity, requires extensive knowledge of psychological diagnosis, which only the psychologist can apply. However, the teacher can use various scales of knowledge and attitudes, worksheets.

Counseling and specialized school assistance are two of the most effective educational activities, which promote and develop the educational resilience of students at various risk or vulnerability. It is defined as an interpersonal relationship of theoretical approaches assistance and support between a person specialized in psychology and educational counseling / teacher of different specialties and the group of students, for personal development and prevention of problematic situations and personal crisis[9] or related to training for professional life. Counseling and specialized school assistance is a qualified approach, organized on scientific principles, which

allows the provision of specialized assistance to those involved in the educational process.[10]

The development of educational resilience can be the main or secondary objective of counseling and specialized school interventions, in both cases it is useful for students to be helped to know their own resilience and the resources they can rely on. It is important to emphasize that such psycho-pedagogical interventions have both immediate positive effects on student development and long-term effects, by strengthening resistance to failure, stress and problematic situations. The literature highlights the importance of focusing on resources and strengths, to the detriment of addressing vulnerabilities.[11] At the same time, however, there is a need for an in-depth knowledge of the risk factors that threaten the educational path of students, which can be achieved by building an authentic relationship with them, their families and representative community actors.

In this sense, school counselors have an essential role in supporting students at risk, interventions can be made at all levels of specific activity - in individual, group or class counseling of students, in counseling parents, teachers or in adapting the school organization to the educational needs of the students, in building school-family-community partnerships that offer development opportunities to vulnerable students. Interventions to increase educational resilience must be adapted to the specific profile of students, taking into account the psychological and educational characteristics, vulnerabilities and resources, learning motivation, the particularities of the student class, the families of origin and the community. The role of school counseling in developing students' educational resilience can be highlighted by reviewing the specific objectives of the activity.

## **Conclusion**

Resilience is a concept that is becoming increasingly important for all school actors: students, teachers, parents, school counselors and the community. Knowing the significance of the concept, as well as the factors involved in obtaining resilience, the specific features of resilient people, as well as models and methods necessary to train and maintain it in students and teachers were the main objectives of this presentation.

Although most of the research on the subject of resilience is carried out in the school and academic environment in the West, it is gratifying that the topic is becoming more and more interesting in Romania as well. As mentioned earlier, the design of an intervention focused on developing students' educational resilience must take into account age, socio-cultural

background, psychological characteristics, aspirations, expectations, fears, values and role models of students. In this sense, in-depth studies and research are needed to identify specific ways that prove effective in supporting the educational of Romanian students. The same recommendation is made regarding the resilience of Romanian teachers.

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