ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AND PROFESSIONALIZATION: A CASE STUDY ON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES FROM VULNERABLE SECTORS

AUTOEFICACIA ACADÉMICA Y PROFESIONALIZACIÓN: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO EN BACHILLERES DE SECTORES VULNERABLES

AUTO-EFICÁCIA ACADÊMICA E PROFISSIONALIZAÇÃO: UM ESTUDO DE CASO SOBRE OS DIPLOMADOS DO ENSINO SECUNDÁRIO DE SETORES VULNERÁVEIS

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***ABSTRACT**: The aim of this article was to explore the capabilities that allowed the graduates of the IPC technical educational institutions Andrés Rosa, Juan de Cabrera and Jairo Morera Lizcano in Comuna 8, a disadvantaged area of Neiva, cohort 2000-2011, to counteract the self-fulfilling prophecies through both general and academic self-efficacy. This study adopted a constructivist paradigm, employing a qualitative approach and case study methodology, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The data analysis was based on some procedures provided by grounded theory. The findings reveal that the key capabilities developed by the participants, encompassing discipline, resilience, solidarity and persistence, along with a strong inclination towards self-improvement, emerged from their ability to convert adverse family and educational circumstances into drivers of motivation. This transformation facilitated the development of personal agency, allowing these individuals to achieve their aspirations for professional success. The study concludes with recommendations for public educational institutions in the commune and directions for future research.*
***Keywords**: academic self-efficacy; expectations of self-efficacy and self-fulfilling prophecy; biases; capabilities.*

RESUMO: O objetivo deste artigo foi explorar as capacidades que permitiram aos graduados das instituições educacionais técnicas do IPC, Andrés Rosa, Juan de Cabrera e Jairo Morera Lizcano na Comuna 8, uma área desfavorecida de Neiva, turma de 2000-2011, contrariar as profecias autorrealizáveis por meio da autoeficácia geral e acadêmica. Este estudo adotou um paradigma construtivista, utilizando uma abordagem qualitativa e metodologia de estudo de caso, com dados coletados através de entrevistas semiestruturadas e análise documental. A análise dos dados foi baseada em alguns procedimentos fornecidos pela teoria fundamentada. Os resultados revelam que as principais capacidades desenvolvidas pelos participantes, abrangendo disciplina, resiliência, solidariedade e persistência, juntamente com uma forte inclinação para o autoaperfeiçoamento, emergiram de sua habilidade de converter circunstâncias familiares e educacionais adversas em motores de motivação. Essa transformação facilitou o desenvolvimento da agência pessoal, permitindo que esses indivíduos alcançassem suas aspirações de sucesso profissional. O estudo conclui com recomendações para as instituições educacionais públicas na comuna e direções para futuras pesquisas.

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Palavras-chave: auto-eficácia acadêmica; expectativas de auto-eficácia e profecia auto-realizável; preconceitos; capacidades.

***RESUMEN**: El objetivo de este artículo fue explorar las capacidades que permitieron a los graduados de las instituciones educativas técnicas IPC Andrés Rosa, Juan De Cabrera y Jairo Morera Lizcano en la Comuna 8, una zona desfavorecida de Neiva, cohorte 2000-2011, contrarrestar las profecías autocumplidas a través de la autoeficacia general y académica. Este estudio adoptó un paradigma constructivista, utilizando un enfoque cualitativo y una metodología de estudio de caso, con datos recogidos a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas y análisis de documentos. El análisis de los datos se basó en algunos procedimientos proporcionados por la teoría fundamentada. Los hallazgos revelan que las capacidades clave desarrolladas por los participantes, que abarcan disciplina, resiliencia, solidaridad y persistencia, junto con una fuerte inclinación hacia la auto-mejora, surgieron de su capacidad para convertir circunstancias familiares y educativas adversas en impulsores de motivación. Esta transformación facilitó el desarrollo de la agencia personal, permitiendo a estos individuos alcanzar sus aspiraciones de éxito profesional. El estudio concluye con recomendaciones para las instituciones educativas públicas de la comuna y direcciones para investigaciones futuras.*
***Palabras clave**: autoeficacia académica; expectativas de autoeficacia y profecía autocumplida; sesgos; capacidades.*

Introduction

Educational abandonment in vulnerable contexts is a critical problem that threatens not only individual well-being, but also the social and economic development of the affected communities. In particular, in the official institutions of commune 8 of the city of Neiva in Colombia, high dropout rates and postponement of higher education are deeply rooted realities (Guarín, 2015; Araujo, 2019). This research focuses on unraveling the multiple factors that contribute to this phenomenon, with a special focus on the pernicious influence of "self-fulfilling prophecies" (Merton, 1949).

The self-fulfilling prophecy, also known as the Pygmalion effect, is a psychosocial phenomenon that can perpetuate and exacerbate situations of exclusion and vulnerability. Numerous studies have confirmed that negative expectations by teachers, parents, and peers can bias students' perception and attitudes, limiting their potential and reinforcing a cycle of inequality and lack of social mobility (Buryanek, 2010); (Maslovaty, 2002); (Owaja, 2007); (Riley, 2009); (Sarrazin et al., 2006); (Bourdieu, 1987); (Merton, 1949). However, amidst this bleak landscape, the notion of self-efficacy emerges as a possible factor of resilience. This study posits that general and academic self-efficacy abilities can serve as mechanisms allowing students from vulnerable environments to break the chains of the self-fulfilling prophecy and improve their educational and life trajectories.

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The concept of self-fulfilling prophecy and its influence on individual and social behavior have been themes studied since ancient times, gaining academic formalization in the 20th century with works like those of Thomas (1928) and Merton (1949). These studies have outlined the importance of this phenomenon in both individual and social contexts, and its application in education was especially emphasized through the "Pygmalion effect" by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968). The literature shows a tendency towards a greater susceptibility of younger students to expectations, though this influence tends to level off with the maturity of the individual (Barnett, 2018); (Hill & Jones, 2018). Additionally, there is a predominant focus on quantitative methods in measuring variables such as self-efficacy and motivation (Nolkemper et al., 2019); (Melliti et al., 2016). In secondary education, studies have revealed how racial and ethnic inequalities are perpetuated through teacher expectations and stereotypes (F. López, 2017); (Rubie-Davies & Peterson, 2016); (Castejón Company, 2017). At the university level, the danger of stigma accumulation and its effect on student confidence and learning has been identified (Vorauer & Miller, 1997); (Gutiérrez & Mayordomo, 2019).

The psychological concept of self-efficacy (SE) has been conceptualized as a significant predictor of individuals' behavior and performance (Bandura, 1986); (Schwarzer et al., 1997). The literature indicates that SE could function as a crucial resource in contexts of economic vulnerability (Huang et al., 2019); (E. Rodríguez, 2017; (Rymer, 2017), and its interaction with resilience and socioeconomic status has been equally highlighted (Luszczynska et al., 2004); (Huang et al., 2019); (Mazur et al., 2014). However, there is a notable lack of studies addressing SE in non-Western contexts (Bandura, 2002); (Huang et al., 2019). In the academic field, SE has been linked with school performance, goal setting, and self-regulation (Jahan & Mehrafzoon, 2019); (Talsma et al., 2018). Methodologically, although the quantitative approach has been predominant (Schwarzer, 1993); (Jeremías Jerusalem, 1995), there are opportunities for qualitative approaches that can offer deeper insights (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). In the Colombian context, despite the growing interest in SE (Agudelo, 2017); (Hurtado, 2017); (Navarro et al., 2017), there is a significant research gap linking SE with self-fulfilling prophecy in vulnerable contexts (Betancourt et al., 2015); (Díaz & Rodriguez, 2016).

The existing body of literature demonstrates the need to further explore the intersections between SE, expectations, and contextual variables, especially in vulnerable populations and non-Western contexts. This multidimensional approach has implications not only for educational outcomes but also for the broader social structure, including the potential to reinforce or dismantle stigmas and inequalities.

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The need for this research is pressing, as the lack of educational training contributes to conditions of economic poverty, exclusion, and vulnerability in society (Lambrunée & Gallo, 2005); (Cardoso, 2019). At the same time, the representations and discourses that perpetuate these conditions tend to be internalized by individuals, fueling a cycle of inequality and disempowerment (Castel, 1999); (Castel, 2014); (Enguix, 2012). Therefore, this research not only seeks to add to the academic literature on the Pygmalion effect and the self-fulfilling prophecy in educational contexts but also has the potential to influence educational policies and practices that address exclusion and vulnerability from a more comprehensive and empowering perspective. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to the development of strategies and tools that enable students from the Commune 8 of the municipality of Neiva to overcome the barriers that limit them, thus enhancing their abilities and capacities for academic achievement and long-term well-being. This research focused on answering the following question: What were the general and academic self-efficacy capabilities developed by professionals graduated from the official educational institutions of commune 8, vulnerable sector of the city of Neiva to defeat the self-fulfilling prophecy, cohort 2000- 2011? Based on these approaches, it is expected that the findings of this study will serve as a starting point for future research and intervention strategies, both in the specific context of Neiva and in similar vulnerable environments.

Theoretical framework - self-fulfilling prophecy

The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy has its roots in the work of the sociologist William Thomas, who in his book "The Unadjusted Girl" highlighted how the family and social interaction groups significantly influence an individual's behaviour throughout their life (Thomas, 1923, p. 234). This author emphasizes that human behaviour is "related to its definition of the situation," which translates into a nodal point for the study of social sciences (Thomas, 1923, p. 234); (Thomas, 1928, p. 572). Robert Merton expanded this concept and coined the term "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy." Merton (1949) states that such prophecy arises from beliefs, often imposed by dominant groups, that can be both true and false but that find congruence with expectations (p. 507). According to Merton, these phenomena have profound social implications, from prejudices and discriminations to the very structuring of society (Merton, 1949, p. 512).

Merton delves into what he calls "social alchemy" and what Estanislao Zuleta would define as "non-logical reciprocity" (Zuleta, 1980, p. 17). This is a kind of anti-logic that justifies our actions and judges those of others, and according to Merton, underlies phenomena such as

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racism, discrimination, and segregation. Ávila Fuenmayor (2006) and Foucault (2001) delve into the role that institutions and power play in perpetuating these prophecies. Ávila Fuenmayor argues that political power maintains a "silent war" embedded in the fabric of institutions (p. 223), while Foucault emphasizes how power and history are intertwined in a discourse that reinforces order and inequalities (p. 70). Ruiz (2011) and Cuenca (2016) explore how the educational system, instead of acting as an equalizer, often reinforces social inequalities. Ruiz points out how factors such as the environment and social origin can be determinants of success or failure, while Cuenca warns that quality education remains a privilege, perpetuating the cycle of inequality. This work argues that understanding the dynamics of the self-fulfilling prophecy is crucial for educators and society at large. Abandoning the prophecy requires a profound questioning of the original assumptions and a transformation in the institutions that make up society (Merton, 1949, p. 520). In this sense, a gradual reformulation of educational practices, oriented towards social mobility and the formation of autonomous individuals aware of their role as agents of social change, is required.

Pygmalion effect in education and other contexts

The notion that a person's expectations and beliefs can influence the behaviour and performance of another is not new and has its roots in ancient human worldviews. However, in the educational field, this concept has gained relatively recent relevance. The phenomenon known as the "Pygmalion Effect" was formally introduced by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson in their work "Pygmalion in the Classroom" (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). In their study, the authors demonstrated that teachers' expectations regarding their students could significantly influence the latter's academic performance and behaviour. The work of Rosenthal and Jacobson opened a new path of research, corroborating that the educator's beliefs could be a determining factor in the academic development of students (Barnett, 2018); (Buryanek, 2010); (Friedrich et al., 2015); (Gentrup & Rjosk, 2018); (Guidera, 2014); (Jahan & Mehrafzoon, 2019); (Niari et al., 2016); (Rubie-Davies & Peterson, 2016). Interestingly, the Pygmalion effect phenomenon has been observed beyond the educational context. Research has indicated that positive expectations can also influence industrial, commercial, and military organisations (Dvir et al., 1995); (Eden, 1992); (Karakowsky et al., 2012). This impact is especially manifested in the development of skills such as self-efficacy, improving the disposition for tasks and their resolution.

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Alonso (2020) and Rowe & O'Brien (2002) introduce the concept of the "Golem Effect," referring to how low expectations or negative beliefs can result in a harmful or restrictive effect on the performance of individuals. On the other hand, the "Galatea Effect," studied by Termes López (2017), focuses on how positive expectations can have a favourable impact on performance and on the individual's self-efficacy. Various studies have expanded these concepts. Feldman and Prohaska (1979) focus on how students' expectations of their teachers affect the classroom environment, while Vorauer and Miller (1997) examine the individual's awareness of how external expectations affect their behaviour. Haimerl & Fries (2010) and Araneda Quiroz (2016) explore how expectations can have an impact on technology-mediated learning and on the role of parents in children's academic performance, respectively.

It is important to note that although the original research by Rosenthal and Jacobson established a fundamental framework, subsequent studies have identified limitations and attempted to fill the gaps in understanding the topic (Jussim et al., 2009). Despite these criticisms, the concept of the Pygmalion Effect and its variants continue to be crucial theoretical tools for understanding the influence of expectations in various contexts. While the Pygmalion Effect has been established as a specific way to understand the self-fulfilling prophecy in education and psychology, its application and implications extend far beyond, offering an invaluable perspective for understanding the dynamics of power, expectations, and performance in a variety of scenarios.

Judgements, prejudices, and self-fulfilling prophecies in the educational field

The phenomenon of prejudice is defined as a preconceived opinion about something or someone that is generally based on insufficient or erroneous information. Ruiz Rodríguez (2012) articulates this concept in more detail: "A prior judgement, a verdict issued prematurely regarding something or someone who is poorly known, with little foundation and generally with an unfavourable character. If stereotypes are overly simplified prior beliefs, prejudices are negative attitudes often directed towards the members of a group that is usually minority, and which unfortunately easily result in some form of discrimination projected onto that group" (Ruiz Rodríguez, 2012, p. 118).

In the same context, Kahneman (2012) argues that humans frequently establish judgements based on unconscious intuitions, which can lead to what he calls "cognitive illusion" (Kahneman, 2012, p. 29). This phenomenon is particularly relevant in the educational

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field, where prejudices and value judgements influenced by intuition can lead to the stigmatization of certain groups and, in the long term, transform into cultural beliefs. Kahneman (2011) also addresses heuristics or intuitive statistics as a process by which people make use of cognitive shortcuts based on experience to reach conclusions. However, the author warns that recourse to heuristics can result in cognitive biases and, therefore, erroneous judgements (Kahneman, 2011, p. 15).

Jussim et al. (2009) and Merton (1949) present models on the self-fulfilling prophecy that coincide in fundamental structural elements. These models suggest that erroneous expectations, often derived from prejudices and stereotypes, can lead to behaviours that, paradoxically, validate those same erroneous expectations. In the educational context, teachers develop expectations that affect their way of interacting with students, which in turn leads students to behave in ways that confirm such expectations (Jussim, Robustelli, & Cain, 2009); (Merton, 1949, p. 557). According to Nussbaum (2012), these self-fulfilling prophecies can perpetuate systems of inequality and discrimination. This occurs when educational institutions and their communities reinforce stereotypes and prejudices that negatively impact students' beliefs about themselves and their potential. In this respect, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) also observed how educators' expectations could become a "self-fulfilling prophecy" in the school context (p. 20).

The phenomenon of the self-fulfilling prophecy is multidimensional and involves various cognitive and social factors interacting in the educational field. It is crucial to be aware of these mechanisms and their implications, as understanding and acknowledging these processes can be the first step towards mitigating their harmful effects. Taking into account these theoretical elements can help researchers and educators develop more effective strategies to combat prejudices and erroneous expectations, thereby contributing to a more equitable and fair education. Terminological differences among researchers may cause confusion, but understanding the phenomenon in question is more crucial than the specific term used to describe it. However, it is essential for researchers to be aware of these differences to avoid misunderstandings.

Self-efficacy: concepts, classifications, and scope

The notion of self-efficacy is rooted in social cognitive theory (SCT) developed by Albert Bandura. This theory emphasizes the individual's agency in learning, that is, their capacity to control and direct their own behavior. Bandura (1997), as cited by Schunk (2012),

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defines self-efficacy as "personal beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform actions at certain levels" (p. 146). These beliefs act as a sort of "internal barometer," where individuals continuously assess their abilities and how they can turn them into effective actions (Izquierdo et al., 2008). The concept of "agency" is crucial in the context of self-efficacy. Salanova (2004) and Bandura (2004) distinguish between "individual agency" and "proxy agency." In the former, individuals have direct control over the circumstances affecting their lives, while in the latter, this control is exercised indirectly through external factors.

The academic field is an important arena to assess self-efficacy. Known as ASE, it relates to a student's confidence in their ability to carry out specific academic tasks. In a broader sense, general self-efficacy (GSE) encompasses an individual's perception of their ability to perform a variety of tasks in different contexts. Bandura (1986) proposes the concept of "reciprocal determinism" to explain how personal, environmental, and behavioral factors interact and influence each other. According to Olaz (2001), the interpretation people make of the outcomes of their behavior affects their future thoughts, emotions, and actions (p. 159). Schunk (2012) argues that self-efficacy is formed and reinforced through two types of learning: active and observational. Active learning implies that the individual learns from the consequences of their actions, while observational learning occurs by watching and emulating others (p. 121).

Self-efficacy, whether academic or general, is nurtured by a variety of factors including individual agency, active and observational learning, and reciprocal determinism. This complex construct not only influences how individuals approach specific tasks but also affects their overall well-being and adaptation to different contexts. Self-regulation emerges as a crucial element in this system, as it allows individuals to evaluate and adjust their actions according to internal goals and expectations, instead of relying solely on external stimuli for motivation and direction (Schunk, 2012).

Self-regulation, motivation, and perceived self-efficacy

Self-regulation is a critical psychological mechanism for the development and maintenance of effective behaviors and attitudes in different contexts. According to Bandura (1986) and Pajares (1996), self-regulation stems from cognitive introspection, which enables individuals to analyze their own attitudes and actions regarding specific tasks or situations in general. This introspective process leads to self-efficacy beliefs that allow people to determine the level of effort, perseverance, and resilience they are willing to exert in a task or challenge (Pajares, 1996). Bandura (1986) also introduces the concept of reciprocal determinism, a theory

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that states that individuals are both products and producers of their environment. That is, a person's actions, beliefs, and behaviors can influence and be influenced by their surrounding environment. In this sense, "individuals are seen as products and producers of their own environments and their socio-cultural systems" (Pajares, 1996, p. 2). Zimmerman et al. (2005) and Schunk (2012) offer a more structured approach to self-regulation, dividing it into different phases. According to Zimmerman (1998, 2000) cited by Schunk (2012), these phases include a forethought phase where goals are set, a performance control phase to implement strategies and motivations, and a self-reflection phase to evaluate and adjust efforts made.

These authors also emphasize the importance of self-efficacy in the self-regulation process. Self-efficacy is related to individual beliefs about the capacity to execute tasks and achieve goals (Pajares & Schunk, 2001); (Olaz, 2001). According to Olaz (2001), these beliefs act as a "filter" between previous skills and future actions, playing a mediating role in self-regulation.

Bandura breaks with behaviorist theories and presents a paradigm focused on the individual's self-processes, allowing the learner to be an active agent in their environment (Pajares and Schunk, 2001). In this model, self-efficacy is perceived as a belief that empowers individuals to face challenges and make proactive decisions. Self-efficacy not only affects self-regulation but also serves as a significant predictor of goal achievement. According to Pajares (1996), self-efficacy can be assessed from a situational and microanalytic approach, allowing it to act as a motivating force impacting the amount of time and effort individuals are willing to invest in a task. Self-efficacy is particularly relevant in the educational context, as students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to exert more effort and be more persistent, especially when facing challenges (Schunk, 2012).

ASE and GSE

ASE has become a specific area within the broader construct of self-efficacy (Gore, 2006). Frank Pajares & Dale (2001) argue that ASE should be measured with specific scales to avoid biases. Additionally, ASE has a strong predictive potential in academic performance and is influenced by the same four sources described by Bandura (Salanova, 2004; Zajacova et al., 2005). In the literature, various scales are presented to measure ASE (Gore, 2006). These scales range from those specific to certain subjects, such as mathematics (Barry J; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990), to more general ones that assess confidence in tasks related to university education (Solberg et al., 1994). However, there are conditions that can limit the effectiveness of self-efficacy, such as lack of motivation or social limitations (Blanco-Vega, 2010). Academic

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Self-Efficacy is a crucial construct that influences the self-regulation of learning, the choice of effective strategies, and persistence in the face of challenges, playing a vital role in an individual's academic performance.

However, despite the debate in the literature about the viability of a general self-efficacy construct (Bandura, Pajares & Schunk, do not agree with the idea), GSE has been developed to address human behaviors and experiences across a diverse range of contexts (Schwarzer, R.,; Warner, 2013). According to Sanjuán et al. (2000), GSE is defined as "the stable belief that an individual has about their ability to adequately handle a wide range of everyday life stressors" (p. 510). Schwarzer and Warner (2013) have indicated that GSE is useful in scenarios such as health behavior, chronic diseases, parenting tasks, and adolescents' adaptability to traumatic experiences. Wallston, Smith; Dobbins (1987), cited by Schwarzer, R; Warner (2013), suggest that experiences of failure or success in various areas of life can be generalized into a perception of capability to face "life in general."

Sherer & Maddux (1982) maintain that AEG beliefs or expectations can be influenced both by past experiences and by the attribution of success to chance or ability. Imam (2007) adds that AEG is reinforced through the accumulation of successes, persistence, verbal persuasion and emotional states. The AEG measurement scales have contributed to its consolidation as a useful construct (Chen et al., 2001). These scales, such as that of Schwarzer, Bäbler, et al. (1997) and that of Sherer & Maddux (1982), have been adapted for use in different populations and contexts, including Spanish speakers (Brenlla et al., 2010); (Cid et al., 2010); (Navarro et al., 2017). The academic field offers an ongoing debate between specific and general self-efficacies. Both types of self-efficacy share similar elements and are reinforced from the same sources (Salanova, 2004); (Sherer & Maddux, 1982); (Chen et al., 2001); (Eden, 1988). Research demonstrates a positive relationship between AEG and various motivational traits, such as need for achievement and conscientiousness (Chen et al., 2001). In the educational context, academic self-efficacy (AA) emerges as a specific form of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997); (Barca et al., 2012); (Escate Lay, 2015). GSE not only serves as a robust indicator of behavior and performance across various domains but is also closely related to other psychological and motivational constructs. Nonetheless, the construct continues to be a subject of debate and ongoing research.

Self-efficacy and the capability approach in human development

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Nussbaum (2012), in her proposal for the Capabilities Approach, distinguishes between "internal capabilities" and "combined capabilities". The former refers to aptitudes and skills developed through education and interaction with the social environment, whilst the latter involves the integration of these attributes with the social and political conditions in which an individual lives (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 41); (Gómez León, 2016). Essentially, Nussbaum's theory of capabilities (2012) suggests that individuals and their groups should be able to access a quality of life, or a life worth living, based on achieving a minimum threshold of capabilities that the family and social institutions ought to provide to citizens.

Education is crucial for the development of these capabilities. According to Boni Aristizábal et al. (2010), the objective of education and social institutions should be to enhance individuals' actual freedom (Boni Aristizábal et al., 2010, p.127). Nussbaum (2012) also stresses that it is the responsibility of society to foster and support internal capabilities, achievable through educational systems and institutional resources aligned with these needs. The development of capabilities not only contributes to individual freedom but also bolsters self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be understood as the belief in one's own capacity to execute tasks and achieve goals, endowing an individual with the self-determination necessary to choose what is best for their life. Consequently, a person with a high level of self-efficacy would feel more capable of overcoming challenges and making decisions, consistent with Nussbaum's concept of "capability".

It is vital to acknowledge that individual freedoms and capabilities are not absolute; they are constrained by the freedoms of others and by the overall well-being of the community (Nussbaum, 2012). In other words, the quest for freedom and self-efficacy must be pursued with social and ethical responsibility. Self-efficacy is presented as a foundational capability within the framework of the capabilities approach. It aligns with the arguments of Sen and Nussbaum by viewing individuals not merely as passive recipients but as active agents of change, capable of enhancing their own well-being and that of society. Therefore, Nussbaum's theory of capabilities (2012), in this research, is posited as a theoretical bridge that enables the examination of the self-fulfilling prophecy as an absence of capabilities or opportunities, which precludes the achievement of human dignity within the context of naturalised inequalities. From this perspective, self-efficacy is viewed as a core capability that facilitates access not only to new capabilities and opportunities but also to improved living conditions.

Epistemological orientation

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This study was situated in the constructivist paradigm, rooted in the theories of Guba and Lincoln (2002), which consider knowledge as a social and intersubjective construction. Given our commitment to constructivism, we adopted a qualitative methodological approach that comprises hermeneutic, contextual and holistic dimensions. Therefore, at the ontological level, we see reality as a multiple and subjective construction. Epistemologically, a dialectical interaction was recognized between the researcher and the phenomenon studied, mediated by language. Ethically, we are aware of the role of our perceptions and prejudices in the construction of knowledge. Methodologically, we adopt a hermeneutic and dialectical approach, favoring a constant dialogue between theory and practice.

Study type: multiple educational case study in a vulnerable context

We chose a multiple educational case study, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the context. The characteristics are as follows:

- Research Context: Focused on graduates from three educational institutions in commune 8 in Neiva, a population deeply influenced by its socioeconomic environment.
- Theoretical Foundation: Based on the works of renowned theorists such as Yin (2008), Stake (1995), and Merriam (2009), the study adopts a constructivist approach, seeking to understand the experiences and interpretations of the participants.
- Flexible and Dynamic Design: Methodological adaptations were made according to emerging needs, ensuring scientific rigour.
- Multiple Case Design: Following experts like Ragin and Yin, we examined various instances of the phenomenon under study: the profile of a professional from a vulnerable sector.

The choice of this design is justified by its coherence with the constructivist epistemological orientation of the study. Moreover, it offers analytical depth by allowing extensive triangulation of data, in line with the objectives of our research.

Unit of analysis: details and justifications

The study subjects were college graduates who are the first generation in their families to achieve a higher educational level. These individuals also present risk factors for academic dropout, according to studies by Ishitani (2003) and Pascarella (2006). The focus is on investigating how these professionals have overcome negative expectations and developed their

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self-efficacy to face challenges in the social and academic field, thus defeating the self-fulfilling prophecy that they were marked to follow by their environments.

The participants were graduates of three specific official educational institutions in commune 8 of the city of Neiva: IPC Andrés Rosa, Jairo Morera and Juan de Cabrera, corresponding to the academic years 2000-2011. Purposive sampling, complemented by the snowball technique, was used to select two cases per institution. The cases were selected considering a variety of variables, such as current occupation, residence during secondary education, academic average, socioeconomic level, among others. Equal gender representation was included, as previous literature suggests minimal differences in self-efficacy between men and women. The choice of this unit of analysis allowed a rich and contextualized exploration of the phenomenon under study, offering perspectives from different socioeconomic, educational and gender angles. Focusing on the first generation of university students from commune 8 of Neiva offers a fertile field to investigate dynamics of self-improvement in vulnerable contexts.

Validation of instruments and data

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, several strategies were established:

- Data Triangulation: This technique involves cross-referencing information from different sources and methods for validation.
- Information Contrast: The coherence and truthfulness of the information gathered through interviews are contrasted with observations and documentary review.
- Peer and Expert Validation: Preliminary findings are reviewed by experts in the field, strengthening the study's rigour and precision.
- Investigative Reflexivity: Through a field diary, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is reflected upon, strengthening interpretative validity.
- Methodological Transparency: All collection and analysis procedures are documented in detail to allow replicability and a critical assessment.

Data analysis

Data analysis was approached from a hermeneutic approach, promoting the detailed construction of emerging categories and themes. In addition, an inductive analysis was applied to interpret and give meaning to the raw data where iteration or co-occurrence will allow the

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discovery of patterns and relationships. Following the stages proposed in the analysis of multiple cases, a detailed study of each case will be carried out (intra-analysis) and they will subsequently be compared and contrasted between them (cross-case analysis). For data coding, procedures inspired by Grounded Theory have been adopted, especially those proposed by Strauss & Corbin (2002). This coding will follow three levels: open, axial and some elements of selective coding such as the use of memos and diagrams, with the aim of breaking down, relating and synthesizing the data respectively. Finally, all emerging categories and subcategories will be aligned with the theoretical framework and objectives of the study, ensuring a rich and contextualized interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation.

Results - self-efficacy: between persistence, solidarity, and self-motivation

GSE refers to an individual's confidence in their abilities to handle a wide range of tasks in various settings. Influential experiences from different contexts throughout life play a crucial role in their development, serving as a basis for people to cope with various situations and tasks. The interviewees developed a set of skills that contributed to the formation of perceived self-efficacy, influencing their actions and decisions towards the future.

Two main elements were found to define the actions and decisions of the participants: their personal beliefs and attitudes, which include an evaluation of their actions in the present and in the past, and their future expectations. Personal beliefs and attitudes comprise four elements: capabilities and strengths, which are recognized but not yet applied, and disabilities and weaknesses, which outline actions and decisions that are most challenging or not carried out. These elements are crucial for individuals to define their life goals and the actions to take.

The study focuses on six professionals from educational institutions in commune 8, highlighting the elements that allowed them to transform their conditions of poverty and vulnerability. Persistence, improvement, and discipline emerged as self-efficacious capabilities rooted in early family life and schooling, and evolved into complex skills over time. These capabilities, along with a strong mental fortitude to not give up, allowed them to turn negative moments into positive ones and persist in achieving their goals. However, the graduates also developed collective contributions, with a constant interest in helping others, which, although not recognized as a capacity per se, is reflected in their actions and decisions. Solidarity emerged as a second capacity, exemplifying the role of graduates as role models for their peers and their families.

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Perceived weaknesses and disabilities highlighted the need to overcome or exit negative family and neighborhood contexts that generate vulnerabilities. Three factors that complicate decision-making and the execution of actions were identified: family origin and relationships, interactions with others (peers, family, teachers) and the consequences of the decisions made. Despite academic achievements, self-efficacy is not reflected in singular successes, but rather evolves with new goals and situations, as individuals master and control unforeseen life events and are willing to adapt behaviors to address discomforts. Self-efficacy encompasses overcoming personal and collective challenges, transforming adverse experiences into sources of motivation, and achieving goals that go beyond individual achievements to include improving the well-being of one's community.

Future expectations: self-regulation and motivation as pathways to achieving goals

Self-regulation, defined by Zimmerman & Kitsantas (2005) as self-generated actions, feelings, and thoughts aimed at achieving learning goals, is a key driver in the development of perceived self-efficacy. Motivation, related to outcome-focused expectations and goal perseverance, influences performance through internal confidence and external influences.

The participants' journey toward self-efficacy began with the aim of escaping their challenging social and familial contexts, aspiring for personal and economic growth. This journey underscored the importance of not only changing their immediate environment, marked by crime and violence, but also transforming familial patterns of physical and psychological violence. Despite these individual goals, the benefits envisioned were collective, aiming to improve not just their lives but also those of their family members economically and motivationally.

Self-regulation emerged as a complex interplay of social, familial, and individual challenges. Socially, participants navigated relationships, distinguishing between positive and negative influences. Familiarly, overcoming economic hardships necessitated early work experiences or the pursuit of higher education as a means to better economic conditions and escape from troubled homes. Individually, participants faced insecurities and financial constraints, fostering resilience and perseverance to achieve their academic and professional goals.

Motivation played a crucial role in driving these efforts, with participants drawing inspiration from the desire to avoid replicating their parents' hardships and to improve their community's well-being. This motivation was largely self-derived, though external influences, such as verbal persuasion and vicarious learning, also played a part. The pursuit of higher

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education or military service emerged as pathways to achieving their goals, underscored by a determination to overcome barriers and adapt to new circumstances.

The participants' stories highlight self-regulation, resilience, and the transformative power of motivation in navigating life's challenges. These narratives underscore the importance of self-efficacy beliefs in persevering through adversity and achieving significant personal and collective goals, demonstrating the participants' ability to reshape their futures and break the cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies within their environments.

Between general self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy: a combination of different capacities

The analysis of GSE was complemented by examining ASE, which relates to a student's process of identifying their capabilities and actualizing them in educational contexts. This exploration revealed three learning types developed by the interviewees: learning from consequences, observational learning, and learning from performance.

• Learning from Consequences: As per Schunk (2012), the outcomes of actions serve as a source of information and motivation, guiding learners to adjust their strategies to achieve their goals. This learning process encompasses not just reactions to success or failure but also a reflective cognition about the consequences of one’s actions and those of others, leading to a motivational drive for improvement.

• Observational Learning and Learning from Performance: Observational learning involves the learner considering the actions, experiences, or realities of others, both positive and negative, as a guide for their own decisions and actions. On the other hand, learning from performance is about gaining new knowledge through action, which can be applied in various settings, enhancing self-efficacy through direct experience of success and failure.

• Consequences of Learning: The participants' learning from consequences emerged from decisions made to achieve their goals, particularly in the context of university entrance, academic life, and professional practice. These experiences included reflections on their academic weaknesses, as revealed by state examination results and economic conditions, leading to adaptations or reconfigurations to meet their objectives.

About Experiences Leading to Learning:

• Pre-University Experiences: Before entering university, the interviewees faced multiple positive and negative experiences, shaping their decision to overcome poverty and conflicts. This led them to view university education as a stepping stone to achieve their personal goals.

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• University Admission Process: The process itself introduced the participants to new technical knowledge, such as handling technological tools and navigating administrative requirements, highlighting the gap between their experiences and the demands of higher education due to economic limitations and technological accessibility.

• Post-Secondary Education: After high school, participants engaged in different preparatory activities, including technical courses and military service, or directly entered the workforce. These experiences, marked by resilience and autonomy, prepared them for university life.

• University Education: Joining unanticipated university courses led to an adjustment process, where participants learned to appreciate their chosen fields, enhancing their self-esteem and identity.

• Professional Practice: Entering the professional world consolidated their acceptance and passion for their careers, despite initial misgivings, teaching them about the realities of job hunting, including dealing with discrimination and the need for further education.

After detailing learning from consequences, the focus shifts to observational learning, where lessons are drawn from observing and listening to life models. This vicarious learning involves assimilating behaviors through the observation of models, which can be live or symbolic, including virtual (electronic models like TV, social media) and printed models (books, magazines). Observational learning, as Bandura (1994) suggests, is an indirect source of self-efficacy but equally effective.

Analysis of observational learning highlighted by participants distinguishes between positive and negative models, and the actions they subsequently undertook. Initially, family models provided primarily negative learnings; parents were seen as individuals who failed in life due to a lack of education and early parenthood, limiting their job options and life perspectives. This aligns with research indicating parental education and economic levels significantly impact children's future visions and self-efficacy. Such vicarious models made participants aware of what they wished to avoid in their lives, suggesting that negative experiences can also motivate a break from potential futures.

Parents, in some cases, also influenced through verbal persuasion, encouraging their children to "be someone in life" to avoid repeating their mistakes. This influence, according to Bandura, is crucial for enhancing confidence in abilities and perceived self-efficacy, motivating greater effort and persistence towards success. Despite these encouragements, there was a general low expectation for higher education among parents, suggesting a cycle of "learned hopelessness" regarding educational aspirations.

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Observational learnings also came from siblings, with some participants inspired by their brothers' or sisters' professional paths as positive role models. In contrast, negative behaviors observed in schoolmates or neighbors, such as involvement in delinquency or teenage pregnancy, prompted participants to dissociate from such individuals, adopting prosocial behaviors and solidifying a desire for a different life path. This blend of observational learning from both family and external contexts influenced participants' decisions and behaviors, demonstrating the complex interplay of negative and positive models in shaping aspirations and self-efficacy beliefs.

Teachers and the self-fulfilling prophecy: a journey through supportive experiences

This section delves into the positive influence of teachers on participants, noting a distinction between group and individual interactions. Group-wise, teachers engaged in interpersonal and academic interactions, including motivational talks on overcoming poverty and violence in their community, promoting the value of education for long-term benefits, and encouraging university aspirations. Such interactions, though less common, left a lasting impression on participants, indicating teachers' efforts to transcend mere academic duties.

Individually, teachers connected with students through personal advice, gifts, or recognitions for academic achievement or financial need, and encouragement towards higher education. This personal touch not only bolstered students' self-efficacy but also their self-esteem and personal agency. The narrative includes examples like Atenea's religion teacher who inspired students to aim beyond their socioeconomic constraints, and Hamilton's teachers who pushed for academic perseverance. Moreover, teachers' verbal encouragement played a crucial role in shaping students' academic and personal development. Positive expectations from teachers enhanced students' academic performance and future outlook, aligning with research indicating the powerful impact of positive teacher-student communication on self-efficacy (Haimerl; Fries, 2010; Riley, 2009).

Gifts or recognitions from teachers, based on academic performance or need, served as extrinsic motivation, reinforcing students' commitment to their educational journey. Such gestures, from new shoes to acknowledgments of academic excellence, underscored the supportive role teachers played in students' lives, countering the negative self-perceptions instilled by their challenging environments. Lastly, teacher support extended to guiding students towards university education and career choices, further cementing the significant role

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teachers play in fostering students' self-efficacy and ambition, against the backdrop of community and familial challenges.

Teacher abuse of power: negative teacher-student interactions

This section delves into the negative experiences between teachers and participants, contrasting the instances where teachers, through their actions or words, projected negative prophecies towards their students. These interactions, which could have diminished the students' self-efficacy, instead became a source of strength for the interviewed participants, setting them apart from many of their peers who ended up fulfilling such negative teacher projections. Key insights include:

• Negative Prophecies by Teachers: Teachers projected negative outcomes through discouraging phrases, focusing on students' weaknesses or societal prejudices rather than their strengths. This imbalance of power placed students in an inferior position, aligning with research suggesting that stigmatizing or underestimating students leads to adverse self-perceptions and academic progress (Barnett, 2018); (Nolkemper et al., 2019); (Willinghanm, 2014). Examples include teachers telling students they were incapable of achieving anything significant or warning them to stay alert to avoid academic failure, fostering an environment of fear rather than encouragement.

• Limiting Academic Futures: Some teachers verbally discouraged students from striving beyond high school, suggesting their socio-economic backgrounds would ultimately define their futures. This demotivation not only limited students' aspirations but also contributed to a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement (Reynolds, 2007).

• Lack of Empathy: Teachers often showed little empathy or concern for students struggling academically, failing to consider the complex familial and social contexts affecting their performance. This approach reduced students' worth to mere academic grades, overlooking their individual needs and challenges (Barnett, 2018); (Francis et al., 2017).

• Absenteeism and Disengagement: Teacher absenteeism and lack of engagement in the educational process were noted as contributing to a deficient learning environment (Nolkemper et al., 2019). This absence, while not directly projecting negative prophecies, highlighted systemic flaws in public education and its impact on student learning opportunities.

• Physical Violence: Instances of physical violence used by teachers as disciplinary measures were reported, instilling fear in students and hindering their ability to learn and develop skills in certain subjects.

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• Discrimination and Favoritism: Discrimination based on gender, appearance, and other biases was reported, with teachers showing preferential treatment to certain students, exacerbating feelings of inadequacy among others.

• Sexual Harassment: Some university teachers were accused of leveraging their grading power to coerce female students into sexual relationships, illustrating a severe abuse of power and trust.

• Lack of Teacher Support: Stories of teacher indifference to students' academic growth and well-being underscored a broader issue of educational neglect, where students' potential was stifled rather than nurtured.

These negative experiences with teachers underscore the challenges students face in environments where educators fail to support and uplift them. Despite these obstacles, the participants' stories also reveal resilience and the ability to turn negative prophecies into motivators for personal and academic success.

Discussion - building self-efficacy among two groups: those experiencing neglect and abuse, and those with family support

Among the six participants, five acknowledge acquiring values and virtues at home, alongside a precarious understanding of the role of academic education, shaped by their parents' belief in "getting ahead and becoming someone in life." This belief was often communicated through verbal persuasion, as noted by Hamilton's parents' constant urging to "study, study," or Macarena's parents' advice to "study and not end up like me, living always like your mum," and Alex's parents' encouragement to "study to get a good job." In contrast, Angela, despite experiencing neglect and abuse, received no familial encouragement for her academic pursuits but learned to fulfill her duties at home due to her mother's harsh treatment.

This study reveals a crucial link between motivation and self-efficacy developed by the participants, shaped significantly by their primary socialization experiences. These experiences were pivotal in developing early responsibilities, discipline, solidarity, resilience, and persistence both in GSE and academically. Self-efficacy and its consolidation emerge not from individual accomplishments but as a product of various life experiences, decisions, and challenges faced by the participants.

The group that experienced mistreatment showcased remarkable mental strength and early professional aspirations. Hamilton learned to transform negativity into positivity from a young age; Angela set a goal to attend university at five years old; Simon was steered towards

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higher education by teachers who shielded him from bad influences. These adversities later became sources of self-efficacy, enabling the participants to develop capabilities to overcome or permanently escape such vulnerabilities, aligning with Nussbaum's (2012) concept of leading a full and dignified life.

Both groups navigated a neighborhood environment fraught with gang violence and drug use, threatening to perpetuate self-fulfilling prophecies of failure and incapacity. Yet, all participants adopted protective measures, ranging from adhering to home-imposed rules to engaging in group studies with like-minded peers, underscoring the importance of familial values and the aspiration to "get ahead" and "become someone in life" as foundational to their resilience and academic success.

Despite facing adversities, including discriminatory and demotivating educational environments, the participants' stories highlight a collective journey of overcoming challenges through self-reflection, solid family values, and a determined pursuit of academic and professional goals. This journey underscores the intricate interplay between self-efficacy, resilience, and the power of positive personal and familial aspirations in navigating and transforming adverse circumstances into stepping stones for success.

Bridging general self-efficacy and the capability approach

This discussion explores whether possessing GSE and academic self-efficacy facilitated the development of internal and combined capabilities as proposed by Nussbaum, from two perspectives: institutional influence and personal experiences of the participants.

Nussbaum champions education as a cornerstone for individual and citizenry development, arguing that educational institutions, as state representatives, should nurture capabilities based on humanistic values. This involves recognizing individual differences, fostering autonomy, and equipping students with the freedom to make informed choices. However, this ideal is achievable only if the education system acknowledges the vulnerability and unfinished nature of human beings, emphasizing social interdependence, reciprocity, and cooperation.

The findings suggest that the educational institutions under study failed to fulfil their societal role by not providing the necessary opportunities for participants to develop essential life skills. Nussbaum (2012) identifies two critical capabilities: practical reason and affiliation. Practical reason, the ability to discern right from wrong and plan one's life, was not adequately nurtured, as teacher expectations often reinforced a narrative of incapability and conformity to

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the limitations of the participants' socio-economic backgrounds. This led to a control-oriented and indifferent pedagogical approach that stifled autonomy and decision-making freedom.

Affiliation, the capacity for empathy and understanding others, was also lacking in the educational experiences recounted by the participants. Educational policies and school curricula did not promote an environment conducive to human growth, failing to cultivate human dignity and inclusivity principles. Instead of fostering democratic spaces and dialogue to celebrate diversity, schools and teachers did not enhance the pillars of human dignity.

Educational institutions should empower students to transition from heteronomy to autonomy by encouraging the development of imagination and reasoning. This involves providing a holistic education that goes beyond academics to include aesthetic appreciation, thereby ensuring students' dignity, freedom, and self-expression are respected and valued. However, these institutions often mirrored the prejudices of the surrounding community, perpetuating a narrative of despair and lack of future prospects for students. This environment, marked by substance abuse, violence, and fear, hindered the physical integrity and free movement of young people, particularly affecting those from marginalized gender and sexual orientations.

Despite these challenges, the solidarity and teamwork displayed by the participants in study groups played a crucial role in overcoming adversity. These groups provided emotional support and security, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect that was absent in formal educational settings. This collaborative spirit helped develop other capabilities, such as emotional health and physical integrity, offering a protective barrier against the insecurity of their environment.

Gender and sexual orientation emerged as significant factors in the participants' experiences of abuse and discrimination. Women and LGBTQ+ individuals faced greater vulnerabilities, including early pregnancy, sexual harassment, and physical appearance discrimination. These narratives underscore the societal pressures and cultural norms that limit individuals' freedom and autonomy, challenging their ability to live dignified lives.

The study highlights the importance of educational and social policies that prioritize humanistic values and the development of capabilities. By fostering an environment that respects individual differences and promotes autonomy, educational institutions can empower students to pursue fulfilling lives, transcending the constraints of their socio-economic backgrounds. This approach aligns with Nussbaum's vision of a humanistic education that equips citizens with the tools to achieve personal well-being and contribute meaningfully to society.

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Conclusion

This study aimed to understand GSE and ASE capabilities to counteract self-fulfilling prophecies. For this purpose, it was proposed to explore the influence of self-fulfilling prophecy expectations within socio-familial and educational environments on the development of EA capabilities in the participants. Likewise, it was allowed to interpret the GSE and ASE capabilities that graduates of official educational institutions have in Commune 8, vulnerable sector of Neiva, cohort 2000-2011. Key findings include:

1. Breaking the self-fulfilling prophecy: Commune 8 graduates with self-efficacious capabilities were able to challenge the self-fulfilling prophecy despite what their environment meant. They developed personal agency and positive expectations, fostering social coping skills and academic problem-solving skills. This transformation changed their life trajectories from a path of limited opportunity to one of dignity and success, demonstrating the critical role of self-efficacy in academic and social learning, driven by environmental models and the verbal persuasion of teachers, peers, and parents.

2. The influence of the socioeconomic environment: Regardless of social strata or economic conditions, all individuals can develop SEL and GSE expectations. This study shows that young people from vulnerable sectors can be self-efficacious, challenging the notion that expectations of success are conditioned by social conditions. By highlighting the compatibility of GSE with Nussbaum's internal capabilities, she suggests that self-efficacy fosters practical reasoning, emotional control, and social engagement, crucial for building a democratic society respectful of differences.

3. Impact of teachers and self-fulfilling prophecy: Teachers assigned to disadvantaged areas, without significant academic or professional background, may inadvertently succumb to self-fulfilling prophecies. This study reveals the mobbing experiences faced by the interviewees, underlining the importance of raising teacher awareness to break negative cycles and promote positive socialization processes in schools. It highlights the role of teachers in promoting students' life projects through a democratic relationship based on diversity and respect.

4. Methodological approach: The use of a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative approach allowed the exploration of indirect and resilient experiences, revealing knowledge unattainable through quantitative methods. This approach highlighted the importance of adverse vicarious experiences in shaping participants' resilience and their refusal to replicate

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adverse patterns observed in their community, aligning with Nussbaum's concept of imagining a dignified life.

5. Develop self-efficacy: Despite the challenging environment of Comuna 8, participants developed self-efficacy through adversity, leading to resilience, discipline, solidarity, and commitment to changing their life circumstances. Academic self-efficacy was shaped in the school context, albeit within a system that was not conducive to high achievement, illustrating the importance of basic cognitive efforts and social skills in overcoming educational barriers.

6. Recommendations for educational improvement: Based on the findings, recommendations are made for teachers and administrators in Comuna 8 schools to promote positive expectations and encourage the development of GSE and ASE. This includes building life projects that open the possibility of higher education and social mobility, thus allowing students and their families to imagine and achieve a life of freedom and dignity.

This study underscores the transformative power of self-efficacy in overcoming socioeconomic and educational challenges, advocating for educational practice that empowers students to transcend their circumstances and reach their full potential.

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Enviado em: 30/06/2025.
Aceito em: 01/12/2025.
Publicado em: 31/12/2025.

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