Individual, family, school and community: Multidimensional supports for school success in contexts of poverty[1]

Individuo, familia, escuela y comunidad: apoyos multidimensionales para el éxito escolar en entornos de pobreza

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Abstract

The paper focuses on analysing the school success of secondary school students living in contexts of poverty through a multiple case study in five Spanish cities. The information has been obtained using semi-structured interviews with the students, their family members, teachers or tutors and community agents. In total, we have triangulated the information from 102 interviews with the aim of ascertaining the factors that influence students' school success, such as their individual strengths, their trusting relationships at school and in their family, or the community support they received. The results show that 57% of the students had support in all or at least three of the dimensions studied (individual, family, school and community). This multidimensional support enables young people to develop resilience, even though factors hindering school success were found

in 70% of the cases. The findings open up new approaches to promoting equity and inclusion policies beyond the school.

Key words: child poverty, school success, community support, educational equity, multiple case studies.

Resumen

El artículo presenta un estudio de casos múltiple que aborda la comprensión del éxito escolar de jóvenes en situación de pobreza y vulnerabilidad social. Se analizan en profundidad las trayectorias de éxito de 30 estudiantes que han finalizado la Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria en 5 ciudades españolas diferentes. Para obtener la información de cada caso se han realizado entrevistas semi-estructuradas a los propios estudiantes, a un tutor/a o profesor/a referente de su centro escolar, a un familiar y a un referente comunitario próximo. En total se ha triangulado la información de 102 entrevistas, lo cual ha permitido comprender las trayectorias de éxito escolar que se explican tanto por las fortalezas individuales como por las relaciones de confianza, los apoyos personalizados y el acompañamiento socioeducativo de los diferentes agentes implicados en la educación de los jóvenes. En el 57% de los casos se han identificado factores de apoyo al éxito escolar en todas o en 3 de las dimensiones estudiadas (individual, familiar, escolar y comunitaria). Es esta combinación de apoyos lo que permite estos jóvenes ser resilientes, a pesar de que en un 70% de los casos hemos encontrado factores inhibidores del éxito escolar. La identificación de factores de apoyo multidimensionales para el éxito escolar abre puertas a nuevos enfoques para elaborar las políticas educativas de equidad e inclusión más allá de la escuela.

Palabras clave: pobreza infantil, éxito escolar, apoyo comunitario, equidad educativa, estudio de casos múltiple.

Introduction

Since 2007, the number of families with children living in poverty has increased considerably in Spain. In this period, the context of the economic crisis has also had repercussions on worsening children's living conditions and has revealed poverty to be a structural problem in our country. Job instability, difficulties accessing housing, transformations in

the family and the low impact of family and social policies are just some factors which explain children's increased vulnerability due to poverty.

In 2016, 28% of the Spanish population lived at risk of poverty or social exclusion, according to the AROPE indicator, a figure that reached 33% for children under the age of 18 (more than 2.7 million children and teenagers), according to figures from Eurostat (2018). Both rates are above the European Union average (EU-28). Specifically, according to Flores (2016), young people in the 12-17 age range, which dovetails with compulsory secondary education, are the most vulnerable.

According to Flaquer, Almeda and Navarro (2006), equal opportunities early in the life cycle is a crucial determinant in people's futures. In a democratic society, it is unacceptable that children suffer from exclusion processes that irreversibly condition their future. In this sense, numerous studies show the association between parents' and children's living conditions, confirming that equal opportunity is more an aspiration than a reality. Children who live in contexts of poverty or social exclusion will find it much harder to improve upon their parents' socioeconomic status, thus perpetuating intergenerational transmission of poverty (ITP) (Flores, 2016) or social immobility, understood as a high proportion of children who remain in the same social class as their parents (Marqués & Herrera, 2010).

The field of sociology of education has used different theoretical approaches to study the role played by education in lowering or maintaining inequalities related to family background. Since Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) in their classic reproduction theory, today we continue to witness the association between the educational and economic level of the parents and their children's academic performance, and this is still a key factor conditioning both success and failure (Bernardi & Cebolla, 2014; MECD, 2013; Gil-Flores, 2011; Moreno, 2011; Calero, Choi & Waisgrais, 2010).

The concepts of educational success and failure refer to factors that go beyond marks, although the majority of studies reduce school success/failure to this, as seen in the previous literature review which we conducted (Carrillo, Civís, Andrés, Longás, & Riera, 2018). The indicators repeatedly used to measure it are failure to attain the basic competences, repeating grades, failure to graduate from compulsory secondary school and dropping out of school. In Spain, recent data for these indicators show a very worrisome situation: 1) the PISA reports estimate that one-

third of 15-year-olds do not acquire basic competences in reading, maths and the sciences (UNICEF Research Centre, 2017); 2) it is estimated that 53% of the students in disadvantaged contexts repeat some grade throughout their schooling, highlighting the existence of inequalities in the life courses of students according to their socioeconomic background (OECD, 2014); 3) the overall non-graduation rate in compulsory secondary school was 22% in academic year 2014-15, that is, more than one-fifth of the youths did not graduate at the expected age (MECD, 2017); 4) the early school drop-out rate among youths aged 18 to 24 from the lowest income quintile increased from 28% to 36% in the period 2008 to 2015 (Save The Children, 2016). Dropping out of school and failing to certify the minimum competences required in our society limits their job insertion and increases the risk of social exclusion (Sarasa & Sales, 2009).

Beyond the material limitations that condition educational success resulting from the situation of poverty, the affective and relational components have also been shown to be some of the factors that most determine school performance (Lozano, 2003). Family instability is often associated with the appearance of potentially traumatic life events (Pereda, 2002) and the generation of learned defenceless (Seligman, 1975), which are highly invalidating. Likewise, belonging to social networks with a noticeably vulnerable profile also increases the likelihood of suffering from stressful life events and contributes to perpetuating ITP (Muñoz, Vázquez, & Vázquez, 2003). However, even though the study of ITP can suggest an apparent determinism between poverty and school failure, research confirms that this is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon in which factors that facilitate school success also exist (Carrillo et al., 2018). Specifically, there is empirical evidence on the influence of individual factors in school failure/success (Berliner, 2009), with a particular emphasis on responsible personality structure (Paul & McCrae, 2008), as well as family factors (Hernando, Oliva, & Pertegal, 2012; Jeynes, 2007), school factors (Flecha & Puigvert, 2002; Flecha, García, Gómez, & Latorre, 2009) and community factors (Hatcher & Leblond, 2001). Specifically, positive expectations towards education emerge as an important driver of success (Pàmies, 2013) and tend to be arise as mentoring and educational support allow youths to set their academic and professional goals (Hattie, 2017; Santana, Feliciano, & Jiménez, 2016).

There is recent literature analysing the systemic relationships among these factors and the positive effects of community action or coordinated

socio-educational action on the development of educational resilience and school success (Abajo & Carrasco, 2004; Moliner, 2008; Pedró, 2012; Díaz-Gibson & Civís, 2011; Civís & Longás, 2015; Díaz-Gibson, Civís, Longás, & Riera, 2017; Ruiz, Calderón, & Juárez, 2017). They all open up the possibility of designing new strategies to promote success (Smith, 2003), considering the principle of educational co-responsibility (Riera, 2007), the school-community connection from a holistic standpoint (Santalucía & Cisi de Solari, 2014; Bonal, Castejón, Zancajo, & Castel, 2015), the development of social capital (Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001) and the national and local articulation of equity policies (Assiego & Ubrich, 2015).

According to Escudero, González and Martínez (2009), students' personal, emotional and biographical dimensions tend to remain in the shadows in studies on school failure. However, researching students' school experience should enable us to understand the contextual conditions and how youths design their life courses and construct their identities based on their experiences (Calderón, 2014). For this reason, the objective of the study presented here is to analyse the conditioning factors of school success in secondary students living in situations of poverty and to understand how these factors work by analysing school trajectories as narrated by the students themselves.

Method

The interest in knowing the meaning and interpretation of the conditioning factors associated with school success from the standpoint of the students themselves explains the qualitative orientation of this study (Maxwell, 2004; Vasilachis, 2006). It is presented in multiple case studies (Neiman & Quaranta, 2006) because this allows for an in-depth analysis of the different school experiences based on the stories of the youths themselves and key agents in their milieu. In this way, we have sought to learn about the particularities of each life story, which would have been difficult to capture in a quantitative study (Stake, 1998), in order to obtain "local" causal explanations referring to specific processes and contexts which help to verify or develop theories around the object of study (Miles & Huberman, 1991; Maxwell, 2004).

Sample

The sample is comprised of 30 cases of youths living in situations of vulnerability because of relative poverty, as established by the threshold of the 2012 Living Conditions Survey (INE, 2013), and with successful school records. School success was considered having graduated from compulsory secondary school with good academic performance on average (at least 6 points out of 10 or higher) and studying or starting post-compulsory education programmes.

The participating youths were between the ages of 16 and 22 when the interviews were held (26.7% were 16 years old, 26.7% were 17, 23.3% were 18, 10% were 19 and 6.7% were 21 and 22, respectively). The mean age was 17.6 for girls and 17.9 for boys.

To ensure the diversity of the sample, which allows analytical generalisation albeit without purporting statistical representativeness (Coller, 2000), the inclusion criteria were to combine residency in different cities (23% Barcelona, 17% Murcia, 20% Palma de Mallorca, 20% Seville, 20% Tenerife) with the 4 sociodemographic variables which correlate with educational success according to Enguita, Mena and Riviere (2010): gender (50% males and 50% females), family background (73% Spain, 27% foreign) type of household (27% single-parent, 60% two-parent and 13% other situations) and maximum educational level attained by a parent (57% no education or primary school, 43% with secondary school or higher education).

Instruments

For each case, information was collected from the student's academic record, and 102 semi-structured interviews were held (30 with students, 29 with parents or guardians, 27 with reference teachers in their schools and 16 with reference community agents, when applicable). The interviews were divided into 4 sets of questions: (1) characteristics of the case (student) and their school career (past, present and future expectations); (2) family's role and expectations; (3) role of the school and teachers in the learning process; and (4) student's relationship with their milieu, including the role and expectations of the community agent.

Procedure

The fieldwork was conducted between June and September 2014, as this was believed to be the ideal time during the academic year to collect relevant information. Each student was accessed openly through the assistance of local socio-educational agents, who helped select them based on the inclusion criteria described above. The members of the sample and the participants in the research were guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity required for this kind of research and signed the corresponding informed consent form. The interviews were recorded and transcribed so they could later be analysed.

The analysis process sought to ensure the consistency and transparency of the results bearing in mind the credibility criterion of the study (Dorio, Sabariego, & Massot, 2004; Mendizábal, 2006); triangulation strategies were used at different points in the process and the categories of analysis were designed and restructured according to the criteria of *dependency* and *confirmability* (Guba, 1981). Initially, the sources of information for each student were triangulated. After that, the information was analysed via triangulation among the researchers, such that the cases were randomly distributed among 3 teams of 2 researchers. Finally, the different cases were analysed together using the comparison by similarity strategy in order to understand the common support factors in the cases of school success studied (Yin, 2014).

The participants' narratives were analysed with the assistance of *NVivo10 qualitative data software*. Each group categorised the information from the cases by assigning units of text from the interviews to the categories established in the design of the study and identifying emerging categories. Thus, a flexible or mixed design (deductive and inductive) was used, starting with an analysis structure devised based on the literature review, which was open to the interactive generation of knowledge based on the data obtained (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Blumer, 1982; Mendizábal, 2006). The restructuring of the categories of analysis based on shared reflection on their meanings (Barber & Walczak, 2009) enabled a matrix of fields and categories of analysis to be established (Table I) to compare the concordant or discordant discourses among the different agents and cases, as well as the common meanings which may be generalisable.

TABLE I. Categories by dimensions of analysis

Dimensions	Categories	Number of male references	Number of female references	Total number of references	% of the total
Individual		**340**	**562**	**902**	**33**
	Skills and competences	34	43	77	3
	Personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, kindness, responsibility and resilience	103	221	324	12
	Personal study: learning style, difficulties, space and time for schoolwork	77	103	180	7
	Life habits	64	96	160	6
	Future plans	49	72	121	4
	Assessment of education	13	27	40	1
Family		**278**	**522**	**800**	**30**
	Oversight of schooling	68	97	165	6
	Models in the family and child-rearing style	14	39	53	2
	Family's expectations of the youth	31	39	70	3
	Family's assessment of education	21	36	57	2
	Family-school relationship	33	45	78	3
	Family's relationship health	30	73	103	4
	Family status: structure, sociocultural context, work and economic status, housing and health.	81	193	274	10
School		**249**	**409**	**658**	**24**
	School record	82	99	181	7
	Youth's integration at school: relationships with peers, participation in and assessment of the school	44	83	127	5
	Teacher-student relationship	37	72	109	4
	Teachers' expectations of the youth	22	23	45	2
	School: sociocultural context, educational curriculum and organisation	64	132	196	7

Community		187	165	352	13
	Relationship with community referent	29	16	45	2
	Educational oversight of the community referent	62	20	82	3
	Expectations of the community referent	12	8	20	1
	Peer relationships outside of school	42	46	88	3
	Local participation: free-time, educational or social activities	42	75	117	4
Total		**1.054**	**1.658**	**2.712**	**100**

Source: Authors

Of all the interviews, 2,712 units of text were coded in the 4 fields (902 individual, 800 family, 658 school and 352 community). The overall analysis of these units enabled us to identify some social handicap conditions and recurring factors that hinder or foster school success. In view of the emergence of potentially traumatic life events, we chose to use the classification by Pereda (2002), while adding a few more categories to record other situations which may be stressful. Once the cases were analysed, the strengths of the school success factors were evaluated for each dimension according to the importance that the interviewees attributed to them. By doing so, we made an approximation of the concept of multidimensional support and its systemic value.

Results

The results of the study are presented in two sections: 1) analysis of life contexts of the participants and factors hindering school success; and 2) analysis of factors supporting school success.

Drudgery of poverty and factors hindering school success

In all the cases, situations of poverty were identified that lowered students' access to material resources and opportunities or even deprived

the students of them entirely, with a potential to affect their education. Economic status affects being able to afford school costs (textbooks and school supplies, extra activities), engagement in extracurricular activities (English, sports, tutoring, etc.) and the availability of space and resources to study at home (computer, Internet access, etc.). This reality tends to come with a complex system of feelings and effects which directly condition school performance and more indirectly affect the motivation to study. What stands out in the narratives is the perception of a kind of stigmatisation associated with poverty, such that in addition to the material barriers, the youths also feel symbolic barriers. In the majority of cases, they are aware that they are accessing the educational system without having the same opportunities as their classmates. In a subtle way, material deprivation implies creating social relations based on feelings of "inferiority", a kind of oppression that is particularly felt in adolescence, a stage of self-affirmation and the construction of one's identity.

> *My mother's economic situation made me feel inferior and it affected me a lot (…) if some people realised it, they made fun of me. Not everyone did, but it made me feel insecure. (Youth, C17, Tenerife)*

In 37% of the cases, the families and school and community agents expressed limitations in their expectations of the youths' future due to their poverty. They clearly stated that economic status can be an insurmountable obstacle for youths to continue studying, regardless of their good performance.

The effects of poverty are also felt in the family's day-to-day lives. The stress that parents feel when trying to make ends meet every month, some of them even facing eviction, often leads to a gradual deterioration in the family dynamic. Likewise, in the cases studied, we found a high unemployment rate in the families (33.3% with no income from work, 47.7% one-income families; 20% two-income families). Many parents experience long-term unemployment and unstable jobs, which forced them to hold down several jobs or get involved in the underground economy. All of this means that a feeling of insecurity prevails in the families' perception, regardless of whether or not they work. Some youths are clearly aware of the harsh experience of instability generated by their parents' lack of work or unstable jobs and try to help out the family economically by doing paid jobs, taking on responsibilities and family roles which are beyond their age.

The parents' education also arises in the participants' discourses, as they acknowledge the sociocultural handicap that their educational level entails for their children. This particularly affects them because of the impossibility of them understanding and/or helping their children in their learning processes, the lack of direct stimuli in the family or the lack of referents of school success within the nuclear and extended family.

The lack of referents within the neighbourhood was also mentioned as a difficulty in some cases. This absence of role models also extends to peer relationships. Some youths claim that they found no stimuli to study in their social networks due to their friends' lower educational level and/or motivation. Others directly recognised the negative influence their peers had on them.

> *He wants to show the people in the neighbourhood that you can do something else, like study, because this means that in the future he'll get a good job; he wants to be an example for the neighbourhood. (Mother, C20, Murcia).*

> *The friends I have in the neighbourhood, probably the one with the most education has a secondary school certificate, that's it. So of course, I'm kind of like the weird one. (Youth, C9, Mallorca)*

What is noteworthy is the large number of experiences identified as highly stressful situations in themselves which affect emotional wellbeing and can be described as potentially traumatic. A total of up to 72 experiences of this were tallied (Table II) which have affected up to 70% of the cases (N=21), coupled with the difficulties stemming from economic poverty, a depressed sociocultural environment and other school-related or typically adolescent problems (fights with siblings, emotional instability, lack of direction, etc.). It is frequent for the same student to experience several of these situations. The distribution or concentration of experiences of this type is as follows: 13.3% of the cases have 9, 7 or 6 life stressors; 23.3% of the cases have 4 or 3 stressful life situations; and 33.3% of the cases have 2 or 1 experiences of this kind.

Table II shows the different stressful life experiences or events which were identified. Negative experiences related to health have affected 46.7% of the youths in the sample, who have experienced serious family illnesses, experiences of death of close family members and/or illnesses themselves. Forty percent of the cases have experienced undesired and

potentially destabilising changes, such as a change in country in the case of immigrants, moving home and a new school, which bring pain, uncertainty and efforts to adapt. A total of 20 experiences of instability within the family were identified, caused by ruptures, regrouping or conflicts in family life, which affect 11 cases of 36.6% of the sample. Twenty percent of the students had experienced abuse or direct aggression, either physical or psychological, in its different manifestations, such as harassment or bullying at school, gender violence at home, sexual abuse by their father and abortion because of unwanted pregnancy. Another situation we have classified as stressful is sudden poverty, which has occurred in 23.3% of the families in the sample. Other families also live in situations of poverty, sometimes even more severe, such that the stress entailed by having limited access to many resources and living with uncertainty about the future affects all the students. However, the particularity of these cases is that they started in the middle or lower-middle class and were forced to change their lifestyle and learn how to live with instability because of the effects of the economic crisis.

TABLE II. Distribution of stressful life experiences

Type of experiences	No.
Negative health experiences	**19**
Family illness	8
Death of loved one	6
Illness (self)	5
Undesired and potentially destabilising changes	**17**
Immigration	5
Moving home	7
New school	5
Family instability	**20**
Abandonment	6
Adoption or fostering	3
Living away from the family	5
Divorce or separation	5
Parent in prison	1

Experiences of abuse and direct aggression, either physical or psycho-logical	9
Harassment or bullying from peers	5
Gender violence at home	2
Sexual abuse by father	1
Abortion due to unwanted pregnancy	1
Sudden poverty	**7**
Total	**72**

Source: Authors

Multidimensional supports to achieve school success in contexts of poverty

We have identified the supports the youths have received in each area of analysis. The narratives acknowledge them as factors explaining their success, and sometimes as factors that offset other difficulties. These supports are distinguished from what we call conditions of possibility which could favour the youths' school success because they are attributed direct action, which is somehow a crucial cause explaining it.

■ Individual

The individual strengths of the youths oriented explicitly at success at school and in education are often presented as both a result and a factor of support for their successful careers. On the one hand, they show attainment of a life trajectory directly influenced by the other factors that facilitate success which we have identified in the family, school and community environments. Yet they also simultaneously emerge as protective factors that explain the success itself. The participants' discourses particularly stress the youths' own cognitive capacities, personal features and future plans, which are very powerful factors that help them overcome adversity:

From a very young age, I saw that education is the only way to get ahead; it was like my only lifesaver. (Youth, C5, Barcelona)

In terms of personality, what stands out is the capacity for personal and educational resilience of the youths interviewed. In 57% of the cases, the youths' capacity to deal with difficult situations and "fight" to achieve their goals is mentioned explicitly. Another noteworthy personality characteristic is responsibility, as defined in the Big Five model (Paul & McCrae, 2008) as self-awareness and self-esteem, organisation, a sense of duty, a need for achievement or determination, self-discipline and conscientiousness. Responsibility in one of these facets appears in all the cases in the sample.

Finally, a crucial lever in success according to the youths' narratives are the expectations of education to help them achieve their life plans. Fifty-three percent of the youths in the sample value education as an investment in the future, which sparks their interest in learning and shows that when the social milieu does not push them to have horizons beyond the neighbourhood itself, looking outward and connecting with other milieus can counter this.

In some cases, these clearly defined future expectations and life plans emerge in response to the very situation of deprivation and vulnerability. Specifically, in 5 cases (17% of the sample), the main factor explaining school success is that the youths have taken refuge in their studies to compensate for problematic family situations. Having a better future is what makes their life courses meaningful.

■ Family

For the youths, regardless of their parents' level of education, having their family monitor their school activity is particularly important because it fosters school inclusion. This direct support for education is perceived not so much in help with doing schoolwork as in monitoring their education (40% of the cases), keeping track of their calendar and homework and showing an interest in what is happening at school. Emotional support from the family is also valued when the youths feel "overwhelmed" by difficulties in their schoolwork or frustrated by not achieving the academic results they wanted. More directly, positive parenting practices in the family are important support for school success in 60% of the cases. Good communication between family members, time shared together, trust and/or mutual support in some cases are crucial to offsetting certain difficulties related to the family economic situation,

stressful life events or risks detected in other areas of analysis. In some cases, what also stands out is the strength of the family environment, especially the role of some mothers, who convey positive values which serve as an invaluable lever of support in the construction of the youths' resilient personalities:

> *I always tell her: a warrior has to dry her tears and keep going.* (Mother, C18, Tenerife)

It was found that the trust deposited in the youth is more obvious when the family agent interviewed expressed a positive view of education (53% of the sample) and projects positive future expectations, either by praising their children's ability to achieve their goals or by valuing the possibilities of social mobility ("becoming someone" or "going far").

■ School

At school, the most valued and effective lever is teachers' personal support and high expectations (80% of the cases). The narratives show that the existence of one teacher that keeps watch over the youths both educationally and personally leads them to feel "pushed" to improve:

> *If it hadn't been for her (teacher) I think I would have foundered.* (Youth, C8, Mallorca)

In many cases, this personalisation of educational mentoring is not always associated with instruction, which is regulated by the school, but instead appears with certain educators with whom they have forged strong bonds. They primarily act as role models and/or project positive future expectations for the youths. In 2 cases of dire vulnerability (lack of support outside school), the personal commitment of some teacher was the determining factor. The other major lever of school success at school is positive peer relations. These can take on different guises: academic support among peers, integration into the class, friendships with some classmates that extend outside school and the positive influence of pro-school discourses in the peer group.

■ Community

In this dimension, which categorises activities and supports found outside the school, extremely influential supports of school success were identified by leaders of entities involved in socio-educational activities and professionals in different extracurricular activities in 70% of the cases. They can be a taekwondo instructor, a music teacher or a village priest:

He's more an educator than just a taekwondo teacher (Youth, C2 Barcelona).

Their stability or permanence during the youths' school years, their ability to offset some family limitations and the human quality of the bonds are the most striking explanations of how this community support works.

Beyond the positive impact of the relationships established with the referents, mere participation in the community is also a lever that facilitates success. One the one hand, local socio-educational entities offer guidance and academic support, and personal mentoring for the youths and their families depending on their needs (school, psychological and economic support, job orientation, leisure and free-time activities, etc.). Meanwhile, engaging in educational activities (sports, theatre, music, organised leisure, etc.) is an opportunity to forge new social relations which are stimulated by sharing something that is very personally valuable or by the self-esteem and confidence that the youths practising these activities develop.

Considering the quality, consistency, persistence or importance that the participants assign to the support factors for their success, the presence of factors that strongly influence success in the 4 dimensions of analysis was assessed. Table III shows a summary of their distribution according to the number of dimensions that incorporate strengths and their combination.

It is worthwhile to assess the distribution of the support factors by dimensions in order to determine their systematic nature and the hypothetical interrelations among them: in 57% of the cases, the multidimensional nature of the levers of success is recognised (which affect 3 or 4 dimensions); in 33% of the cases, a two-dimensional distribution is recognised; and in 10% of the cases, factors that support

school success are only identified in one dimension. We can see that success is attributed to both individual strengths (67% of the cases) and to the support received from the family (63%), school (57%) and community (67%). It is worth noting that a high number of youths have personal strengths that help them achieve school success, but in all of them we can also find multidimensional or two-dimensional support from agents within each student's milieu, be it from the family, school or community. In contrast, in 9 of the 10 cases where individual strengths do not exist, there is a greater presence of support from the community, which in some cases combines with major support in school and the family.

TABLE III. Distribution of supports by dimensions

Case code	Supports according to area of analysis				Total dimensions of support per case			
	Indiv.	Family	School	Comm.	4	3	2	1
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
16	✓	✓	✓			✓		
1	✓	✓	✓			✓		
4	✓	✓	✓			✓		
7	✓	✓	✓			✓		
19	✓	✓	✓			✓		
3	✓	✓		✓		✓		
14	✓	✓		✓		✓		
28	✓	✓		✓		✓		
21	✓	✓		✓		✓		
27	✓		✓	✓		✓		
29	✓		✓	✓		✓		
9		✓	✓	✓		✓		
13		✓	✓	✓		✓		
23		✓	✓	✓		✓		
25		✓	✓	✓		✓		

6	✓	✓					✓	
17	✓	✓					✓	
5	✓		✓				✓	
12	✓		✓				✓	
8	✓			✓			✓	
20	✓			✓			✓	
22	✓			✓			✓	
26		✓		✓			✓	
30		✓		✓			✓	
24			✓	✓			✓	
15			✓					✓
10				✓				✓
11				✓				✓
Total cases	**20**	**19**	**17**	**20**	**2**	**15**	**10**	**3**
% of cases	**67**	**63**	**57**	**67**	**7**	**50**	**33**	**10**

Source: Authors

Discussion and conclusions

The research enables us to gain an in-depth understanding that the poverty which affects children and adolescents is not only material poverty but also has social handicapping effects such as insecurity, low access to positive models, etc. We can conclude that the youths in the sample live in conditions that are largely unfavourable due to two kinds of effects: a) adverse, directly aggressive or even potentially traumatic conditions (Pereda, 2002); and b) conditions of social impoverishment which lower or eliminate their access to opportunities for greater educational development which in themselves are major social inequalities.

Even though all cases share the invisible barriers of economic poverty, the importance of relational wellbeing and the construction of positive relationships with adults and/or peers from the family, the school and community organisations are also associated with their school success (Lozano, 2003). Beyond individual strengths or weaknesses, the most determining factors of success are the people who mentor or act as role

models. Sometimes the relationship itself, the quality of the bond and the commitment with others is what leads the youth to persist and seek success. In some cases, respect and admiration for someone else is what induces them to imitate this person. And in almost all cases, the person-mentor who guides, mentors, accompanies and sustains the youth is acknowledged. The main educational role is school mentoring meant as offering security, generating trust, developing self-esteem and helping students construct future expectations. As Flores (2016) notes, the different personalised supports which the youths have received do not act exclusively as factors preventing academic careers doomed to failure and exclusion; instead, they also act as factors of integration because they offset the shortcomings with which the youths begin. The existence of positive relationships not only is a personal support and solidarity structure but also acts as a catalyst of their own resources and capacities.

Our study found evidence of the strength of the school-family-community alliance. In the cases where the family or school supports are not valued as levers facilitating school success, there is always a community referent with whom the youth has forged stable, high-quality bonds, showcasing the role of social education and third-sector organisation from the perspective of school success.

It can be claimed that the resilient processes developed by the youths in the sample can be explained by the multidimensional interaction of individual strengths and support factors in the family, school and community. Feeling one's life course and building one's future in a shared way emerges as a driving force in the struggle to overcome educational inequalities. As Ruiz et al. (2017) state, resilience goes from being a quality to being a community educational action in which the possibility of social transformation is constructed. This capacity to overcome the social adversity associated with poverty, which is more possible when the community weaves a systemic web of complex interactions that explicitly and implicitly support children's holistic development, matches the theories of social capital and its impact on educational and school success (Lin et al., 2001). The youths' connection to a variety of people and organisations opens up new educational opportunities for them, as the barriers limiting this access are an important factor in educational inequality.

In this sense, policies geared at educational improvement should incorporate the core objective of building local community social

capital by ensuring access to libraries, IT resources, educational support services, school-setting projects, cultural and leisure activities, sports activities, etc. All of these community resources together should rise to the challenges of education by incorporating the vantage point of all the socioeducational agents in order to go beyond their individual action, hierarchies, sectorisation and the mechanisms of the educational system for the sake of greater social efficiency (Santalucía et al, 2014; Díaz-Gibson et al., 2011; Assiego et al, 2015; Bonal et al., 2015).

This study found that in the cases of lower individual strengths, the presence of community support factors is crucial. What clearly emerges is the importance of having social networks or socioeducational resources that promote school success near the youths, somehow local or regional ones. In this sense, community social capital can be understood as a kind of social and educational guarantee or support which expands the provision of education that the (universal) educational system represents. For all of these reasons, it would be wise to consider the value of articulating community development projects that solidify socioeducational networks and intersectoral cooperation because of their benefits in improving academic performance in the middle and long term (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017) and their effects on lowering ITP (Flores, 2016).

In the cases studies, it was found that successful academic careers are not linear but instead tend to follow processes of crisis and restructuring. The shadows of fragility and uncertainty are still cast over the youths' evolution. Hope in the future is contained by traumatic experiences or is assumed to be threatened by a lack of resources (economic and time), which can prevent them from accessing higher levels of education. This is one of the limitations of our study. We have chosen youths who at a given point in time had successful careers which we have defined in terms of graduation and continuing with post-compulsory studies. However, this attainment is only the first phase in educational success. Hence, we would suggest the possibility of conducting a subsequent longitudinal study by once again interviewing those youths who want to continue participating in the study.

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