

Article

The Role of Relationships in Resilience: Teachers Who Were At-Risk Youth Supporting At-Risk Students

Laura I. Sigad 

Faculty of Graduate Studies, Oranim College of Education, Tivon 3600600, Israel; laura_s@oranim.ac.il

Abstract: Despite extensive research on resilience, little information exists on the resilience of teachers who faced adversity in childhood and the meanings they attribute to their current work with at-risk students. Thus, this study aimed to address this knowledge gap by examining the narratives of teachers who were at-risk children. Based on 30 semi-structured life-narrative interviews, the findings revealed the significant meaning that the participants ascribed to positive relationships. Whether such relationships were present or absent in their childhood, these relationships were instrumental in their choice to pursue a career in education. In supporting their students' resilience and becoming the teachers they wanted as children, they found meaning in their past experiences of risk and coping. The study's discussion applies the social mirroring theory to analyze how the participants resisted the negative image presented to them by others in their childhood and how a belief of hopeful prospects fortified them and led them to take on transformative justice as their life mission. Supporting at-risk children functioned as a form of healing for the participants, fostering both their students' and their own resilience. The study findings highlight the importance of accounting for teachers' childhood experiences as formative narratives that mold their educational work.

Keywords: narratives; teachers; lived experience; children at risk; resilience; relationships



Citation: Sigad, L.I. The Role of Relationships in Resilience: Teachers Who Were At-Risk Youth Supporting At-Risk Students. *Educ. Sci.* **2023**, *13*, 1118. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13111118>

Academic Editors: Trudy Ambler, Puspha Sinnayah and Joanna Lim

Received: 26 August 2023

Revised: 13 October 2023

Accepted: 6 November 2023

Published: 8 November 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The social construction of childhood often conceptualizes and presents this time as carefree, happy, and untroubled by oppressive adult responsibilities. This concept is a myth, as, even in the healthiest of childhoods, balancing the complexities of development is akin to walking a daily tightrope [1]. Beyond normative challenges, children can also endure trauma and hardship [2], with ever-increasing extreme childhood adversities [3]. Adverse childhood experiences have been correlated with long-lasting interpersonal difficulties [4], professional challenges [5], and other potentially detrimental effects in adulthood [6]. Children who experience hardship continue to endure its harmful effects throughout their lives, and research has overwhelmingly been directed toward these negative consequences for both their physical [7] and mental health (e.g., [4]). While childhood adversity remains ever-present [8], governments, social systems, and private organizations [9] worldwide strive to combat its damaging effects by creating and implementing prevention and intervention programs.

The experience of trauma in childhood is often examined through the cycles of the risk paradigm [10]. However, it can be alternatively captured by the theoretical framework of resilience [11], which describes how insulating or mitigating factors [12] may allow an individual to cope constructively, rather than destructively, with adverse events and circumstances [13,14]. Thus, there are children who, despite their childhood hardships, develop well and even thrive [11]. Yet, what creates this variance? Why should the seemingly same circumstances lead to such vastly different outcomes? What are the particular circumstances of such unexpected results? Most importantly, how can we learn from these success stories to assist those who continue to bear hardships?

Despite the increasing interest in resilience, the meaning that teachers give to their own adverse childhood experiences and the impact of these experiences on their chosen profession is, as yet, largely unstudied. Therefore, the current paper seeks to reveal an insider's view among teachers who have contended with childhood risk and the meanings they attribute to these experiences. Furthermore, the research questions address how teachers who experienced childhood adversity attribute meaning to their current work with at-risk students. Using the lens of resilience, we can further clarify the adaptations they made to cope with events that carry an immense emotional toll [15,16]. Thus, the purpose of this study is to unveil the unique and subjective experience of teachers who cope with both their own history of childhood risk as well as that experienced by their students.

1.1. Resilience

Resilience describes the processes of successful coping and positive adaptation of individuals who cope with adversity [17–19]. However, the concept of resilience is also inclusive of the struggle involved in achieving this result (e.g., [8,20]). While research has indicated that at-risk individuals can exhibit resilience (e.g., [21,22]), the defining qualities of this phenomenon and the mechanisms that it entails remain an area of continued investigation and debate [23].

Thus far, resilience has been conceptualized according to various theoretical perspectives. Some theorists have emphasized resilience as a matter of personal disposition (e.g., [24,25]) and ability [26]. Other scholars have viewed it as a result of protective environmental conditions (e.g., [27–29]). Similarly, some see it as an integration that considers the dynamics of the interactions between the two aforementioned perspectives (e.g., [30–32]).

The personal qualities associated with resilience are mental acuity, problem-solving ability, drive, a strong self-image, and a sense of humor [33]. Gratitude, kindness [34], hope, and bravery [35] have also been identified as personal attributes of fostering resilience. Additionally, hardiness, defined as encompassing a sense of purpose and meaning, faith in one's ability to substantially impact the world, and the propensity to derive lessons from both agreeable and painful experiences have also been found to be strongly correlated with resilience [36].

Environmental factors that may contribute to resilience include the presence of meaningful pursuits or attachments outside the high-risk, harmful setting [19,37], along with strong, positive relationships with either authority figures or peers [38,39]. The ability to enter or construct alternative “spaces of being” away from the harmful, adverse environment may allow individuals to experience other, healthier forms of reality. Consequently, they might be able to integrate or independently fashion positive forms of coping [37].

Paradoxically, it should be noted that resilience has also been found alongside behaviors that are conventionally considered harmful, such as emotional dissociation and repressive coping [40]. In fact, these behaviors may even contribute to the buffering effect that constitutes resilience itself [41]. Hence, resilience cannot be distinctively categorized as positive or negative, rather, it should be understood as multi-faceted. Due to these distinctions, nuance is required when assessing resilience [18,30]. For instance, resilience has been evaluated using abstract indicators, such as self-reported wellbeing [42] and the quality of well-becoming, which is the belief in and use of future aspirations as well as a trust that things will be better in the future [43]. At other times, it has been evaluated according to an individual's ability to attain success, as understood in their particular social-cultural context (e.g., [19]), such as long-lasting interpersonal relationships or professional accomplishments.

1.2. Teachers Who Experienced Risk in Childhood

Teachers are among the professionals who most frequently meet children. Relationships with teachers are a primary example of an environmental factor with the potential to have an emolliating effect on at-risk children and assist them in developing resilience [44]. The study of teachers and resilience has largely been related to their ability to meet chal-

lenges in the workplace and teacher retention (e.g., [45,46]). However, teachers have also been included in the research on resilience among child-focused professionals with adverse personal backgrounds, including a limited investigation of their coping and meaning attribution in relation to their past experiences [47]. Specifically, among teachers, a history of adverse childhood experiences has been correlated with lower levels of teacher resilience, lower quality teacher–student relations [48], and lower quality classroom climates [49].

The study at hand, therefore, aims to contribute an insider’s view of the meaning-making processes of teachers who confronted risks and extreme adversity in childhood, including poverty, violence, and abuse. Can their personal life histories and tacit knowledge contribute to their students’ coping with childhood adversity? Resilience, which addresses coping without minimizing the experience of risk and trauma, is an effective lens for analyzing both teachers’ difficult experiences in childhood and the implications of such experiences on their professional and personal lives. In delving into this view of childhood risk and its impact, the research questions that guided the study were as follows: (1) how do once at-risk teachers construct their stories of resilience? and (2) what are the common themes among these teachers’ experiences?

2. Methods

The current study was guided by the constructivist paradigm, which ontologically places emphasis on how individuals actively construct their own reality [50]. The narrative methodological perspective within the constructivist paradigm gleans participants’ realities through their narrations of their lived experiences [51]. Since individuals conceptualize their experiences in a narrative form, narrative inquiry is a way of examining memory, that is, how one perceives and sequences past events. Researchers of various disciplines have explored narratives as a tool for fostering resilience [52], observing that reconstructing past experiences can allow individuals to extract and articulate new meanings [53]. This process is also influenced by one’s social and cultural group [54,55]. The present study is based on teachers’ narrated constructs about their biographies, as well as on how these personal histories have shaped their professional lives [56]. Therefore, the narrative approach of the constructivist paradigm was chosen as the most suitable for this study as it allowed to capture and describe how the participants made sense of and attributed meaning to their experiences of childhood risk and how they related them to their professional work [57].

2.1. Participants

Participants were selected using a criterion sample to ensure information-rich data [58]. The interviewers recruited research participants in their immediate area according to the following criteria: teachers in either Jewish or Arab schools in Israel with at least 5 years of teaching experience who, by their own description, had undergone severe childhood risk, overcome adversity, and were currently working with at-risk children. For the study’s purpose, the terms childhood and children refer to the developmental stages of individuals under the age of 18. These participants referred the interviewers to additional candidates via the “snowball technique” [58]. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved [58,59]. The participants were first contacted by phone to ensure they met the criteria, the study was explained to them, and their consent to participate was obtained.

The final sample included the life story narratives of 30 teachers, with a mean age of 42.8, who worked with children ranging from early childhood to high school age. Initially, participant sampling was conducted according to five risk types: (1) poverty; (2) survivors of violence; (3) survivors of child sexual abuse, specifically; (4) parents with diminished functioning; and (5) learning disabilities. However, during data collection and analysis, the participants were all found to have contended with multiple forms of risk and were thus all included in the same population sample. Beyond the described initial childhood adversity, the participants also contended with their parents’ physical, emotional, and medical neglect, parental drug use and alcoholism, childhood addiction and homelessness, and early exposure to crime and sex work. Their teaching experience ranged from 5 to

30 years. The participants were 24 women and 6 men. Socio-culturally, the sample was composed of 12 Arab teachers (6 Muslim Arab, 3 Druze Arab, and 3 Bedouin Arab) and 18 Jewish teachers (3 national religious Jewish and 15 secular Jewish).

2.2. Procedures

Initially, three open interviews were conducted by the author, who utilized the findings to construct a narrative life story interview guide [60]. In these interviews, the teachers were invited to share their life stories in relation to the risks they experienced in their childhood and their educational work. Based on an analysis of the open interviews, a semi-structured narrative interview guide was developed [61], which included four categories: the experience of the teacher's particular childhood risk; the teacher's relationship with significant individuals, including their own educators in childhood; the teacher's understanding of resilience; and the teacher's professional and personal life in adulthood.

The remaining 27 narrative interviews were conducted by a research group composed of four Arab (1 Druze, 1 Bedouin, and 2 Muslim) and nine Jewish M.Ed. graduate students. They collected the data for the partial fulfillment of a seminar course on the topic of resilience and received ongoing, in-depth interview training to do so. The interviews were open to effectively capture the context and holistic view of the participants' experiences. As the interviews were intended to cover the narrative of the teachers' entire lifetimes, from childhood to the present, each participant was interviewed three times. Each of the interviews lasted between 45–75 min.

2.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative narrative analysis was conducted by the author and a research assistant with the purpose of unveiling the narratives and meanings constructed by the participants regarding risk and resilience through their life stories. The analysis was led by the research question of how teachers who experienced childhood adversity attribute meaning to their current work with at-risk students. To do so, narrative thematic analysis was conducted, focusing on the content within the interviews [62]. For this form of analysis, although the interviews were conducted in three separate sessions [63], all three interviews were considered as the component parts of the narrative of a single research participant [62]. As the analysis process examined the thoughts and emotions that animated the participants' narratives, a coherent, generalized picture of their subjective experiences of coping and the meanings they attributed to risk and resilience emerged [63]. This process was inductive and grounded in the data rather than outside biases or prior knowledge and research [64].

Following repeated viewings of the interview transcripts via Dedoose software, the author and research assistant then engaged separately in open coding [58], identifying and labeling the aspects that were deemed fundamental to the teachers' narratives [65]. Next, each prominent idea and meaning received a corresponding code [62]. Following this, the individual codes were integrated into a single consolidated codebook [58]. In the subsequent stage, the codes were consolidated into themes that represented the main, overarching narratives [62]. This process was considered complete when theoretical saturation was reached. Only those themes that offered substantive insights on the domains of risk and resilience were selected, revisiting the participants' accounts once more to further develop their analysis [66].

In the current study, two major themes that emerged are as follows: (1) the teachers' narratives regarding the experience of significant relationships in childhood, which included both the presence and absence of significant relationships, and (2) the teachers' narratives of life purpose through educating at-risk students in the context of their own childhood risk.

2.4. Rigor and Trustworthiness

To meet the standards of credibility and rigor required of a qualitative study [50,67], the research process was comprehensively documented via an audit trail, with all analyses

preserved alongside the data on which they were based [68]. Furthermore, representative participants from the various Jewish and Arab subgroups were provided the opportunity to inspect their interview transcripts and amend their answers [67]. The analysis team held weekly meetings to debrief regarding the data and to fine-tune the ongoing coding process [69]. The Arab M.Ed. students who conducted the interviews also contributed their insights to ensure cultural veracity and relevance. Finally, the author was advised by experts in children at risk, education, coping, resilience, and teacher welfare [70].

In presenting the findings, direct quotations from the participants were included to illustrate the basis for the researchers' interpretations. Such an approach provides readers the opportunity to assess the rigor of the researchers' claims [58]. Each quote was introduced using the participants' personal contextual details, followed by the researchers' analysis of the quote's use of language, implications, and connection to the overall theme being described.

2.5. Ethics

The study was granted approval by the ethics board of the author's academic institution. Before the study began, the interviewers ensured that the interview candidates were fully apprised of the research subject matter, the voluntary nature of any involvement, and the way in which their anonymity would be protected. They also conveyed that mental health resources could be provided, as needed, either during or after the interviews. The participants signed a consent form before being interviewed, with the clear understanding that they could refuse to answer any question at any time. After the interview concluded, the interviewers shared their contact details and those of the author, as well as the contact information of mental health specialists. In transcribing the interviews, the author removed all identifying details from the dataset.

3. Findings

Focusing on story content, structure, and meaning, the present study's findings revealed that meaningful interpersonal relationships were the central organizing feature of the majority of the teachers' narratives. The analysis of the narratives unveiled experiences that hindered the participants' coping with adversity, such as a lack of parental care and attention due to alcohol abuse and financial poverty as well as childhood sexual abuse, physical danger in the participants' childhood environment, and more. Additionally, childhood experiences emerged that were found to have assisted the participants in their childhood to cope with adversity, particularly receiving attention and assistance from educational figures and teachers, such as extra study hours, support in acquiring conceptual tools, and even weekend respite care.

From the analysis of the narratives, it was found that all participants placed great value on such relationships, framing their presence or absence as the key connector between the different phases of their lives from childhood to the present, and even to the person they hoped to be in the future. Notably, meaning was constructed around absence—that is, the participants' awareness of lacking important and caring relationships—was the most common trend. Conversely, a minority of the participants described the presence of life-changing relationships with educators and the benefits this conferred.

In both cases, the critical realization of the importance of such relationships consciously led the participants to pursue education as a profession. In choosing to be present for and protective of students at risk, they aimed to play a key role they recognized from their own pasts, whether from actual recollection or as something absent and hoped for. In this way, they aimed to foster their students' resilience. These meanings composed the backbone of the themes of this study: (1) the teachers' experience of significant relationships in childhood, whether present or absent, and (2) the teachers' experience of their mission to support at-risk students by fostering resilience.

3.1. *Between Having and Not Having a Caring Relationship When Facing Childhood Risk*

A central narrative that emerged through the life stories of all the educators from the different socio-cultural and religious groups was the importance of meaningful relationships with significant adults in their childhood. This narrative was evident not only among participants who described experiences of significant relationships, but also, importantly, among those who described an absence of significant relationships. As such, both the absence and presence of meaningful relationships in childhood played a central role in the participants' narratives of resilience construction.

3.1.1. "I Faced Everything Alone": Life Stories with the Absence of a Significant Relationship

The majority of the participants described feeling abandoned, invisible, or insignificant in the face of their adverse childhood experiences. Naama, a 37-year-old Jewish high school teacher and mother of three, was exposed to crime, drugs, violence, and sex work from an early age due to the socio-economic status of her area and circumstances. She stated that she "adopted the views" of her neighborhood and began smoking and drinking at age 13. She also emphasized the impact of her father as a violent and inconsistent presence and her mother as an inattentive and neglectful presence:

Do you know how hard it is to be a child who is neglected or rejected by their parents? What a horrible feeling that is? It colors your whole life; it leaves a scar. For the rest of your life, you feel like you're walking on shaky ground that may, at any moment, split open. You are constantly in a state of uncertainty. [...] You feel like you aren't worth anything, that you aren't like everyone else, you are constantly busy with shame, and you think, why couldn't I have been born to normal, well-established parents?

The lack of present, supportive parental relationships darkened Naama's worldview, leaving her with a sense that the world is, at its core, unpredictable and that she, herself, is marginalized and worthless. This feeling was so unbearable that, while describing it, she continuously said "you" as if to push the reality away from herself. Though she yearned for a different world, Naama saw the damage caused to her sense of self as permanent.

The participants described a childhood spent feeling unnoticed both in and out of their homes, as if they were invisible. Lital, a Jewish teacher in her late 30s, grew up in poverty and faced additional risks, including family violence and sexual abuse by an adult when she was a teenager. She described how these risks and, in fact, she herself, seemed not to exist to those around her:

The teachers [...] paid attention to me only to the extent of my achievements or lack thereof. [...] They didn't care about who I was and what was happening to me. All that mattered to them were my studies. With my family, I didn't matter to anyone. [...] They didn't see me. I was insignificant at school. No one asked questions, and no one was interested.

The adults in Lital's life failed to show an interest in her authentic self and well-being, as solely academic achievements provided her with any kind of recognition. With care and interest entirely absent from her life, she had to be her own audience and source of validation. Yet, Lital expressed outrage at being treated as unworthy of attention, implying that, currently, she is confident in her own self-worth.

Gadir, a 34-year-old Bedouin Arab middle-school mathematics teacher, recounted a narrative surrounding the extreme poverty and lack of parental care she experienced in childhood. Gadir shared a room with five siblings in a home without water, electricity, warm clothes, or blankets, and the little food they had often had to be shared with the animals they raised. She described how this material dearth was intertwined with a lack of attentiveness from her parents, particularly in conjunction with her father's addiction:

Whatever money we had would go to his cigarettes, he would leave us [the children] without food. [...] It was an extremely difficult childhood in every

way: a childhood that was meaningless; a childhood that was not experienced like other girls; [...] a childhood that was characterized by different kinds of deprivation, such as the lack of clothing, food, games. . . I kept asking for very simple things and I couldn't receive them because "there is no money". These gaps and disparities accompanied me throughout the later stages of my life.

Gadir was a child living in poverty who later became aware that, to her father, her basic need for food was secondary to his addiction. The absence of parental care left Gadir feeling insignificant and defenseless. Like the other participants, this sense accompanied her into adulthood and colored her view of life and herself.

The lack of care from attentive adults influenced the participants' experiences and coping throughout their lives. Dan, a 50-year-old Jewish high school teacher of low socioeconomic status, in his childhood, started working at an early age to support his family, while his father spent the money he earned on alcohol. Dan cared for his father, who became dysfunctional and dangerous when drinking. Additionally, school was not a safe space, as Dan described how he was ostracized and physically injured by his classmates, with no one to defend him. One instance that still haunts Dan was when another child stabbed him with a pencil during class, and he was left to contend with this act with no support from the school: "No one spoke up. This teacher did nothing. The school didn't do anything about it either. The boy was from a family with established parents. They didn't do anything to him. No suspension, nothing". Dan believed that the other boy's privileged background led others to act on his behalf. Dan knowing no one would protect him, experienced a constant sense of danger that changed his perspective and behavior:

I distanced myself even more from children from school. [...] Now I became the type not to speak at all. [...] No one knew about my situation, no one knew about the things I was going through or anything. I didn't get help from school. I faced everything alone. The counselor knew, but there wasn't someone who called me or wanted to help me.

With children and adults alike failing to show any positive interest in him, Dan coped by distancing himself and accepting that he was on his own. Thus, a lack of environmental support from their peer groups and meaningful relationships with adults negatively affected the sense of belonging of the participants when they were children.

Today, Dan shared how these traumatic experiences left a scar. He spoke about feeling great anxiety over financial issues, and the presence of alcohol, particularly the smell, triggers memories of his father's violence as he associates the smell with harm. Naama, in contrast, suggested that struggling on her own was a painful means of gaining independence: "You learn to do everything with your own two hands. You fall and get up again, fall and get up again. You do this dozens of times until you learn to survive on your own". Naama's experience with hardship revealed her agency, which led her to construct an identity as a survivor, albeit reluctantly. Other participants expressed similar sentiments. Yet, overall, a childhood without meaningful, attentive relationships, particularly with caring adults, left the participants vulnerable to danger and with a damaged sense of self-worth. This low perception of themselves, alongside a vulnerability to harmful relationships, often became a pattern for the participants from childhood to throughout adulthood.

3.1.2. "Thanks to Them, I Had Something to Dream about": Life Stories with Turning Points around the Presence of Significant Others

A minority of the participants described relationships with educators as the source of a positive life change. Chanan, a 36-year-old Jewish high school mathematics teacher, lost his parents and then the grandmother who cared for him at an early age. He grew up in poverty and in a dangerous neighborhood where he was regularly violently assaulted by older teenagers. Chanan described his narrative as one of "fighting for everything," yet noted that a relationship with a teacher changed the way he experienced this reality:

She strongly believed in the power of thought and always said that “thoughts create reality”. I understood and recognized through her the power of the human mind to shape the existing reality. [...] What a person wants, he can achieve. That’s what she believed, and she taught me this way of thinking.

In the context of this positive relationship, Chanan acquired conceptual tools and came to believe in his ability to create a better reality. This prepared him to be active and conscious in taking advantage of opportunities to change his life circumstances:

In the end, I succeeded. I learned in a small class. All the students had difficult economic backgrounds and challenging family situations. [...] The school poured resources into us: extra study hours, hot lunches at the end of the school day. This was a springboard for me. So, what the school gave, I took with both hands.

Thus, Chanan attributed his success to both the extra resources he received and the empowering motivation of the significant adults around him:

I remember them today as key figures. People who lit the way for me with a flashlight, who sprinkled crumbs on the right path so that I would know where to turn. [...] It wasn’t easy for me at all, but I always had the thought that I wanted to succeed at any cost, that I was an equal among equals. The sense of capacity is a feeling that every person should develop, promote, and use.

These supportive relationships with school figures were both the lighthouse providing guidance in a stormy childhood and the foundation of Chanan’s motivation and competence. As in Chanans’ case, all of the participants perceived their teachers’ involvement positively as it was through their teachers that they received the support they so greatly needed.

The participants who had the opportunity in their childhood to be involved in groups and sports supported by teachers benefited from the positive impacts of having their confidence bolstered by their abilities and developing self-esteem. Dor, a 37-year-old Jewish middle school teacher specializing in humanities-related subjects, grew up with a learning disability. Dor described his childhood as one of frustration and helplessness: “Nobody understood me, and I didn’t understand what anyone wanted from me”. He did not receive support from his teachers, but he found acceptance and success in a Judo class and, specifically, in his relationship with his coach:

I loved training, fighting, and competing... I could release all the energy I had there. I would ask the coach to stay for the training of the older kids. For me, it was really the best place in the world. There, I felt proud and special. Mostly, I felt that I was very good. I felt no fear or frustration that I wouldn’t succeed. The coach was so pleased with me, and always cheered me on, supported me and pushed me forward. I felt that I could trust him.

With its positive environment and supportive coach, this alternative place of being provided Dor the space and foundation of trust to develop a sense of self-esteem and significance.

Ronit, a 54-year-old Jewish history high school teacher, grew up with a father who was an alcoholic and experienced extensive physical and emotional neglect from her parents. Ronit attempted suicide in 10th grade, yet she did not receive care from her parents or professionals. Despite this, her narrative focused on the positive experiences and relationships she had in school as a child:

My teacher would adopt me during weekends... She was like a mother. This way, I had the strength to go back to school in 10th grade. [...] What did this relationship give me? It gave me warmth and love and necessities. This teacher gave me a place to sleep; she fed me Friday meals, gave me food, a shower, gave me a home, a roof. It gave me a lot. [...] The other teachers gave me things that I like and what I do today: teaching history; being a consumer of knowledge, culture, literature; and dreams. Thanks to them I had something to dream about.

[...] No one believed in me at home. No one asked about me. No one taught me anything. But the light that began to ignite me—that first began with my teachers at school.

Ronit's relationships with her teachers constituted an alternative environment that enabled her positive development. These figures represented a safe space, providing not only physical necessities, but also the enrichment that led to a vision of a new and positive tomorrow. Thus, a select few participants experienced supportive, significant relationships. Both participants who had meaningful relationships and those who did not, described how the relationships they experienced in childhood shaped their educational calling as adults.

3.1.3. "I Try to Do Everything So That the Children Do Not Experience What I Went through": Being the Teacher That I Needed to Have

In emphasizing the significance of having or lacking meaningful relationships in their childhood, the participants' narratives also associated their experiences in their childhood with their professional outlook, goals, and ways of interacting with their own students. The majority described consciously taking on a supportive role for their students based on their tacit knowledge and experience of the needs of children in adverse situations. They attributed the centrality of this mission to their need to care for and protect their students and enact some form of personal healing for themselves.

The narrative of Shiraz, a Jewish teacher in her 40s with 15 years of experience, emphasized the love and care she received from her parents as she struggled with severe anxiety and shame over her family's financial insecurity (among other triggers) and related difficulties in school. Due to their financial situation, her parents were unable to spend much time with her due to work, so she navigated much of her childhood and the struggles she experienced due to poverty on her own. At school, she received little attention and was ostracized by the other children. She described how, as a teacher, these life experiences now inform her mission to protect her students from the effects of poverty:

It always reminds me of my own childhood, only I didn't have anyone to direct and help me. I feel a calling, I feel that this is my way of repairing the world. In this world, I don't leave any child alone until I lift them off the ground and make them stand on their own two feet and equip them with the tools for the journey.

Thus, she shaped her interactions with the children in her class according to her own firsthand knowledge of what they might be facing and need:

I remind the children all the time that I'm there for them, that they can call me, they can schedule a conversation with me [...] I can see how a child arrives at school in terms of their clothing, I know where the children live [...] I know what the parents do for work, and through this, I can know who is in more financial difficulty and who less. [...] I call that child and I try to check with them if they need anything from me, or I simply tell them that I noticed that their eyes are red, is everything okay? In short, I try to do everything so that the children do not experience what I went through.

Dalit, a 48-year-old Jewish school principal with extensive teaching experience, related how being taken under the wing of a local store owner as a teen impressed upon her the importance of making sure every child feels seen. As the youngest of ten in an impoverished family, she felt neglected and unnoticed and spent most of her time on the streets, where she was involved in drinking and violent conflicts. However, the attention of this mentor figure "gave [her] inner strength the legitimacy and drive to be expressed," a source of support she now strives to pass on to the children under her care. As an example, she shared the story of going to the home of one of her students, who had not been seen at school for several days:

The girl was very happy. It was amazing to see, it was as though I lifted her out of an abyss. Her bed is the sofa in the living room. I spoke with her, I told her, "I

came to take you to school". She got dressed and we went to the car. We spoke in the car. It made her feel important, and that I care about her. [...] Her mother was very excited and thanked us as if she had been waiting for someone to come. [...] The school was her safe place, and when I arrived her face lit up that finally someone was doing something for her. I know what that is because I was there, and unfortunately, no one took such a step. That's why it is very important to me to do this.

Like Dalit, all of the participating teachers aimed to continually remind their students that they are there for them, being the teacher that they themselves needed to have.

Personal experiences of hardship served as a source of knowledge, enabling the teachers to analyze their at-risk students' behaviors and support them. For example, Hatam, a 53-year-old Arab elementary school teacher of 27 years who is married with five children, described how her own childhood adversity allowed her to understand that of her students:

I understand the distress and difficulty that the poor students experience. I accept them, and I know where their behavior stems from. If, for example, a child took another's toy or food, I understand that he did not intend to steal, that his behavior stems from satisfying some need that is very difficult for them to give up. I constantly try to compensate them and explain right from wrong without embarrassing them in front of their classmates. My understanding comes from the fact that I experienced the same hardship and poverty in my childhood.

Dan, whose feelings of abandonment by the school system were described previously, shared his reason for becoming a teacher and his particular mission:

I wanted to start studying. So, what should I study? To work in the field of education. [...] And why? [...] To see the children in need. Because with me, nobody saw me. I was invisible, see-through. [...] And that's what was in my mind. This was my vision. To reach children who are in situations of risk, whether it be poverty, violence, children to alcoholic parents, drug addicts. [...] I knew I was going to work with children, and through education, to fix everything that happened [to me]. I came to fix things.

Dan's personal life story was his underlying motivation for becoming a teacher. His goal was to protect other children and prevent them from experiencing what he did, ensuring that the things adults ignored in his childhood would not go unseen on his watch. Thus, his life's work not only protects his students but also remedies his own past suffering.

Similarly, Omina, a 48-year-old Muslim Arab special education teacher with 25 years of experience, described the meaning she attributed to supporting at-risk students, which was echoed by the majority of the participants:

The experience of poverty is very painful and leaves a scar for life. Although I was able to deal with poverty and overcome the economic hardship and build resilience, I'm still hurt by the unforgettable experience, and every time I meet a poor student, that experience is renewed. Therefore, I make every effort to make it easier for my students, to accommodate them in their plight, to support them and help as much as possible to overcome what is lacking. . . Every time I make a child happy and help him, I feel happy and satisfied with myself. I empathize with him and soar with joy that I accomplished something very big for him, that he needed.

Thus, Omina described her work with at-risk children as both arising from the need to care for and protect the children as well as a form of personal healing for herself. Omina, like the majority of the participants, intentionally sought to use the wisdom she gained from her childhood experiences to assist the development of her students.

In constructing the narratives of their life stories, the participants drew from their own adverse childhood experiences and their work as teachers in adulthood. The connecting factor across these contexts was the meaning they invested in their interpersonal relationships, whether with educators in their childhood or their current students, as a central component of their resilience. This was the case in the presence of such relationships as well as in their absence, both of which contributed to the participants' sense of mission and purpose as educators supporting at-risk students.

4. Discussion

Resilience construction has received much scholarly attention over the past decades [71], with different theories describing multiple approaches regarding how adverse and traumatic experiences may be buffered to lead to outcomes where individuals can thrive [40]. Among the environmental theories of resilience development, the presence of strong relationships is recognized as central [72]. Thus, a supportive relationship with a parent, family member, caring adult, or close friend may protect against the effects of risk, promote emotional security [73], and provide an alternative space for social engagement [37]. Furthermore, these relationships could provide at-risk children a context in which they can develop a positive model of themselves.

4.1. *The Role of Teachers Working with At-Risk Students*

Beyond immediate family, the role played by teachers is among the most prominent ones in any child's life [74,75], and the personal relationships developed between teachers and students have been found to substantially contribute to children's well-being [76,77]. Hence, while supportive teachers are a valuable resource for students in general, for children facing adversity, the benefits are even more vital [78,79]. Consistent with the findings regarding protective environmental factors, strong relationships with teachers are particularly valuable in relation to fostering students' resilience [80,81].

Cultivating nonjudgmental, trust-building relationships, therefore, has been found to be the primary aim of teachers in their work with at-risk and marginalized children [82,83]. Emotional bonding between teachers and at-risk students has also been viewed by some pedagogists as far more essential than teaching academic content and the development of students' cognitive skills [43]. Sanders et al. [43] also found that at-risk students who perceived their relationships with teachers as positive—that is, respectful, responsive, and fostering students' personal agency—demonstrated prosocial behaviors, social participation, and held future aspirations, among other positive outcomes. Furthermore, Johnson [82] found that at-risk students placed a significant weight on their relationships with their teachers in the development of their resilience.

Nevertheless, to the knowledge of the author, no previous studies have described and analyzed the path from risk to resilience through the value placed on such meaningful relationships, regardless of whether the relationships were actually present. While an important minority of the participants did experience life-changing relationships with educators, most had negative or neglectful relationships with educators and other adults in their childhoods, leaving them feeling abandoned, invisible, or insignificant. However, paradoxically, these participants did not merely survive. They used their childhood experience of adversity—including the sense of invisibility resulting from a lack of positive relationships—as an impetus to “pay forward” to their students what they wished they had been privy to.

4.2. *The Importance of Student–Teacher Relationships in Coping with Adversity*

When present, strong relationships were a source of hope, a sense of well-becoming, and a model of how to interact with care. The participants took that hope for a better life, made it so, and passed it on to their own students. Yet, even when strong relationships were absent, the participants—with no model to guide them and without the sense of security that such relationships offer—emerged from their adverse circumstances to pursue a career

in education and promote the very type of relationship they lacked in their childhood. This enabled them to provide the kind of support and guidance they never received. Being the teacher they needed to have as children was both a way to heal themselves and protect their students, fostering resilience among both parties simultaneously.

4.3. *The Social Mirror*

This path of constructing resilience through finding an anchor in relationships, even in their absence, contradicts the existing knowledge of how environmental contexts contribute to this phenomenon [73]. Moreover, it contradicts theories of social-emotional development [84] and enculturation [85,86]. To understand this, it may be useful to consider Winnicott's [87] concept of "social mirroring", which proposes that a child's self-image is deeply rooted in the reflection of themselves they perceive from the people and world around them. While Winnicott emphasized the essential role of the mother, other family members, friends and acquaintances, authority figures, and the media also contribute to this effect [88]. When the mirror held up by society shows an auspicious picture, this simplifies the process of constructing a positive self-image. When the picture is unfavorable, it inhibits the development and reinforcement of a stable sense of self-worth.

4.4. *Overcoming the Negative Reflection in the Social Mirror: A Path to Resilience*

The teachers in the current study perceived a strongly destructive image in the social mirror of their childhood, leading them to feel ignored and unseen. Suárez-Orozco [88] et al. [89] applied the social mirror theory to the risk experiences of immigrant and minority children, describing their potential reactions in several forms. One option would be to accept and internalize the negative image of themselves and, consequently, adopt a self-effacing and pessimistic point of view that would inhibit ambition and cultivate a pattern of self-sabotage. On the other hand, they could also reject and retreat from the negative image, avoiding social relations to such an extent that they neglect their education as well as any interests and activities outside of school. Yet another possible resistant path is defiance, whereby some children react with hostility toward the unflattering image reflected by society, a response typically accompanied by combative or unsafe tendencies [88–91].

While the teachers in the study described themselves as feeling invisible and insignificant in their childhood—a plainly negative social mirror—they also overcame this self-perception and took the reins in constructing their own resilience. They appeared to resist not only the negative reflection held up by society, expressing outrage and indignation toward how they were treated and made to feel, but also the negative models of relationships they experienced. However, remarkably, this defiance did not result in retreat, aggression, or distancing from interpersonal relationships. Instead, it led the teachers to pursue their own well-becoming, be open to the possibility of a better future for themselves, and foster positive relationships with their students.

It remains unanswered precisely how the teachers knew to defy the social mirrors that were harmful to their self-image, development, and relations with others. Furthermore, it is unclear what led them to take on such a constructive, empowering, meaning-building role rather than a destructive one. Nonetheless, according to the teachers in this study, their ultimate achievement was the active maintenance and cultivation of hope in a humane future, which they contributed to creating for their students. It is through this method of resistance that their resilience emerged.

4.5. *Limitations*

The current study provides unique insights into how individuals who experienced adverse and traumatic childhoods provided meaning to both harmful and meaningful relationships in their life narratives. Several limitations warrant mention. Firstly, as this is a narrative qualitative study, the findings aimed to provide an in-depth exploration of the specific population of previously at-risk teachers. Consequently, the study is limited in how its findings can be generalized [92] regarding the understanding of pathways to

resilience. Examining the narratives of the teachers who were models for the participants, as well as other educators, their families, and their students, is also necessary to gain a holistic understanding of the specific relationships described herein.

Additionally, the heterogeneous nature of the sample was significant in a few ways. While it is not unusual for individuals to experience multiple and interacting forms of adversity, such as the participants' exposure to violence, poverty, and parents who were challenged by the responsibility of caring for them, future research should examine the impact of particular types of adversity in-depth, for example, CSA. Similarly, no systematic description was provided regarding the forms of risk experienced by the participants' students.

The population was also socio-culturally heterogeneous, including secular Jewish, religious Jewish, Muslim Arab, Druze Arab, and Bedouin Arab teachers, who had a range of years of seniority. However, the study was limited in its ability to closely examine each population due to the small sample size. As the definition of resilience is socially constructed and varies based on pertinent norms, future research on coping with past childhood adversity should also closely investigate cultural implications and contexts as well as examine the effect of seniority on reflective resilience construction. To address this dearth, the author's concurrent studies on resilience among educators are dedicated to analyzing and discussing specific socio-cultural and religious contexts.

Finally, there has not yet been sufficient attention paid to how teachers' personal histories and narratives might contribute to the classroom experience. This will bear upon future research seeking to expand existing knowledge of the social mirroring processes that occur in educational settings, perhaps leading to the development of new and innovative teaching practices that protect and stimulate students' healthy development.

4.6. Implications for Practice and Policy

Interventions to aid children at risk should integrate an understanding of the structure and dynamics of resilience. Current programs designed to foster resilience among at-risk children primarily focus on developing environmental and personal characteristics seen as elemental to this process. While such programs do emphasize on external means of support through significant relationships with competent mentoring adults and normative, well-functioning peers (e.g., [93]), as well as improving the quality of current relationships with caregivers (e.g., [94]), the potential role of teachers remains overshadowed. This study suggests that such relationships are not only crucial to providing children with hope for the future but also may be "paid forward" to the next generation.

While this is important knowledge for programs striving to assist in children's resilience construction, it is all the more radical for teacher education, overturning previous conceptions. The chief goal of educational practice and policy should be teachers' relationship construction with children. Policymakers should realize that the relationships formed within educational contexts, whether they involve teaching academic subject matter or extracurricular and enrichment programs, have effects that extend far beyond their specific fields. Lastly, educators and social services should reframe conventional thinking regarding the defiance of norms as detrimental and recognize the potential benefits of such resistance for children in adverse situations. Such a focus may hold the key for enabling those children who do not have external support to resist the negative self-image that society reflects onto them, offering a world of meaning, hope, and change to those children who need it most.

Funding: This research was supported by the Academus Program, Research & Evaluation Authority, Oranim College of Education.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee at: Oranim, Academic College of Education, confirmation number, 159.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Acknowledgments: Most interviews in this study were conducted by the author's former graduate students in education, as part of their fulfillment of requirements for a seminar on the topic. I am grateful for their time, dedication, and commitment to this important topic. Moreover, I thank them for their vital help in giving voice to teachers, such as themselves, who form positive relationships with their at-risk students, fostering their emerging resilience.

Data Availability Statement: Data is unavailable due to privacy and ethical restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- James, A.; Prout, A. Re-Presenting Childhood Time and Transition in the Study of Childhood. In *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*; James, A., Prout, A., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2015; pp. 202–219.
- McLaughlin, K.A.; Koenen, K.C.; Bromet, E.J.; Karam, E.G.; Liu, H.; Petukhova, M.; Ruscio, A.M.; Sampson, N.A.; Stein, D.J.; Aguilar-Gaxiola, S.; et al. Childhood Adversities and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Evidence for Stress Sensitisation in the World Mental Health Surveys. *Br. J. Psychiatry* **2017**, *211*, 280–288. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- ILO. UNICEF *More than a Billion Reasons: The Urgent Need to Build Universal Social Protection for Children—Second ILO–UNICEF Joint Report on Social Protection for Children*; Second ILO–UNICEF Joint Report on Social Protection for Children: Geneva, Switzerland; New York, NY, USA, 2023.
- Poole, J.C.; Dobson, K.S.; Pusch, D. Do Adverse Childhood Experiences Predict Adult Interpersonal Difficulties? The Role of Emotion Dysregulation. *Child Abus. Negl.* **2018**, *80*, 123–133. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Keesler, J.M. Adverse Childhood Experiences among Direct Support Professionals. *Intellect. Dev. Disabil.* **2018**, *56*, 119–132. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- McDonald, S.W.; Madigan, S.; Racine, N.; Benzie, K.; Tomfohr, L.; Tough, S. Maternal Adverse Childhood Experiences, Mental Health, and Child Behaviour at Age 3: The All Our Families Community Cohort Study. *Prev. Med.* **2019**, *118*, 286–294. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Ehrlich, K.B.; Miller, G.E.; Chen, E. Childhood Adversity and Adult Physical Health. In *Developmental Psychopathology*; John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2016; pp. 1–42.
- Masten, A.S. Resilience in Children Threatened by Extreme Adversity: Frameworks for Research, Practice, and Translational Synergy. *Dev. Psychopathol.* **2011**, *23*, 493–506. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. *Child Maltreatment Prevention: Past, Present, and Future*; Children's Bureau: Washington, DC, USA, 2017.
- Horan, J.M.; Widom, C.S. Cumulative Childhood Risk and Adult Functioning in Abused and Neglected Children Grown Up. *Dev. Psychopathol.* **2015**, *27*, 927–941. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Masten, A.S.; Lucke, C.M.; Nelson, K.M.; Stallworthy, I.C. Resilience in Development and Psychopathology: Multisystem Perspectives. *Annu. Rev. Clin. Psychol.* **2021**, *17*, 521–549. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Theron, L.; Murphy, K.; Ungar, M. Multisystemic Resilience: Learning from Youth in Stressed Environments. *Youth Soc.* **2022**, *54*, 1000–1022. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Goldstein, S.; Brooks, R.B. Why Study Resilience? In *Handbook of Resilience in Children*; Springer: Boston, MA, USA, 2013; pp. 3–14.
- Werner, E.E. Protective Factors and Individual Resilience. In *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2000; pp. 115–132.
- Fergusson, D.M.; Horwood, J. Context of Childhood Adversities: Results of a 21-Year Study. In *Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities*; Luthar, S.S., Ed.; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2003; pp. 130–155.
- Wright O'Dougherty, M.; Masten, A.S.; Narayan, A.J. Resilience Processes in Development: Four Waves of Research on Positive Adaptation in the Context of Adversity. In *Handbook of Resilience in Children*; Goldstein, S., Brooks, R., Eds.; Springer: Boston, MA, USA, 2013; pp. 15–37, ISBN 9781461436614.
- Southwick, S.M.; Bonanno, G.A.; Masten, A.S.; Panter-Brick, C.; Yehuda, R. Resilience Definitions, Theory, and Challenges: Interdisciplinary Perspectives. *Eur. J. Psychotraumatol.* **2014**, *5*, 25338. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Luthar, S.S.; Cicchetti, D.; Becker, B. The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work. *Child Dev.* **2000**, *71*, 543–562. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Masten, A.S. *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development*; Guilford Press: New York, NY, USA, 2014.
- Masten, A.S.; Osofsky, J.D. Disasters and Their Impact on Child Development: Introduction to the Special Section. *Child Dev.* **2010**, *81*, 1029–1039. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Mesman, E.; Vreeker, A.; Hillegers, M. Resilience and Mental Health in Children and Adolescents: An Update of the Recent Literature and Future Directions. *Curr. Opin. Psychiatry* **2021**, *34*, 586–592. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Johnson, E.I.; Arditti, J.A. Risk and Resilience among Children with Incarcerated Parents: A Review and Critical Reframing. *Annu. Rev. Clin. Psychol.* **2023**, *19*, 437–460. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Aburn, G.; Gott, M.; Hoare, K. What Is Resilience? An Integrative Review of the Empirical Literature. *J. Adv. Nurs.* **2016**, *72*, 980–1000. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bonanno, G.A. Uses and Abuses of the Resilience Construct: Loss, Trauma, and Health-Related Adversities. *Soc. Sci. Med.* **2012**, *74*, 753–756. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

25. Folkman, S.; Lazarus, R.S.; Dunkel-Schetter, C.; DeLongis, A.; Gruen, R.J. Dynamics of a Stressful Encounter: Cognitive Appraisal, Coping, and Encounter Outcomes. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* **1986**, *50*, 992–1003. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
26. Smith, B.W.; Tooley, E.M.; Christopher, P.J.; Kay, V.S. Resilience as the Ability to Bounce Back from Stress: A Neglected Personal Resource? *J. Posit. Psychol.* **2010**, *5*, 166–176. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
27. Daro, D.; Dodge, K.A. Creating Community Responsibility for Child Protection: Possibilities and Challenges. *Future Child.* **2009**, *19*, 67–93. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
28. DuMont, K.A.; Widom, C.S.; Czaja, S.J. Predictors of Resilience in Abused and Neglected Children Grown-up: The Role of Individual and Neighborhood Characteristics. *Child Abus. Negl.* **2007**, *31*, 255–274. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
29. Felner, R.D.; DeVries, M.L. Poverty in Childhood and Adolescence: A Transactional–Ecological Approach to Understanding and Enhancing Resilience in Contexts of Disadvantage and Developmental Risk. In *Handbook of Resilience in Children*; Goldstein, S., Brooks, R.B., Eds.; Springer: Boston, MA, USA, 2013; pp. 105–126.
30. Masten, A.S.; Powell, J.L. A Resilience Framework for Research, Policy, and Practice. In *Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities*; Luthar, S.S., Ed.; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2003; pp. 1–26.
31. Rutter, M. Resilience Reconsidered: Conceptual Considerations, Empirical Findings, and Policy Implications. In *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention*; Shonkoff, J.P., Meisels, S.J., Eds.; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2000; pp. 651–682.
32. Theron, L.; Ungar, M.; Cockcroft, K.; Fouche, A. Multisystemic Resources Matter for Resilience to Depression: Learning from a Sample of Young South African Adults. *Qual. Health Res.* **2023**, *33*, 828–841. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
33. Cicchetti, D. Annual Research Review: Resilient Functioning in Maltreated Children—Past, Present, and Future Perspectives. *J. Child Psychol. Psychiatry* **2013**, *54*, 402–422. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
34. Fletcher, D.; Sarkar, M. Psychological Resilience. *Eur. Psychol.* **2013**, *18*, 12–23. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
35. Martínez-Martí, M.L.; Ruch, W. Character Strengths Predict Resilience over and above Positive Affect, Self-Efficacy, Optimism, Social Support, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction. *J. Posit. Psychol.* **2017**, *12*, 110–119. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
36. Maddi, S. Personal Hardiness as the Basis for Resilience. In *Hardiness*; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2013; pp. 7–17.
37. Carmel, Y.; Sigad, L.; Lev-Wiesel, R.; Eisikovits, Z. Pathways to Resilience among Israeli Child Victims of Abuse and Neglect. *Child Indic. Res.* **2015**, *8*, 551–570. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
38. Noble, T.; McGrath, H. Wellbeing and Resilience in Young People and the Role of Positive Relationships. In *Positive Relationships*; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2012; pp. 17–33.
39. Mawila, D. Growing Resilience Capacity for Learners Presenting with Specific Learning Disability in Learners with Special Education Needs Schools. *Afr. J. Disabil.* **2023**, *12*, 1–8. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
40. Bonanno, G.A. Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events? *Am. Psychol.* **2004**, *59*, 20–28. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
41. Coifman, K.G.; Bonanno, G.A.; Ray, R.D.; Gross, J.J. Does Repressive Coping Promote Resilience? Affective-Autonomic Response Discrepancy during Bereavement. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* **2007**, *92*, 745–758. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
42. Fraser, M.W.; Kirby, L.D.; Smokowski, P.R. Risk and Resilience in Childhood. In *Risk and Resilience in Childhood: An Ecological Perspective*; Fraser, M.W., Ed.; National Association of Social Workers Press: Washington, DC, USA, 2004; Volume 2, pp. 13–66.
43. Sanders, J.; Munford, R.; Liebenberg, L. The Role of Teachers in Building Resilience of at Risk Youth. *Int. J. Educ. Res.* **2016**, *80*, 111–123. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
44. Doll, B.; Song, S.Y. Enhancing Resilience in Classrooms. In *Handbook of Resilience in Children*; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2023; pp. 525–537.
45. Oldfield, J.; Ainsworth, S. Decentering the ‘Resilient Teacher’: Exploring Interactions between Individuals and Their Social Ecologies. *Camb. J. Educ.* **2022**, *52*, 409–430. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
46. Vallés, A.; Clarà, M. Conceptualizing Teacher Resilience: A Comprehensive Framework to Articulate the Research Field. *Teach. Teach.* **2023**, *29*, 105–117. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
47. Metzler, M.; Merrick, M.T.; Klevens, J.; Ports, K.A.; Ford, D.C. Adverse Childhood Experiences and Life Opportunities: Shifting the Narrative. *Child Youth Serv. Rev.* **2017**, *72*, 141–149. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
48. Rancher, C.; Moreland, A.D. Adverse Childhood Experiences, Stress, and Resilience among Early Childhood Teachers. *Early Child Res. Q.* **2023**, *62*, 186–193. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
49. Hubel, G.S.; Davies, F.; Goodrum, N.M.; Schmarder, K.M.; Schnake, K.; Moreland, A.D. Adverse Childhood Experiences among Early Care and Education Teachers: Prevalence and Associations with Observed Quality of Classroom Social and Emotional Climate. *Child Youth Serv. Rev.* **2020**, *111*, 104877. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
50. Lincoln, Y.S.; Guba, E.G. *Naturalistic Inquiry*; Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 1985.
51. Burns, M.; Bally, J.; Burtles, M.; Holtslander, L.; Peacock, S. Constructivist Grounded Theory or Interpretive Phenomenology? Methodological Choices within Specific Study Contexts. *Int. J. Qual. Methods* **2022**, *21*, 16094069221077758. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
52. Wyman, P.A. Emerging Perspectives on Context Specificity of Children’s Adaptation and Resilience: Evidence from a Decade of Research with Urban Children in Adversity. In *Resilience and Vulnerability*; Luthar, S.S., Ed.; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2003; pp. 293–317.
53. Atkinson, R. *The Life Story Interview*; SAGE Publications, Inc.: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 1998; ISBN 9780761904281.
54. Pinnegar, S.; Daynes, J.G. Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically. In *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*; Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2007; pp. 3–34.

55. Clandinin, D.J. Narrative Inquiry: A Methodology for Studying Lived Experience. *Res. Stud. Music Educ.* **2006**, *27*, 44–54. [[CrossRef](#)]
56. Day, C.; Sammons, P.; Stobart, G. *Teachers Matter: Connecting Work, Lives and Effectiveness*; McGraw-Hill Education: London, UK, 2007.
57. Craig, C.J. Story Constellations: A Narrative Approach to Contextualizing Teachers' Knowledge of School Reform. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2007**, *23*, 173–188. [[CrossRef](#)]
58. Patton, M.Q. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*; Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2015.
59. Fusch, P.I.; Ness, L.R. Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research. *Qual. Rep.* **2015**, *20*, 1408–1416. [[CrossRef](#)]
60. McAdams, D.P. *The Life Story Interview*; The Foley Center for the Study of Lives, Northwestern University: Evanston, IL, USA, 2008.
61. Anderson, C.; Kirkpatrick, S. Narrative Interviewing. *Int. J. Clin. Pharm.* **2015**, 631–634. [[CrossRef](#)]
62. Butina, M. A Narrative Approach to Qualitative Inquiry. *Am. Soc. Clin. Lab. Sci.* **2015**, *28*, 190–196. [[CrossRef](#)]
63. Riessman, C.K. *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*; Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2008.
64. Bamberg, M. Narrative Analysis: An Integrative Approach—Small Stories and Narrative Practices. In *Qualitative Analysis: Eight Approaches for the Social Sciences*; Järvinen, M., Mik-Meyer, N., Eds.; Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2020; pp. 243–264.
65. Roulston, K. Considering Quality in Qualitative Interviewing. *Qual. Res.* **2010**, *10*, 199–228. [[CrossRef](#)]
66. Sarfo, J.O.; Debrah, T.; Gbordzoe, N.I.; Afful, W.T.; Obeng, P. Qualitative Research Designs, Sample Size and Saturation: Is Enough Always Enough? *J. Advocacy Res. Educ.* **2021**, *8*, 60–65. [[CrossRef](#)]
67. Morse, J.M. Critical Analysis of Strategies for Determining Rigor in Qualitative Inquiry. *Qual. Health Res.* **2015**, *25*, 1212–1222. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
68. Petty, N.J.; Thomson, O.P.; Stew, G. Ready for a Paradigm Shift? Part 2: Introducing Qualitative Research Methodologies and Methods. *Man. Ther.* **2012**, *17*, 378–384. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
69. Nowell, L.S.; Norris, J.M.; White, D.E.; Moules, N.J. Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *Int. J. Qual. Methods* **2017**, *16*, 160940691773384. [[CrossRef](#)]
70. Henry, P. Rigor in Qualitative Research: Promoting Quality in Social Science Research. *Res. J. Recent Sci.* **2015**, *4*, 25–28.
71. Masten, A.S. Global Perspectives on Resilience in Children and Youth. *Child Dev.* **2014**, *85*, 6–20. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
72. Masten, A.S.; Obradovic, J. Disaster Preparation and Recovery: Lessons from Research on Resilience in Human Development. *Ecol. Soc.* **2008**, *13*, 9. [[CrossRef](#)]
73. Luthar, S.S. Resilience in Development: A Synthesis of Research across Five Decades. In *Developmental Psychopathology. Volume 3. Risk, Disorder, and Adaptation*; Cicchetti, D., Cohen, D.J., Eds.; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2006; pp. 739–795.
74. Diers, M. Strengthening Resilience in School—A Narrative Examination of How Teachers Promote Resilience by Providing Social Support. *Int. Dialogues Educ. J.* **2020**, *7*. [[CrossRef](#)]
75. Siegel, D.J.; Siegel, M.W.; Parker, S.C. Internal Education and the Roots of Resilience: Relationships and Reflection as the New R's of Education. In *Handbook of Mindfulness in Education: Integrating Theory and Research into Practice*; Schonert-Reichl, K.A., Roeser, R.W., Eds.; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2016; pp. 47–63.
76. Furrer, C.J.; Skinner, E.A.; Pitzer, J.R. The Influence of Teacher and Peer Relationships on Students' Classroom Engagement and Everyday Motivational Resilience. *Teach. Coll. Rec. Voice Scholarsh. Educ.* **2014**, *116*, 101–123. [[CrossRef](#)]
77. Martin, A.J.; Collie, R.J. The Role of Teacher–Student Relationships in Unlocking Students' Academic Potential: Exploring Motivation, Engagement, Resilience, Adaptability, Goals, and Instruction. In *Handbook of Social Influences in School Contexts*; Wentzel, K., Ramani, G., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2016; pp. 158–177, ISBN 9781317670872.
78. Hamre, B.K.; Pianta, R.C. Can Instructional and Emotional Support in the First-Grade Classroom Make a Difference for Children at Risk of School Failure? *Development* **2005**, *76*, 949–967. [[CrossRef](#)]
79. Liebenberg, L.; Theron, L.; Sanders, J.; Munford, R.; van Rensburg, A.; Rothmann, S.; Ungar, M. Bolstering Resilience through Teacher–Student Interaction: Lessons for School Psychologists. *Sch. Psychol. Int.* **2016**, *37*, 140–154. [[CrossRef](#)]
80. Cahill, H.; Beadle, S.; Farrelly, A.; Forster, R.; Smith, K. *Building Resilience in Children and Young People: A Literature Review for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)*; Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne: Melbourne, Australia, 2014.
81. Morrison, G.M.; Allen, M.R. Promoting Student Resilience in School Contexts. *Theory Pract.* **2007**, *46*, 162–169. [[CrossRef](#)]
82. Johnson, B. Teacher–Student Relationships Which Promote Resilience at School: A Micro-Level Analysis of Students' Views. *Br. J. Guid. Coun.* **2008**, *36*, 385–398. [[CrossRef](#)]
83. Razer, M.; Friedman, V.J. *From Exclusion to Excellence*; Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2017; ISBN 978-94-6300-488-6.
84. Demircioğlu, H. Psychological Resilience at Social-Emotional Development. In *Educational Research and Practice*; Koleva, I., Duman, G., Eds.; St. Kliment Ohridski University Press: Sofia, Bulgaria, 2017.
85. Kottak, C. *Cultural Anthropology: Appreciating Cultural Diversity*, 19th ed.; McGraw Hill: London, UK, 2021.
86. Tylor, E.B. *Primitive Culture*; Murray: London, UK, 1871.
87. Winnicott, D.W. Mirror-Role of Mother and Family in Child Development. In *The Collected Works of D. W. Winnicott*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2016; pp. 211–218.

88. Suárez-Orozco, C. Identities under Siege: Immigration Stress and Social Mirroring among the Children of Immigrants. In *Cultures under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma*; Robben, A., Suárez-Orozco, M., Eds.; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2000; pp. 194–226.
89. Suárez-Orozco, C.; Abo-Zena, M.M.; Marks, A.K. *Transitions: The Development of Children of Immigrants*; Suárez-Orozco, C., Abo-Zena, M.M., Marks, A.K., Eds.; New York University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2015.
90. Suárez-Orozco, C.; Motti-Stefanidi, F.; Marks, A.; Katsiaficas, D. An Integrative Risk and Resilience Model for Understanding the Adaptation of Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth. *Am. Psychol.* **2018**, *73*, 781–796. [[CrossRef](#)]
91. Green, G.; Rhodes, J.; Hirsch, A.H.; Suárez-Orozco, C.; Camic, P.M. Supportive Adult Relationships and the Academic Engagement of Latin American Immigrant Youth. *J. Sch. Psychol.* **2008**, *46*, 393–412. [[CrossRef](#)]
92. Polit, D.F.; Beck, C.T. Generalization in Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Myths and Strategies. *Int. J. Nurs. Stud.* **2010**, *47*, 1451–1458. [[CrossRef](#)]
93. Bolger, K.E.; Patterson, C.J. Sequelae of Child Maltreatment: Vulnerability and Resilience. In *Resilience and Vulnerability*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2003; pp. 156–181.
94. McClure, F.H.; Chavez, D.V.; Agars, M.D.; Peacock, M.J.; Matosian, A. Resilience in Sexually Abused Women: Risk and Protective Factors. *J. Fam. Violence* **2008**, *23*, 81–88. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.