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Resilience levels in sixth-grade primary school students

Niveles de resiliencia en estudiantes de sexto grado de educación primaria

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Abstract

Resilience is the ability to overcome adversity, adapt to change, and move forward despite challenges. The objective of the study was to analyze the levels of resilience among sixth-grade students at an educational institution in Lima, Peru. The methodology used was based on applied research, framed within a non-experimental and cross-sectional design with a descriptive approach. The population and sample consisted of 73 sixth-grade students between the ages of 10 and 12. The technique used was a survey, and the instrument was a validated questionnaire called JJ46. The results show that 60% of students are part of a dysfunctional family, and there is no emotional stability that can provide a sense of security to the student. Eighty percent have low self-esteem, and it is confirmed that they often feel that they are not good enough to interact with others. Seventy-three percent say they are sporadically assertive and have trouble interacting effectively with others. Eighty percent show that their adaptability is moderately adequate, and 49% of students are creative. The conclusions indicate that the levels of resilience found in this study are “medium resilience,” making it necessary to enhance all activities within the classroom.

Keywords: resilience, life skills, basic education.

Resumen

La resiliencia es la capacidad de superar adversidades, adaptarse a los cambios y seguir adelante a pesar de los desafíos. El objetivo del estudio fue analizar los niveles de resiliencia que presentan los estudiantes de sexto grado de educación primaria en una institución educativa en Lima – Perú. La metodología empleada se basa en una investigación aplicada, enmarcado dentro de un diseño no experimental y transversal con un enfoque descriptivo, la población y muestra fue de 73 estudiantes de sexto grado de primaria entre 10 y 12 años. La técnica fue la encuesta y el instrumento un cuestionario validado denominado JJ46. Los resultados demuestran que el 60% de estudiantes forma parte de una disfunción familiar, no existe estabilidad emocional que pueda proporcionar una sensación de seguridad al estudiante. El 80% presentan una baja autoestima y se confirma que a menudo sienten que no son lo suficientemente buenos para relacionarse con otros. El 73% manifiesta ser esporádicamente asertivos teniendo problemas para interactuar de manera efectiva con los demás. Un 80% evidencia que su adaptabilidad es moderadamente adecuada y el 49% de estudiantes es creativo. Las conclusiones indican que los niveles de resiliencia encontrados en este estudio se presentan en una “resiliencia media” siendo necesario potenciar todas las actividades dentro del aula.

Palabras clave: resiliencia, competencias para la vida, educación básica.

Introduction

In recent years, various international organizations have focused their efforts on researching and promoting programs aimed at developing resilience within the educational sector, recognizing its importance for the overall well-being and academic performance of students. These entities actively collaborate with governments and communities to foster educational approaches that not only impart knowledge but also develop life skills such as resilience. This component is essential for students to overcome challenges in an increasingly demanding and changing world (Arifiyanti et al., 2025).

Problem description

Among the main international organizations that have addressed this issue are:

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- UNESCO, which links resilience to contexts of poverty, promoting educational systems capable of adapting and remaining functional during crises (UNESCO, 2024).
- UNICEF, which has focused on the resilience of children and adolescents in emergency situations and forced displacement, highlighting the need for inclusive, flexible, and resilient educational systems (UNICEF, 2023).
- The World Bank, which has studied how educational systems can strengthen students' resilience in the face of economic crises or vulnerabilities.
- PNUD, which has researched resilience in education within the framework of sustainable development, supporting policies that favor long-term social and economic resilience (PNUD, 2024).
- OCDE, which has promoted studies on resilience in educational systems, emphasizing the need to adapt to technological and social changes to address various challenges (OCDE, 2024).

In the case of Peru, various initiatives have been developed—by both public and private sectors—to promote resilience in the educational context, recognizing its relevance in the holistic development of students, particularly in contexts of social crisis and vulnerability. National organizations such as the Ministry of Education (MINEDU) and the Center for Educational Research and Development (CIDE) have driven public policies, intervention models, and curricular strategies aimed at strengthening student resilience during the pandemic, in both urban and rural contexts (MINEDU, 2021). Additionally, the National Education Council (CNE) has promoted proposals focused on improving educational quality and enhancing students' adaptability.

However, while these studies have facilitated decision-making and investments in the educational sector, most research on resilience among primary education students has been conducted from a macro perspective, encompassing broad populations. This has resulted in a general overview but lacks the necessary depth to effectively intervene in specific contexts (Nicholson et al., 2025).

The absence of individualized approaches prevents a detailed analysis of each student's personal characteristics. Resilience manifests diversely and uniquely in each individual, making general studies susceptible to overlooking determining factors such as family environment, personal experiences, or social context (Tabibnia, 2024). Moreover, this lack of precision hinders the identification of specific school and family situations affecting resilience, limiting the effectiveness of interventions. While large-scale studies provide a panoramic view of the educational system, their results are often generalized, hindering the design of specific strategies that respond to the particular needs of certain student groups (Daniilidou et al., 2020).

In this context, it is observed that sixth-grade students face emotional and social difficulties that affect their ability to cope with changes and stressful situations in the classroom. Some exhibit family conflicts or economic problems, resulting in emotional instability reflected in feelings of sadness and disengagement during classes, reducing their sense of support and protection. Others avoid participation due to insecurity or fear of rejection, contributing to social isolation (Bene, 2025).

One of the most concerning aspects is the low self-esteem observed in these students, who are at a critical stage of identity development. Experiences such as bullying or comparisons with peers negatively impact their confidence and sense of self-efficacy (Hassan et al., 2025). Many express disbelief in their abilities, avoiding academic challenges for fear of failure. Furthermore, they exhibit difficulties in assertive communication skills, which impedes the appropriate expression of emotions, desires, and thoughts, generating high levels of stress and frustration (Revuelta-Domínguez et al., 2023).

At this grade level, students prepare for the transition to secondary education and feel overwhelmed by changes in the school environment. The new academic and social demands compromise their adaptability, performance, and emotional stability. Many express frustration when interacting with new peers, and some respond with aggressive behaviors when they are unable to adequately regulate their emotions.

For educators, it is a priority to enhance the development of creativity as a tool for students to face challenges with greater flexibility. However, some children do not explore their creative potential, focusing instead on obtaining external validation through social media, which limits their ability to generate their own innovative solutions.

This issue highlights that the absence of well-developed resilience—across dimensions such as family functionality, self-esteem, assertiveness, adaptability, and creativity—affects sixth-grade students' capacity to confront academic and emotional challenges. Strengthening these dimensions is crucial for promoting a successful school transition to secondary education.

Conceptualization of resilience

Resilience has been studied for over four decades; however, it has garnered particular interest in psychology and education in recent years, especially within the school context (Havea et al., 2020). Resilience is recognized as having a direct impact on students' personal development and academic performance (Chiang et al., 2024), enabling them to adapt more effectively to adverse situations, which translates into greater motivation and commitment to learning (Rodríguez-Vintimilla et al., 2025; Roldán-Quijije, 2025).

Resilience can be defined as the capacity to adapt in the face of adversity and to confront processes of overcoming positively (Nielsen et al., 2022). In this process, the family plays a central role by providing emotional, affective, and practical support during difficult times. Family bonds significantly influence the development of resilience (Farfán et al., 2023).

According to Lee (2025), the family constitutes a safe space that allows the expression of emotions and sharing of fears, generating a sense of belonging that strengthens the emotional security of the student. This sense of support contributes to the student facing challenges with self-confidence.

Furthermore, self-esteem is a key dimension of resilience, as it conditions how students confront failure and difficulty. A student with high self-esteem tends to view obstacles as learning opportunities rather than personal failures (Qu et al., 2024). When resilience is adequately developed, it allows for the construction of a solid self-esteem, associated with confidence, personal valuation, and emotional regulation (Al-Rashidi & Çakmak, 2024).

Conversely, low self-esteem can undermine the emotional development of the student. Therefore, timely intervention is necessary through the recognition of achievements and the strengthening of self-confidence, enabling students to make independent decisions and resolve problems (Ioannidou & Michael, 2024).

Another key skill is assertiveness, which allows students to express their emotions and ideas clearly and respectfully, without aggression or passivity (Zhao, 2024; Vitalaki et al., 2018). Assertiveness is fundamental for facing difficult situations, resolving conflicts, and maintaining healthy relationships (Gadari et al., 2023).

Additionally, adaptability allows for the modification of strategies when conditions change, and is related to the active seeking of support and willingness to work in teams. This component enhances the emotional, social, and cognitive development of students, improving their capacity to face academic challenges (Çalhan, 2024; Razzaq et al., 2024; Zellma & Mąkosa, 2024).

Finally, creativity is also a fundamental dimension of resilience, as it drives learning, problem-solving, and emotional expression. According to Sheehan & Hadfield (2024), creativity enhances critical thinking, while González-Moreno & Molero-Jurado (2024) assert that it strengthens self-esteem and motivates students to actively participate in their personal and academic development.

Justification of the study

Resilience has gained particular relevance in the field of psychological development. Currently, its study has expanded to other disciplines, such as education, where it has assumed a fundamental role (Tan et al., 2024). In this regard, its theoretical value in the educational context lies in enhancing knowledge about the levels of resilience exhibited by students, who face challenges that can affect both their academic performance and emotional well-being.

From a practical perspective, this study allows for the establishment of strategies aimed at fostering resilience in students, providing them with tools to more effectively tackle the specific problems that arise in their daily lives (Cordero & Mateos-Romero, 2021).

Understanding resilience levels from a methodological perspective will contribute to improving procedures related to the use and application of the instrument, thereby strengthening existing knowledge about its validity and reliability. Consequently, the primary beneficiaries will be sixth-grade primary education students, as greater awareness of resilience will enable the implementation of educational strategies that help them confront adverse situations more effectively (Roldán-Quijije, 2025; Chiang et al., 2024).

Objectives

General objective:

To analyze the levels of resilience among sixth-grade primary education students in an educational institution in Lima, Peru, in order to identify the factors that influence their adaptability to adverse situations.

Specific objectives:

- To describe the level of family functionality, self-esteem, assertiveness, adaptability, and creativity in students.
- To assess the influence of these factors on the development of resilience.

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- To establish educational intervention proposals to strengthen resilience in this age group.

To effectively promote resilience among primary education students, it is essential to have a reliable and validated instrument that accurately measures resilient capacities. This will facilitate the identification of areas for improvement, allowing for the implementation of effective and personalized educational interventions, thereby contributing to the holistic development of students and their ability to face adversities throughout their lives (González et al., 2024).

Methodology

Design

This study is framed within applied research, as its purpose is to generate knowledge aimed at improving resilience levels in sixth-grade primary education students. A non-experimental methodological design was employed, specifically cross-sectional, since data collection was conducted at a single point in time through a systematically administered questionnaire to two sixth-grade sections of an educational institution in Lima, Peru, during December 2024 (Hernández & Mendoza, 2018).

Additionally, the study adopted a descriptive approach, focusing on accurately identifying and detailing the reality faced by students regarding their resilience and capacity to overcome difficult situations in the school environment. Its aim was to describe the current situation and provide a deeper understanding of resilience levels in this specific context.

To measure the resilience variable, five dimensions were considered, as proposed by Alvarán et al. (2022):

- Family functionality: understood as the systematic interaction among family members and the roles they assume in new situations.
- Self-esteem: the student's ability to value themselves.
- Social assertiveness: the ability to express thoughts, emotions, and desires appropriately without resorting to defense mechanisms.
- Adaptability: the capacity to adjust to new situations using cognitive and social resources.
- Creativity: the cognitive faculty to solve problems in an original and personal way.

Population and sample

The study population consisted of 73 sixth-grade primary education students, distributed in sections A and B of an educational institution in Lima. The participants were aged between 10 and 12 years. Since the entire population was studied, it was a census sample, meaning the sample size coincided with the total population under study, which is advisable in research with small and manageable populations (Hernández & Mendoza, 2018).

Techniques and instruments

The technique employed was the survey, and the instrument used was a validated questionnaire, which had previously been adapted to the educational context for application with primary students. Prior to its application, informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians.

Table 1

Technical specifications of the JJ46 resilience level measurement questionnaire

Name	Description
Author(s)	Sandra Milena Alvarán López, Sandra Milena Rueda Ramírez, Germán Fernando Vieco & Jaime Andrés Gaviria Bedoya (2022).
Adapted from	Jaramillo Oyervide (2010).
Objective	Aims to evaluate the resilience levels of students in children and adolescents in the school stage.
Origin	Colombia
Administration	Individual

Subject of application	Sixth-grade primary education students from an educational institution in Lima, Peru
Duration	25 to 30 minutes on average, sometimes with supervision.
Structure	46 items grouped into eight dimensions: Family Functionality, Self-esteem, Assertiveness, Adaptability, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Impulsivity, and Affectivity.
Scoring Scale	Items are framed in a Likert scale: almost never, rarely, sometimes, often, and almost always.
Expert Panel	The experts included a social worker, a psychologist, a mental health epidemiologist, and a statistician; all with master's and doctoral degrees specialized in the subject.
Scoring	Each item has five scoring alternatives from 1 to 5 points: almost never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and almost always (5).
Psychometric Properties	For construct validity, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was implemented, allowing for the elimination of items with a factor loading equal to or greater than 0.3. Cronbach's alpha values are below 0.6 in most dimensions. The internal consistency of the instrument obtained a correlation coefficient between odd and even scores of 0.79; the reliability coefficient corrected by the Spearman-Brown method was 0.88.

The instrument used was the JJ46 questionnaire, adapted by Alvarán et al. (2022), which consists of 46 items and employs a scoring scale to classify resilience levels into three ranges:

- **Low Resilience:** 46 to 107 points
- **Medium Resilience:** 108 to 167 points
- **High Resilience:** 168 to 230 points.

The questionnaire evaluates five key dimensions: family functionality, self-esteem, assertiveness, adaptability, and creativity, which were considered for the analysis and interpretation of the results.

Table 2
Top 5 constructs or dimensions with items from the JJ46 scale and scores

Construct	Items	Min, Max	Scores
Family Functionality	1, 2, 3, 4, 7	5,25	20 to 25 points: functional family 15 to 19 points: moderately functional family 10 to 14 points: dysfunctional family 5 to 9 points: severely dysfunctional family
Self-esteem	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 (reversed)	6, 30	24 to 30 points: adequate self-esteem 18 to 23 points: moderately adequate self-esteem 12 to 17 points: deficient self-esteem 6 to 11 points: severely deficient self-esteem
Assertiveness	15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21	6, 30	24 to 30 points: assertive 18 to 23 points: moderately assertive 12 to 17 points: sporadically assertive 6 to 11 points: not assertive
Adaptability	22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27	6, 30	24 to 30 points: adequate adaptability 18 to 23 points: moderately adequate adaptability 12 to 17 points: inadequate adaptability 6 to 11 points: severely inadequate adaptability
Creativity	37, 38, 39, 41, 42	5, 25	20 to 25 points: creative 15 to 19 points: moderately creative 10 to 14 points: occasionally creative 5 to 9 points: not creative

Note. Data taken from Validation of the JJ63 instrument for measuring resilience in school-aged children and adolescents in five public institutions of Antioquia, Alvarán et al. (2022).

Procedure

Data collection was conducted following institutional authorization and with informed consent signed by the parents or guardians. The questionnaire was administered during regular class hours, dedicating one class period, during which detailed instructions were provided. Privacy and confidentiality of responses were ensured, with no student having access to their peers' answers.

Data analysis

The collected data were entered into the SPSS statistical program version 26 to perform a quantitative analysis of the results obtained. Descriptive statistical graphs and indicators were created for each of the five dimensions considered in the study. Using this information, the resilience levels of the students were determined, and areas requiring priority attention for strengthening this capacity were identified.

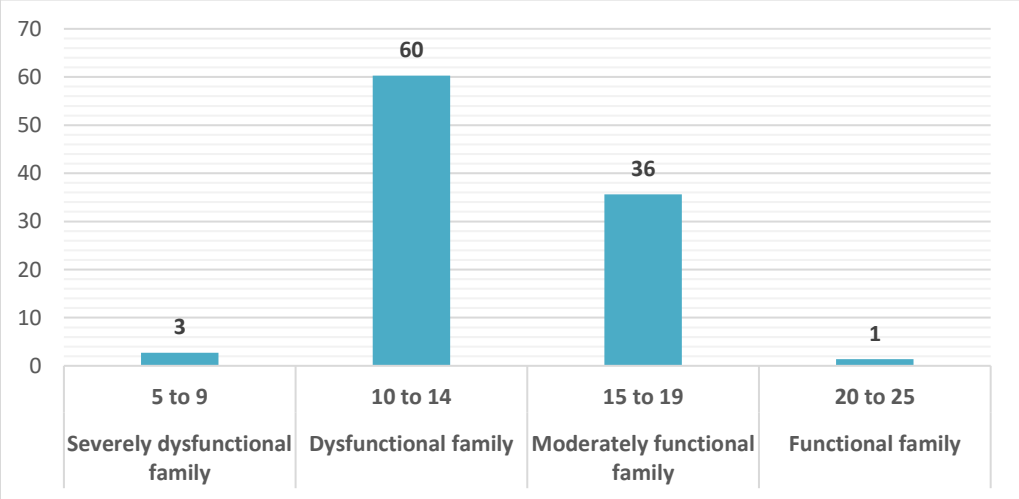
Results

Due to various circumstances, the families of these students face problems that affect the overall well-being of the family unit. However, parents rarely involve their children in resolving these conflicts. Although children and adolescents directly experience family tensions, they are generally kept out of conversations or decisions aimed at resolving them. This exclusion can generate a sense of disconnection and lack of control over their environment, complicating their ability to comprehend and manage the emotional impact of such situations.

According to Figure 1, 60% of primary education students report being part of a dysfunctional family, meaning a home where there are difficulties or problems in family relationships that negatively affect their emotional, social, and academic well-being. These students experience constant conflicts and lack emotional support; some even face parental separation or divorce. Only 36% are part of a moderately functional family, which also influences their academic performance, ability to relate to others, and behavior in the classroom.

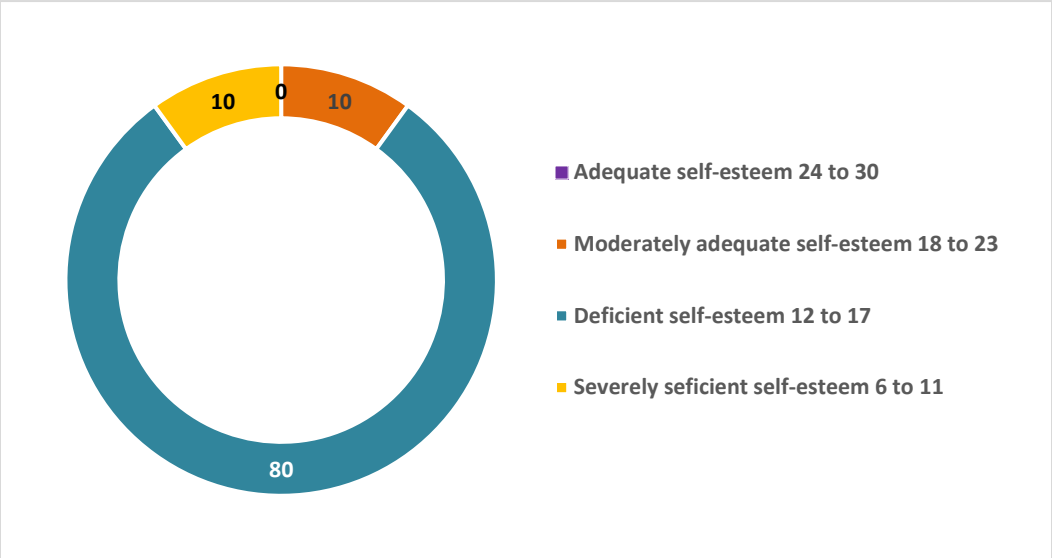
Figure 1

Levels of family functionality among primary education students



According to Figure 2, 80% of the students exhibit deficient self-esteem, which has consequences for their emotional, academic, and social development. This lack of self-confidence impacts various areas of their lives, limiting their ability to face everyday challenges. Only 10% demonstrate moderately adequate self-esteem. This difference illustrates low participation in class, a lack of willingness to try new activities, and difficulties in completing tasks or taking risks in learning due to fear of making mistakes. In contrast, students with moderate self-esteem trust in their ability to learn and face challenges, enabling them to adopt a proactive attitude towards studying, problem-solving in class, and participating in school activities.

Figure 2
Levels of self-esteem among primary education students



Concerning the levels of assertiveness, Figure 3 shows that 73% of the students are only sporadically assertive. This situation reflects that their emotional state does not allow them to effectively manage difficult situations, express their thoughts and emotions clearly and respectfully, or face challenges without losing control over their emotions or behaviors. In contrast, 25% exhibit a moderate level of assertiveness, indicating that these students do not adopt submissive or aggressive behaviors, and they know how to handle conflicts constructively, as well as ask for help or pose questions when they do not understand something.

Figure 3
Levels of assertiveness among primary education students

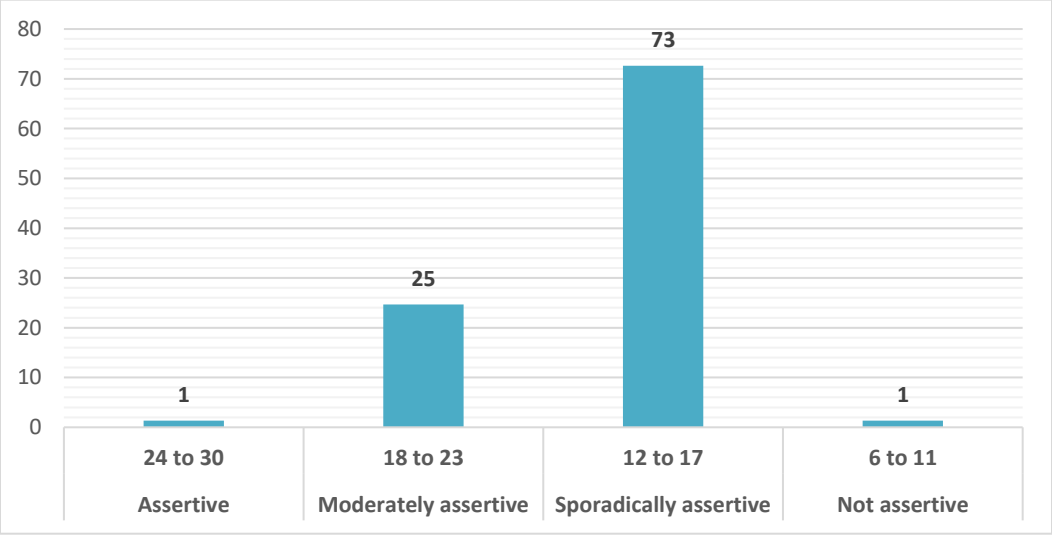
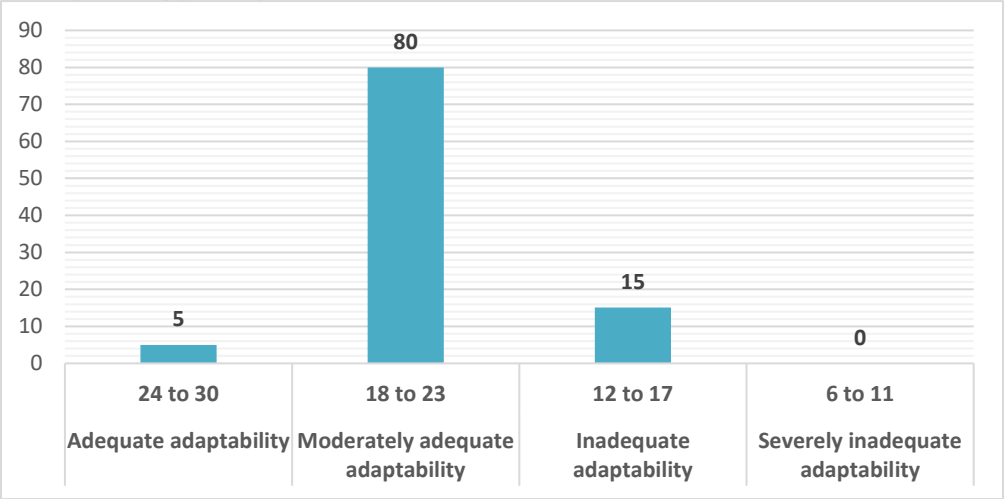


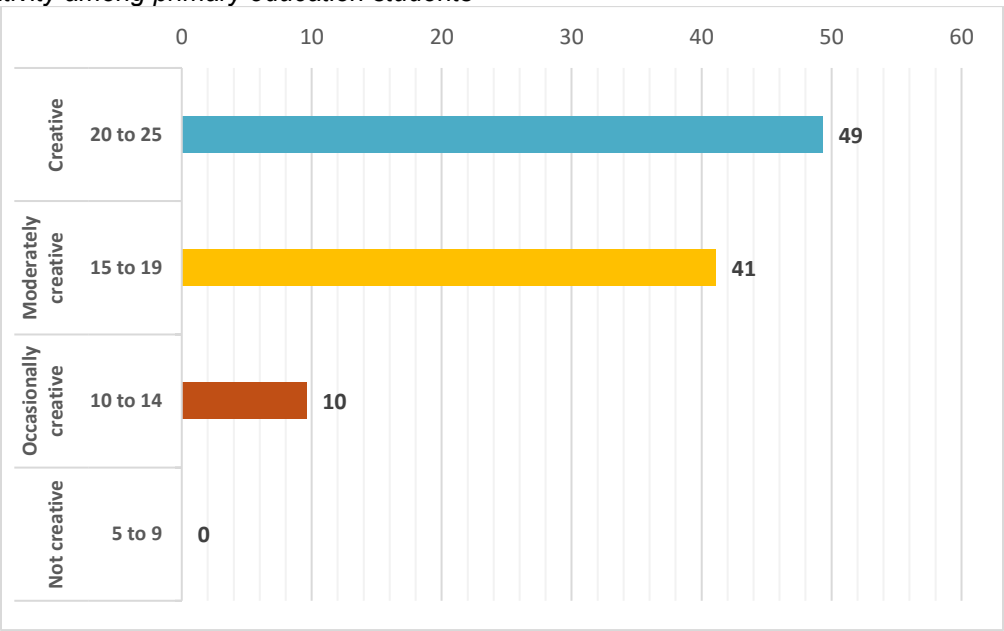
Figure 4 reveals that 80% of the students possess a moderately adequate level of adaptability, which is significant considering that the levels obtained in the other dimensions of resilience were lower. This result suggests that students have begun to develop the capacity to confront, overcome, and learn from adversities, difficulties, or changes in their school or personal environments. Only 5% demonstrate adequate adaptability, indicating that these students already possess essential emotional and social skills for their well-being and long-term success.

Figure 4
Levels of adaptability among primary education students



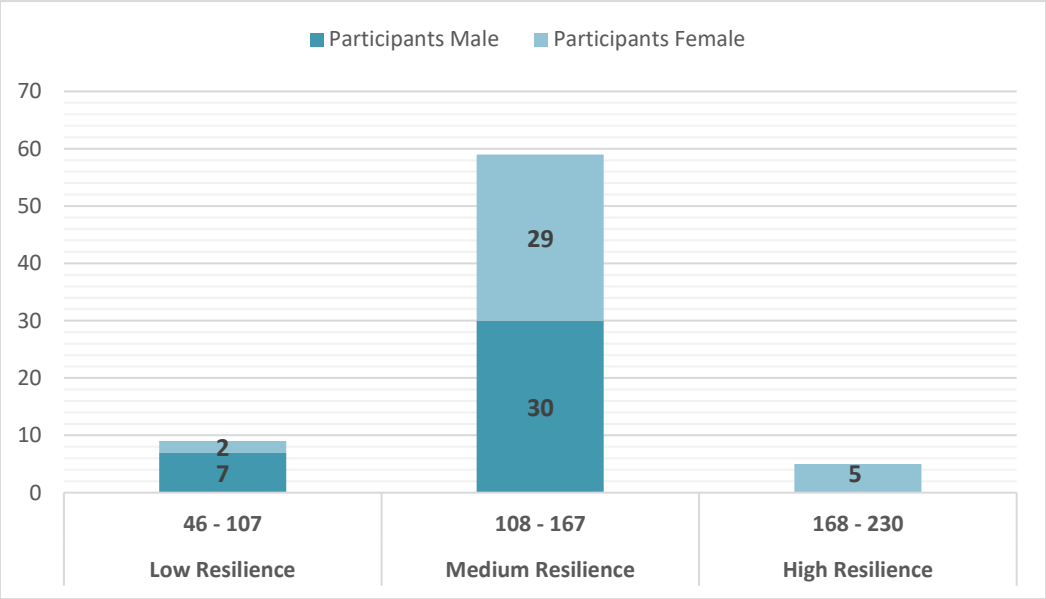
Creativity also fosters the development of collaborative skills, as experts suggest it is not always an individual process. According to Figure 5, 49% of the students consider themselves creative, indicating that they tend to collaborate in class, share ideas, and resolve conflicts together. Meanwhile, 41% express being moderately creative, developing skills such as communication, cooperation, and respect for others' ideas. Finally, 10% of the students demonstrate creativity only occasionally.

Figure 5
Levels of creativity among primary education students



Regarding the overall levels of resilience, this group of primary education students falls within the “medium resilience” range. On average, boys scored 30 and girls scored 29. These levels indicate that students are developing skills such as problem-solving, innovation, personal expression, and cooperation, which prepares them to become effective learners and responsible citizens in the future.

Figure 6
Overall resilience levels of primary education students



Discussion

Regarding family functionality, Farfán et al. (2023) noted the importance of involving children, according to their age and maturity, in certain family problems, as this could strengthen emotional bonds and foster an environment of open and sincere communication. However, 60% of the students come from dysfunctional families, where they do not feel valued or responsible for the collective well-being within the home. Those who live in a dysfunctional family environment may be experiencing stress and anxiety, which affects their academic performance. Only 36% belong to a moderately functional family.

These results contradict the assertion that the family should be a safe and protective space for students (Lee, 2025). However, the current environment presents constant conflicts between parents or within the family unit in general, creating a tense atmosphere that compromises the emotional stability of students. If parents do not provide emotional attention or the necessary support, the student may feel alone, neglected, or insecure, which negatively impacts their emotional development.

Regarding self-esteem, it was observed that 80% of the students have deficient levels, which is reflected in their low motivation. This condition generates constant doubts about their ability to complete tasks and face academic challenges, leading to a lack of interest in learning and a tendency to avoid situations where they might fail. This situation contradicts what Qu et al. (2024) and Al-Rashidi and Cakmak (2024) state, highlighting that good self-esteem allows individuals to confront challenges or failures as learning opportunities. Instead, these students express fear of failure and making mistakes, which causes anxiety and stress both inside and outside the classroom. Since there is no recognition of their achievements, as suggested by Ioannidou and Michael (2024), self-confidence is not fostered, affecting their concentration and ability to enjoy school activities to the point of avoiding participation or asking questions for fear of being wrong.

According to the reviewed literature, being assertive involves expressing emotions appropriately, without suppressing them or acting destructively. However, 73% of the students indicate that they are only sporadically assertive, suggesting that they have not yet learned to control their emotions, as Zhao (2024) points out. Assertiveness involves communicating feelings such as sadness, frustration, or joy coherently; however, only 25% of the students exhibit moderately assertive behavior. In the classroom, this is evidenced by a tendency to abandon activities or projects when faced with difficulties, showing low tolerance for frustration and criticism. Gadari et al. (2023) propose that one should neither be aggressive nor submissive when expressing oneself; however, the results indicate that students have difficulty communicating their thoughts, needs, desires, and emotions clearly, respectfully, and without fear.

Having high levels of adaptability is beneficial for primary education students. Razzaq et al. (2024) assert that this is a key skill that not only helps to face immediate challenges but also lays the foundation for solid

emotional development by focusing on opportunities for improvement. Eighty percent of the students show moderately adequate adaptability, indicating that they possess the ability to adjust quickly to changes without feeling overwhelmed or anxious, thus facilitating smooth and positive transitions. These results confirm the assertion that students should be flexible and able to work in teams (Calhan, 2024). In this group, the ability to find alternative solutions when things do not go as expected is observed. Only 5% demonstrate adequate adaptability, suggesting they are already capable of adjusting to different situations both in the classroom and in their daily lives.

Finally, regarding creativity, the results show that 49% of the students consider themselves creative, while 41% identify as moderately creative. This reinforces what Sheehan and Hadfield (2024) state, that motivation drives personal, emotional, and social development, allowing for the fostering of critical thinking and innovative problem-solving. On the other hand, 10% show creativity only occasionally, and as indicated by González-Moreno and Molero-Jurado (2024), a lack of creativity can limit the development of confidence, generating fear of failure. Therefore, the importance of a stimulating environment and the development of creative activities in the classroom that enhance these skills is emphasized.

Conclusions

According to the general objective, the resilience levels found in this study, through the analysis of the group of primary education students, indicate that they fall within a “medium resilience” range, with boys and girls distributed equitably. These levels demonstrate the need to enhance all classroom activities to strengthen this competence.

Sixty percent of the students come from dysfunctional families, a situation that often involves parental separation or divorce. This rupture creates an unstable family environment, affecting the emotional security of the student. There is no family stability that provides a sense of security, allowing them to concentrate on finding solutions without being dragged down by emotional chaos.

Additionally, 80% of the students exhibit low self-esteem, which is reflected in frequent feelings of not being good enough to relate to others, generating isolation or rejection. This insecurity prevents them from seeking friendships or participating in social activities both inside and outside the classroom. Currently, in some cases, isolation or lack of interaction with peers is evident, and in discussions, students show difficulty expressing their opinions assertively, leading them to become victims of bullying.

The lack of self-confidence also hinders students from expressing their needs, desires, or emotions clearly and respectfully, as 73% indicate they are only sporadically assertive. This reflects problems in effectively interacting with others, both in the classroom and other contexts. Only 25% demonstrate moderate assertiveness, indicating they have some capacity to manage everyday situations and address conflicts healthily.

Adaptability, as an essential life skill, is reaffirmed by the study results, which show that 80% of students exhibit moderately adequate adaptability. These students are developing this competence from an early age, better preparing them to face the changes and challenges that will arise as they advance to secondary education.

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