

RESOURCES OF YOUTH RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL UNCERTAINTY: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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SUMMARY

This article examines the psychological resilience of adolescents and young adults in Moldova within a multicultural social context. The study draws on empirical data from 160 university students aged 19–25, representing diverse ethnic backgrounds, and from 50 adolescents aged 16–18 enrolled in a vocational–technical institution. The research is grounded in contemporary approaches to resilience as a multidimensional construct shaped by personal, social, and cultural resources. Particular attention is given to the role of ethnic identity, shared cultural representations, and social competencies as potential protective factors that support young people’s adaptation to socio-economic uncertainty. The study explores how resilience is structured across developmental stages and how internal and external resources contribute to young people’s coping strategies, emotional regulation, and social interaction. Methodologically, the research integrates quantitative assessments of resilience components with analyses of culturally embedded perceptions and stereotypes. The article’s scientific contribution lies in advancing a culturally sensitive perspective on youth resilience by conceptualising it as a dynamic system shaped by developmental context and ethnic diversity. The study provides an integrative framework for understanding resilience among Eastern European youth and offers a basis for designing preventive educational and psychosocial programs to strengthen adaptive resources in multicultural environments.

Keywords: self-stereotype, self-image, ideal, resilience, uncertainty, socio-psychological resources, identity

INTRODUCTION

In periods of socioeconomic uncertainty, young adults are among the most vulnerable social groups, as they are at a crucial stage of professional and personal self-determination. In this context, resilience becomes increasingly relevant and is conceptualised as a system of beliefs, attitudes, and coping strategies that enable individuals to overcome stress while preserving their functioning and continuing their personal development.

In a post-transitional society characterised by contradictions, fragmentation of group identities, and instability in social norms and expectations, resilience contributes to strengthening the integrity of the self-concept and to maintaining continuity across temporal perspectives (Caunenco et al., 2025).

Research on youth resilience is particularly relevant because its level may reflect the degree to which young people are ready for active integration into social life, professional achievement, and civic participation amid innovative and sociocultural transformations (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Masten & Cicchetti, 2016).

In the context of accelerated social, economic, and political transformations, resilience has become a concept of central importance both theoretically and practically. These transformations, further intensified by technological progress, contribute to increased stress and emotional imbalance, posing significant challenges to individuals’ psychological health. Thus, resilience is a fundamental concept for understanding the mechanisms through which individuals maintain psychological and social functioning, as well as the possibilities for strengthening these mechanisms under conditions of uncertainty and continuous change.

Empirical research on resilience confirms the need to develop and implement comprehensive public policies that promote the coordinated development of key areas—employment, education, infrastructure, and social assistance. The absence of such policies may intensify migration and social disintegration, particularly among young adults. Therefore, interdisciplinary empirical studies are required to deepen understanding of resilience across social groups (e.g., age, generational, and educational), (Caunenco & Gașper, 2025). In this context, the educational dimension plays a crucial role in developing psychological skills associated with resilience. A child’s well-being is an integral indicator of the extent to which the child is oriented towards implementing the core components of positive functioning: personal growth, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, and positive relationships with others (Cucer, 2025).

By reducing stress, stimulating academic engagement, and strengthening interpersonal relationships, the school environment can become not only a place of learning but also a space for personal and emotional development. It can foster socially competent, well-adapted students who maintain optimal well-being, thereby preparing them for a fulfilling and balanced life. Teachers and parents, through sustained collaboration and an empathetic approach, can significantly contribute to the formation of children who are socially integrated, emotionally healthy, and capable of adapting to diverse social contexts. An education that values the relational dimension ultimately becomes an education for life (Puzur, 2025, p. 101).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Recent research emphasises the importance of developing resilient capacities in youth as a foundation for long-term mental health, social inclusion, and civic participation (Masten, 2020; Arnett, 2000). Understanding how young people transform experiences of risk and adversity into developmental resources helps identify psychosocial mechanisms that support positive adaptation and informs the development and implementation of psychosocial interventions to strengthen individual and collective resilience (Ungar, 2019).

Individual resilience is conceptualised in the literature as a multidimensional process involving the interplay among personal characteristics, psychosocial resources, and the ecological context in which the individual lives (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2018). Additionally, some studies highlight the contributions of cognitive

factors (e.g., self-efficacy and emotion regulation) and personality traits (e.g., optimism and psychological flexibility) to strengthening individual resilience (Kalisch et al., 2017; Schäfer et al., 2024).

Among the dimensions of resilience described by local sociologists (Malcoci et al., 2025), personal resilience to stress is also included, reflecting how individuals integrate internal and external resources to cope with everyday adversities. The findings indicate that overall resilience is moderate but unevenly distributed. Although two-thirds of respondents report coping with stress effectively or very effectively – suggesting a reasonable level of resilience within the population – one-third still experience difficulties in stress management, with higher prevalence among women, older adults, and individuals with lower levels of education (Malcoci et al., 2025).

DATA AND METHODS

To assess the emotional-evaluative component of the ethnic stereotype, the Diagnostic Test of Relationships (DTR) was applied (Soldatova, 1998). This method was selected based on the premise that ethnic identity is understood as a category situated at the intersection of the individual and the social context. “Ethnic identity implies not only awareness of belonging to an ethnic community, but also its evaluation, the importance attributed to this belonging, shared ethnic feelings, and the experience of one’s relationship with the ethnic environment” (Stefanenko, 1999).

The DTR was developed by G. U. Soldatova to examine the emotional-evaluative component of ethnic identity. It represents an original modification of the semantic differential method. The DTR includes 12 pairs of bipolar qualities (24 adjectives). The standard DTR format presents four cards on which respondents rate the qualities they believe characterise themselves, the “Ideal” person, and typical representatives of their own ethnic group and other ethnic groups. Participants were asked to consistently evaluate themselves, the “Ideal,” and the “typical” representative of their nationality, among others, based on the proposed characteristics.

The DTR measures the following parameters of ethnic stereotypes: ambivalence, intensity, and orientation. Their quantitative indicators were treated as empirical indicators of the emotional-evaluative component of the ethnic stereotype. *Ambivalence* (A) characterises the degree of emotional certainty of the stereotype. The valence of this emotional certainty – positive or negative – can be determined based on the corresponding coefficients of intensity and orientation. *Intensity* (S) reflects the strength of the stereotypical effect and determines its positive or negative orientation. *Orientation* (D), or the diagnostic coefficient of the stereotype, characterises the direction and magnitude

of the subject’s general emotional orientation toward a given object.

The dominant stereotype orientation, according to the DTR methodology, was determined using nonparametric statistical tests: the Friedman test (Friedman ANOVA) and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. IBM SPSS Statistics software was used for data analysis.

To assess psychological resilience, the Dispositional Resilience Scale (DRS) developed by S. Maddi was administered in its short form (DRS-12), comprising 12 items. The instrument assesses the three structural components of dispositional resilience – *commitment*, *control*, and *challenge* – as well as provides an *overall resilience score*. The Russian version described and psychometrically validated by E. N. Osin (2013) was used in this study.

To capture the subjective and experiential dimensions of resilience, the sentence-completion method was applied, formulated as: “I think that developing a person’s resilience involves...”. This method enabled the identification of significant dimensions of the personal and social experience of resilience, which are relevant to understanding adaptation mechanisms in contexts of uncertainty (Fomina, 2012).

The *aim* of the study is to examine resilience and its resources in situations of uncertainty among adolescents and young adults.

The *study population* consists of adolescents and young adults (students).

The *research subject* is the analysis of the structural components of resilience (commitment, control, and challenge).

The *methodological framework* of the study is grounded in several complementary theoretical perspectives that conceptualise resilience across the sociocultural, ecological, and existential-cognitive dimensions of human experience. The central research question guiding the study is: What resilience resources do young people draw on in situations of uncertainty?

Research on youth resilience draws on an integrative methodological approach that combines sociocultural, ecocultural, and existential-cognitive perspectives. The study is grounded primarily in the sociocultural approach, which considers the sociocultural context, ethnic status, generational belonging, and the characteristics of individuals and interacting groups (including identity and intercultural attitudes (Lebedeva et al., 2023).

At the same time, J. Berry's ecocultural approach is incorporated, emphasising that groups and individuals

develop patterns of daily behaviour as adaptations to the ecological demands of their environments and function within specific ecological systems (Berry et al., 2004).

A central role in the study is played by the existential-cognitive approach of S. Maddi, in which resilience is conceptualised as a stable system of existential attitudes that ensures active stress management. Maddi's approach is rooted in the existential-cognitive paradigm, in which resilience (or hardiness) is understood as an integrative personal disposition that supports an active, conscious orientation toward stressful and uncertain life circumstances (Maddi, 1999, 2004). In addition to these theoretical frameworks, the study is based on the premise that each culture contains symbolic resources that may provide psychological support. Cultural traditions, in particular, provide individuals with a sense of stability and continuity within their sociocultural context (Fominova, 2012, p. 45).

MAIN RESULTS

The research sample consists of 160 respondents, comprising undergraduate and master's students from universities in Chisinau, Balti, Comrat (ATU Gagauzia), and Taraclia. Data were collected during the period 2024–2025. Participants were aged 19–25. The mean ages were: Moldovans ($M = 20.3$), Gagauz ($M = 20.9$), Bulgarians ($M = 22.3$), and Ukrainians ($M = 21.9$).

In the present study, the following comparisons were conducted:

- the self-image ("I" image) and the self-stereotype, in order to determine the degree of identification with the ethnic group at the personal level, that is, the importance of the ethnic component within the self-image;
- the self-image and the ideal image, in order to examine the relationship between personal traits and those attributed to the ethnic group. A content analysis of self-stereotypes and evaluations of the ideal image was conducted.

Table 1.

Mean values of ambivalence (A), intensity (S), and orientation (D; diagnostic coefficient) among Moldovan, Gagauz, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian youth

Type of evaluation	Bulgarians			Gagauz			Moldovans			Ukrainians		
	A	S	D	A	S	D	A	S	D	A	S	D
Self-image	0.64	0.23	0.21	0.63	0.24	0.22	0.59	0.25	0.21	0.63	0.23	0.19
Ideal	0.51	0.42	0.34	0.52	0.39	0.36	0.54	0.38	0.27	0.50	0.44	0.35
Self-stereotype	0.62	0.25	0.20	0.66	0.16	0.14	0.66	0.14	0.10	0.68	0.14	0.11

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Across all analysed ethnic groups, a positive self-stereotype was observed (Table 1), indicating positive group-level self-identification. At the same time, high levels of ambivalence (A) were found in all ethnic groups with respect to self-stereotypes and self-image, along with lower values for the "Ideal" component. Similar findings were reported in previous studies by Gașper (2008) and Horozova (2018).

For all ethnic groups examined, *statistically significant differences* were identified between the *ideal* and *self-image*: Moldovans ($Z = -3.623$, $p = 0.0001$); Gagauz ($Z = -4.593$, $p = 0.0001$); Ukrainians ($Z = -5.375$, $p = 0.0001$); and Bulgarians ($Z = -4.796$, $p = 0.0001$).

Significant differences were also found between the *self-stereotype* and the *ideal*: Moldovans ($Z = -3.931$, $p = 0.0001$); Gagauz ($Z = -4.983$, $p = 0.0001$); Ukrainians ($Z = -5.332$, $p = 0.0001$); and Bulgarians ($Z = -4.329$, $p = 0.0001$).

When comparing *self-image* and *self-stereotype*, no statistically significant differences were observed among young Bulgarians ($Z = -1.103$, $p = 0.27$), suggesting a strong alignment between personal and ethnic self-perceptions. In contrast, statistically significant differences between self-image and self-stereotype were

observed among *Moldovans* ($Z = -3.064$, $p = 0.002$), *Gagauz* ($Z = -2.974$, $p = 0.003$), and *Ukrainians* ($Z = -2.576$, $p = 0.01$).

Overall, the findings indicate the presence of positive self-stereotypes across all analysed ethnic groups of young adults, reflecting a positive ethnic identity that may function as a socio-psychological resource for adaptation and resilience.

The content of ethnic stereotypes, as well as the self-

image and the “Ideal” image, was further analysed among young adults. In examining the content of ethnic stereotypes, the analysis was based on the premise that *stereotypes are shaped by the characteristics of the group being stereotyped, as well as by the duration and intensity of its historical interactions with other ethnic groups*. The most frequently attributed qualities were those rated at 3 points or higher. For each ethnic group, the six qualities with the highest scores were selected for analysis (see Tables 2-5).

Table 2.

The dominant qualities of the self-image, the “ideal” image and the self-stereotype in Moldovan young adults

	Self-image	Mean (M)	“Ideal” image	Mean (M)	Self-stereotype	Mean (M)
1	orderly	3.38	orderly	3.79	proud	3.35
2	cautious	3.30	sociable	3.78	sociable	3.23
3	ingenious	3.20	active	3.73	active	3.13
4	sociable	3.13	ingenious	3.67	persistent	3.13
5	active	3.13	mentally sharp	3.54	ingenious	3.05
6	mentally sharp	3.05	diplomatic	3.49	mentally sharp	3.03

Source: Authors' own elaboration

As shown in Table 2, the shared qualities of Moldovan youth across the self-image (“I”), “Ideal” image and self-stereotype representations are: *ingenious*, *sociable*, *active*, and *mentally sharp*. At the same time, the self-stereotype of Moldovan youth differs from the “I” and “Ideal” images by placing greater emphasis on *pride* and *persistence*.

According to Soldatova (1998), pride fosters solidarity within the group; in other words, solidarity based on ethnic belonging represents an important value. In the self-image (“I”), *caution* emerges as a significant quality, which is not present in the other analysed

representations. Conversely, *diplomacy* appears only in the “Ideal” image and is absent from both the self-image and the self-stereotype.

These findings suggest the presence of a stable positive ethnic identity among Moldovan youth. At the same time, the prominence of *pride* and *persistence* reinforces solidarity with the ethnic group. The presence of *prudence* in the self-image and *diplomacy* in the “Ideal” image indicates a tendency among Moldovan youth toward adaptive social behaviour strategies oriented toward balanced decision-making and constructive interaction.

Table 3.

The dominant qualities of the self-image, the “ideal” image and the self-stereotype in Bulgarian youth

	Self-image	Mean (M)	“Ideal” image	Mean (M)	Self-stereotype	Mean (M)
1	sociable	3.35	active	3.68	sociable	3.44
2	active	3.25	sociable	3.59	active	3.18
3	mentally sharp	3.05	mentally sharp	3.55	mentally sharp	3.13
4	persistent	3.00	diplomatic	3.50	persistent	3.11
5	orderly	2.95	orderly	3.40	ingenious	3.10
6	diplomatic	2.80	thrifty	3.38	diplomatic	3.00

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The shared qualities of young Bulgarians across the self-image (“I”), the “Ideal” image, and the self-stereotype are *sociable*, *active*, *ingenious*, and *diplomatic* (Table 3). In the self-stereotype of young Bulgarians, *mental sharpness* is prominently represented, reflecting cognitive flexibility. Only in the “Ideal” image is *thrift*

highly valued, which reflects a cultural tradition of frugality, prudence in spending, and the importance of saving and planning, as emphasised in the Bulgarian proverb: “*And in a rich house, good is kept in moderation.*”

These findings suggest that young Bulgarians cognitively internalise the ethnocultural qualities of their group; in other words, their perception of the typical Bulgarian largely coincides with their self-perception. This convergence between the self-stereotype and the self-image was also confirmed by the results of the emotional-evaluative component.

Among the Gagauz, the dominant qualities identified in self-stereotypes, self-images, and “Ideal” images are sociability and activity, underscoring the importance of social interaction and cooperation. In both the self-

image and the “Ideal” image, *orderliness* ranks highly, indicating a preference for self-regulation and control over life circumstances, as well as the perception of order as an important adaptive mechanism in conditions of uncertainty. Only in the self-stereotype does *pride* rank highly (second position), reflecting a tendency toward cohesion with one’s own ethnic group. Additionally, *stubbornness*, although less strongly expressed ($M = 2.95$), appears among the first six qualities in the self-stereotype and can be interpreted as reflecting a striving for stability in the face of external pressures.

Table 4.

The dominant qualities of the self-image, the “ideal” image and the self-stereotype in young Gagauz

	Self-image	Mean (M)	“Ideal” image	Mean (M)	Self-stereotype	Mean (M)
1	orderly	3.36	sociable	3.75	sociable	3.55
2	sociable	3.18	active	3.67	proud	3.32
3	cautious	3.05	orderly	3.56	active	3.15
4	persistent	2.95	ingenious	3.47	persistent	3.00
5	active	2.90	mentally sharp	3.46	stubborn	2.95
6	thrifty	2.88	diplomatic	3.45	mentally sharp	2.92

Source: Authors’ own elaboration

Thus, the prominence of the qualities “*sociable*” and “*active*” in the self-stereotype, the “Ideal” image, and the self-image of Gagauz youth reflects a clear orientation toward social interaction. The high ranking of *order* at the personal level (in both the self-image and the “Ideal” image) indicates a tendency toward self-regulation and

the maintenance of order under conditions of social uncertainty (Table 4). The prominence of *pride* in the self-stereotype highlights the importance of ethnic cohesion, while the inclusion of *stubbornness* among the most characteristic traits suggests a striving for stability and resistance to external pressures.

Table 5.

The dominant qualities of the self-image, the “ideal” image and the self-stereotype in Ukrainian youth

	Self-image	Mean (M)	“Ideal” image	Mean (M)	Self-stereotype	Mean (M)
1	orderly	3.20	sociable	3.88	sociable	3.43
2	sociable	3.18	active	3.80	active	3.43
3	mentally sharp	3.13	diplomatic	3.75	persistent	3.15
4	active	3.10	mentally sharp	3.73	ingenious	3.00
5	ingenious	3.10	ingenious	3.70	mentally sharp	2.97
6	diplomatic	3.05	orderly	3.63	diplomatic	2.88

Source: Authors’ own elaboration

Among young Ukrainians, the shared qualities across the self-image, the “Ideal” image, and the self-stereotype are *sociable*, *ingenious*, *active*, and *diplomatic*. Within this group, the overlap among the most highly rated qualities across the three representations is particularly pronounced. In the self-stereotype of young Ukrainians, persistence is a salient quality (absent from both the self-image and the “Ideal” image), suggesting a perception of their ethnic group as determined and capable of achieving results. In both the “Ideal” image and the self-image, *orderliness* ranks highly, underscoring

the importance placed on maintaining order and self-regulation (Table 5).

The concordance of qualities across the self-image, the “Ideal” image, and the self-stereotype reflects a stable and positive ethnic identity among young Ukrainians. The emphasis on *persistence* in the self-stereotype suggests a perception of the ethnic group as determined and achievement-oriented, while the importance of *orderliness* in the self-image and the “Ideal” image indicates an orientation toward self-regulation and structured social behaviour.

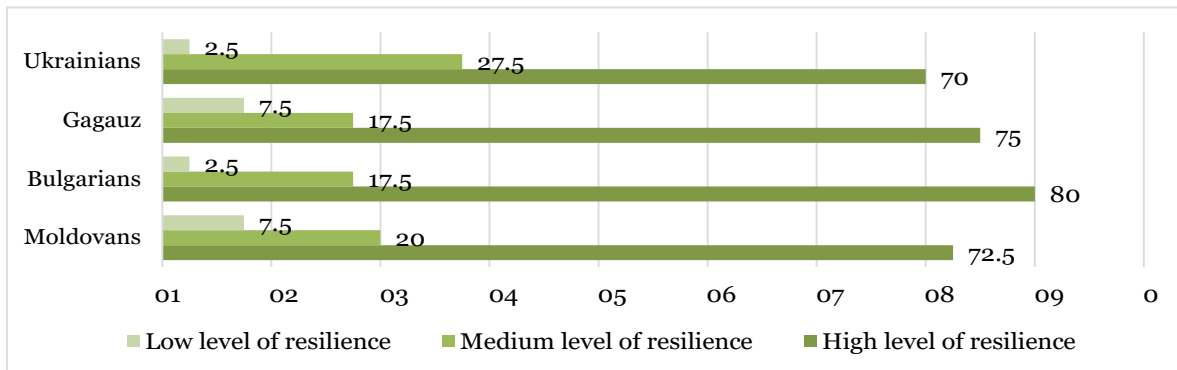
The significance of cultural and traditional values is also supported by psychological research. A study conducted by Rusnac (2025) examined the social representation of happiness across four generations in Moldova – Generation Z, Millennials (Y), Generation X, and Baby Boomers – using the free association method and structural analysis developed by Vergès. Among young adults from Generation Z (18-25 years, n = 72), a hybrid representation was identified, combining traditional

values with experiential and expressive elements (Rusnac, 2025).

The resilience of young adults from the studied ethnic groups was assessed using the Dispositional Resilience Scale developed by S. Maddi. The findings indicate that high levels of resilience were predominant among Moldovan, Gagauz, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian young adults (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Levels of resilience in young adults (%)



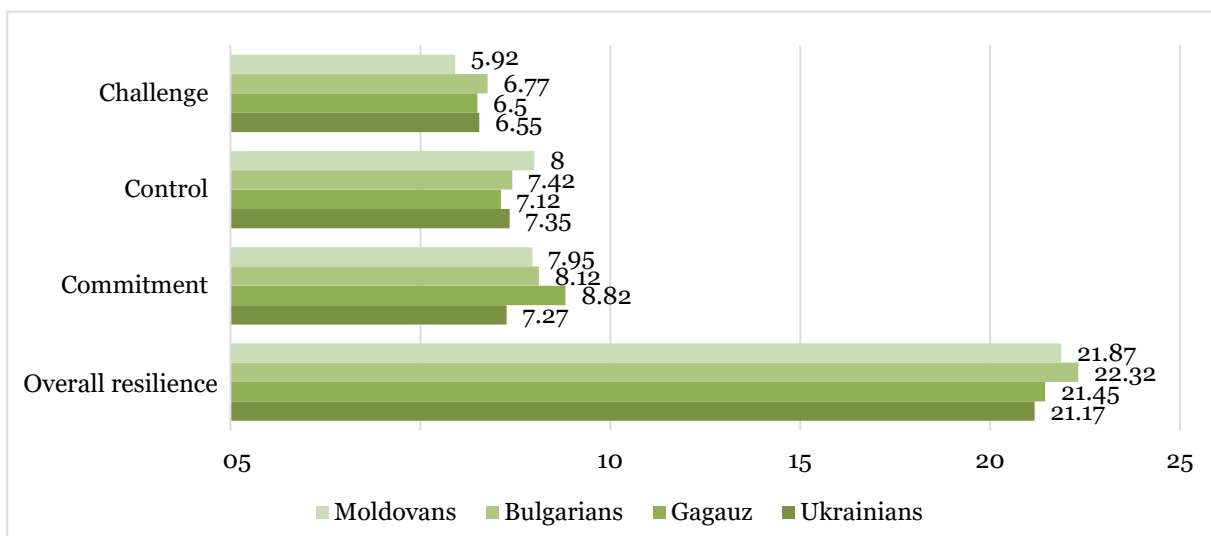
Source: Authors' own elaboration

The highest level of resilience is observed among Bulgarian youth (80%), whereas the lowest is among Ukrainian youth (70%). When comparing the scales (indicators): *commitment*, *control* and *challenge*, statistically significant differences were identified between challenge and control in all ethnic groups of young people studied: Moldovans ($Z = -3.683$; $p = 0.0001$), Gagauz ($Z = -3.853$; $p = 0.0001$), Bulgarians ($Z = -3.307$; $p = 0.001$), Ukrainians ($Z = -2.188$; $p = 0.029$). Thus, commitment predominates over control; young people believe that,

through active participation in life events, they can achieve and find something valuable for themselves. This belief is more pronounced than the belief in control. Also, the comparison of the dimensions of challenge and control revealed statistically significant differences among Moldovan ($Z = -4.717$; $p = 0.000$), Gagauz ($Z = -1.999$; $p = 0.046$) and Ukrainian ($Z = -2.566$; $p = 0.010$) young adults. In the case of the Bulgarian group of young people, no statistically significant differences were identified between these dimensions (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Mean values of youth resilience



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Overall, the findings indicate that the resilience of young adults from the studied ethnic groups is characterised by the predominance of *commitment* and *control*, with *challenge* being comparatively less pronounced. Statistically significant differences between the control and challenge components were identified among Moldovan, Gagauz, and Ukrainian youth, suggesting a preference for control over life circumstances rather than perceiving change as a challenge. In contrast, among Bulgarian youth, the differences between control and challenge did not reach statistical significance, indicating a more balanced relationship between these components within the resilience framework.

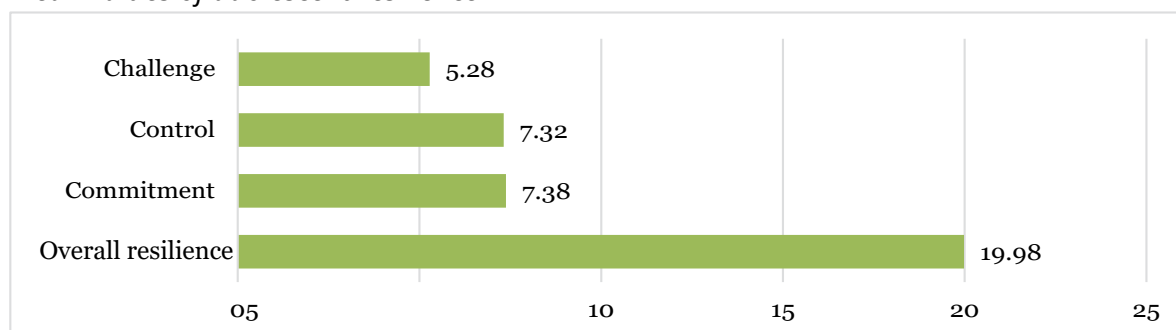
The study thus revealed a relatively consistent structural pattern of resilience among Moldovan, Gagauz, and Ukrainian young adults, reflecting similar adaptation

strategies to uncertainty. Ethnocultural specificity is observed among Bulgarian youth, for whom the balance between resilience components appears more even.

These findings are further supported by a study conducted on a sample of 50 adolescents (aged 16-18, $M = 16.8$) from a vocational-technical institution in the city of Orhei. The study was carried out within the framework of the research project “Resilience as a Socio-Psychological Resource for Consolidating Human and Social Capital,” part of Subprogram 01.05.01 “National Security of Moldova in the Context of Accession to the European Union: Legal, Political, and Sociological Approaches” (2025, Institute of Legal, Political and Sociological Research, State University of Moldova). The same short version of S. Maddi’s Dispositional Resilience Scale was applied (Gașper, 2025; Gașper, 2024).

Figure 3.

Mean values of adolescent resilience



Source: Authors' own elaboration

The results presented in Figure 3 indicate a high overall level of *resilience* ($M = 19.98$), suggesting a strong capacity among adolescents to cope with challenging situations and adapt to change. Within this structure, *commitment* had the highest mean ($M = 7.38$), reflecting intrinsic motivation and active engagement with personal goals and activities. Adolescents with a high level of commitment tend to perceive life as a space of opportunities and personal growth, fostering a positive orientation toward effort and learning.

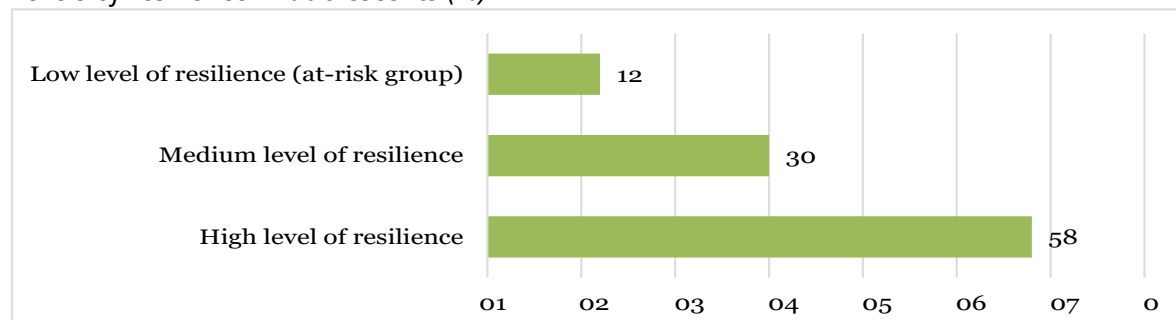
The *control* component also recorded a high mean value ($M = 7.32$), indicating a strong perception of self-efficacy and personal responsibility for one's life outcomes. Respondents demonstrate a belief that they can influence events through their actions, reflecting well-developed cognitive and behavioural aspects of resilience necessary

for emotional self-regulation.

In contrast, the *challenge* component obtained a lower mean value ($M = 5.28$), suggesting a more cautious orientation and a preference for stability. Adolescents appear more reserved in the face of uncertainty and tend to prefer predictable and structured contexts. Although this may limit engagement in new experiences, it can also be interpreted as a protective adaptive strategy in a vulnerable and uncertain environment. Overall, the resilience profile suggests a structure predominantly based on *commitment* and *control*, combined with a cautious attitude toward *challenge* – a configuration that supports effective adaptation while also indicating the need to further develop the exploratory dimension of resilience among adolescents.

Figure 4.

Levels of resilience in adolescents (%)



Source: Authors' own elaboration

The data emphasise a differentiated distribution of resilience levels among adolescents. The majority of respondents (58%) demonstrate a high level of resilience, suggesting a strong capacity for adaptation and personal resources for managing stress. However, the combined proportion of medium- and low-resilience individuals (42%) indicates the presence of a vulnerable segment that requires socio-psychological interventions and educational programs to develop socio-emotional skills.

Adolescents were also asked to complete the following sentence: "I think that developing a person's resilience involves..." (Fominova, 2012). Their responses were structured into three categories.

Category 1. Internal resources (32%): self-confidence, self-control, and inner strength. This category includes responses emphasising the role of personal factors—self-belief, self-knowledge, emotional regulation, and inner reflection. Adolescents perceive resilience as an individual capacity for self-regulation and the ability to mobilise inner strength in overcoming difficulties.

Sample responses include: "One's own strengths, self-confidence" (F., aged 17); "Self-confidence and the support of friends" (F., aged 17); "It is a way to hold ourselves together and calm down in a stressful situation, so as not to react negatively toward others" (F., aged 18); "Through prayer and self-confidence" (F., aged 16); "The spiritual strength of the person" (M., aged 16).

Overall, adolescents understand resilience as a process of psychological self-regulation grounded in faith in one's own resources, emotional balance, and personal reflection. Kobasa's (1979) model conceptualises hardiness (resilience) as a stable personal disposition characterised by commitment and control, supporting this interpretation of resilience as an internally grounded psychological resource.

Category 2. Social support and trusting relationships (46%). This category includes responses emphasising family members, friends, partners, or other trusted individuals as primary sources of resilience. Adolescents describe their social networks as the primary context for emotional recovery and support.

Examples of responses include: "With the help of parents and friends" (F., aged 17); "Parents support you all the time" (F., aged 17); "Friends, family" (M., aged 17); "Friends and family can help a person" (F., aged 18); "Family environment and emotional support" (F., aged 17); "Personally, my husband helps me get through all my problems" (F., aged 17).

In this perspective, resilience is conceptualised relationally, consistent with Ungar's (2019) socio-ecological model, which holds that social support serves as a protective resource that strengthens adaptive capacity.

Category 3. Contextual factors and compensatory activities (22%). This category includes responses referring to environmental influences, recreational or spiritual activities, and concrete stress-management

strategies such as rest, hobbies, sports, reflection, or meditation.

Sample responses include: "Rest or a hobby to forget about stress or talk to someone" (M., aged 16); "Family, friends, hobbies, meditation, sport, being alone for a while" (F., aged 18); "The environment, support from those around, information" (F., aged 17); "Those around him" (M., aged 17). Adolescents recognise the importance of a balanced socio-emotional environment and of positive coping activities (e.g., hobbies, reflection, relaxation).

Overall, adolescents' responses indicate a mixed approach to resilience: some perceive it as an individual capacity, others as the result of interpersonal support, while a smaller group associates it with contextual coping strategies. This triadic structure corresponds to the integrative model of resilience proposed by Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000), which emphasises the dynamic interaction between internal, relational, and contextual resources.

The adolescent groups were further characterised by their resilience levels, as indicated by their scores on Maddi's scale (high, medium, and low). The responses from each group to the open-ended question, "I think that developing a person's resilience involves...", were analysed to highlight differences in perceptions of this psychological construct.

Adolescents with high resilience demonstrate a balanced, integrative perspective on personal development, drawing on internal and social resources. Many associate resilience with self-confidence, self-efficacy, and socio-emotional support. Their responses reflect both an awareness of relational factors and a recognition of personal responsibility in the adaptation process. Relevant examples include: "Self-confidence and the support of friends" (F., aged 17); "Family environment, emotional support, life experience, and emotional regulation skills" (F., aged 17).

This combination of intrapsychic and relational resources reflects a more developed resilience profile, in which social support is perceived not as a dependency but as a complementary mechanism to self-regulation, consistent with Ungar's ecological model (2019). The presence of reflective and empathic elements suggests a proactive orientation towards resilience, directed at personal development and the maintenance of emotional balance.

The group of adolescents with moderate resilience is characterised by ambivalence between the need for support and the striving for emotional autonomy. While adolescents recognise the role of the social environment, they often express uncertainty about their internal resources, alternating between passivity and attempts to exert control. Relevant examples include: "Family, friends, hobbies, meditation, sports, to be alone for a while" (F., aged 18); "To be helped by close people and to stay calm, not to panic" (F., aged 17).

These responses suggest that resilience is understood as the outcome of a combination of external support and partial self-regulation; however, the coping strategies described appear more reactive than proactive. The presence of ambiguous responses (e.g., “don’t know,” “no answer”) may indicate a less consolidated sense of internal control and incomplete awareness of coping mechanisms. This pattern suggests a transitional stage between emotional reliance and resilient autonomy, highlighting the potential benefit of adaptive skills training programmes.

Adolescents with low resilience show a strong reliance on external resources and a predominantly affective orientation in their understanding of resilience. They perceive the ability to overcome difficulties as largely determined by emotional support from family members,

CONCLUSIONS

A positive ethnic identity was identified across all analysed ethnic groups of young adults, representing an essential cultural resource for integration into sociocultural processes and for coping with uncertainty. This resource is grounded in intercultural communication, inclusion, and a sense of personal and collective control. All ethnic groups place high importance on sociability, activity, and ingenuity.

The need for communication appears to underpin the expansion of a shared space of meaning among young people from different ethnic backgrounds. At the same time, communication functions as a form of cultural capital through which the region has historically maintained its multicultural character. This multicultural experience entails diverse worldviews, which may foster adaptability and resilience in post-transitional contexts.

The empirical findings further indicate that the resilience of young adults from the studied ethnic groups is characterised by a predominance of commitment and control, with challenge comparatively less pronounced. Statistically significant differences between the control and challenge components were identified among Moldovan, Gagauz, and Ukrainian youth, suggesting a preference for control over life events rather than openness to challenge.

In contrast, among Bulgarian youth, the differences between control and challenge were not statistically significant, indicating a more balanced relationship between these components within the resilience structure. Overall, the study revealed a relatively consistent pattern of resilience among Moldovan, Gagauz, and Ukrainian youth, reflecting similar adaptation strategies under conditions of uncertainty.

The analysis of the three groups of adolescents indicated a progressive increase in the complexity of resilience

partners, or friends, whereas intrapsychic resources are rarely mentioned and are described in vague terms. Relevant examples include: “Family help and self-confidence” (F., aged 17); “Personally, my husband helps me overcome all problems” (F., aged 17).

This profile suggests heightened psychosocial vulnerability, with emotional balance maintained primarily through supportive interpersonal relationships. The limited references to internal self-regulation mechanisms suggest a pattern of resilience anchored primarily in the immediate relational context. Within the framework proposed by Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000), these adolescents may be classified as at risk, underscoring the need for interventions to strengthen autonomy, self-concept, and emotion regulation.

perceptions, ranging from externally dependent patterns (low resilience) to the integration of internal and external resources (high resilience). Adolescents with high resilience demonstrate a reflective and adaptive understanding of this construct, whereas those with medium or low resilience exhibit unmet emotional needs and greater affective reliance on others.

This empirical differentiation confirms the dynamic nature of resilience as an adaptive process that involves the effective mobilisation of personal and interpersonal resources. The findings align with international models that conceptualise resilience as an ecological and contextual process grounded in the balance between individual and environmental resources (Masten, 2014; Ungar, 2012; Luthar et al., 2000).

Cross-national research on youth resilience highlights both convergences in adaptation strategies (Masten, 2014; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) and context-specific variations shaped by socio-historical, cultural, and institutional conditions (Ungar, 2012; Panter-Brick, 2015). In this context, resilience resources, ethnic identity, and intercultural socialisation processes are key variables for understanding how young people manage uncertainty, vulnerability, and adaptation in post-transitional contexts.

Future research should examine resilience across diverse social groups, including working adults differentiated by professional sector, migrants, and retirees, and explore the role of intercultural communication and uncertainty management in post-transitional societies. The findings of the present study may inform the development of applied social programmes – such as training in uncertainty adaptation, intergenerational initiatives, volunteering activities, and mental health support programmes – particularly those targeting young people.

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