

## CHAPTER 3

# THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

## THE CONCEPT OF “RESILIENCE”: HISTORY OF FORMATION AND APPROACHES TO DEFINITION

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**Abstract.** The aim of the article is to collect information about the history of the integration of the concept of "resilience" into psychological science and determine the main approaches to its understanding; to systematize and compare the approaches to the conceptualization of the concept of "resilience" and its distinction with other terms presented in the Ukrainian and foreign scientific literature in recent years. The article gives a historical review of the formation and development of the concept of "resilience", starting from the 19th century and ending with the present. The authors consider different views on the psychological interpretation of the term "resilience", as an aspect that has an impact on the quality of life of an individual. There are two main approaches in psychology to understanding resilience – resilience as a trait and a process which have a common understanding of the concept: it describes the ability of individuals and social systems (family, communities, organizations) to successfully function, adapt, and cope despite different kinds of adversity (psychological, social, cultural, physical). Resilience emerges in people along the continuum of their development. The focus is on the conceptualization of resilience as a continuous, active process of the emergence or development of new forces and resources for adaptation and recovery, which has uneven dynamics in the face of the emergence of new risks. In such interpretation resilience is the ability of a person or social group to maintain balance and integrity in a difficult situation, to effectively solve not only the task of adapting to changing conditions, but also the task of development. The authors compares the approaches to the conceptualization of the concept of "resilience" presented in the Ukrainian and foreign scientific literature in recent years. In both English and Ukrainian sources, resilience belongs to the category of adaptation, it is preceded by a traumatic event or stressful impact. In the Ukrainian-language psychological literature, the definition of resilience as a dynamic process, prevails; the concept of resilience is interpreted mainly as resistance to stress, maintenance of normal functioning in conditions of psycho-traumatic influence. In English-language literature, the conceptualization of resilience as a return to the previous level of functioning, rapid recovery is significantly predominant.

**Keywords:** resilience, resiliency, resilience as a personality trait, resilience as a skill.

**JEL Classification:** I31, I1, Y8

**Formulas:** 0; fig.0; tabl.0; bibl. 46

**Introduction.** Modern challenges encourage the search for new, scientifically based methods and tools for psychological assistance and support in personality development. Current life conditions create new challenges in society, taking into account the growing mental health problem of the younger generation in connection with social isolation and stress related to the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

It remains an important task of psychological practice to help people in various stressful situations, in order to overcome the consequences of encountering adverse circumstances and prevent the formation of destructive behaviour. And also to create conditions enabling the development of effective self-regulation and improvement of the quality of life.

Combat operations on the territory of Ukraine, occupation and difficult socioeconomic situation in the country as a whole leads to a deterioration of living standards and the well-being of families, which has a particularly negative effect on children.

**Aims.** The purpose of the study is to collect information about the history of the integration of the concept of "resilience" into psychological science and determine the main approaches to its understanding; to systematize and compare the approaches to the conceptualization of the concept of "resilience" and its distinction with other terms presented in the Ukrainian and foreign scientific literature in recent years.

**Methodology.** Research methods include methods of generalization and systematization of the findings of different researchers, retrospective and comparative analysis.

**Results.** *The history of studying the concept of 'resilience.'* The history of the development of the construct of "resilience" in the world begins in the 1800s. Until the 1950s, resilience was considered in the psychological literature in the context of unconscious defence mechanisms, since the 1960s - conscious coping strategies, and since the 1980s - protective factors and risk factors. As for physiological research, resilience was studied in the context of homeostasis and quantum physics in the 1920s, emotional stress and disease in the 1950s, brain plasticity in the 1970s, and psychoneuroimmunology since the 1980s. Only since the 1990s physiological and psychological aspects of resilience have begun to combine (Tol et al., 2013).

Separately, we can talk about the study of resilience in the context of mental health, starting from the 1950s. The concept was first used in the study of children with mental health problems (the 1970s) to describe children who had well-being despite adverse conditions and risks.

The term "resilience" is translated as "stability, plasticity, elasticity" (Khaminych, 2016, p. 161). It was borrowed from physics, where it means the ability of solid bodies to restore their shape after mechanical pressure, and has been used since the beginning of the 70s of the last century. Dissemination of research in various psychology fields aimed to define whether resilience is a personality trait or a dynamic state. Different approaches have led to differences in the definition of this term.

In psychology, the study of resilience focuses on identifying characteristics of individuals, especially young people, who have been successful and prosperous, living

under challenging circumstances, such as low socioeconomic status and parents' mental illness.

In 1960-1970, the phenomenon of resilience became the most popular topic for discussion in scientific circles and was also studied within the framework of positive psychology (Fletcher, Sarkar, 2012). In 1973, N. Garmezi first published the results of studying resilience. He used epidemiology data and identified protective factors that now help determine resilience (Fletcher, Sarkar, 2013). In 1982, E. Werner was one of the first to use the term "resilience" to describe children from low-income families, as well as children who grew up in families with parents with alcohol addiction and parents with mental disorders. Resilience became a major theoretical and research topic after the publication of A. Masten's works in the 1980s devoted to studying children whose mothers suffer from schizophrenia (Fletcher, Sarkar, 2013).

In the 1980s and 1990s, research on resilience was devoted to children who, despite various stresses and adversities, were able to function well in adulthood (Miller, Rasmussen, 2010). In the 2000s, other population groups appeared in the focus of resilience research, including the elderly and representatives of various ethnic groups who were in unfavourable conditions (had various diseases, were in military conflict zones etc.).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the focus of resilience research has shifted from identifying protective factors to understanding the processes due to which individuals are able to overcome difficulties (Fletcher, Sarkar, 2013).

Currently, this term is widely used in psychology, medicine, and social sciences and is considered in connection with the issues of (1) the impact on a person of adverse (extreme, threatening, stressful) conditions and (2) the ability of a person and/or social system to function normally (families, communities, organizations) during and after such an impact (Bonanno, 2004; Connor & Davidson, 2003; Luthar et al., 2000).

*Approaches to defining the nature of resilience.* Resilience was studied as a dynamic process of successful adaptation to adversity, revealed through the prism of developmental psychopathology. There has been considerable debate in research and practice regarding the definition and operationalization of resilience (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Researchers who have narrowly focused on developmental risk often view resilience in response to adversity as an exception rather than a rule (Luthar, 2006).

Dissemination of research in various psychology fields aimed to define whether resilience is a personality trait or a dynamic state. Different approaches have led to differences in the definition of this term. The ecological systems approach describes resilience as a stable personality trait (Bonanno et al., 2015; Connor & Davidson, 2003; Wagnild & Young, 1993). A transactional/social-ecological approach considers this phenomenon as a state, an adaptive system of a family or society (Hays-Grudo & Morris, 2020; Henry et al., 2015; Sameroff, 2010; Stokols et al., 2013; Ungar, 2012).

S. Pirozhkov, E. Bozhok, N. Khamitov (2021) point out that resilience is a medical term that means a set of traits inherent to the subject that make it capable of overcoming stress and challenging periods in a constructive way. In their opinion, the characteristics that determine such ability are not always natural, in many cases they must be acquired.

J. Shonkoff, P. Levitt, S. Bunge note that resilience reflects a person's ability to transform potentially toxic stress into a more enabling one and reduce the harmful physiological and psychological effects of such stressors that occur in childhood (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015).

G. Richardson (2002) identified three stages: in the first stage, researchers identify the qualities of individuals who respond positively to difficult living conditions; in the second one, resilience is considered in the context of dealing with stressors and difficulties; in the third one, they study the motivation of individuals and groups, which leads to self-realization.

It should be noted that the definition of resilience approved by the American Psychological Association (APA) is the most common and widely used today, in which resilience is understood as "the process of positive adaptation in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy or significant stress" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023).

Traditionally, the most important phenomena considered in the context of overcoming difficult life situations include "personal adaptation potential", "adaptation potential", "sustainability", "stress resistance", "hardiness", "personal potential", "sanogenic potential" and "resilience".

In the publications of M. Rutter, E. Werner and others, the term "resilience" is considered in three vectors:

- 1) in the vector of cognitive behaviourism — studying the processes of emotional regulation of children's behavioural reactions in stressful situations;
- 2) constructive vector — aimed at mastering an active life position;
- 3) ecological approach — aimed at overcoming difficult life circumstances precisely by social factors (Nahnybeda, 2018).

A theoretical model of resilience was created based on the theoretical and experimental studies of G. Richardson, K. Bolton, and A. Masten. The model consists of four separate phases:

- confrontation with risk factors (traumatic events);
- activation of protective factors and vulnerability factors;
- interaction between protective factors and vulnerability factors;
- possible results: resilience, maladaptation (Lazos, 2019).

Further research led to the emergence of a new, cross-cultural approach, which reflects the connection of vitality and ways of responding in risk situations with race, age, gender, place of residence. This approach is very promising in the framework of joint international projects of scientists from different countries.

Within the framework of psycholinguistics, the following types of resilience are defined:

- 1) positive adaptation - when a person successfully adapts to new social conditions without difficulty and does not experience psychological problems;
- 2) conditional adaptation — demonstrates a group of so-called risk, i.e. represents a person's tendency to encounter certain difficulties and barriers, in particular psychological ones, during adaptation to life circumstances. However, a person, despite the destructive factors, still gradually adapts;
- 3) negative adaptation is characterized by the impossibility of personal adaptation

to new life conditions due to certain psychological and physiological problems (Hromova, 2021).

The last years of the study of the term resilience are characterized by research not only of the process itself but also of the description of factors of resilience, factors of a positive result of adaptation and further socialization (Hromova, 2021).

Modern scientists approach studying and definition of this phenomenon comprehensively. Thus, a follower of the constructivist approach to the study of resilience, D. Hellerstein, conceptualizing this phenomenon, singles out its two main components - physical resilience as an indicator of stress resistance and tolerance and psychological resilience, which includes the development and maintenance of social contacts, the use of social support, finding meaning in difficult events or situations, increasing the educational level and mastering various psychotechnologies that help the development and overcoming of negative consequences after stress (Hellerstein, 2011).

T. Fedotova (2018) notes that resilience requires mastering social skills and abilities, including the ability to solve problems. The list of such skills includes sociability, the ability to restrain anger and control the manifestations of emotions, the ability to plan one's activities and interact with others.

Modern approaches to consideration of resilience:

1. Resilience as an individual characteristic (ego-resiliency), a personality trait that protects against the adversities of life and prevents the development of mental disorders as a result of psychotraumatization, manifests itself as flexibility, agility, creativity and character grit, as well as the ability to adapt to functioning in various external conditions (Block, & Block, 1980).

2. Resilience as a dynamic process (the term "resilience" is used) in which positive adaptation occurs in the face of adversity. In this sense, resilience is conceptualized as a continuous, active process of the emergence or development of new forces and resources for adaptation and recovery, which has uneven dynamics in the face of the emergence of new risks (Masten et al., 1990; Norris et al., 2008).

Whether resilience is a trait or a process is still debated, but there is a common understanding that the concept describes the ability of individuals, families, and groups to successfully function, adapt, and cope despite psychological, social, cultural, and/or physical adversity. Resilience (as a trait and a process) appears in people along the continuum of their development (Psykhosotsialna pidtrymka v umovakh nadzvychnykh sytuatsii, 2017).

However, numerous studies have proven that people recover faster from the effects of emergencies when they feel safe, have close (family) ties, are at peace, have access to social, physical and emotional support and find ways to help themselves. And the main risk factors leading to the development of mental illnesses are the adverse environmental conditions that people find themselves in and the lack of support in this environment (Silk et al., 2007).

According to the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO), resilience is "the ability to cope relatively well with difficult situations and personal resources" (Silk et al., 2007).

Today, a broad empirical base and several theoretical constructs for practical use have been created in relation to the term "resilience". But there is no final and universally accepted decision regarding the interpretation of this concept in science.

So, a historical review of the formation and development of the concept of "resilience" was given, starting from the 19th century and ending with the present.

The problem of different views on the interpretation of the psychological term "resilience", which is studied by specialists of various branches of psychological science as an aspect that has an impact on the quality of life of an individual, is considered.

Resilience can be seen as an approach that can be used in communities to help avoid deep trauma for people exposed to threatening or extreme conditions.

Currently, the term "resilience" is widely used in psychology, medicine, and social sciences and is considered in connection with the issues of the impact on a person of adverse (extreme, threatening, stressful) conditions and the ability to normal functioning of a person and/or social system (family, communities, organizations) during and after such an impact. Resilience is the ability of a person or a social group (community) to absorb the impact of emergency situations, that is, to "mitigate" the effect of their social and psychological consequences through the actualization of the resources of individuals, groups, organizations and communities capable of preventing the exacerbation of psychological problems and disorders among participants and witnesses of adverse events.

Resilience is a dynamic process in which positive adaptation occurs in the face of adversity. This interpretation focuses attention on the conceptualization of resilience as a continuous, active process of the emergence or development of new forces and resources for adaptation and recovery, which has uneven dynamics in the face of the emergence of new risks.

Today, the study of human resilience and means of its development is one of the priority areas of psychological science.

*Resilience in English-language scientific literature.* Most researchers confidently claim that the negative impact of stress or psychological trauma precedes resilience. Researchers also agree that resilience belongs to the category of positive adaptation and adjustment (Caldeira, Timmins, 2016; Sanderson, Brewer, 2017; Ten Hove, Rosenbaum, 2018; . Rice, Liu, 2016).

The vast majority of authors of review studies emphasize the processuality of resilience. The explanation for this is that over the years, there has been a gradual transition from the earlier concept of resilience as a personal trait to the concept of resilience as a dynamic process (Ten Hove, Rosenbaum, 2018; Stainton et al., 2018). Therefore, we can currently talk about a certain agreement of the scientific position regarding the fact that the nature of resilience is dynamic, not static (Stainton et al., 2018; Deshields et al., 2015).

The basis of the dynamic process is either the search for protective resources to overcome the negative consequences of trauma or the interaction of protective factors (resilience factors) and risk factors. Protective factors are internal and external resources that interact with risks, positively influencing mental state and functioning.

A. Stainton et al. claim that protective factors can be psychological, social, neurobiological, neurocognitive, and genetic. They are inherent to each person to a greater or lesser extent and are determined by his/her qualities and environment. Resilience is highly dependent on the cultural context, society, and family. Researchers agree that resilience should be considered not only at the individual level, but also at the interpersonal level, which leaves the interpretation of resilience only as an individual trait in the past (Assonov, & Haustova, 2019).

The trajectory of resilience is characterized by researchers as (1) stable mental functioning during stress exposure, and as (2) a quick return to normal after the destructive effect of psycho-traumatic factors, and as (3) the acquisition of qualitatively new traits and more successful functioning as a result of overcoming psychological trauma. In most reviews, the authors concluded that resilience is a return to normal functioning and restoration of the previous state after a certain period of maladaptation due to a stressful experience (Assonov, & Haustova, 2019).

A much smaller number of researchers additionally indicate that resilience is the acquisition of qualitatively new traits and properties or resistance to stress. In part of the reviews, the researchers concluded that resilience is characterized by several trajectories at once (stability and return to the previous state or return to the previous state and acquisition of new features). Therefore, it was proposed to define resilience as a dynamic process of returning to the initial state, which becomes the foundation for further possible post-traumatic growth (Sisto et al. (2019).

Some scholars who favour scientific parsimony argue that the concept of resilience adds nothing to the more general term "positive adaptation". Others challenge this view, arguing that resilience is a useful heuristic in developmental science because it provides a framework for developmental learning that differs from many classical theories (Wang et al., 1994).

M. Ungar and L. Liebenberg (2013) rely on three propositions regarding the concept of resilience. First, they understand resilience as coping with stress, and thus a description of populations that cope well with adversity. Second, because most knowledge about resilience (positive coping with stress) is almost entirely based on research and clinical experience, this concept needs further study in different contexts and cultures. Third, since the study of resilience necessarily requires the description and further quantification of unnamed processes, the development of a measure of resilience requires both a review of the existing literature and a qualitative study.

Modern literature on salutogenesis, health care, resilience and opportunities focuses on the issue of positive adaptation, protective factors that mitigate risk factors and reduce their impact on consequences (Masten, 2007, p. 22).

In the literature on resilience, the importance of the emotional and social side of the life and history of individuals, families, organizations and communities is clearly evident. This suggests that mental health is the main element of personal health (Masten, 2007, p. 23).

Many studies are devoted to the issue of distinguishing resilience from stress resistance, coping, resilience and post-traumatic growth. V. Rice, B. Liu draw a line between coping and resilience, arguing that coping is an activity aimed at overcoming

a stressful impact (which can be positive, neutral or negative), while resilience is a result (exclusively positive) of positive coping, so they recommend to avoid using the terms "resilience" and "coping" interchangeably. According to research, the difference between "resiliency" and "resilience" is that the term "resiliency" should refer to the traits of personality, and resilience is a process. A person can be more or less resilient in one period of life than in another, and resilience is a more or less effective process. In some works, hardiness is used as a synonym for resilience, however, in later works, researchers distinguish between hardiness and vitality, considering the latter to be a protective factor of resilience (Assonov, & Haustova, 2019).

At the beginning of the 21st century, criticism of resilience as a psychological construct is observed in foreign scientific literature. These criticisms tend to focus on ambiguity in definitions and terminology, the heterogeneity of risks and competencies achieved by individuals considered resilient, the instability of the phenomenon of resilience, and concerns about the utility of resilience as a theoretical construct (Luthar et al., 2000).

In 2007, system approach to resilience was already gaining strength, and technologies for measuring and analyzing multiple levels of functioning and their interactions were improving. Thanks to this, it becomes possible to study the interactions of genes with the environment, the development of adaptive systems and their role in resilience, as well as to conduct experiments to promote resilience or reprogram adaptive systems that protect the development of the psyche in the context of adversity (Masten, 2007).

In foreign countries - Great Britain, the USA, and France, in the system of social support for orphans, the "resilience" approach is widely used, which is a set of measures to support people who find themselves in a crisis situation, which involves creating favourable conditions for the development of a child in a difficult life situation (Soroka, & Kalaur, 2019).

*Interpretation of resilience in Ukrainian-language scientific literature.* The results of the quantitative content analysis of 107 studies conducted by D. Assonov and O. Haustova show that the most frequently used translation of the term "resilience" in the Ukrainian-language scientific literature of recent years is the concept of "resilience" and (to a lesser extent) "resiliency". A slightly smaller number of researchers operate with the concept of "psychological springiness (пружність)", and a much smaller number define resilience as resistance to trauma. A number of researchers use several Ukrainian analogues for the English term "resilience" at the same time, thus adding ambiguity to the terminology (Assonov, & Haustova, 2019).

Most often, Ukrainian-language researchers define resilience as a certain human ability, in a slightly smaller number of studies, resilience is defined as a process. O. Khamnych (2016) currently determines that in the Ukrainian scientific literature, one of the most urgent problems is the divergence of views regarding resilience as a personal trait or process.

More often than in the English-language literature, in the Ukrainian-language literature, there is a definition of resilience as a personal trait or a process. A number of researchers consider resilience to be both a trait and a process (Lazos, 2018);



*Bolotova, 2019).*

In the Ukrainian-language literature on psychology and social work, resilience is translated as stress resistance, hardiness, viability, and resistance to trauma. These terms are used to denote resources for overcoming extraordinary and stressful events, psychological and social consequences of traumatic stress, loss, etc. Recently, publications have appeared in which the concept of "resilience" is translated into Ukrainian as "springiness", in particular, "psychological springiness". At the same time, the process of entering of a new construct into the scientific circulation requires certain time, therefore, an established term equivalent to the concept of "resilience" has not yet been defined in the Ukrainian humanities (*Psykhosotsialna pidtrymka v umovakh nadzvychainykh sytuatsii*, 2017).

S. Pirozhkov, E. Bozhok, and N. Khamitov (2021) point out that resilience is a medical term that means a set of traits inherent in a subject that make it capable of overcoming stress and challenging periods in a constructive way. In their opinion, the characteristics that determine such ability are not always natural, in many cases they must be acquired.

Most often, the Ukrainian analogue of the word "resilience" is the concept of "viability" (Khamynych, 2016). V. Hromova (2021) expresses the opinion that currently, the study of the concept of resilience is very relevant due to the relentless informational progress, globalization and other social phenomena. In particular, she notes that the phenomenon of resilience is used to denote a dynamic process in the context of sustainability and adaptation.

T. Fedotova (2018) determines that resilience includes the ability of a person to protect his/her integrity from the influence of strong adverse external influences, as well as the ability to build a full life under challenging conditions, the ability for social adaptation, full development, the presence of the necessary willpower. In her view, resilience involves the mandatory mastery of social skills and abilities, including the ability to solve problems. The list of social skills in this context is endless. These include sociability, the ability to restrain anger and control manifestations of negative emotions, the ability to plan one's activities and interact with others.

Also T. Fedotova (2018) emphasizes that if a person constructively interacts with his/her microsocial environment, then this interaction develops and changes the ability to resist and create. But if this interaction is disrupted, resilience is weakened and then completely lost. Resilience can be in a latent state, it manifests itself as a result of negative events that occur in the life of each person, and then it can even increase.

Z. Kireeva et al. (2020), on the one hand, attribute resilience to the group of volitional mental states, a motivational subgroup, according to the general classification of mental states by V. Hansen and V. Yurchenko. They believe that resilience is a positive mental state that leads to adequate adaptation during adversity. On the other hand, in their view, resilience is a resource through which people choose an appropriate type of coping. They do not identify, like S. Wiechert, the concepts of "resilience" and "sustainability", because they believe that resilience is a system-forming element in the structure of a sustainable personality (Z. Kireeva et al. (2020).

Investigating the problem of post-traumatic growth, G. Lazos (2016) concluded

that scientists often replace this concept with personal resiliency. Often in the literature, you can find the concepts of "resilience" and "post-traumatic growth" equated.

**Discussion.** Thus, today in numerous scientific studies and literary sources, various options for defining the concept of "resilience" are offered.

Whether resilience is a trait or a process is still debated, but there is a common understanding that the concept describes the ability of individuals, families, and groups to successfully function, adapt, and cope despite psychological, social, cultural, and/or physical adversity. Resilience (as a trait and a process) emerges in people along the continuum of their development.

Resilience is considered as the ability of an organism, person or social group to maintain balance and integrity in a difficult situation, to effectively solve not only the task of adapting to changing conditions but also the task of development.

There are both divergent and common points in the terminological content of resilience presented in Ukrainian-language literature and the latest global trends in the definition of this concept. In both English and Ukrainian literature, resilience belongs to the category of adaptation, it is preceded by a traumatic event or stressful impact. Also, in the Ukrainian-language scientific literature, the definition of resilience as a dynamic process, which corresponds to the latest global trends in the conceptualization of resilience, prevails.

In the Ukrainian-language literature, the concept of resilience is interpreted mainly as resistance to stress, maintenance of normal functioning in conditions of psycho-traumatic influence, while in recent years in English-language literature, the conceptualization of resilience as a return to the previous level of functioning, rapid recovery is significantly predominant.

**Conclusion.** Resilience can be defined as an adaptive dynamic process of returning to initial psychosocial functioning after a period of maladaptive functioning due to the disorganizing effect of psychotraumatic factors.

The concept of resilience is popular in health and social services research. Over the past 40 years, the term has been shaped and transformed from the idea of a trait that can be nurtured in an individual to a concept with an emphasis on environmental factors.

The analysis of the literature shows that the term resilience does not have a single meaning and acquires different shades depending on the perspective from which it is analyzed.

Currently, this term is widely used in psychology, medicine, and social sciences and is considered in connection with the issues of the impact on a person of adverse (extreme, threatening, stressful) conditions and the ability for normal functioning of a person and / or social system (family, community, organization) during and after such exposure. They believe that resilience is the ability of a person or a social group (community) to absorb the impact of emergency situations, i.e. to "mitigate" the effect of their social and psychological consequences through the actualization of the resources of individuals, groups, organizations and communities capable of preventing the exacerbation of psychological problems and disorders among participants and witnesses of challenging events.

Based on the results of the literature search, it can be stated that psychological resilience is the ability to adapt positively to life conditions. This is a dynamic process capable of development. Further research can be focused on determining the structural components of resilience.

**Author contributions.** The authors contributed equally.

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