

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

Stress Resistance and Resilience in the Psychological and Pedagogical Dimension

Viktoriia Savishchenko¹

¹Doctor of Science (Law), Ph.D. (Pedagogical Sciences), Professor, Professor of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, Dnipro State University of Internal Affairs, Dnipro, Ukraine, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6278-4774>

Citation:

Savishchenko, V. (2026). Stress Resistance and Resilience in the Psychological and Pedagogical Dimension. *Public Administration and Law Review*, (2(26), 118–130. <https://doi.org/10.36690/2674-5216-2026-2-118-130>

Received: May 20, 2026

Approved: June 09, 2026

Published: June 30, 2026



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Abstract. The problem of stress resistance and resilience has become particularly relevant in the context of prolonged social instability, military threats, psycho-emotional exhaustion, and increasing risks to children's mental health. These phenomena are significant not only as individual psychological characteristics, but also as important components of the psychological and pedagogical formation of a harmonious personality. The objective of the article is to substantiate the psychophysiological mechanism of stress, stress resistance, and resilience, to differentiate the concepts of their formation and development, and to determine the role of family environment in the development of these qualities in preschool children. The study is based on theoretical analysis, systematization, comparison, and generalization of scientific approaches to stress theory, resilience, biopsychosocial development, and personality formation. An empirical study was conducted in 2025–2026 with the participation of 150 families raising preschool children aged 5–6 years. The sample included 75 psychologically favourable families and 75 unfavourable families. The research used the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, the Family Environment Scale, the Parental Stress Scale, and a child anxiety scale. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Student's t-test. The study identified a multi-stage biopsychosocial mechanism of stress that includes activation, cognitive-emotional appraisal, endocrine response, physiological mobilisation, and behavioural outcome. The concepts of "formation of stress resistance," "development of stress resistance," "formation of resilience," and "development of resilience" were differentiated. The empirical results showed statistically significant differences between children from favourable and unfavourable families. Children from favourable families demonstrated higher resilience, self-regulation, social adaptation, and family support, whereas children from unfavourable families showed higher anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and parental stress. Stress resistance and resilience are integral elements of the child's psychoprotective system and should be developed within the broader paradigm of educating a harmonious personality.

Keywords: stress; stress resistance; resilience; preschool children; family environment; parental stress; harmonious personality; psychological and pedagogical development; prenatal education; moral values.

JEL Classification: I12, I21, I31

Formulas: 0; **fig.:** 0; **tabl.:** 4; **bibl.:** 17

Introduction. The full-scale war in Ukraine has significantly intensified the relevance of psychological security, stress resistance, and resilience as key conditions for preserving mental health, social stability, and the capacity of individuals to function under prolonged uncertainty. The consequences of military aggression are not limited to physical destruction or economic losses. They also include chronic psycho-emotional exhaustion, anxiety, sleep disorders, traumatic experience, family destabilisation, and the growing need for psychological support among adults and children. In this context, stress resistance and resilience should be considered not only as individual psychological characteristics, but also as socially and pedagogically significant phenomena that determine a person's ability to withstand destructive stressors, adapt to extreme conditions, and restore internal balance after traumatic experiences.

The problem becomes particularly important in relation to children of preschool age. Early childhood is a sensitive period during which the basic mechanisms of emotional regulation, behavioural stability, social adaptation, trust in the world, and the ability to overcome difficulties are formed. Children who grow up in conditions of war, family instability, parental stress, or domestic violence may experience a higher risk of emotional vulnerability, behavioural difficulties, anxiety, and impaired social adaptation. At the same time, a psychologically safe family environment can become a protective factor that supports the development of resilience even under conditions of external threat.

The scientific relevance of this study is determined by the need to integrate psychological, physiological, social, and pedagogical approaches to the analysis of stress resistance and resilience. In psychological science, stress has traditionally been examined through physiological, cognitive, neurobiological, psychosocial, organisational, and biopsychosocial paradigms. However, the pedagogical dimension of the formation and development of stress resistance and resilience in the prenatal and preschool periods remains insufficiently elaborated. Existing studies often focus on stress reactions, post-traumatic stress disorder, coping strategies, or adaptation in adults, while the early mechanisms through which children acquire psychological protection, emotional stability, and adaptive resources require deeper theoretical and empirical justification.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this article concerns the psychophysiological and pedagogical foundations of stress resistance and resilience, as well as the role of family environment in the development of these phenomena in preschool children. The article proceeds from the assumption that stress resistance and resilience have a dual nature. On the one hand, they are rooted in genetic, neurophysiological, endocrine, and temperamental characteristics. On the other hand, they are shaped by socialisation, upbringing, emotional communication, parental behaviour, educational influence, and the moral and psychological climate of the family.

Such an understanding makes it possible to consider stress resistance and resilience as integral components of the formation of a harmonious personality.

Literature Review. The theoretical analysis of stress resistance and resilience requires consideration of several interconnected scientific traditions. The first group of approaches is related to the classical theory of stress. Selye (1956) developed the concept of the general adaptation syndrome and interpreted stress as a universal adaptive response of the organism to demands imposed upon it. His model distinguished three stages of stress: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. This approach laid the foundation for understanding stress as a physiological process that mobilises the organism but may lead to depletion when stress is excessive or prolonged.

Cannon (1932) made an important contribution to the physiological explanation of stress by introducing the concept of the “fight-or-flight” response. According to this approach, stress activates the autonomic nervous system and prepares the organism for immediate action in the face of threat. Later, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) shifted the focus from purely physiological reactions to cognitive appraisal and coping. They argued that stress does not arise automatically from an external event, but depends on how a person evaluates the situation and their own resources for dealing with it. This idea is especially important for the psychological and pedagogical analysis of stress resistance, because it shows that stress reactions can be modified through cognitive, emotional, and behavioural mechanisms.

The neurobiological dimension of stress was substantially developed by McEwen (1998), who introduced the concept of allostatic load. This concept explains how repeated or chronic activation of stress systems can produce cumulative negative effects on the body and brain. In this perspective, stress resistance is connected not only with the ability to mobilise resources, but also with the ability to prevent excessive physiological wear and tear. Sapolsky (2004) also emphasised the biological consequences of chronic stress, especially the role of glucocorticoids and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis in long-term adaptation and health outcomes.

Another important direction is represented by the biopsychosocial model proposed by Engel (1977). This model is particularly useful for the present study because it allows stress to be analysed as a phenomenon determined by biological, psychological, and social factors. The biopsychosocial perspective makes it possible to explain why the same stressor may produce different outcomes in different individuals. These outcomes depend on neurophysiological sensitivity, cognitive appraisal, previous experience, family support, social context, value orientations, and available coping resources.

The psychosocial measurement of stress was significantly advanced by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983), who developed the Perceived

Stress Scale. Their approach demonstrated that subjective perception of uncontrollability, overload, and inability to manage life circumstances is central to the experience of stress. This is relevant for understanding children's stress as well, because preschool children do not always verbalise stress directly, but may express it through anxiety, behavioural difficulties, avoidance, emotional instability, or social withdrawal.

The study of resilience has developed as a related but distinct research field. Resilience is commonly understood as the capacity to adapt successfully despite adversity, trauma, threat, or significant stress. In the context of childhood development, resilience is not merely an individual trait. It is a dynamic process that depends on protective factors within the child, the family, and the broader social environment. Instruments such as the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment are based on this strength-oriented understanding of resilience and focus on protective factors that support children's social and emotional development. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is also widely used to identify behavioural and emotional difficulties in children and to assess their social adaptation.

Ukrainian psychological and pedagogical thought provides an important methodological foundation for this study. The ideas of holistic personality development, humanisation of education, moral upbringing, the unity of intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual development, and the interaction between biological and social factors are reflected in the works of Bekh, Ziaziun, Kostiuk, Maksymenko, Sukhomlynskyi, Tytarenko, and Ushynskyi. These approaches are especially important because they allow stress resistance and resilience to be considered not as isolated functional capacities, but as elements of a harmonious personality.

At the same time, the literature reveals several research gaps. First, there is insufficient integration between the physiological, psychological, social, and pedagogical interpretations of stress resistance and resilience. Second, the prenatal and preschool stages of formation of these phenomena remain underdeveloped in psychological and pedagogical studies. Third, existing research often analyses resilience as an adaptive response after trauma, but pays less attention to the family and educational conditions that prevent maladaptation before deep psychological damage occurs. Fourth, in the Ukrainian context of war, there is a need for empirical studies that examine how different types of family environment influence preschool children's resilience, self-regulation, anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and social adaptation. This article addresses these gaps by combining theoretical analysis with empirical comparison of children raised in psychologically favourable and unfavourable family environments.

Aim. The aim of the article is to substantiate the psychophysiological mechanism of stress, stress resistance, and resilience, and to determine the psychological and pedagogical features of the formation and development of

stress resistance and resilience in the paradigm of educating a harmonious personality.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were formulated:

- to analyse the evolution of scientific approaches to the interpretation of stress, stress resistance, and resilience;
- to clarify the biopsychosocial mechanism of stress development and its main stages;
- to differentiate the concepts of formation and development of stress resistance and resilience;
- to justify the importance of prenatal and preschool periods in the formation of psychological protective mechanisms;
- to empirically compare indicators of resilience, self-regulation, social adaptation, anxiety, behavioural difficulties, family support, and parental stress among preschool children from psychologically favourable and unfavourable family environments;
- to determine the pedagogical significance of an ecologically safe family environment for the development of stress resistance and resilience in preschool children.

Methodology. The study used a mixed theoretical and empirical research design. The theoretical component was based on the analysis, comparison, generalisation, and systematisation of scientific approaches to stress, stress resistance, resilience, coping, allostatic load, biopsychosocial functioning, and harmonious personality development. The methodological basis of the study included the principles of holistic personality development, the unity of biological and social determinants, humanistic pedagogy, personal-oriented education, and the biopsychosocial understanding of mental health.

The empirical component was conducted in 2025–2026 in preschool educational institutions and psychological support centres in Ukraine. The study was implemented during the period of full-scale war, which was considered an important contextual factor influencing the psycho-emotional state of both children and parents. The research took into account children's experience of air raid alarms, possible displacement, changes in family functioning, increased parental stress, and signs of secondary traumatisations.

The sample consisted of 150 families raising preschool children aged 5 to 6 years. The participants were divided into two groups. The first group included 75 psychologically favourable families. These families were characterised by a stable positive emotional climate, consistency of pedagogical requirements, emotional support, constructive communication, and absence of domestic violence. The second group included 75 unfavourable families. These families were characterised by conflict, emotional instability, inconsistent educational requirements, insufficient support, and signs of dysfunctional family interaction.

The research hypothesis assumed that preschool children from psychologically favourable families would demonstrate higher levels of resilience, self-regulation, social adaptation, and family support, while children from unfavourable families would demonstrate higher levels of anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and exposure to parental stress. It was also assumed that family support and emotional stability would act as significant predictors of children's resilience under wartime conditions.

A system of criteria was developed to study the psychological and pedagogical features of stress resistance and resilience in preschool children. The emotional-regulatory criterion reflected the child's ability to withstand psycho-emotional load, regulate emotional reactions, and restore psychological balance after stress exposure. This criterion was assessed using the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment and a child anxiety scale. The social-adaptive criterion reflected the child's ability to interact with peers and adults, maintain communicative activity, and demonstrate behavioural stability. This criterion was assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. The family-environmental criterion focused on family climate, cohesion, conflict, stability of family relationships, and the nature of educational influence. This criterion was assessed using the Family Environment Scale. The parental-stress criterion reflected parental emotional exhaustion, difficulties in performing the parental role, tension in interaction with the child, and stress in family functioning. This criterion was assessed using the Parental Stress Scale.

The empirical data were processed using descriptive statistics and comparative analysis. Mean values and standard deviations were calculated for each indicator in both groups. Differences between the two groups were tested using Student's t-test for independent samples. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < .001$, which allowed determining whether the observed differences between groups were statistically reliable.

Table 1 presents the research design.

Table 1. Research Design

Research component	Description
Research type	Theoretical and empirical study
Period of empirical research	2025–2026
Research context	Full-scale war in Ukraine
Participants	150 families raising preschool children aged 5–6 years
Group 1	75 psychologically favourable families
Group 2	75 unfavourable families
Main hypothesis	Family environment significantly influences the development of resilience and stress resistance in preschool children
Key indicators	Resilience, self-regulation, social adaptation, anxiety, behavioural difficulties, family support, parental stress
Methods	DECA, child anxiety scale, SDQ, FES, PSS
Statistical procedure	Descriptive statistics and Student's t-test

Source: developed by the author based on the research design and empirical data obtained during the study

Results. The theoretical analysis made it possible to clarify the biopsychosocial mechanism of stress. Stress is not only a physiological reaction to an external threat. It is a complex process that includes social, psychological, neurophysiological, endocrine, physiological, and behavioural components. Within the biopsychosocial triad, stress develops through several interrelated stages: activation, cognitive-emotional appraisal, endocrine response, physiological mobilisation, and behavioural outcome.

At the activation stage, an internal or external stressor affects the individual. Such stressors may originate from the social environment, natural environment, or the inner world of the person. Social stressors include family conflicts, professional difficulties, social instability, war, economic crises, loss, violence, or rapid social change. Natural stressors include climatic, geophysical, biological, and physical influences. Intrapersonal stressors arise from anxiety, self-criticism, fear of failure, moral dilemmas, lack of meaning, internal conflicts, or catastrophic thinking.

At the cognitive-emotional stage, the individual evaluates the stressor and their own ability to overcome it. This stage is central because the same event may be interpreted differently depending on previous experience, emotional maturity, value orientations, and available psychological resources. If the situation is assessed as non-threatening, the stress process may be stopped. If it is assessed as dangerous or uncontrollable, the endocrine response is activated.

At the endocrine stage, the sympathetic-adrenal system and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis are activated. This leads to the release of stress hormones, including adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol. At the physiological stage, these hormonal changes are manifested in increased muscle tone, changes in cardiovascular activity, breathing, digestion, attention, and general mobilisation of the organism. The final behavioural stage may result either in constructive behaviour, associated with eustress, effective decision-making, adaptation, and resilience, or in destructive behaviour, associated with distress, avoidance, disorganisation, and exhaustion.

Table 2 summarises the biopsychosocial mechanism of stress.

The theoretical results also made it possible to differentiate the concepts of formation and development of stress resistance and resilience. Formation refers to the emergence of innate and acquired characteristics that create the basis for psychological protection. Development refers to subsequent quantitative and qualitative changes that move these characteristics toward higher levels of self-regulation, adaptation, and recovery.

Table 2. Biopsychosocial Mechanism of Stress

Stage	Main content	Psychological and pedagogical significance
Activation	Influence of internal or external stressor	The same stressor may have different effects depending on personality and environment
Cognitive-emotional appraisal	Evaluation of threat and available resources	Cognitive interpretation can intensify or reduce stress
Endocrine response	Activation of sympathetic-adrenal system and HPA axis	Stress becomes embodied through hormonal mechanisms
Physiological mobilisation	Changes in muscular, cardiovascular, respiratory, and other systems	The organism mobilises resources for action
Behavioural outcome	Constructive or destructive behavioural response	Eustress supports adaptation, while distress increases maladaptation

Source: systematized by the author based on Cannon (1932), Selye (1956), Engel (1977), Lazarus and Folkman (1984), McEwen (1998), and Sapolsky (2004)

Table 3 presents the conceptual differentiation of these categories.

Table 3. Differentiation of the Concepts of Formation and Development

Concept	Definition
Formation of stress resistance	The process of emergence of innate and acquired characteristics that enable the individual to withstand stressors and transform stress into eustress
Development of stress resistance	The process of quantitative and qualitative changes through which stress resistance moves toward self-regulation and effective mobilisation of internal resources
Formation of resilience	The process of emergence of innate and acquired characteristics that enable the individual to restore lost psychophysiological resources and adapt to new conditions
Development of resilience	The process of quantitative and qualitative changes through which resilience develops into the ability to regulate recovery, accumulation, and use of psychophysiological resources

Source: developed by the author based on the theoretical generalization of psychological and pedagogical approaches to stress resistance, resilience, personality formation, and personality development

The empirical results confirmed statistically significant differences between preschool children from psychologically favourable and unfavourable families across all studied indicators. Children from favourable families demonstrated substantially higher levels of resilience, self-regulation, social adaptation, and family support. Children from unfavourable families demonstrated significantly higher levels of anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and parental stress.

The largest difference was observed in the indicator of family support. Children from favourable families received significantly higher support than children from unfavourable families. This confirms the central role of the family environment as a protective factor in the formation of resilience. The high level of family support was associated with higher resilience, better self-regulation, and more stable social adaptation.

A considerable difference was also found in parental stress. Parents from unfavourable families demonstrated much higher stress levels, which

may negatively affect the child through emotional contagion, inconsistent educational behaviour, increased conflict, and reduced capacity for sensitive communication. This result confirms that parental stress is not only an adult psychological problem, but also a developmental risk factor for the child.

**Table 4. Results of the Empirical Study:
Comparison of Mean Indicators**

Indicator	Favourable families, M ± SD	Unfavourable families, M ± SD	t	p
Resilience	79.2 ± 8.4	58.6 ± 11.2	12.44	< .001
Self-regulation	75.8 ± 7.9	56.1 ± 10.8	11.31	< .001
Social adaptation	77.1 ± 8.2	60.4 ± 10.1	10.92	< .001
Anxiety	30.6 ± 6.8	49.7 ± 9.5	-13.27	< .001
Behavioural difficulties	11.8 ± 4.1	22.3 ± 5.6	-12.04	< .001
Family support	83.7 ± 7.0	53.2 ± 12.8	16.75	< .001
Parental stress	27.9 ± 6.3	47.6 ± 8.9	-14.18	< .001

Source: calculated by the author based on the results of the empirical study conducted in 2025–2026

Children from unfavourable families showed higher anxiety and more behavioural difficulties. These results indicate that an unstable family climate may intensify the effects of wartime stress and reduce the child's ability to restore emotional balance. In contrast, children from favourable families showed higher self-regulation and social adaptation, which suggests that stable emotional communication, predictable rules, parental support, and constructive conflict resolution contribute to the development of psychological protective mechanisms.

Thus, the empirical results support the hypothesis of the study. A psychologically favourable family environment contributes to the development of resilience and stress resistance in preschool children, while an unfavourable family environment increases the risk of anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and psycho-emotional maladaptation.

Discussion. The results of the study confirm the importance of integrating physiological, psychological, and pedagogical explanations of stress resistance and resilience. Classical theories of stress explain the biological and adaptive nature of stress reactions, while cognitive and biopsychosocial approaches show that stress is mediated by subjective appraisal, social environment, and available resources. The empirical findings of this study support the biopsychosocial interpretation of stress because they demonstrate that children's resilience cannot be explained only by individual characteristics. It is strongly connected with the quality of family support, parental emotional stability, and the general psychological climate of the family.

The findings also expand the understanding of resilience in early childhood. Resilience in preschool children should not be interpreted as the ability to suppress emotions or tolerate stress passively. It is a dynamic capacity to maintain emotional stability, seek support, interact constructively

with adults and peers, adapt to changes, and recover after distressing experiences. In this sense, resilience is formed through everyday interaction with significant adults. The child learns how to respond to danger, uncertainty, conflict, failure, and emotional tension by observing the behaviour of parents and educators.

The high level of parental stress in unfavourable families is particularly important. Preschool children are highly sensitive to the emotional state of adults. They may not fully understand the causes of parental anxiety, anger, exhaustion, or despair, but they perceive emotional tension through tone of voice, facial expressions, bodily reactions, impulsive behaviour, and inconsistency of parental responses. When parental stress becomes chronic, the child's own stress system may remain activated for a long time. This can hinder the development of self-regulation and increase anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and emotional vulnerability.

The results also show that excessive protection and neglect can both interfere with the development of stress resistance and resilience. An ecologically safe family environment does not mean a sterile environment without difficulties. On the contrary, children need age-appropriate experience of overcoming obstacles, making mistakes, resolving simple problems, and returning to emotional balance after frustration. However, this experience should occur in a context of emotional security, parental support, predictable boundaries, and respect for the child's dignity. In such conditions, the child gradually develops the ability to recognise danger, regulate emotions, seek help, and act constructively.

The pedagogical significance of the study lies in the fact that stress resistance and resilience should be included in the broader paradigm of educating a harmonious personality. A high level of stress resistance without moral values, empathy, responsibility, and humanistic orientation may lead not to psychological maturity, but to emotional coldness, cynicism, or destructive behaviour. Therefore, stress resistance and resilience should be developed together with moral consciousness, empathy, social responsibility, self-respect, respect for others, and the ability to preserve humanity in difficult circumstances.

In the context of war, these findings have practical implications for parents, preschool educators, psychologists, and social workers. Work with children should be combined with support for parents because the child's resilience depends on the emotional resources of the family. Preventive programmes should include parental education, psychoeducation about stress and child development, training in emotional regulation, support for nonviolent communication, and practical strategies for maintaining predictable family routines during crisis. Preschool institutions should also become spaces of psychological safety, where children can experience stability, acceptance, structured interaction, and recovery from traumatic stress.

At the same time, the study has certain limitations. The empirical data were obtained from a sample of 150 families, which allows identifying statistically significant differences but does not fully represent all regional, social, and wartime experiences of Ukrainian families. The study focused on children aged 5 to 6 years, while further research should include younger children and longitudinal observation. Another limitation is that the study used quantitative indicators, whereas qualitative interviews with parents, educators, and children could provide deeper understanding of emotional experiences and family dynamics. Future research should examine the long-term influence of family environment on resilience during school transition and should also study the effectiveness of parental support programmes aimed at strengthening children's stress resistance.

Conclusions. The study substantiates stress resistance and resilience as complex biopsychosocial and psychological-pedagogical phenomena. Stress develops through a multi-stage process that includes activation by a stressor, cognitive-emotional appraisal, endocrine response, physiological mobilisation, and behavioural outcome. This process demonstrates that stress is not only a biological reaction, but also a psychological and social phenomenon influenced by perception, experience, values, family environment, and available support.

The article differentiates the concepts of formation and development of stress resistance and resilience. Formation refers to the emergence of innate and acquired characteristics that create the basis for psychological protection. Development refers to the subsequent quantitative and qualitative improvement of these characteristics, leading to self-regulation, adaptation, recovery, and conscious management of internal resources. Stress resistance is more closely connected with the ability to withstand the impact of stressors and transform stress into eustress. Resilience is more closely connected with the ability to adapt, recover, and restore psychophysiological balance after stress.

The theoretical analysis confirms that the origins of stress resistance and resilience should be sought already in the prenatal and preschool periods. Genetic, neurophysiological, endocrine, temperamental, emotional, communicative, sensory, and social factors create the initial conditions for the development of the child's psychological protective system. Prenatal and early childhood education should therefore be understood not only as preparation for intellectual development, but also as the creation of conditions for emotional stability, adaptive capacity, and future mental health.

The empirical study confirmed that the type of family environment is a key factor in the development of stress resistance and resilience in preschool children. Children from psychologically favourable families demonstrated significantly higher levels of resilience, self-regulation, social adaptation, and family support. Children from unfavourable families demonstrated

significantly higher levels of anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and parental stress. All differences between the groups were statistically significant at $p < .001$, which confirms the reliability of the obtained results.

The findings prove that an ecologically safe family environment performs a protective function under wartime conditions. Such an environment is characterised by emotional stability, parental support, consistency of educational requirements, constructive conflict resolution, absence of violence, and the ability of adults to regulate their own stress. In contrast, conflict, emotional instability, inconsistent upbringing, parental exhaustion, and domestic tension increase the child's vulnerability to stress and hinder the development of resilience.

Stress resistance and resilience should be considered integral components of a harmonious personality. Their development cannot be separated from moral values, empathy, responsibility, emotional culture, and humanistic education. The pedagogical task is not only to teach the child to endure difficulties, but also to help the child remain humane, emotionally alive, socially responsible, and capable of constructive interaction with the world. Further research should focus on longitudinal studies of childhood resilience, parental support programmes, and psychological-pedagogical interventions aimed at strengthening stress resistance in children affected by war and family instability.

Conflict of interest. The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Funding. The author declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Ethics statement. All procedures performed in this study complied with institutional and international ethical standards.

Generative AI statement. The author declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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