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## Resilience education through Service-Learning methodology

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### Abstract

**Research objectives (aims) and problem(s):** This study promotes the use of the Service-Learning methodology to strengthen children's and young people's awareness in the face of social challenges and to foster Education for Resilience. It underscores the importance of involving students actively in their educational process to ensure responsible citizenship grounded in values that contribute to their holistic development.

**Research methods:** In this regard, the Service-Learning methodology is used as an educational approach that integrates the development of academic competencies with meaningful community service.

**Process of argumentation:** We present the theoretical framework underpinning the relationship between knowledge, social skills, and emotional competencies, which together activate mechanisms that foster resilience. In addition, we propose the design of a methodological approach and a Service-Learning project for Resilience Education, adaptable to various educational levels, from Primary Education to Higher Education.

**Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences:** This proposal aims to enhance students' ability to cope

### Keywords:

Service-Learning,  
resilience,  
active citizenship,  
educational  
community,  
resilience education

with academic and emotional challenges and to support the development of resilient educational and life trajectories.

**Conclusions and/or recommendations:** The Service-Learning methodology provides a broad spectrum of psychological benefits aimed at safeguarding mental health aspects that may be at risk, while also fostering community resilience.

## Introduction

Education, insofar as it contributes to the development of resilience, helps improve the social climate necessary for further developing the skills that will be part of meaningful learning. For this reason, we consider the practice of a Service-Learning project to be a highly valuable tool, as it promotes a comprehensive education aimed at developing the skills and abilities needed for resilience (Aguilar et al., 2016). Service-Learning, for its part, is a methodology that supports the transfer of knowledge to society through actions that facilitate the acquisition of tools for promoting resilience (Filgueira et al., 2023). Students involved in Service-Learning usually face unexpected and novel situations that guide them through a process of change, transformation, development, and personal growth, enabling them to acquire new techniques or skills along with valuable aptitudes and competences (Council of the European Union, 2012), both in their present roles as students and in their future adult and professional lives.

Participation in a Service-Learning project offers the possibility of acquiring knowledge and skills, as well as feeling empowered to contribute to social change (Blanch et al., 2020). This becomes a tool that guides education toward overcoming challenges throughout the educational trajectory, while also fostering an awareness that can evolve into a lifelong commitment. We focus on this specific area, which involves further exploring knowledge related to the development of the skills and abilities necessary for Resilience Education. We aim to achieve this through the creation and implementation of a Service-Learning methodology project, in order to enrich students' holistic development. When knowledge and skills are put into practice for the benefit of others, the competen-

cies needed for personal growth are strengthened, allowing students to actively participate in their own development and face the challenges that may arise during this process of growth and maturation.

### **Resilience - brief historical development of resilience**

In the current academic and non-academic landscape, resilience stands out as a construct that generates considerable interest, due to its many implications and applications in different fields. The concept of resilience has roots in material physics, but it is in psychology and sociology that it takes on the meaning most commonly used today in the social sciences (Kazmierczak, 2016). The notion of resilience dates back to the 1970s, when psychologists began studying people who, despite facing adverse circumstances, such as poverty or trauma, demonstrated a remarkable ability to bounce back and thrive. This initial focus centered on identifying the factors that promote psychological resilience (Corti et al., 2022).

In the decades that followed, resilience research expanded into a variety of fields, including developmental psychology, neuroscience, and public health. Protective factors such as social support, positive self-concept, and coping skills were identified as key contributors to resilience. The concept has since transcended individual psychology and has been applied to broader contexts such as education, public health, social work, and community development. Its importance has been recognized in promoting well-being in diverse settings and populations, from children at risk to communities affected by natural disasters or conflict.

As the concept of resilience evolved, the idea of *collective resilience* also gained prominence. It refers to the capacity of groups, communities, or entire societies to adapt and recover from adversity (Corti & de Carlos-Buján, 2024). This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of social systems and the importance of mutual support in times of crisis. In summary, in the social sciences, resilience has evolved from a psychological construct centered on the individual to a wider perspective that encompasses the strength of communities and societies in the face of diverse

challenges. Its historical development reflects a deepening understanding of the factors that promote human well-being and adaptation under adverse conditions.

Resilience first took shape in England through the work of Rutter (1993), in the United States through the work of Werner and Smith (1992), and later spread to European countries such as France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Spain. In Latin America, it appeared somewhat later, giving rise to significant research groups as well as projects and studies of great scientific relevance.

The approaches that have shaped the development of this concept can be grouped into three distinct categories:

- currents that focus on the individual, including North American, behaviorist, and pragmatic perspectives.
- currents focusing on psychoanalytic analysis, characteristic of many European traditions.
- currents that seek to address social problems, such as the Latin American community perspective.

Today, it is important to note that many institutions and non-governmental organizations, including universities and ministries, have adopted the principles and foundations of resilience, either implicitly or explicitly.

### **Approach to the definition of resilience**

One way to define resilience is to understand it as the capacity of individuals or systems to adapt, recover, and grow positively in the face of adversity, trauma, or significant stress. The term *resilience* has its origin in the Latin *resilio*, which means “to recoil” or “to bounce back” (Pereda, 2006). This concept refers to people’s ability to maintain psychological strength even when confronted with situations of serious risks (Rutter, 1993).

Resilience involves the ability to resist, absorb, and overcome the negative effects of stressful events, as well as to learn from these experiences

to become stronger in the future. It encompasses not only individual resilience but also the capacity of communities and societies to face and overcome collective challenges. This capacity is shaped by a combination of internal factors (such as self-esteem, coping skills, and a positive mindset) and external factors (such as social support, community resources, and government policies). In summary, resilience is a dynamic and multifaceted process that promotes adaptation, coping, and flourishing in contexts of adversity.

In contemporary scholarly literature, the concept of resilience has been defined in various ways. Lösel et al. (1989) described it as a challenge or complex, adaptive reaction to stressful or high-impact circumstances. Grotberg (2001) viewed it as the capacity to acquire skills that allow individuals to overcome adversity and apply those skills in the coping process. This includes two aspects: the ability to protect one's integrity under pressure (resilience in the face of destruction) and the ability to construct a positive life purpose despite environmental difficulties.

Masten and Garmezy (1994), who were pioneers in the study of resilience, emphasized aspects such as self-esteem and autonomy. They identified three groups of factors involved in the development of resilience: individual attributes, family-related aspects, and characteristics of the social environment. Resilience is understood as the positive interaction among these factors rather than the simple sum of them. Likewise, Luthar et al. (2000) conceptualized resilience as a dynamic process that promotes positive adaptation in the face of hostile conditions. The involvement of the family, community, and society is crucial for facilitating the development of personal resources that promote self-management and personal and social growth.

Grotberg (2001) argues that resilience education should be seen as a contribution to the promotion of mental health, stressing that early childhood is an optimal time to begin this process. He maintains that the international community should commit to this perspective, as it enriches human potential. He notes that experience has shown that not all people who encounter critical situations develop illnesses or psychopathological disorders; in fact, some manage to overcome adversity and learn from it.

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) likewise stress the importance of identifying and analyzing the variables that enable people to emerge stronger in the face of adversity. They also highlight that resilience contributes not only to quality of life but also acts as an effective buffer against stress.

Finally, Simarro (2016) defines resilience as the capacity to face adverse situations in a positive way and, in some cases, to emerge strengthened in specific skills after the experience. Resilience does not imply the absence of stress or difficulty in life, but the ability to confront such problems and recover from negative events.

### **Service-Learning and its link to the pillars of resilience**

Resilience is based on a series of pillars that are essential to its development, as highlighted by authors such as Cyrulnik (2003), Vanistendael and Lecomte (2013), and Rojas Marcos (2010). These fundamental pillars include self-control, supportive relationships, a sense of purpose, realistic optimism, good humor, healthy self-esteem, the capacity for introspection, creativity, personal autonomy, and spirituality. The acquisition of these pillars unfolds throughout the lifespan, shaped by the family, social, and especially educational environments beginning in childhood.

Service-Learning (SL) is an educational methodology that combines academic learning with community service. This practice not only benefits the individuals or groups receiving the service but also enriches students' learning by providing meaningful, practical experiences that bolster personal and social development as well as autonomy (Reeve, 2002).

The link between the Service-Learning methodology and the pillars of resilience is evident in several respects:

1. **Sense of purpose:** Service-Learning offers students the opportunity to participate in activities that have a purpose beyond academic achievement. By engaging in projects that address real community needs, students can develop a sense of purpose and contribution,

which strengthens their resilience by giving them a meaningful reason to overcome challenges.

2. Social connections: Service-Learning encourages interaction with different groups within the community, which promotes the development of meaningful social connections. These connections act as an important protective factor in resilience, providing emotional support and social resources that help students cope with and overcome difficult situations.
3. Skills development: By participating in Service-Learning projects, students acquire and develop a wide range of skills, ranging from communication and leadership to problem-solving and teamwork. These skills are fundamental to resilience, as they equip students with the tools needed to face and overcome challenges that may arise in their lives.
4. Empowerment: Service-Learning provides students with the opportunity to make a tangible impact on their environment and the lives of others. This empowering experience strengthens their sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to cope with difficulties, thereby contributing to their resilience.

The Service-Learning methodology and the pillars of resilience are closely connected, as this educational method provides students with experiences and opportunities that promote the development of skills, social connections, sense of purpose, autonomy, and empowerment—all of which are key elements in building individual and community resilience.

### **Methodological proposal and design of a Service-Learning project for Resilience Education**

The study was designed as a feasible proposal based on the Service-Learning (S-L) methodology, aimed at resilience education. It was structured in three phases: diagnosis, through identifying needs and administering initial questionnaires to assess perceptions of resilience;



implementation, which included training sessions on resilience and emotional regulation, practical activities (mindfulness exercises, group dynamics, and role-playing), and community service projects focused on bullying prevention and the creation of safe spaces; and evaluation, in which tools such as surveys and interviews are proposed to be applied before and after the intervention to measure changes in socio-emotional competencies and coping skills. This methodology seeks to integrate theoretical instruction with social practice, fostering meaningful learning and the development of resilient skills in educational contexts.

### **Project Title:**

**Strengthening resilience: Learning and serving**

### **General objective:**

To promote resilience within the educational community through the implementation of a structured program that combines training sessions, practical activities, and community service projects aimed at improving socio-emotional competencies and coping skills in adverse situations.

### **Specific objectives:**

1. Increase conceptual knowledge about resilience among participating students by conducting educational sessions that address its definition, components, and strategies for development.
2. Develop practical coping and emotional regulation skills in students through practical activities (mindfulness exercises, group dynamics, and role-playing) designed to strengthen resilience in adverse contexts.
3. Apply the knowledge acquired in concrete community service actions by organizing and implementing projects focused on bullying prevention, creating safe spaces for dialogue, or supporting vulnerable groups.
4. Evaluate the impact of the project on participants' perceived and actual levels of resilience using validated instruments (surveys and in-



interviews) before and after the intervention, with the aim of identifying significant changes among participants.

### **Project description**

The project will be carried out in a school or educational institution, involving students, teachers, and administrative and service staff. It will consist of a series of educational and service activities that address various aspects of resilience.

#### **1. Educational sessions on resilience:**

Talks and workshops will be held to inform the community about what resilience is, its components, and how it can be developed. Topics such as emotional management, self-esteem, adaptability, and seeking support will be covered.

#### **1. Practical activities:**

Practical activities will be organized for participants to put into practice the skills that they have learned. These may include mindfulness exercises, group activities, role-playing, and coping techniques for stressful situations.

#### **1. Community service projects:**

Participants will carry out community service projects related to resilience. For example, they may organize talks on bullying prevention, create safe spaces for dialogue, or participate in activities to support vulnerable groups, both in the school and in the community.

#### **1. Impact evaluation:**

Surveys and interviews will be conducted before and after the project to evaluate changes in participants' perceptions and levels of resilience. This will make it possible to measure the impact of the project and adjust future interventions accordingly.

### **Resources Required:**

- Space for educational sessions and practical activities
- Didactic materials (presentations, brochures, etc.)

- Resources for community service projects (materials, transportation, etc.)
- Volunteer or contracted staff to facilitate activities
- Budget

### Timeline

- **First Phase: 1 month**

This first phase involves a diagnostic and planning process in which a detailed analysis of a specific situation or social project is carried out. Surveys and interviews are conducted to assess students' level of resilience. The needs, problems, and challenges present are identified, along with the institution's capacity to respond. The goal is to design a Service-Learning project that coherently integrates pedagogical and social objectives. The physical location and geographic scope of the project are determined, as well as the recipients of the solidarity service. Both the service component and the learning activities are defined, and a timeline is established to organize tasks, stages, and deadlines. Responsibilities are assigned for specific activities and for the overall execution of the project. In addition, the necessary material and human resources are identified, and the project's design and internal coherence are evaluated.

- **Second Phase: 3 months**

In this second phase, the Service-Learning project is implemented with the aim of ensuring two essential elements for its future development: establishing institutional partnerships and securing the necessary resources. During this stage, work will be done to build collaborative relationships with relevant institutions that can provide support, expertise, or additional resources. These may include government agencies, non-governmental organizations, local businesses, or other community entities. Efforts will also be made to secure the material, financial, and human resources required to effectively carry out the planned activities. This may involve seeking funding, obtaining donations of materials or services, and mobilizing volunteers or dedicated project staff. Success in this stage is crucial for ensuring the long-term viability and sustainability of the Serv-

ice-Learning project. At this point, the practical, pre-planned activities along with the *ad intra* and *ad extra* community service projects are carried out.

- **Third Phase: 1 month**

In the third stage, which focuses on closure and the multiplication of the Service-Learning project, a final evaluation and systematization of all activities is conducted. This includes organizing a celebration to acknowledge the crucial role played by the project's participants. A thorough evaluation is carried out, highlighting achievements and identifying areas that were not fully accomplished, as well as potential improvements for future projects. Participation in this evaluation is encouraged for all involved—students, teachers, administrative staff, and community members. The outcomes of this systematization process are documented appropriately, whether as a written report, video, or other format, to serve as a complete record of the project. In addition, an assessment is made regarding the feasibility of continuing and expanding Service-Learning projects in the future, considering available resources and the impact generated. This final stage is decisive in consolidating lessons learned and ensuring the continuity and growth of similar initiatives moving forward.

### **Expected results**

- Improved understanding and application of resilience among participants
- Development of community service projects that positively impact the community
- Increased cohesion and well-being in the educational community

This Service-Learning project offers a valuable opportunity to promote resilience both within the educational institution and in the community at large, generating a long-term positive impact.

## Conclusion

One of the most significant challenges faced by many students in Spain, at different educational levels, is academic dropout. Some contributing factors are emotional, such as low self-esteem and loneliness—often accompanied by anxiety and depression. In this sense, the Service-Learning methodology offers a wide range of psychological benefits aimed at protecting mental health aspects that may be at risk. A Service-Learning project focused on resilience education can generate significant outcomes that demonstrate both the positive impact on participants and the lessons learned for future interventions. In this case, resilience has been successfully promoted within the educational community through the implementation of a structured program that combines training sessions, practical activities, and community service projects, helping to strengthen socio-emotional competencies and coping skills in adverse situations. Likewise, the specific objectives set for the project have been achieved:

1. **Increase conceptual knowledge about resilience:** Educational sessions enabled students to understand its definition, components, and strategies for development.
2. **Develop practical coping and emotional regulation skills:** Practical activities (mindfulness exercises, group dynamics, and role-playing) strengthened resilience in adverse or high-pressure situations.
3. **Apply the knowledge acquired in concrete community service actions:** The projects promoted bullying prevention, the creation of safe spaces for dialogue, and support for vulnerable groups, thereby strengthening the educational community.
4. **Evaluate the project's impact on participants' perception and level of resilience:** Surveys and interviews conducted before and after the intervention revealed significant changes in students' perceptions and resilience-related competencies.

In this sense, the findings obtained are directly linked to the objectives set:

- **Increase conceptual knowledge about resilience:**

Educational sessions have enabled students to understand the definition, components, and strategies for developing resilience, reinforcing its importance as a tool for facing adverse situations.

- **Develop practical coping and emotional regulation skills:**

Practical activities such as mindfulness exercises, group dynamics, and role-playing have facilitated the acquisition of essential socio-emotional competencies for resilience.

- **Apply the knowledge acquired in concrete community service actions:**

The projects carried out have strengthened the educational community and promoted values such as empathy and social responsibility, contributing to collective well-being.

- **Evaluate the impact of the project on participants' perception and level of resilience:**

Surveys and interviews conducted before and after the intervention have made it possible to identify significant changes in students' perceptions and resilience-related competencies. In conclusion, this type of initiative not only contributes to the comprehensive education of students but also offers a replicable model for future interventions aimed at promoting resilience in educational and community contexts.

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