

**EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION PROGRAM BASED ON COMPETITIVE
PLAY FOR DEVELOPING SELF-ESTEEM AND RESILIENCE AMONG 2ND
GRADE STUDENTS**

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Educational Intervention Program based on Competitive Play for Developing Self-Esteem and Resilience among 2nd Grade Students

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Abstract

In an increasingly complex and fast-paced world, where academic and social pressures can profoundly affect children's development, resilience becomes a pillar of long-term success. Competition is a natural part of life. Whether on the playground, in the classroom, or later in the workplace, children will encounter challenges that test their abilities and drive. A healthy competitive spirit can motivate children to try their best, build resilience and develop goal-setting skills. But when not balanced with empathy, respect and fair play, competition can lead to stress, exclusion, or even conflict.

Resilience does not mean removing the negative, but expanding our vision of the negative to give it meaning, assimilating and allowing for greater focus on what matters, on what is necessary to sustain a continuous course towards a desired and meaningful outcome. Building a resilient environment in schools is fundamentally based on ensuring that adults provide a safe and nurturing environment.

The aim of this research was to develop, implement and test the effectiveness of an educational intervention program based on competitive play in order to develop self-esteem and resilience among second-grade students.

Following the re-evaluation of the students participating in this research, the results showed improvements in both self-esteem and resilience. After calculating the effect size, the educational intervention program based on the competitive play demonstrated its effectiveness by obtaining a *d* between 1.33 and 4.58, which means that the proposed educational intervention program had a very strong effect on the measured variables.

Keywords: competitive play, educational intervention program, primary school students, resilience, self-esteem

1. Introduction

Competition games are a complex activity of great seriousness, both in terms of the intended purpose and the way it is carried out, involving two or more players who have decision-making power and who aim to achieve objectives based on information acquired or currently being acquired and in accordance with precise rules. This involves making decisions by judiciously choosing alternatives in each game situation. The goal is achieved in conditions of competition, but also cooperation with others, interdependence (since competition does not only mean conflict).

In addition, competitive games are an excellent way to: test skills and strategy, practice social skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, etc. Taking turns, playing fairly, and following the rules are all important skills that can be developed through competitive games. This is especially helpful for children, as it can also help with early social skills development. Competitive games come in a variety of styles, from logic games to strategy games, to memory games, but no matter what form they take, they are an excellent way to learn a valuable lesson - losing or winning gracefully.

Through these games, students learn that they cannot always be the best and that this is not at all wrong. Success is not defined by being first all the time, but by hard work and perseverance. When they lose a game, they have a hard time controlling their emotions, and the first feelings that come to them are disappointment or even anger. This perception of students can be changed if it is emphasized that the important thing was to participate in the game and that they managed to reach the end rather than the win itself. Students also need to understand that it is okay to lose and that next time it will be better if they work harder. In this way, they will start to set their own expectations for themselves and will not let themselves be brought down by failures. They will be more resilient and will accept failure as an experience from which they can only learn.

On the other hand, victory or winning such a game or competition in general develops a sense of pride, gradually building a baggage that will allow them to consider themselves competent in various areas and have enough self-confidence to try new things. The student who knows the experience of success will refer to these previous experiences when they have difficulties in the future, which leads to the development of a sense of competence and implicitly to an increase in self-esteem.

Therefore, competitive play also holds an important set of life skills. Competition can be great for focus, creativity, growth mindset, motivation, coping strategies, resilience, and perseverance. In many cases, it doesn't have to be one or the other, as competitive play overlaps with cooperative play. Competitive games promote cooperation because students must adhere to a set of rules and empathize with the perspectives of other peers (DeVries & Kamii, 1980; Redgrave-Hogg, 2022).

Among the benefits of competitive play for elementary school students are:

- ✓ ***Develops cognitive and problem-solving skills.*** When students compete, they must think strategically, plan their time and solve problems in real time. Through competitive play, they learn

how to stay focused, improve their attention and think creatively, all key skills they will use in school and beyond.

✓ ***Emotional and resilience development.*** Winning and losing are part of life and competitive play can be one of the first ways students experience these emotions. Whether it's the joy of a win or the disappointment of a loss, competition teaches students how to process their feelings and develop emotional resilience. Losing a game can be difficult, but it's also an incredible opportunity to build resilience. Learning to get back up, try again, and work harder next time is an essential life skill. Determination can help students develop resilience in the face of challenges and setbacks – they can learn to persevere and bounce back from setbacks, which is essential for building confidence and maintaining a positive attitude toward achieving their goals.

✓ ***Developing social skills and teamwork.*** One of the most valuable lessons competitive play teaches is how to work with others. Students also learn conflict resolution and negotiation. In a competitive setting, disagreements may arise, but they learn to resolve problems through communication and compromise – skills that are equally valuable for the long term.

✓ ***Building confidence and self-esteem.*** Competitive play gives students the opportunity to feel proud of their achievements, increasing their self-esteem. And even when they don't win, learning to persevere, improve and try again builds a strong sense of self-worth (Gymfinity Kids, 2024).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Self-esteem in primary school students

The ongoing socio-economic transformations in society, science and education update modern educational policy in the field of personality formation of students capable of self-development and self-realization, defining a new vision of education in the formation of the personality of younger students. Under these conditions, primary school provides an integral system of knowledge, skills and experience of independent activity and personal responsibility of students. The basis of this position is the subjective attitude of students to educational activities based on self-assessment.

Self-esteem, which is understood as the process of knowing oneself, their potential and real properties, personal, intellectual characteristics, character traits, their relationships with other people (Calafell & Carnicer, 2019) affects the formation of children's self-confidence, the ability to see the future of their development and to actively participate in the educational process.

In a *psychological* context, self-esteem is identified with the relatively stable, more or less conscious "self-concept", experienced as a unique system of representations of the individual about himself, on the basis of which he builds his interaction with other people and relates to himself (Markova et al., 2018; Moghaddam et al., 2017).

From a *pedagogical* point of view, self-esteem is defined as a person's awareness of himself as a member of society, his relationships with the world around him, other people, his actions, thoughts and feelings, and the whole variety of personal qualities (Raknes et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2017).

The self-esteem of the student acquires its own characteristics at each stage of his formation; however, the younger school age is considered a sensitive period for the development of self-esteem. However, it should be noted that primary school students especially need targeted pedagogical support and stimulation of personal development and self-esteem (Ilaltdinova et al., 2018). The self-esteem of a younger schoolchild is characterized by a reflection of his own activity, intellectual abilities and ability to overcome difficulties (Markova et al., 2018). It is manifested in the student's behavior, in the educational process, as well as in his social adaptation.

The *cognitive* component of self-esteem refers to a person's description of the main characteristics of his personality, which are familiar to self-perception (Moghaddam et al., 2017). These include any attribute, role, status, psychological characteristics of an individual, a description of his priorities, life goals, etc. The meaning of self-description elements, their hierarchy can change depending on the context, the life experience of an individual, under the influence of a situational moment.

The *evaluative* component consists not only in the enunciation and description of one's personality traits, but also in the totality of evaluative characteristics and related experiences (Burenkova & Podturkin, 2020; Raknes et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2017). They contain a hidden evaluative meaning, the source of which is the individual's subjective interpretation of other people's reactions to these qualities, as well as the fact that a person perceives them against the background of objectively existing standards and through general, group or individual cultural concepts that he has learned during his life.

The *behavioral* component is a direct expression of an attitude in a person's behavior that is modified or restricted due to his fear of possible consequences. An attitude is characterized as an emotionally colored belief associated with a certain object.

Burenkova and Podturkin (2020) highlighted three main types of self-esteem: *adequate*, *underestimated* and *exaggerated*. According to Kolubinski et al. (2019), both high and low self-esteem are not the norm, but when compared with each other, students with low self-esteem see themselves in a less favorable light than their peers with adequate and high self-esteem.

Syzdykbayeva et al. (2021) conducted a study to test which of these three criteria contributes to increasing the level of self-esteem of students. The results showed that including students in the process of self-knowledge; step-by-step involvement of students in self-assessment and reflective activities; participation of students in assessing the criteria lead to an increase in self-esteem.

Therefore, in order to help a student increase self-esteem, it is necessary to teach him the ability to learn - the ability to see authentic learning tasks and find the best ways to solve them. Coluccia and colleagues (2017) believed that self-esteem is often based only on results; the process of activity itself and the previous stages of planning and forecasting are not reflected in it; this means that we need to teach the student to control their actions at any time, to adequately evaluate them and to be attentive to each stage of their work, to any of its intermediate results.

Wang et al. (2021), according to their methodological strategy, insist that the specificity of the self-concept is determined not only by the characteristics of its individual elements, but also by the nature of their relationship. In addition, researchers adhere to the principled position that the main indicators of the self-concept are: features of self-esteem, the level of subjective control, the level of self-esteem, the presence or absence of chronic internal personal conflicts.

According to Lyyra et al. (2021) self-esteem is influenced by two groups of factors – *external* and *internal*. The category of external factors includes the social environment, assessments of other people, successes and failures inactivity, features of interpersonal relationships, and individual psychological qualities and personality traits such as anxiety, introversion, extraversion, value orientations, character and temperament fall into the category of internal factors.

Having a sense of competence means having the belief that the person in question is generally capable of producing the desired results, having confidence in the effectiveness of one's own mind and ability to think as well as to make choices and to make the most appropriate decisions. Worth can be considered the psychological aspect of self-esteem, while competence would be the behavioral or sociological aspect. Self-esteem comes from the experience of living consciously and can thus be interpreted as a person's general judgment of himself, relating to reality-based competence and self-worth.

According to Duclos (2008), a specialist in the field of self-esteem, this concept can be divided into four components:

1) Feeling of security and trust

From birth, the child needs to feel safe, to perceive that his parents are attentive to his basic needs and capable of satisfying them. This feeling is rooted in attachment and is built gradually, from the first days of life. The child's sense of security is closely linked to the ability of those around him to understand his needs and to respond to them in a reasonable time.

Thus, day after day, the child builds a mental representation of his parents; he sees them as people he can count on to calm him down, restore his energy, feed him, warm him, etc. By repeating small gestures of encouragement towards the child, the foundations of self-esteem are laid. The feeling of security is a prerequisite for self-esteem. It is the main component that we must dwell on with young children (0-3 years), because on this solid foundation the other components of self-esteem will be able to develop.

The image that the child will have of himself will be based, first of all, on the way in which he will have been treated by those around him. Feeling loved, he will develop the conviction that he is worthy of love, and this conviction constitutes an essential element of self-esteem. A child neglected at this stage of development will have every chance of developing an image of himself as unworthy of love. The first task of a parent is, therefore, to know how to listen to his child's needs, both physical and psychological.

2) Self-knowledge

Self-esteem consists of making a judgment about oneself, but before being able to judge oneself, one must first be able to recognize one's main characteristics, know one's needs, know how to express them, recognize one's emotions, and know how to express them. The ability to make a judgment about oneself by evaluating all one's personal characteristics as a whole is acquired around the age of 7 or 8, with the development of concrete operational thinking, described by Piaget. Before this stage, the child does not have the intellectual skills necessary to make a realistic judgment about oneself. However, the small child, who learns to climb and fall, thus learns to know one's limits. In the same way, the 4-year-old child learns that he is capable of riding a bicycle, but sometimes gets scared when you go too fast. However, it is only at the age of 7 or 8 that he will be able to make a global analysis of all his personal characteristics in order to formulate assessments such as "I am good at sports" or "I have a rich imagination, but sometimes my head is in the clouds."

The sense of identity is therefore built little by little, following the stages of the child's cognitive development. Developing one's own identity also means differentiating oneself from others, especially from parental figures. At the age of assertion (between 18 months and 3 years), the child learns to assert himself, sometimes opposing what adults ask of him. This is a crucial stage, because it allows him to psychologically distance himself from adults and develop his autonomy. During this period, it is important for the parent to accept, to a certain extent, the fact that his own child tells him, in his own way: "I am different from you, I do not necessarily want the same thing as you and I dare to tell you so."

3) The feeling of belonging to a group

The young child first develops the feeling that he has his place in the family. If he has brothers and sisters, he must learn how to make room for himself among his siblings. If he feels loved and accepted by family members, it will be easier for him to integrate into other groups, at kindergarten, at school, in sports teams or in any group. The more we encourage the child to participate in the family dynamics, integrating him into various family activities, allowing him to take part in certain decisions regarding family life, promoting mutual help between brothers and sisters, the more his social and academic integration and sense of his own value in relation to social groups will be encouraged. If he feels recognized for what he is by his parents, brothers and sisters, the child will have more courage to assert himself and will dare to give his colleagues his trust. He will be less inclined to step aside, for fear of rejection.

4) Sense of achievement and competence

Any success in everyday life deserves to be highlighted. In this way, the child develops a sense of pride. He gradually builds a memory of his successes, small and large. This baggage will allow him to consider himself competent in various areas and to have enough self-confidence to dare to try new things. A strong sense of competence protects the child from the fear of failure. A fragile self-esteem leads him to protect himself against failure, avoiding getting involved in new activities. He thus risks getting stuck in a vicious circle, which increasingly lowers his self-esteem (Pelletiera, 2024).

2.2. Resilience in educational context

Increasingly used in recent years, resilience is a concept that covers several different aspects of overcoming challenges and adapting to the environment (McCubin, 2001). In a broad sense, resilience is defined as the ability to overcome adversity. Another definition is the successful

adaptation to adverse conditions (Norman, 2000). Therefore, there are two important aspects of resilience:

1) adversities, challenges, life events (including people, situations, emotions, context, etc.) that take us out of our comfort zone;

2) "solving" the situation, finding a solution (physical and mental) that leads us to integrate the respective experience and to positively adapt to the respective context.

Additionally, Ahern et al. (2008) define resilience as a "personal, adaptive, stress-resistant quality" (p. 32) and if we also consider the recognition of context in the growth and development of resilience throughout life, Pooley and Cohen (2010) define resilience as the potential to demonstrate ingenuity using available internal and external resources, in response to different contextual and developmental challenges.

Resilience in the educational context represents the ability of students to adapt to challenges, manage failures and maintain their motivation in the learning process. Developing resilience in students through commitment and goal orientation shows that we need a clear direction to build a solid foundation in the face of challenges. Exploring all of these elements reveals a series of mutually complementary concepts, which we may not think of when we hear the term resilience, but which have deep connections between them beyond a first glance (Pânișoară, 2024).

Furthermore, regarding the basic characteristics of the resilient individual, Hornor (2017) names six basic characteristics of it:

- ✓ problem-solving skills;
- ✓ strong social connections;
- ✓ survivor mentality;
- ✓ emotional regulation;
- ✓ self-compassion;
- ✓ sense of control (internal control).

Resilient students often see mistakes as valuable opportunities for growth and learning. They possess the ability to delineate aspects of their existence and direct their efforts and focus towards these aspects, rather than expending energy on variables that are beyond their sphere of influence. An essential component of a resilient student is the belief that they have the ability to effectively approach and solve problems, as well as make decisions. They also possess the ability to effectively express and articulate challenges, analyze different potential solutions, implement what they

perceive to be the most appropriate course of action, and gain valuable information from the results obtained. It is crucial that parents refrain from imposing ways of solving problems on their children. On the contrary, it is more advantageous to cultivate in their children the inclination and willingness to reflect on different potential solutions themselves, to support and guide this process discreetly (Brooks & Goldstein, 2015).

In addition to these aspects, Boza (2024) argues that students who have a resilient state of mind: feel appreciated and loved unconditionally, have the ability to set achievable goals and reasonable expectations for their own personal development, can approach and solve problems effectively, can make decisions, are inclined to perceive mistakes, obstacles and barriers as opportunities to be faced and overcome, rather than as sources of anxiety to be avoided, have an approach to situations that facilitates personal development and does not undermine their own progress, recognize and value their strengths and abilities, believe that their actions can improve the quality of life of others and this gives them meaning and purpose and feel satisfied in interpersonal relationships, have skills in establishing and maintaining positive relationships.

2.3. The impact of competitive play on increasing self-esteem and resilience in primary school children

In general, self-esteem is, or expresses, a positive self-evaluation, a feeling of one's own worth. Individuals with high self-esteem tend to consider themselves valuable, as having projects worth achieving and capable of carrying them out. This positive relationship with themselves is expressed in their attitudes (in beliefs, judgments, feelings, emotions) and in their behavior. Self-esteem can be a state, a mood or a process and can occur consciously or as an implicit condition (Gilabert, 2023).

Self-esteem is often pursued in contexts shaped by competition. Competition consists of forms of social activity in which those involved try to obtain certain things (such as prestige) that cannot be obtained simultaneously by all, so that some obtain them only if others fail. Competition can support self-esteem by stimulating students to develop valuable traits, creating performative arenas in which they become visible and their achievements are rewarded.

Self-esteem can be socially comparative, when its attainment depends on whether and how much one has a certain characteristic compared to others. It is also competitive when it increases depending on successfully acting to have more of the characteristic than they have. Two types of relationships can be distinguished between variations in self-esteem and performance at the level

of competition. In both, students gain or lose self-esteem based on how well they do in competition. But the relationship may be in a kind of internal case, because doing well or badly in competition is considered by the person to be intrinsically significant. Here, when students evaluate themselves, making reference to how they do in competition is part of what they take as the reason for evaluating themselves as they do. They may say to themselves: “I am worthy because I will win,” “I am worthless because I lost.” In the case of the second type, the external cases are different. Here, doing well or badly in competition is causally relevant to gaining or losing self-esteem, but people do not make reference to their competitive performance to explain why they evaluate themselves as they do (Gilabert, 2023).

Improving resilience depends on individuals’ coping styles or strategies and on personality factors that may act as mediators (Villasana et al., 2017). These mediators include self-esteem, locus of control, self-efficacy, hope, stress coping strategies and sense of humor (Olsson et al., 2003).

According to Prince-Embury’s (2007) model, the variables that constitute resilience fall into three general factors: (a) *a sense of dominance* that includes aspects such as optimism, adaptability and self-efficacy; (b) *a sense of connectedness* that takes into account perceived social support and is manifested through tolerance, comfort, support and trust and (c) *emotional reactivity*, which is related to adequate emotional self-regulation skills, manifesting itself as factors of sensitivity, greater or lesser vulnerability and speed of recovery.

Adequate levels of self-esteem are psychological indicators of well-being and personal satisfaction that contribute to mental balance and general health (Fuentes et al., 2011; Palacios et al., 2015), having important repercussions on the development of a positive life and the achievement of goals (Halder & Datta, 2012). People with high self-esteem feel more capable of carrying out any task or activity and are more daring to express opinions different from those of most people, as well as to share creative ideas (Thatcher & Brown, 2010). Also, high self-esteem allows maintaining high levels of intrinsic motivation while reducing extrinsic motivation (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012). In addition, it can increase self-regulation, reduce the perception of fear or anxiety and lead to the establishment of new goals (Carver et al., 2008; Wang & Wang, 2016). People with high self-esteem feel more capable of completing any task or activity and are bolder in expressing opinions different from those of most people, as well as sharing creative ideas (Thatcher & Brown, 2010).

In this case, competitive play cannot be perceived as the antonym of collaborative play, because although the goal is to achieve success, students must work hard together to enhance their specific skills. Consequently, during these games, students can also improve their teamwork (collaborative learning) along with a better understanding of how to deal with conflicting opinions and ideas in order to work together despite different personalities. External incentives (such as awards, public recognition, becoming a school hero to peers, etc.) can create a challenge behind competition, leading students to act for the external reward and increasing their innate desire to excel (Reeve & Deci, 1996). In contrast, the intrinsic sense of competition, which comes from the desire to beat other students, drives them to do better, beyond their own limits. A well-designed competitive game can help students develop a beneficial comparison among peers, benefiting them and strengthening their self-concept and self-efficacy.

The aim of this research is to develop, implement and test the effectiveness of an educational intervention program based on competitive games in order to develop self-esteem and resilience among second-grade students.

The application approach aims to test the following hypothesis: *The educational intervention program "Discover yourself, grow and believe in yourself!" based on competitive games will significantly contribute to increasing self-esteem and resilience among second-grade students.*

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants in this research were 20 second grade students aged between 9 years and 3 months and 10 years and 2 months, students of the "Vasile Berci" Junior High School in Călinești, Maramureș County, Romania. Of the total of 20 students, 10 were boys and 10 were girls.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI, Coopersmith, 2002)

The CSEI were designed to measure evaluative attitudes of the self in the social, academic/school, family and personal areas of one's existence. In order for the forms of the inventories to best reflect their usefulness, there are three forms: *the Student Form (Form A)*, *the Student Form-Short Form (Form B)* and *the Adult Form (Form C)*. For this research we used the Student Form (Form A).

The student form is used with students aged 8 to 15 years and includes 58 items scored on a dichotomous scale (Yes/No) and takes approximately 25-30 minutes to complete. Fifty statements

relate to self-esteem, and eight statements make up the Distortion Scale, which is a measure of the defensive manner in which a student responds to this instrument.

The statements regarding self-esteem make up a total score and, alternatively, they can make up four separate scores for four subscales: *Self-esteem - General score*, *Self-esteem in relation to peers*, *Self-esteem manifested at home in relation to parents* and *Self-esteem manifested at school in relation to academic performance*.

Regarding its validity and reliability, Johnson (1982) obtained the following Cronbach alpha coefficients: $\alpha=.86$ for the entire questionnaire, $\alpha=.71$ for the Self-Esteem - General Score subscale, $\alpha=.61$ for the Self-Esteem in Relation to Peers subscale, $\alpha=.61$ for the Self-Esteem at Home in Relation to Parents subscale, and $\alpha=.61$ for the Self-Esteem at School in Relation to Academic Performance subscale. Also, the different forms of the CSEI have an internal consistency coefficient ranging from .80 to .92 for various cultural populations (Coopersmith, 2002; Lane et al. 2002; Turan & Tufan 1987). In our country, the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventories were translated and adapted by Țânculescu & Iliescu (2017). After calculating the psychometric indices, the authors obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging between .68-.97 for the subscales in the Standard Form, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging between .54-.75 for the subscales in the Student Form-Short Form, and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging between .41-.76 for the subscales in the Adult Form.

3.2.2. Child & Youth Resilience Measure - Revised (CYRM-R, Ungar & Linderberg, 2011)

The CYRM-R for children is a tool that includes 17 items scored on a 1-5 Likert scale, where 1 means "Not at all" and 5 means "Very much", and it takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Ten statements are related to personal resilience, and seven statements to relational resilience. To determine the score of the personal resilience subscale, the sum of the 10 items will be made, a score that can be a minimum of 10 points and a maximum of 50 points. To determine relational resilience, the sum of the other 7 items will be made, here a minimum of 7 points and a maximum of 35 points can be made. For the total score, the sum of the scores of the two subscales will be made. Higher scores indicate characteristics associated with stronger resilience.

Regarding the validity and reliability of this instrument, Jeffries et al. (2019) obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87 for the total score resilience, a coefficient equal to .82 for personal resilience, and a coefficient equal to .82 for relational resilience.

3.3. Design

The present research had an experimental design, this one having a longitudinal study, research that was carried out over 4 months starting from December 2024 to April 2025.

In the *pre-experimental phase* of the research, the teachers and parents of the students participating in the study were asked to sign an informed consent giving their agreement to participate in this research, respectively they were assured of the confidentiality of the data both during the research and after its completion. Then, the students participating in this research were assessed by administering the two chosen instruments.

During the *experimental phase*, we focused on implementing and developing the activities of the educational intervention program "Discover yourself, grow and believe in yourself!". Within this program, ten activities dedicated to developing self-esteem and resilience through competitive games will be carried out, activities that will be carried out over ten weeks for one hour per week.

The Curricular Areas in which these activities are included are: Language and Communication, Counseling and Guidance, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technologies, addressing content such as emotions, managing difficult situations and failure. The main methods and strategies used in carrying out these activities are: competitive play, conversation, explanation, demonstration, station method, brainstorming.

Table 1. Description of the proposed activities

Crt. No.	Activity	Objectives
1.	<i>"Island without worries"</i>	Understanding the term of "resilience".
2.	<i>"I am WOW"</i>	Developing self-confidence and self-acceptance. Cultivating a harmonious parent-child relationship.
3.	<i>"Pirate Treasure"</i>	Developing the spirit of competition and cooperation skills within the group. Understanding and accepting a defeat in a competitive game.
4.	<i>"In My Mind"</i>	Determining the causal factors of stress and possible solutions to overcome them.
5.	<i>"Sign Specialist"</i>	Developing students' self-esteem and resilience. Consolidating knowledge related to mathematical signs and punctuation marks.
6.	<i>"Personality game"</i>	Developing skills to face up to various challenges; Identifying and understanding one's own emotions;
7.	<i>"Did you know?"</i>	Strengthening teamwork skills; Developing self-esteem by becoming aware of each other's abilities;
8.	<i>"Popini and Gandarici"</i>	Expressing and understanding all emotions and ways to overcome unpleasant ones;

9.	"I like that about you...."	Developing and increasing self-esteem.
10.	"Hot air balloon ride"	Developing a sense of self-confidence and self-control.

The *post-experimental phase* took place immediately after the completion of the proposed educational intervention program activities and consisted of re-evaluating the participants to determine the effectiveness of the educational intervention program based on the competitive play on increasing self-esteem and resilience.

4. Results

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of the results obtained for the self-esteem

Variables	N	M	Std. Error of Mean	Mdn	SD	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness
<i>General Self</i>		,41	,005	.41	.02	-,37	.99	,70	.51
<i>Social Self</i>		,41	,004	.42	.02	-,44	.99	-,26	.51
<i>Peers</i>									
<i>Home-Parents</i>	20	,49	,004	.50	.02	-,71	.99	-,33	.51
<i>School-Academic</i>		,61	,005	.61	.02	,27	.99	,22	.51
<i>General Perceptions of Self</i>		,48	,005	.49	.02	,14	.99	,71	.51

Following the evaluation of the participants included in the research at the level of self-esteem, the following difficulties were identified: at the level of the *general self subscale*, students do not consider themselves to be liked by children of their age, considering that most children are more liked by others than they are themselves, other children do not usually follow their ideas and some of them tease them quite often; at the *home-parents subscale* level, students get upset easily when they are at home, their parents do not really take their feelings into account and moreover, they have a high level of expectations from them. Also, we identified difficulties in the *School-Academic* and *General Perceptions of Self* subscales. These students experience difficulties or even inability to integrate into the group, have difficulties in the process of relating to others indicating an increased level of social isolation, respectively an increased level of emotional sensitivity, make decisions with some hesitation, give up very easily, do not really express their point of view and some get angry quite quickly when are criticized.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of the results obtained for the resilience

Variables	N	M	Std. Error of Mean	Mdn	SD	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness
<i>Personal Resilience</i>		3	,036	3.02	.16	4,81	.99	1,38	.51
<i>Relational Resilience</i>	20	2,64	,03	2.64	.13	-,85	.99	,19	.51
<i>General Resilience</i>		2,96	,031	2.98	.14	,56	.99	-,14	.51

According to Table 3, the existence of certain difficulties is noted both at the level of personal resilience and at the level of relational resilience. Thus, the students participating in this research do not really share with their peers, have few friends who care about them, do not really feel that they resonate with other peers and do not really have opportunities/situations through which to learn certain things that will be useful to them later in life. Moreover, students have an avoidant communication towards their parents, they don't really talk to their parents about the emotions, the states they are experiencing, respectively they believe that their parents don't really know much about them (for example, what makes them happy, what they are afraid of, etc.).

In order to highlight the existence of certain statistically significant improvements, respectively to demonstrate the efficiency of the proposed educational intervention program, the paired samples t-test was calculated.

Table 4: Paired samples t-test results

Variables	Pre-test		Post-test		N	95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df	d
	M	SD	M	SD					
<i>General Self</i>	,41	.02	,60	.02	20	-,20; -,16	20*	19	4,58
<i>Social Self Peers</i>	,41	.02	,53	.02		-,13; -,09	14,44*	19	3,31
<i>Home-Parents</i>	,49	.02	,62	.02		-,14; -,09	12,63*	19	2,89
<i>School- Academic</i>	,61	.02	,75	.03		-,15; -,11	13,63*	19	3,12
<i>General Perceptions of Self</i>	,48	.02	,62	.02		-,15; -,11	15,53*	19	3,56
<i>Personal Resilience</i>	3	.16	3,40	.20		-,51; -,28	7,19*	19	1,65
<i>Relational Resilience</i>	2,64	.13	3	.16		-,45; -,25	7,26*	19	1,66
<i>General Resilience</i>	2,96	.14	3,20	.10		-,31; -,15	5,81*	19	1,33

*p<.01.

After the completion of the activities of the educational intervention program "Discover yourself, grow and believe in yourself", a re-evaluation of the participants included in the research took place to investigate the existence of certain improvements in the measured variables. First of all, improvements are noted at the level of self-esteem (see table 4). Most of the activities being in

teams, students began to share their ideas, express their point of view, developed their negotiation skills, support each other and provide constructive feedback, accept each other and develop their interaction and social relationships. Complementarily, significant improvements from a statistical point of view are also noticeable at the level of resilience. Through competitive games, students improved their problem-solving skills and when they lost a game, they no longer felt so frustrated and disappointed, but instead tried to think more carefully about what they did wrong and what they could do better, motivating themselves. Improvements were also noted in relational resilience: students became more open and shared with their parents at home how they felt at school, they became more empathetic and learned to express their emotions in a constructive manner.

In addition, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed educational intervention program, we also chose to calculate the effect size. After calculating the effect size, we obtained a d ranging between 1.33-4.58 which means that the proposed educational intervention program had a very strong effect on the measured variables. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The essence of education at any level is to form an informed, skilled and productive person with a healthy mind. The well-being of children must take priority in shaping the environment and supporting learning experiences so that students can learn resilience and grow optimally and, ultimately, thrive.

In the literature, studies that have focused on competitive play to increase resilience have focused more on the sports and gaming fields. The intentional and balanced integration of competition into teaching activities can contribute to strengthening emotional health and developing essential skills for children's social adaptation from the elementary school.

Resilience is defined as the ability to rise above difficult situations; it is the trait that allows us to survive in this less than perfect world and move forward with optimism and confidence. Resilience is based on a series of skills such as: effective communication, assertiveness, healthy and harmonious relationships with those around you, empathy, optimistic thinking and attitude, problem-solving skills, autonomy, self-esteem, promoting hope, adaptability and flexibility in the face of new situations, setting realistic goals and demonstrating perseverance in achieving them, high academic aspirations, etc.

The aim of this research was to develop, implement and test the effectiveness of an educational intervention program based on competitive play on the development of self-esteem and resilience

among second grade students. The results highlighted that in the educational environment, the implementation of competitive games significantly contributes to increasing self-esteem and resilience among students. Students learned that this type of game allows them to objectively evaluate and self-motivate themselves, as well as to better manage challenges and accept defeat. This led to the exploration of the benefits that games have in increasing self-esteem and resilience in schoolchildren without overlooking the personal traits that bring them closer or separate them from others.

Although the results obtained support the hypothesis and provide valuable clues regarding the positive impact of competitive games on self-esteem and resilience, this research presents several limitations that must be taken into account. A first limitation is related to the instrument used to assess resilience. Although the instrument is internationally recognized and frequently used in psychological research, it is not validated and culturally adapted to the Romanian school population. This aspect may affect the accuracy of the measurement and the relevance of the results in the specific socio-cultural context of Romanian students.

Another limit is the short period of the intervention. The educational intervention program based on competitive play was carried out for a limited period, which could influence the durability and depth of the observed changes. Also, the limited number of participants represents a limitation of this research. With a limited number of participants, the results obtained cannot be extrapolated regarding the demonstration of the efficiency of the proposed educational intervention program.

A final limitation is the lack of investigation of endogenous variables such as emotional intelligence and personality traits.

Starting from the identified limitations, we outlined the following research directions. A first future direction of research would consist in expanding the implementation of the educational intervention program both on a larger sample and over a longer period of time in order to demonstrate its effectiveness on the measured dependent variables. Another direction for future research could be the introduction of additional variables that may mediate or moderate the impact of competitive games on children's development; one of these is growth mindset. Exploring the interaction between playful competition and growth mindset could provide a more complex perspective on how children respond to challenges and build self-esteem in a sustainable way.

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The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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