Be you a superhero: Paths for creating a psycho-pedagogical intervention to promote resilience in school environments

Sé un superhéroe: vías para crear una intervención psicopedagógica que promueva la resiliencia en el entorno escolar | Seja você um super-herói - caminhos para a criação de uma intervenção psicopedagógica para promover a resiliência em ambientes escolares

GELSON VANDERLEI WESCHENFELDER · gellfilo@gmail.com
PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL · BRASIL

iD https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6571-8027

ALEXANDRE ANSELMO GUILHERME · alexandre.guilherme@pucrs.br
PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL · BRASIL

iD https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4578-1894

Abstract:

Since the emergence of comic books, storylines with superheroes have focused on community spirit, mutual trust, strength, courage, and resilience, inspiring themes for the fields of Education. However, little is known about the stage entitled pre-cover/pre-mask of the superheroes' lives. This stage indicates that most fictional characters have experienced risky situations prior to the empowerment stage. This study examined relationships between real-life adversities of psychosocially disadvantaged children and the adversities of the fictional lives of superhero

characters, in their Pre-Cover/Pre-Mask phases. This still unexplored resource presents potential to be developed in psychoeducational interventions and to subsidize public policies for the promotion of resilience and empowerment in this population. The findings support the potential for the development of psychoeducational intervention programs with superhero themes in educational settings.

Palavras-chave:

Resilience. Empowerment. Comics. Superheroes. Intervention Program.

Resumen:

Desde la aparición de los cómics, las historias con superhéroes se han centrado en el espíritu comunitario, la confianza mutua, la fuerza, el coraje y la resiliencia, temas inspiradores para los campos de la Educación. Sin embargo, poco se sabe sobre la etapa denominada pre-cubierta/pre-máscara de la vida de los superhéroes. Esta etapa indica que la mayoría de los personajes de ficción han experimentado situaciones de riesgo antes de la etapa de empoderamiento. Este estudio examinó las relaciones entre las adversidades de la vida real de los niños desfavorecidos psicosocialmente y las adversidades de la vida ficticia de los personajes de superhéroes, en sus fases Pre-cubierta/pre-máscara. Este recurso aún inexplorado presenta potencial para ser desarrollado en intervenciones psicoeducativas y para subsidiar políticas públicas de promoción de resiliencia y empoderamiento en esta población. Los hallazgos apoyan el potencial para el desarrollo de programas de intervención psicoeducativa con temas de superhéroes en ambientes educativos.

Palabras clave:

Resiliencia. Empoderamiento. Cómics. Superhéroes. Programa de Intervención.

Resumo:

Desde o surgimento da banda desenhada, as histórias de super-heróis têm-se centrado no espírito comunitário, na confiança mútua, na força, na coragem e na resiliência, temas inspiradores para as áreas da Educação. No entanto, pouco se sabe sobre a fase intitulada pré-cobertura/pré-máscara da vida dos super-heróis. Esta fase indica que a maioria das personagens fictícias passou por situações de risco antes da fase de capacitação. Este estudo examinou as relações entre as adversidades da vida real de crianças psicossocialmente desfavorecidas e as adversidades da vida ficcional de personagens de super-heróis, nas suas fases de Pré-Cobertura/Pré-Máscara. Esse recurso ainda inexplorado apresenta potencial para ser desenvolvido em intervenções psicoeducativas e subsidiar políticas públicas para a promoção da resiliência e do empoderamento dessa população. Os achados sustentam o potencial para o desenvolvimento de programas de intervenção psicoeducacional com temas de super-heróis em ambientes educacionais.

Palavras-Chaves:

Resiliência. Capacitação. Banda desenhada. Super-heróis. Programa de Intervenção.

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1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (Who, 2002), violence is a public health problem, since more than 1.5 million people around the world die each year as victims of some form of aggression, personal, social or structural. In Brazil, according to Unicef (2012) adolescents are the age group most exposed to violence and residents of less socially privileged communities are the most vulnerable to the actions of criminal groups, repression by security forces, and the absence of efficient public policies to support and protect populations living on the sidelines like a boat adrift. In this scenario, it is important to understand how to intervene before the effects of adversities on groups that suffer from the disregard for social inequalities. Brazil is living through times that make many people think: 'Only a superhero can save us from such difficult situations!!!!'. But most people are unaware that the super-empowered character has already been through

many misfortunes and that suffering has not discouraged him. In the wake of these reflections, this chapter aims to: Present superheroes as resources for promoting resilience in educational settings; Present the novelty of thinking about the pre-empowerment phase in the life of superheroes; Demonstrate interventions that use superheroes in their potential as a pedagogical resource and promoter of resilience, even less in the pre-empowerment or pre-empowerment phase; Present a positive intervention developed in a public school in southern Brazil that used the pre-empowerment phase as a guide for actions with results.

2. Theoretical basis

2.1. Positive Interventions in Education

There is a consensus on the responsibility of the school environment as an important promoter of the full development of children and adolescents alongside the family. However, it is in this same school context that numerous and frequent manifestations of aggressive behavior, conflicts, and expressions of intolerance are recorded (Abramovay, 2002; Portela; Dalbosco, 2016). The characteristics of these violences include bullying (Fernandes, 2016; Fernandes, at al, 2017), physical and verbal aggression among peers or against educators, depredations in the physical structure of places, drug use, carrying weapons, prejudice and discrimination, among others (Portella; Dalbosco, 2016).

It is undeniable the implication of the risks caused by these situations on the social health of young people and, above all, on the psychological constitution of these adolescents in development, such as: damage to social relationships; quality of life; impacts on emotional development; depression; post-traumatic disorders, among others (Portella; Dalbosco, 2016). Given this reality, one could affirm the need for much planning and implementation of protective interventions or "positive psychoeducational interventions". The goal to be sought by these interventions follows the principles of Positive Psychology and move towards provoking reflections that guide these young people to seek happiness and alleviate the symptoms of their experiences of suffering and pain (Seligman, et al., 2005). Moreover, these are actions that aim to promote resilience with transformations of the self and their social environment (Yunes, 2015) and consequent personal and social empowerment. According to Yunes, Silveira, Juliano, Pietro, and Garcia (2013), designing and carrying out a positive intervention proposes to act preventively, that is, at the stage when individuals, groups, and communities are still healthy and productive. Such interventions only become possible if their conductors start from a more optimistic view of human beings. This is a big challenge in today's media-driven world that survives on the "consumption" of headlines and reports that sell the evil and wicked side of some (un)human beings (Weschenfelder at al, 2020). As such, it makes perfect sense to create positive interventions in formal educational settings to generate actions aimed at promoting transformative learning and generating resilience from inspiring examples and good-treatment interactions (Weschenfelder et al, 2018).

2.2. It's neither a bird nor a plane: It's superheroes hovering in classrooms

The vast majority of people restrict superhero comic books (comics) to the entertainment of the general public, especially children and teenagers. Over the years, superheroes have transcended the comic book pages and found their way into movies, TV series and animation, games, literature, among others. According to William Irwin (2009), these characters are not as innocent as they seem, because they bring more than entertainment

to the reader. Such stories, presented in their plots, introduce and address in a vivid way some issues of paramount importance faced in the daily lives of "ordinary" people. These are issues related to overcoming adversity, building personal identity, elements of ethics, morality, justice, facing fears, situations of violence, among others (Weschenfelder, 2011a).

Few early childhood education professionals believe that superhero characters can be used as a pedagogical resource for motivation and inspiration in children's development. In addressing this topic in a recent article, researchers on the subject, Weschenfelder, Fradkin, and Yunes (2020) highlighted the work of Harris (2016). These authors highlighted the effectiveness of one of the strategies used by the American educator in her work in the classroom context, which is to enable children to wear costumes of the superadventures characters. With this simple movement of the children's symbolic world, some children have revealed feeling especially empowered, secure, confident, and with the courage and hopeful outlook of a superhero (Harris, 2016). Harris' work further suggests that school work with the feelings of compassion and caring concern underscored in various superhero stories, may be tools for educational professionals to use to predict and contain bullying initiatives. This is in line with Weschenfelder's (2021) arguments that superheroes model values of ethics and moral education. In this sense, superheroic characters have potential as educational resources and can make themselves present in classrooms (Weschenfelder, 2021) and in therapeutic settings.

But to what extent can the superhero character help in the pre-empowerment phase, prior to their superpowers, without capes and masks that hide their real identities? The superhero in the "Pre-Cloak /Pre-Mask"[1] phase is very much alive and shares his stories with many at-risk children. In an indexing of the adversities experienced by superheroes, a study (Fradkin, et al. 2016) observed that the vast majority of superhero characters have experienced or are experiencing some adversity, such as: orphanhood; abandonment; murdered family member; bullying; economic limitations; sexual abuse and violence among others. These stories of adversity in the Pre- Cloak /Pre-Mask phase of superheroes have the potential to promote the empowerment of children and youth from vulnerable groups (Fradkin et al, 2016). These groups can be easily identified in classrooms around the world, something that should be preventatively realized.

Superheroic characters are already present in the imagination of children and teenagers and are included in an interventional elaboration, having a great power of ludic identification and helping to find paths with a taste of empowerment. However, it should be noted that in a classroom setting, there is a fine line between being inspired by superheroes and having an educational professional as a tutor to promote an intervention using superheroes. Harris (2016) believes that superheroes can be a source of positive motivation and inspiration for children and adolescents. Therefore, in the classroom, superhero use has immense value for reasons stated by the author, which are: socialization, reciprocity, promoting resilience, community building, and child empowerment (Weschenfelder, 2017). In this sense, taking inspiration from superheroes can also be seen as a reCloaky program, in contrast, the proposed use of the comic book superhero figure among vulnerable populations of children and adolescents (Fradkin et al, 2016) would more accurately be described as rehabilitation.

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[1] The term "Pre-Coat/Pre-Mask" refers to such a period in the life of the fictional superhero character, before he puts on his uniform. This means that, like all individuals in real life, superheroes present difficult developmental moments in their fictional lives, during which they do not (yet) perform heroic roles (Fradkin, Weschenfelder, Yunes, 2016; Weschenfelder, et al, 2017).

2.3. Pilot Project: Creating Life Scripts focusing on the pre-superhero phase

As an experiment demonstrating the applicability of superheroes in the pre-superheroic phase, a pilot intervention was carried out in the classroom space. The experience sought to work with the self-esteem of Youth and Adult Education (YAE) students, generally at risk because of the relationship between age and schooling. It is known that with this public, there is a need for positive practices to encourage and motivate them to pursue successful goals. With these ideas in mind, an intervention with superheroes was carried out, in which the Pre-Cloak/Pre-Mask phase of the characters was the focus. The actions were organized so that after the presentation of the adversities experienced by the superheroes, the students were asked to write a script for the creation of a comic book. The story should contain social adversities, contain a turning point (Rutter, 1987), and end with a life transformation or a quest for these turning points and transformations.

During the intervention, students were instructed that the story could be their life story if they felt comfortable doing so (Weschenfelder, 2016). The exercise of this intervention resulted in the participants expressing that they became aware that in their lives there were turning points and positive transformations or the possibility of such. The reports evidenced that the participants felt good and said they were strengthened by seeing their stories of pain and struggle transformed into sequential (comics) art. Their stories were later drawn by a guest comic artist who volunteered to collaborate with the proposal.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Intervention Program "Be the Superhero of your own life

As seen previously, few interventions with the use of the image of superheroes are made in the educational field. The need to create an intervention program with this theme in the field of education is, therefore, a contemporary phenomenon, because it is a fact in the interest of children and teenagers to have the stories of these superhero characters as a form of entertainment. It is also proven by scientific studies that these characters go beyond entertainment, they encourage the reading habit and significantly increase student performance (Weschenfelder, 2011b). Through their plots they help readers adjust their personalities to the time and the world and fill the children's mind's need for stories and adventure (Carvalho, 2006), they are models of ethics (Weschenfelder, 2021; Weschenfelder, 2011a;) of a value system that works for human life (Campbell, 2012) and are the best current representation of what we can all become (Morrison, 2012).

3.2. The Program's methodology

The proposal of this Intervention followed the systematization of an education and family and parental support program that follows the experiential model (Martín et al, 2009) for conducting the activities that were systematized. Thus, to be consistent with the experiential model and methodology, this Intervention was not designed to bring established theories or information to those involved, but rather to provoke and develop reflections based on the fictional stories of risk and adversity of superheroes in the Pre-Cloak/Pre-Mask phase. The ludic character in the proposed activities (mainly in the idea that the Intervention participants would create characters) in the experiential model potentiated participation, because the experiential methodology enables a dialogue starting from the day to day of each person, from their pre-knowledge, from their beliefs, and from situations lived in their own context. Therefore, the experiential model can produce new knowledge and transformation (Martín et al, 2009) of themselves and their

contexts, which can be a framework for positive and healthy development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

An important concept from the perspective of healthy development is the concept of resilience and its promotion through the use of images of superheroes in their pre-cape phase (Fradkin et al, 2017). This dimension makes it possible to consider that the superhero character can become a model or "tutor" of resilience (Cyrulnik, 2009) taking into account their transformations and acquisition of skills to overcome their adversities, transcending them. There is a monumental moment, scientifically explained by the "turning point" defined by Rutter (1987), that for comic book superheroes and for the at-risk child or adolescent leads to positive development.

The participants were students from a municipal public elementary school. A socio-demographic questionnaire presented the profile of the participants who started the proposal: they were between 12 and 15 years old; most of them were male (71.43%); 42.86% considered themselves white; 28.57% brown, 14.29% black, and 14.29% indigenous. Regarding the level of education, 44% of the students are in 7th grade, 44% are in 9th grade, and 11% are in 8th grade. The great majority (71%) answered that they live in their own house, and 29% live in houses that were lent by someone. In reference to how many people live in their house that work, 29% answered none, 29% two, 14% three, and 14% four. 14% of the participants reported that they participate in the Bolsa Família program, and 43% answered that they do not participate in any social program, and 43% did not know or did not want to answer this question.

4. Results

4.1. The Intervention Program: instruments and activities of each module

In general, the data were collected from: a) observations made during the meetings; b) answers to the 4 (four) instruments in the pre-test phase; c) transcribed audio record of the evaluation chat at the end of the Intervention; d) analysis of written and drawn works done during the meetings; e) answers to the questionnaires about the participants' satisfaction with the intervention proposal.

The intervention was carried out in 8 (eight) meetings, each with 2 (two) to 4 (four) activities per meeting. Each meeting lasted approximately 2 hours. The following will present the analysis and discussion of the meetings and activities themselves.

1st meeting: It was planned to present the lives of the superheroic characters and their adversities lived before their masks and capes, that is, in the Pre-Cap/Pre-Mask phase (Fradkin et al, 2016).

The reaction of the students involved was at first very attentive and concentrated. They showed themselves to be participating listeners of the narratives and expressed interest in the theme. Regarding the experiences of adversity of superheroes, everyone showed surprise, as most expressed and opined that they did not imagine and had never even thought that superheroes suffered in their lives. It can be interpreted that superpowers did not align with problems and adversity in the participants' imagination. This idea was unanimous and denotes the dichotomy of the image of powers as dissociated from suffering and negative emotions. Therefore, it can be seen that the goal of sensitizing participants to the pre-superhero phase and turning their attention to their possibilities for resilience was achieved.

2nd meeting: Two questionnaires were applied: one sociodemographic and one about Bullying. After answering these questionnaires, a conversation circle was held, and

the participants were free to bring fictional stories from the comics in which social adversities were observed from their perspective.

With regard to the participants' experience with bullying, it was found that more than 50% of the participants had already suffered from this manifestation. 29% of the participants had suffered from bullying several times a week, 14% between 1 and 2 times, and 14% between 3 and 6 times. The vast majority revealed that they have suffered bullying at school (75%) and answered that the act is committed by two or three classmates.

Regarding their feelings about the act they suffered, 100% said they were not bothered. The great majority (75%) affirmed that no schoolmate tried to prevent the participant from being bullied at school. Still 25% said they felt bad seeing their schoolmates being bullied, 25% felt sorry for the victim, 25% said they were not bothered, and 25% were afraid this could happen to them.

When asked if they had ever helped or committed bullying against other students, 71% answered that they had never helped bully other students, 29% answered that it was only once or twice, and of these they reported that they usually did it alone. Of those who did commit bullying, 50% reported that they hit and pushed, and 50% made fun of nicknames, badmouthing, and teasing. They also report that they thought it was funny (the practice).

After answering the questionnaires, a conversation was held to see if they observed/remembered the discussion from the first meeting about adversities or risky situation in the fictional life of superheroes from comic books or the adaptations to film or TV series. Half of the participants were able to report some adversities that were discussed at the very beginning of the meeting. As the conversation unfolded, the vast majority demonstrated consensus and understanding in their recollections of some situations that occur in the lives of the characters they know. Those who made their memories explicit talked about the character Batman, who had his parents murdered and the difficulties of going through life and dealing with daily life without the presence of these caregivers.

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3rd meeting: This meeting had as its objective the creation of a superhero character that could be a "good" superhero or a villain. This creation was done in written form, bringing in the plots that led the characters to choose such paths (heroism or villainy). The life stories of the characters created were to be exposed. Furthermore, they were asked to describe situations of risk and adversity suffered by these characters, if any.

In this same meeting, the participants were asked to list three situations of risk and adversity experienced by themselves. It was noticed that there was need to reinforce the clarification of risk and adversity situations to make the list. After this step, they were asked to describe "how the superhero created by them could solve the issues listed". They investigated what actions this character could perform and what they themselves could do in their lives, based on the action imagined by the fictional character they created.

At the end of the meeting the students exposed their characters, bringing their lived stories and the reasons that led them to choose different paths. They related reasons why one becomes a superhero and another a villain. The following were described as situations of risk and social adversity in the story created of the heroic or villainous characters Family rejection; Alcoholic father; Loss of a family member; Bullying. Other situations such as: Mother with depression problems; Not being popular at school; Drug use (licit and illicit); Seeing oneself close to death; Fights between parents and family members; Prejudice (because of weight and color); Persecution by criminals; Brain disease was also mentioned. When asked individually if any created character, hero or villain, was inspired by their own life stories, they all unanimously affirmed that they did

not use themselves as a source of inspiration. But in the comparison and analysis of the listing of situations of risk and adversity experienced by them, in comparison with those experienced by the heroic characters, one notices indications of familiarity. One participant practically used her entire list of risks to build the story of the heroine she created, which leads us to verify the possibility of projection of herself into the imagined character.

About the reason for choosing the situations of risk and adversity experienced by both the hero and the villain, the vast majority reported that these situations are common and are experienced or witnessed by them all the time. Both the superhero built and the villain, were victims of some aggression listed by them. They recognize that the heroic character manages to rise from his fall, while the villain experiences his suffering and uses that pain, to justify his means. It was notable that for the heroic character to "rise " and survive, most participants placed the support of a third party, an individual (such as a guardian) or institution (such as a memory or experience at school), and that the villainy character did not have this experience, and therefore this made a difference in the development of social or antisocial behaviors. For Cyrulnik (2009), tutors provide an affective structure, resuming the re-socialization process. According to the author's ideas, it can be inferred that in the interaction with the tutor, the psychic dynamism that is the basis of the resilient process transforms the very wound of the sufferer into a new organizer of the Self. Many of the comic book superheroes have had such guardians (e.g. Spider-Man, Uncle Ben; Batman, the butler Alfred). And in addition to having such a tutor, as in the created stories presented above, the heroic character, after empowerment, becomes the tutor of those who are inspired by them and their examples of overcoming and transformation.

They were also asked, in individual conversation, what lessons this character created by them (Hero and/or Villain) could give them. Identified each participant as "P" and a number, we have the following lines that express the power of inspiration and identification with this universe of empowerment with elements of maturity and reflection indicators: P1 - "it helps me to understand that nothing is perfect, nothing is easy, but we have to deal with it and stand firm and strong"; P2- "maturation and the change in the hero's behavior will certainly help me to reflect on my evolution as a person and to mature; think about the wrong things we have in common and try to act the same way or almost the same way as him"; P3- "My superhero helps me to overcome my pains and traumas, and that can help me, and so I help other people, who also went through this moment; and that it helps me to mature and forget it (pains and traumas)".

4th meeting: In this meeting, the definitions of the words heroes and superheroes were presented and stories of heroes from our history were referred to with demonstrations about their struggles and what they stood for (such as Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, among others). After this activity, they were asked if there is any person in their community who could be called a hero or heroine. There was a dialogue about what they do.

In this activity, some situations of collective adversity (hunger, civil wars, racial segregation, climate disasters, etc.) were raised. Then they were asked what a superhero would do in these situations. Using the same collective adversities, they were asked again, what a hero (without superpower) could do.

The vast majority had no knowledge of the historical heroes presented (Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, among others) and expressed surprise at their altruism. They told how people who did what they did could have existed, others related fictional characters to the real ones presented. Thus, there were comparisons between fictional beings with superpowers saving lives and these real heroes of our history transforming and also saving lives.

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They were asked if there are people in their community who could be called heroes/heroines. After a brief reflection, some began to question whether certain tasks performed can be considered heroic, such as: people who help defend animals, social causes, and activities related to fighting hunger. The participants mentioned names of people in the community where they live who carry out the above mentioned tasks; 100% of the members also mentioned names of some teachers in their school and their actions beyond the classroom. When asked why these names were mentioned, they reported that: "This one looks out for us"; "She goes beyond the classroom, she talks and gives me tips on how to behave on the street"; "She is caring and worries about me". It is interesting to note that the participants' conceptions of heroism are not limited to superpowers, but refer to actions, attitudes, and relationships with others. This is a perspective on the relational quality of a hero, of care and good treatment (Barudy & Dartagnan, 2007).

5th meeting: In this stage, the leader presented to the group how the process of creating a comic book takes place. It was mentioned that several hands are involved and mutual help is essential for the development of the material: the scriptwriter who creates the story and visualizes how it will be presented; the artist who will draw the pictures; the colorist who colors the pictures. There are also, in some cases, the final artworkers, who give the final touches to the drawings. A professional may also be requested to make the speech balloons.

After this more technical and explanatory presentation, the group was divided into those who would be in charge of the script and the creation of the story, and those who would draw the story in comic format. Each group should have one designer and one or two scriptwriters. After this division of groups, it was explained that the task of building the comic strip should contain: 1 - The beginning of the hero's journey (with the following stages: experiencing one or more adversities; a turning point; how he became a hero); 2 - The character should also be a moral example and a source of inspiration for his readers.

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The idea was to show that creating a comic book is a team process. After the groups were created, it was decided who would take what responsibility. However, the creation of a new hero was to be debated among everyone and, after the discussion, the person responsible for the script would create the story.

6th meeting: In this meeting the Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) questionnaire was applied in the first phase of the session. In the second phase, the previous week's task of creating a group comic book was continued.

The analysis of the results of the answers to the questionnaire about traumas and undesirable experiences shows that half of the participants live with a family member who uses drugs, both illicit and licit. 17% of the participants lost their biological father/mother or step-father/ step-mother due to divorce, abandonment, or other reasons. Still, 17% of those involved in the program, answered that in their homes there is often domestic violence between their parents and/or guardians, and that sometimes they have been threatened with some kind of weapon, and another 17% did not know how to answer or did not want to answer this question.

When asked if a member of their family who lives with them has often threatened, insulted, or humiliated them, and provoked fear of physical aggression, 17% said yes and 24% did not answer this question. 59% answered negatively to this question. Regarding whether there is often some kind of physical violence inside their homes, the numbers were the same. Almost 60% answered that they do not suffer violence. Also 17% answered that there is a member of their family with depression problems or mentally ill, and in some cases with suicide attempts. There were also reports (17%) that a family member is in prison for having committed some type of crime.

7th meeting: Presentation of the final results of their comics. Suggestions were given and doubts were clarified for the forwarding and finalization of the project (Comics).

A brief analysis of the comics drawn by the participants shows that the character created by them, presented adversities and risky situations before their empowerment (Pre-Cloak/Pre-Mask - Weschenfelder et al, 2020) which evidences the understanding of the relationship between moments of fragility with subsequent empowerment. The moment of trials was elaborated, as in the hero's journey (Campbell, 2024) with the turning point for a heroic life. When asked about what this created hero symbolized for them, they said: "To be able to be someone better"; "To act like the hero in the most difficult moments (use wisdom)". "To be able to think more about different daily issues, difficulties, and the importance of following a correct life"; "It helped me to care more about my commitments"; "To get along with people"; "To interact more with other people to discuss other subjects". As these statements suggest, the created hero is a reflective, wise, responsible being, who knows how to live and deal with people. The virtues and strengths of the hero are valued by Positive Psychology scholars and show that positive interventions are those that promote affirmative actions of these socially fundamental values at this moment in the evolution of humanity. The fascination that these characters exert, figuring as heroic examples, where these address, in an exemplary way, the way to face and solve issues refers them to virtuous actions to become ethical models (Weschenfelder, 2011b).

8th meeting: Application of the questionnaire 'Be the Superhero of your own Life - Evaluation and satisfaction and effectiveness of the program'. Each group presented their comic strip to all the participants, highlighting the reasons that led them to create the plot of the stories. After this phase, the delivery of the comic was held.

Each group presented their hero and their dilemmas before and after empowerment (of becoming a hero). The two groups were asked to relate their difficulties in developing the story. They reiterated that in the beginning, working as a group was difficult. To create the character, there was no agreement and each one wanted to bring different characteristics. But with the support of the leader this aspect was solved. An interesting element was related to the number of adversities experienced by the hero. Some wanted to put more risky situations and, when asked why, they answered that they thought there are many risky situations experienced or witnessed every day. Just like the comic book superheroes who suffered from numerous tragic events at the beginning of their journey, the character created by them should also highlight these adversities with vehemence. It is worth mentioning that each group listed up to three risky situations in the creation of their characters. The most frequently mentioned were in order of frequency: Bullying, Bullying perpetrator, Loss of loved ones/family members, Living in the midst of organized crime, and Illness.

In this last meeting of the program, an evaluative questionnaire on satisfaction and effectiveness of the program was also presented to the participants. All participants stated that they felt accepted by everyone in the program group. But when asked if they felt well supported by the group, half answered sometimes. But the vast majority (83%) answered that they made new friendships at the meetings, that the participants helped each other, and that they would like the program meetings to continue. Also, 83% answered that the subjects discussed in the meetings were very important for their growth as a person, and that they feel that what was discussed will be useful for their future as a good citizen. Half of them believe that the discussions in the group brought about personal changes in the way they speak and behave at home and in the school environment. And, 23% responded that sometimes the discussions held in the group brought about personal changes. The vast majority (83%) of the participants think about what was discussed in the meetings before solving some problem, and 67% believe that now (after the discussions in the meetings) they are able to come up with better solutions

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to the most difficult situations they face. All of them responded that they liked the subjects discussed and worked on in the group.

Regarding the leader who was in charge of the project, 100% responded that they felt that the professional accepted their opinions, and also the same percentage responded that they believed that the leader provided good solutions in difficult moments. The vast majority (83%) of the participants felt that the leader showed interest in their problems. All believed that the leader maintained a good relationship among everyone, respecting each person's limits. There was a unanimous belief that the leader played a fundamental role in making the group feel good, and for the great majority (83%) he motivated the participants to speak openly and to say what they thought and did.

All of them answered that the program was better than they expected; no one thought of leaving the program meetings, and so they would tell a friend to take part in new programs. Asked if after the activities in the meetings they feel better about themselves, half of the participants believe so, while the other half answered sometimes. A large portion (67%) said that they get along better with others after the meetings, and the vast majority (83%) felt proud of themselves for having participated in the program.

All believe that in some way superheroes are sources of inspiration to solve problems and questions in their daily lives. All of them believe that after the program meetings they now realize that they can make a difference in their lives, so it is unanimous that they believe they can become their own heroes in the environment where they live (school/family/friends/etc.). When asked if the program helped them to become aware of their individual courage and strength, all of them believe so.

There was a final get-together and a chat, where everyone is stimulated through questions and answers (dialectically), to talk about the program, the high and low points, what they liked the most, etc. In the chat that took place, with audio recording, they were asked what was most important in these meetings; for them it was having more direct contact with people, not only doing the activities, but being listened to and receiving feedback. New friendships, living with and learning from different people, talking about their everyday problems, and learning how to act in situations that might occur to them were also reported. The majority reported that relating superheroes to real life was of utmost importance. As to why, they answered that "they can guide themselves to do better things"; "be better people"; "heroes are good influences". When asked if they believe that they can be influenced by superheroes, they all said yes. They answered that it was interesting to live with others and see that they live the same reality. The new friendships were valued, and that one helped the other during the meetings and outside of them. When asked what was a right attitude, they answered that it was "think before you act"; "help others"; "do good"; "be a good person in a world where everybody else is not"; "be an example to others".

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When asked what would be an act of heroism, the participants answered that it would be helping someone, "putting the other person's need before your own"; "it's not just helping one person, it's realizing that by helping one person you are helping others around you"; "being a hero is the guy who always thinks of others before doing something for himself. It doesn't matter if he gets well or not, it's never putting someone's welfare above others, no matter how good or bad a person is.

Asked if the program meetings changed something in them, most of them answered yes, but that they had difficulty identifying exactly what. They reported that they were able to see their lives with new eyes, as well as everything around them. One participant reported that he "realized that other people's problems are often bigger than his own, so that he, like the superhero, should stand up and help them.

They reported that they projected and saw themselves in the fictional life stories of the superheroes and took this into the creation of their stories. There were reports of their

situations of risk and social adversity such as: abandonment of the father's or mother's home due to divorce; abandonment by the mother; murder of the brother by drug dealing; physical violence, depression of one of the parents. But they felt indignant about the situation they lived through, but today they realize that life must go on, just like superheroes, they must stand up and make a better life for themselves.

One of the participants reported that he had experienced great risk situations. This participant, in most of the meetings, was the shy one. But in the last meeting he decided to tell his stories, and revealed that he was physically abused by his stepfather and that his mother took him to live with his maternal grandmother. Therefore, he reveals that he felt abandoned by his mother for choosing to live with his stepfather and not with him. His brother, who was close to his age, was murdered because he was a drug dealer and his body was found a week after his disappearance. This participant missed only one meeting, and in the last meeting he was the most active voice in requesting that the program meetings continue, because according to him, the program is helping him to overcome all the suffering. This participant attributes this support to the fact that he has people around him who give him attention. When asked about his suffering, he couldn't tell us about it, but he answered that, just like Batman, who had also lost his loved ones, he wanted to fight so that other people wouldn't go through what they had experienced, and according to him the meetings help in this process.

5. Discussion

5.1. Summary of the analysis of the intervention results

Superheroes can inspire similar processes as resilience tutors, even though they are fictional. These are sources of positive inspiration, as many scholars refer to when dealing with the topic of resilience and tutors (Cyrulnik, 2009; Nascimento, 2007). Superadventure characters provide certain affective structure, to their reader/viewer, being sources of overcoming and that inspire, showing how to face this process in a more positive way. The GFK Indicator study (2008), pointed out that superheroic characters stimulate virtues in their readers/viewers and teach them how to face challenges and fears. Thus, more than idols, they are role models to be imitated. For the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 B.C.- 322 B.C.) virtuous role models teach us to be moral citizens. More than role models, comic book superheroes are contemporary myths, and myths are life experiences, told through stories (Campbell, 2012). In this case, these experiences are in the storylines of a super-adventure comic book, which brings up issues that every human being faces on a daily basis (Irwin, 2009). In addition, myths serve for understanding how to relate to the world around us (Campbell, 2023) and we need this symbolic context that promotes identification of individuals and their realities. Superheroes go beyond entertainment and the characters make things more fun and easier to face (Morrison, 2012).

An important result of this study is that both the classic superhero characters, and those created by the project participants, have the support of a third person and/or institution (in this case it was the school) to 'stand up and survive'. This finding reiterates that, a positive action in a school environment based on the image of the superhero character can be an element of prevention to the involvement in antisocial or illicit acts, as was stated in the intervention by the participants themselves.

The main results of the intervention showed that there was an understanding of the concept of risk situations and social adversities. These, which until then were perceived as commonplace in their environments, were highlighted by the intervention program as potentially harmful to development, but with possibilities of "turning around" to new ways of acting and being. Just like the fictional superheroes who also went through

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difficult situations before their empowerment, the historical heroes and each of the participants also went through or are still going through difficulties. The focus of the positive psychoeducational intervention was on the aspect of psychoeducational health, i.e. that this does not directly imply weakening, but on the contrary can turn into resilience and empowering processes.

6. Conclusions

The perception that the participants had about heroism was a mythological conception of strong beings, with powers, performing herculean work and pharaonic challenges. The idea was linked to possessing, having super powers. The perception of the participants changed when details of the characteristics of real (flesh and blood) heroes in our history, and also those of their community, were presented and discussed. Thus, the program sought to bring to the participants an understanding that heroism is not only linked to super powers, but also to other more complex issues and education in relational practices of care, good treatment, and reciprocity with balance of power (Bronfenbrenner, 2020). Thus, there was an understanding that anyone, including themselves, can be this 'heroic being', for their own lives and for others around them. Thus, the speech of one of the participants exemplifies, "First the hero becomes his own hero (overcoming the challenge), to then save others." This was the main idea of the intervention, that is, to enable them to be and remain their own heroes.

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