



Article

# Creativity and Resilience as Predictors of Career Success

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**Abstract:** Achieving success in today's society is becoming an increasingly complex endeavor. People must have high levels of creativity and resilience in order to constantly adapt to changing situations and, at the same time, maintain the necessary tenacity and enthusiasm to continue despite failures. This research aims to identify the different characteristics of people with high levels of objective career success, subjective career success, resilience, and creativity, and analyze their relationship with the achievement of career success. The sample consisted of 200 people from six professional categories (unemployed, managers, influencers, entrepreneurs, employees, and professors) in Spain. The questionnaire (EX. P/RE/CRE—professional success, resilience, and creativity) that was designed for this study was used to collect the data. The results suggest that a person with high levels of creativity and/or resilience is more prepared to achieve professional success from both an objective and subjective perspective. The study's conclusions support the correlations between the terms and describe the characteristics and conditions of the successful, resilient, and/or creative person.

**Keywords:** subjective career success; objective career success; resilience; creativity



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## 1. Introduction

One of the main founders of Humanistic Psychology [1] states that everyone has the same fundamental needs. Once our physiological needs are met, we are concerned with safety, later with affiliation, and, subsequently, with the need for recognition. Once these needs are met, human beings search for social status, self-fulfillment, and success [2,3].

Starting with this need for success, and focusing on the professional area, many reports and research [4,5] make it clear that the future society will be shaped by a frequently changing, technological, and globalized world. In this new context, and taking the quest for success into account, tomorrow's professionals will have to work with almost anyone and in any environment; they will have to constantly use technology and, therefore, innovation and adaptation to change will be their leitmotiv [6].

The aim of this study is to understand and identify professional success as people's ability to stand out from the crowd and overcome adverse situations, emerging victorious and stronger to face changes and crises with an innovative spirit (creativity and resilience) [4]. The study was carried out in Spain and it includes a nationally representative sample. It establishes a triad among the three terms, implying that, in order to be professionally successful, it is also necessary to possess outstanding elements of creativity (innovation) and resistance to difficulties (resilience).

Creative performance, which is compulsory for advancement, requires a persevering inner strength to overcome the challenges and setbacks that are inherent in professional development and adapt to a changing environment [7]. Resilience leads to the attainment of goals and achievements and it can provide the necessary mechanisms to persevere in the presence of change and the need for innovative and creative problem solving [8]. Therefore, the aim of this research is to discover to what extent career success is related to an individual's resilience and creative capacity.

### 1.1. Career Success

In fields, such as academia or sports, the scientific community seems to unequivocally specify an aspect of success associated with effort or results [9–18], an approach that is often repeated in the literature reviewed. However, this approach is being employed less and less [19,20]. Broadening this perspective, holistic research specifies that success no longer seems to be easily quantifiable, and it shows a certain mismatch between this conception of academic or sport success and a broader vision of career success [16–21]. These new studies [19–28] focus more on the professional arena and they are contextualized in the objective of this analysis. They show a more complete perspective than the others, contemplating an objective vision of success, but also a more subjective view linked to values, such as: authenticity, growth or development, influence, quality, or satisfaction [21,22], the incidence of obstacles throughout life [19], or to the person's life project, and aspirations and goals [22,23,29]. The latter, subjective success, is seen as the achievement of a goal that fits one's desires and interests, whereas objective success focuses more on the successful achievement of something that many others (society) desire or have previously attempted [30].

Based on these initial conclusions, we understand that a person's career success is the balance between the quantifiable achievements of his or her professional career and the set of subjective expectations and values, which are different for each individual and linked to his or her life project.

It is necessary to define more measurable and concrete dimensions in order to summarize the aforementioned and clarify the evaluation or quantification of the term success. Based on the studies by several authors in the reviewed bibliography, there are indicators of each of the two aspects of career success. For objective career success, some indicators would be rank, medals, qualifications, awards, and promotions [31–33]. Based on this first approach, the indicators most frequently repeated in the literature and most commonly found in the study of objective career success are: salary level, position, and prestige [34,35]. When choosing indicators of subjective career success, a categorization that is widely used and defended by the scientific community consists of: work stress, work-family conflict, work-time conflict, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction [36–38].

### 1.2. Resilience

After careful consideration of the pillars under study, and taking positive psychology as a starting point, we address a concept that is frequently discussed in the scientific field from both a theoretical and methodological perspective [39–41]. Social sciences often refer to resilience to explain individuals', groups', and organizations' ability to overcome crises and adversities, but each of the studies analyzed provides nuances that help to understand the global nature and complexity of the term [42–44]. Resilience is the positive adaptation to circumstances involving significant adversity, such as misfortunes and tragic situations in life, which is, a psychological capacity to recover from conflicts, adversity, uncertainty, and failure, according to one of the most commonly repeated proposals [45–47].

Along these lines, but highlighting the importance of the resources and tools human beings use to overcome adverse and stressful situations, numerous studies highlight the dynamism and adaptability of the construct of resilience [48–58].

Thus, resilience is the positive psychological capacity to recover from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress, and increased responsibility [48,55,58,59]. However, being resilient does not mean that the individual does not experience pain or hardships; instead, it implies that, despite sadness, distress, or pain, the individual can put his or her life back together, get up, and walk. Resilience not only allows the person to survive, but it can also allow him or her to benefit from a positive adjustment to change, which makes it possible to go beyond what is normal and move to a positive deviation [60,61]. Based on these findings, it is easy to understand that the resilient person is better able to adapt positively to change and adversity and, thus, more gifted than the competitors [62,63].

In order to make it measurable or quantifiable, resilience can be divided into smaller and more concrete dimensions that facilitate a unitary measurement of the construct. This evolution from an independent and immovable conception of resilience, which is defended by the first generations, gives way to a new vision of the interaction between resilience factors and non-resilience factors [64]. Taking this latter conclusion and the studies consulted [65–67] as a reference, six areas or dimensions make up a person's resilience spectrum: self-esteem and confidence, satisfaction, learning, pragmatism, clear goals and motivation to achieve, and, finally, social bonds.

### 1.3. Creativity

In addition to resilience, which is, resistance and overcoming difficulties, creativity is another defining element of success. Coping with difficulties can be standardized or creative. The present study focuses on the latter. Creativity and innovation are part of the human genome and they have been present throughout history as part of human expression and the search for new paths [68,69]. Examples are the communities, people, or companies that have managed to move the world due to their advances, inventions, and changes [70]. Creativity is related to success, human potential, social transformation, and progress [71–77].

The understanding of creativity has been approached from an infinite number of perspectives and fields of study; therefore, the approaches and theories that try to explain creativity agree on the essentials, but many aspects remain unclear [78–82]. The very definition of the term creativity is an example. There is agreement about the basic definition, but each author qualifies it according to his or her own needs or the conclusions of his or her study. Thus, creativity can be the capacity to produce new ideas [83] and adapt to new contexts [84], a relationship between novelty and utility [85], an association towards non-conformity, and the search for alternatives [86]; or, from a much more global perspective, it can be an influx of energy that permeates everything it touches [78]. Hence, in the absence of a consensual definition [87], a definition is defended that refers to the person's capacity to question the established, the valuable, or the novel (process), in order to find new solutions (product) that are more adapted, viable, and useful in their context (environment).

Another of these essential agreements refers to the fact that creativity is an essential capacity [84] and it is fundamental for self-sufficiency and the success that is derived from it [88], which all human beings have to a greater or lesser extent [89–93]. Given the possibility of possessing this capacity, many studies have been quick to justify the acquired and improvable nature of the term [73,92,94–98], a question that we also consider in its relation to resilience and success. This is a real advance in the research, because, if creativity can be acquired and improved, it is obvious that it can be evaluated [99]. For this purpose, as with previous constructs, more concrete dimensions of the term are used. Following the structure that was proposed by a large number of authors researching creativity, we include: the person, the product, the process, and the environment [100–103], all of which are key elements in the achievement of professional success.

### 1.4. Interrelations between the Constructs Presented: Career Success, Resilience, and Creativity

The theoretical review of professional success, resilience, and creativity shows the interest of the scientific community in the study of these constructs, but it also reveals a gap in the literature due to the lack of studies that attempt to search for and/or explain the links and relationships in this triad. In this regard, our study is a pioneer in the field, but it also encounters the difficulties that are inherent to these types of studies: very little data with which to compare the results, an absence of tests that measure the relationships between the constructs, or problems when selecting the strata of the sample.

From this theoretical approach, it can be observed that there is no standardized definition for any of the constructs. Therefore, we have implemented and presented our own definitions, in addition to delimiting the dimensions, as described above, based on the reference authors [3,22,35,54,57,67,68,77,86]. Thus, an initial outline is proposed for the

design of a questionnaire to measure a person's degree of professional success (objective and subjective), resilience, and creativity. The purpose is to demonstrate that successful professional profiles correlate positively with high levels of creativity and/or resilience.

Succeeding, being successful, or reaching the top in a profession is becoming increasingly complicated in today's constantly changing world, as pointed out above [104]. Thus, achieving success depends to a large extent on the capacities or skills we can gather as a society or as individuals [6]. In this context, it seems logical that a person with high levels of creativity and resilience will be better able to adapt to constant changes and, at the same time, maintain the necessary tenacity and enthusiasm to continue, despite setbacks or failures.

In order to empirically address the state of this issue, the following questions are posed: What are the characteristics of successful people?; What are the characteristics of creative and resilient people?; Do creative and resilient people have common traits?; Do these common traits influence professional success?, and if so, Is there a relationship between levels of resilience, creativity, and professional success?

These questions are the starting point of the study: to deepen our understanding of professional success through the eyes of a person with high levels of creativity and/or resilience. This approach has not been tackled in the literature from a global perspective, although it has been addressed in a dual or interrelated way. Research that relates creativity and success [20,105–107] or success and resilience [16,27,47,108] are examples of these approaches. In both cases, characteristics are perceived that would facilitate the relationships between these three constructs, as well as the fact that a person who demonstrates high levels of creativity and resilience will be more prepared to address each dimension of professional success (objective/subjective).

Accordingly, the main lines of this research are to establish a theoretical model with a specific design that has the objectives, methods, and techniques to discover the degree of professional success (objective and subjective) of people with a high index of resilience and/or creativity.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Objectives

The aim of the study was to achieve the following objectives: (1) to know the different characteristics that are shown by people with high rates of: objective career success, subjective career success, resilience, and creativity; (2) to correlate these concepts in the achievement of career success; and, (3) to interpret the data on resilience and creativity to find a relationship in people who self-assess and are considered by society as successful career achievers.

### 2.2. Design

Based on the conditions of the study and the predominant paradigms in the social sciences [109], a positivist, qualitative-interpretative paradigm will be followed, whose central interest is to describe and interpret social reality through the analysis of variables, using statistical techniques, and with a distance between the researcher and object of study.

The present research is framed within an ex-post-facto design of a non-experimental nature, where there is no manipulation of the variables and no strict causal relationships are sought. Instead, the aim is to discover and understand the existing relationships between the variables in order to guide the research towards the search for improvement. The design aims to identify, based on prior knowledge that is measured by a questionnaire with objective indicators, the impact of creativity and resilience on the achievement of professional success, both objective and subjective.

### 2.3. Instrument and Data Collection Process

The use of a survey has been chosen, which consists of obtaining data through questionnaires that are answered by members of a sample or a population [110]. This technique

is very useful when the research requires descriptive and cross-sectional data [111]. Within this category, the questionnaire attempts to establish descriptive or quantitative communication between the interviewer and the interviewees in order to obtain important data for the research [112]. Moreover, it is a relatively cheap, easy, and impersonal procedure that guarantees anonymity, does not require the presence of the interviewer, offers a time margin without pressure, and has a broad scope [112–114]. The reason for choosing the questionnaire to relate and find out the degree of success, resilience, and creativity is that it is one of the simplest and most reliable options that are commonly used for data collection in scientific research, as in this case [115].

Therefore, a questionnaire (EX. P/RE/CRE—professional success, resilience, and creativity) was designed, validated, and standardized to bring together the three aforementioned constructs. The questionnaire covers the three constructs (professional success, creativity, and resilience) in each of its dimensions. After three reviews of the literature on each of the constructs, a first draft was produced and subjected to two external validity tests, first by eight university experts, doctors in the fields of psychology and social sciences teaching from the Universities of León, Oviedo, Santiago de Compostela, Murcia, Valencia, and Madrid (Spain), and later using the criteria of two people with proven objective career success in their fields. These 10 people rated the relevance, pertinence, and univocity of the items from 1 to 3, establishing the criterion that two or more evaluators would indicate one of the criteria for the reformulation or elimination of those items that did not meet the established criteria. Once the final version of the test was available, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The resulting values, 0.76 for success, 0.79 for resilience, and 0.92 for creativity, are close to 1, which ensures [116] good inner consistency for career success and resilience and excellent for creativity.

Thus, the final version of the questionnaire consists of a section on socio-demographic data (age and gender) and three categories. (1) Objective career success: analyzed based on three indicators: salary level (e.g., >50.000€ 90.000–500.000€, >500.000€); job title or working position (e.g.,: executive position, intermediate position, entrepreneur, and unemployed); and, social prestige (e.g., I do not own, close environment, local, national, and international). Subjective career success was measured through five sub-categories (job stress, work-family conflict, work-time conflict, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction) (e.g., In my job I am under constant pressure. I hardly have time for a coffee or a break). (2) Resilience was measured through seven sub-categories (self-esteem and confidence, satisfaction, learning, pragmatism, clear goals and achievement motivation, and social bonds) with three items each (e.g., If the situation requires it, I can go against the opinion of others). (3) Creativity was measured by means of a single item with a picture, where the participants are asked to write down all of the questions the picture evokes. The instrument sufficiently and rigorously collects data related to the professional success (objective/subjective), resilience, and creativity of the future participants in the sample.

This first definitive version is digitalized in order to access a larger sample that is stratified and difficult to reach. To guarantee the necessary methodological requirements of validity and reliability, the scientific research method is rigorously followed [117]. The “On-line Survey” application is used for its dissemination, because it meets all of the specific requirements for the test. The data were obtained during nine months of work that began in July 2018 and lasted until March 2019.

#### 2.4. Selected Sample and Participants

When establishing the sample and using the formula for infinite populations [118], we calculated that we would need a minimum sample of 137 people. Because it is a stratified sample, the number of people in each stratum is delimited in order to obtain adequate representativeness.

The construct of career success and, within it, objective career success, is a very interesting variable because it defines the profile of a person's objective career success with only three dimensions that are quantifiable, external to the person, and easy to obtain.

Following the indications of several studies [34,37], these dimensions are: salary level, proven social prestige, and position held in an organization or company. Based on these three dimensions, a sample of six strata is proposed, each of them being associated with a profession or a professional category. Thus, 37.5% of the sample must be people with a high salary level, proven social prestige, and a high position in their company. The following professions were selected because they met all or at least two out of three of these parameters: company directors, professors, and influencers. Another 25% of the sample is situated at a medium and fluctuating level in this dimension. Therefore, a professional control category (entrepreneurs) is established, which may be inclined towards a high or low level, depending on each participant and the sustainability and objective success of his/her own professional project. The rest, 37.5%, must have a low or medium salary level, little or no social prestige, and a position with few responsibilities in their company. As in the previous categories, the following professions were selected, because they met the requirements, or at least two out of three: employed and unemployed.

Thus, the final sample is made up of 200 people that were pre-classified into six professional strata. Of them, the majority were aged between 30 and 45 years (43% of the sample), and the rest were divided into: under 30 years old (20%), between 46 and 60 years old (27%), and over 60 years old (10%). In terms of gender, of the 200 participants, 57% were men and 43% were women.

## 2.5. Data Processing

For the preparation of the data from the questionnaires, a scheme has been followed to ensure organized, systematic, rigorous, and creative coding, emptying, and processing [119]. Once all of the questionnaires (on-line and paper) had been obtained, they were organized by numbering them and discarding the invalid or incomplete ones, according to the sub-strata of the sample, and six data matrices were drawn up.

After completing these first six matrices, the answers given are scored and quantified. In the part of the questionnaire that is associated with “objective professional success”, each dimension is assessed with values ranging from 1 to 3 for salary, from 1 to 5 for position, and from 1 to 5 for social prestige. In the part of the questionnaire linked to “subjective professional success and resilience”, values from 1 to 4 are assigned to each item, with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest. In the “creativity” part of the questionnaire, each question is rated and assigned a value of 0 when the item is null, 1 when the item is positive, and 2 or 3, depending on whether the item is double or triple.

Once this first phase was completed and all of the data had been organized and cleaned, they were entered into the IBM SPSS 22 statistical software package. This process was carried out from June 2018 to March 2019.

## 3. Results

The results that were obtained after the analysis of the (EX. P/RE/CRE) help us to configure the characteristics of people who demonstrate high rates of objective career success, subjective career success, resilience, and creativity, and, subsequently, analyze their correlations.

### 3.1. Characteristics of the Person with Objective Career Success

The exploratory analysis of the person with objective career success according to stratum, age, and gender (Table 1) helps us to understand the characteristics of the participants in the study with greater objective career success. Table 1 presents the data for each of the analyzed variables. The highest scores are highlighted.

Thus, this would be an individual (mostly male) with a long professional career (more than 30 years in the profession) who has reached the top of his or her career (mainly in private enterprise or in the teaching sector—in this case, professors with proven objective success in their careers).

**Table 1.** Means and standard deviations by stratum, age, and gender and study categories.

		N	Obj. Success		Subj. Success		Resilience		Creativity	
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Stratum	Unemployed	25	3.00	0.0	49.92	2.98	62.84	10.69	15.72	7.79
	Managers	25	<b>10.36</b>	0.95	54.48	3.99	<b>76.72</b>	4.80	<b>20.72</b>	10.84
	Influencers	25	8.64	1.52	54.92	2.70	68.64	5.09	<b>19.80</b>	8.86
	Entrepreneurs	50	6.66	0.84	51.48	4.30	66.20	5.93	17.22	7.78
	Employed	50	5.69	0.89	<b>55.72</b>	6.08	70.48	7.18	16.82	5.94
	Professors	25	9.16	1.57	<b>55.88</b>	6.25	70.16	7.27	17.36	7.49
Age	Under 30 years	40	6.93	2.37	52.48	4.22	64.20	9.15	<b>18.53</b>	8.68
	30–45 years	86	6.30	1.94	53.74	5.61	69.01	7.10	17.74	7.76
	46–60 years	54	7.54	2.81	53.43	5.37	<b>72.80</b>	6.99	17.07	8.53
	Over 60 years	20	<b>9.15</b>	1.27	<b>56.70</b>	3.76	71.70	6.55	17.65	6.20
Gender	Male	114	<b>7.39</b>	2.39	<b>53.52</b>	5.11	<b>69.75</b>	7.46	<b>18.16</b>	8.02
	Female	86	6.59	2.33	<b>53.94</b>	5.37	<b>68.79</b>	8.71	17.12	7.95

Note: The highest M values in each stratum are highlighted in bold.

### 3.2. Characteristics of the Person with Subjective Career Success

The exploratory analysis of this dimension of success (Table 1), subjective success, helps us to understand the profile of the person participating in the study who has been or is subjectively professionally successful in his/her career. In this case, it would be a woman (although by a small margin it could also be a man) with more than 30 years in the profession who has opted to work (the education sector stands out) and tried to reconcile personal, family, and work life throughout his/her career to the detriment of a more recognized career in terms of achievements or salary.

### 3.3. Characteristics of the Resilient Person

The resilience construct, as in the case of career success, is analyzed from the point of view of the participant's employment status, age, and gender. The analysis of the data (Table 1) coincides with a man, although, due to the difference between the two genders, it could be a man or a woman, and a private company manager between 46 and 60 years of age.

### 3.4. Characteristics of the Creative Person

Finally, the exploratory analysis yields the characteristics of the creative person. These data (Table 1) help us to configure the characteristics of people who demonstrate high levels of creativity. In this specific case, it would be a man under 45 years of age who has achieved a high position in his company (manager in a private company) thanks to qualified training and high professional competence. A second profile that stands out for demonstrating high creativity would be that of a young and enterprising woman (influencer) who has great weight in the market of trends and social networks.

### 3.5. Correlation Analysis

The use of quantitative variables, the normal distribution of the samples, the similar variances, and a sample size that is greater than 30 cases determine the non-parametric nature of the test [120]. Therefore, Spearman's correlation (Table 2) is used, whose correlation coefficient  $r$  varies between  $-1$  and  $1$ . The closer it is to  $1$ , the stronger the correlation, and the closer it is to  $0$ , the less correlated it is. It is generally accepted that a value of  $0.70$  indicates a high correlation between the variables studied.

Table 2 shows a positive correlation between objective career success and subjective career success ( $0.32$ ); in this case, a statistically significant (between  $0.20$  and  $0.39$ ) and directly proportional linear relationship was found. A statistically significant (between  $0.20$  and  $0.39$ ) and directly proportional linear relationship was found between objective career success and resilience ( $0.39$ ). No statistically significant linear relationship was found for

objective career success and creativity (0.13). For subjective career success and resilience (0.31), a statistically significant (0.20 and 0.39) and directly proportional linear relationship was found. For subjective career success and creativity (−0.09), there was no statistically significant relationship. Finally, for creativity and resilience (0.01), no statistically significant linear relationship was found either. When analyzing the information by stratum, we see that, in all cases, except for creativity, there are significant differences between the Unemployed, Managers, Influencers, Entrepreneurs, Employees, and Professors. The test showed, when analyzing age, that work stress, self-esteem and confidence, pragmatism, social bonds, and creativity do not offer significant data (Table 3).

**Table 2.** Spearman’s correlation matrix.

	Obj. Success		Subj. Success		Resilience		Creativity		$\alpha$
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	
Objective success	1.0		0.32 *	0.00	0.39 *	0.00	0.13	0.06	—
Subjective success	0.32 *	0.00	1.0		0.31 *	0.00	−0.09	0.21	0.76
Resilience	0.39 *	0.00	0.31 *	0.00	1.0		0.01	0.87	0.79
Creativity	0.13	0.06	−0.09	0.21	0.01	0.87	1.0		0.92

Note:  $n = 200$ ; \*  $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 3.** Kruskal Wallis H test for stratum and age.

	Stratum			Age		
	Kruskal-Wallis <i>H</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Kruskal-Wallis <i>H</i>	df	<i>p</i>
<b>Objective success</b>	156.57	5	0.000 *	9.60	3	0.022 *
<b>Subjective success</b>	39.48	5	0.000 *	29.56	3	0.000 *
Work stress	11.21	5	0.047	4.28	3	0.233
Work-family conflict	65.18	5	0.000 *	35.49	3	0.000 *
Work-time conflict	76.32	5	0.000 *	13.06	3	0.005 *
Job satisfaction	128.07	5	0.000 *	13.30	3	0.004 *
Life satisfaction	45.19	5	0.000 *	19.68	3	0.000 *
<b>Resilience</b>	54.81	5	0.000 *	30.24	3	0.000 *
Self-esteem & confidence	49.94	5	0.000 *	7.74	3	0.052
Satisfaction	20.57	5	0.001 *	22.81	3	0.000 *
Learning	52.66	5	0.000 *	35.80	3	0.000 *
Pragmatism	30.24	5	0.000 *	5.60	3	0.132
Clear goals & achievement motivation	39.12	5	0.000 *	15.57	3	0.001 *
Social bonds	17.80	5	0.003 *	2.77	3	0.427
<b>Creativity</b>	3.68	5	0.596	0.83	3	0.841

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ .

#### 4. Discussion

As we have seen, the term success is not a firm or immovable construct; on the contrary, success is understood as something that is circumstantial and relative to the field in which it is used. In the professional field, success is linked to one of the main factors that make up an individual’s life [1] and his or her happiness [2,3], which is of the utmost importance. This means that studies that present the path or way to achieve professional success are increasingly necessary. Thus, a large number of studies have emerged that relate and define success as the positive fit between aspirations, competencies, and skills [121], or the succession of successes and victories [14], academic performance [122], fame [29], perseverance, commitment, and leadership [123], or merely the perceived salary [32].

These views of success, which may have a role in sports or academic research, were too limited for our work. Therefore, we opted for a more holistic view of success [27,35,123–127], which, at the same time, has been widely used and defended in research in recent years [19–21].

Following this approach, the data obtained (Table 1) allow us to draw the profile of the person who has been or is successful in his or her profession, both objectively and subjectively. Thus, the profile of the person who is objectively successful in his or her career coincides with a male on the verge of retirement, emeritus, or retired, who has been a senior manager or an academic, preferably a professor. The profile of the person who is subjectively successful in their profession is a woman, although it could also be a man, over 60 years of age, who is a professor or an employee, in any case, a woman with a high professional level.

Both of the dimensions seem to converge when it comes to determining the characteristics of the professionally successful person (objective and subjective) in our society: a professor, mostly male, who has remained active and has overcome work barriers and personal goals to achieve a job of recognition, a high salary, and a prestigious position in his organization. A profile of overall career success is also drawn in the two professional categories that have been chosen as indicators of objective career success: influencers and managers, as well as a third profile within the low or medium level of career success indicators: employees and average wage earners.

The results coincide with studies analyzed, which, like ours, consider the dual aspect of career success, objective and subjective [25].

#### 4.1. Career Success and Resilience

In the theoretical review of the term resilience, a certain unanimity has been found in the doctrine. Although some research confuses resilience with hard-earned success [128] or with the capacity to resist stressful events, personal misfortunes, and calamities [62], most of the theoretical review coincides in pointing to the capacity of human beings to face adversity, assume its consequences, and try to internalize them in order to emerge strengthened and with new vital objectives [62,129,130].

In much of the aforementioned theoretical review [16,27,47], the construct “resilience” is already positioned as a fundamental capacity for all those who face the hard road to success (objective and/or subjective). Thus, this capacity has been considered in our study as a necessary quality when facing the challenges and dynamics of a professional career aimed at personal and/or social triumph.

The data obtained refute this theoretical assumption (Table 2) and, in this sense, the analysis of correlations allows us to highlight the importance of this ability in the struggle for professional success, whether objective or subjective. A positive correlation shows the unequivocal similarity of resilient people to those who have achieved professional success in their careers.

In our study (Table 1), this positive correlation translates into the dominance of some sample strata over others. First, the group of managers turned out to be the most resilient group, which is predictable if we consider that this group has to face an endless number of stressful and diverse situations to maintain the effective management of their company in a global, fluctuating, and threatening market.

Second, we find the professors, a professional category that requires constant training, innovation, and overcoming of challenges, which are associated with having a reputation and prestige in the scientific community. In this field, there is strong competition, high quality standards, and a “name” at stake in each of the publications or papers presented. Entrepreneurs, a group that seems to be the most affected by stress, appears, however, in third place. Gender is almost unchanged, because even though men appear to be more resilient than women, the difference is so small that it is not significant [131]. Therefore, the profile of the resilient person is a man (even though, due to the difference between the two genders, it can be a man or a woman) who is a manager between 46 and 60 years of age, i.e., with a lot of experience in life, in society, and at work. Additionally, of course, he has already done everything that was expected of him in life.

Previous studies [132,133] have obtained similar results to those that were obtained in this study when relating resilience to gender and age. More specific studies close to our

object of study [16,27,47] also demonstrate the correlation between success and resilience. However, although not many studies have dealt with this subject, most of the reviews mention dimensions that are quite close to career success when referring to resilience: coping, positive attitude, perseverance, self-efficacy, and optimism [129].

#### 4.2. Career Success and Creativity

A large part of the scientific community [101–103] assumes that creativity is intimately linked to the evolutionary capacity of our species: without creativity, there is no evolution. This statement directly relates creativity to innovation, learning, and the search for new opportunities. All of these qualities are intimately linked to the conception of success [123].

In the literature reviewed [134], creativity is considered the capacity and power to develop new ideas [135–137]. These ideas, in addition to being original and innovative, must also be relevant in their context. This is depicted in a figure that is frequently used in the literature, “the triangle of creativity” [138], which defines this capacity and names the vertices of a very broad set of concepts: the field of consciousness and flexibility, the abundance of ideas and their ease, and, finally, the originality of these ideas. This simplification of the details surrounding creativity serves to reveal its complexity and leads to the search for new contributions that complement the global vision of the term. This globalizing conception of creativity reinforces the idea of the necessary coexistence and interrelation of the person with his or her context, possibilities, intrinsic motivation, knowledge, cognitive characteristics, and personal characteristics, all of which are conducive to professional success. Thus, much of the creativity is related to the ability to generate questions, question what is established, valuable, or novel, and engage in change and divergence. Creativity has to be integrated and interrelated with the circumstances, the process, and the evolution of the context, the product, and the person. Finally, it must be focused on an idea or a product, in this case, professional success.

The research conducted (Table 1) indicates that creativity is concentrated in the under 30 age group and decreases throughout life. Our study shows an upturn at the end of working life (over 60), perhaps being associated with professionals who continue to maintain passion and enthusiasm for their work because the data are strongly conditioned by the sectors of professors and managers. These data are in line with numerous studies on creativity that state that, if we do not practice it, it starts declining throughout life [139].

The data show that the stratum of executives shows the most creativity, with Influencers in second place. These values are understood in both professions as being related to success and creativity. On the one hand, managers have to constantly be creative, given that their decisions and actions have to anticipate the market, competition, or variables. Influencers are, if possible, even a more logical value. They are people associated with the characteristics of the creative product: originality, brilliance, modernity, innovation, and popularity, because success in this case is given by the sample selection.

No studies have been found that compare or correlate the different professions with the indices or values of creativity demonstrated. We think that this is a most interesting field, and that this study can be a first approach to reaching broader conclusions about the triad studied here.

Taking the above into account, two types of creative people are found: (1) a female under 30, a successful influencer who has had the creativity to stand out in front of millions through her networks by marketing her talent to influence others; and, (2) a male over 60 with a wealth of experience, i.e., an established and late-career manager. These portraits coincide with the types of people who have or have had professional (at least objective) success in their careers. As noted above, there is no statistically significant evidence to support the conclusions of the study, but there is palpable evidence of the impact of the construct on a person’s career success.

Both sets of traits, even without supporting the data in the statistical analyses, coincide with those that were described for people who demonstrate or have demonstrated objective and subjective career success in their careers.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, and in order to respond to the research objectives, we present a synthesis of the most relevant data that we found in carrying out our study. These results are based on the sample selected and evaluated for the research, which is, two hundred people who are representative of the socio-demographic universe under study.

With regard to objective career success, the conclusions of this research are that, on the one hand, salary prevails over prestige, fame, or position. This is confirmed by the fact that Executives that are associated with a higher salary are the professionals who stand out most in the measurement of objective professional success, with an average score of 10.36. Next, with a score of 9.16 and 8.64, respectively, are the positions most associated with merit (Professors) or with fame and recognition (Influencers). Thus, it is easy to understand that, in this hyper-capitalized society, success is directly related to the economy and, although it is somewhat debatable, it is understood that the person who earns the most money is the most successful. On the other hand, it can also be observed that, although society is moving towards a more equitable model for women, there is still a glass ceiling that invalidates the female gender in positions of power and success. This can be seen, above all, in private enterprise. It can also be concluded that creativity and youth make up a model that is also considered successful. In contrast to the first premise, which refers to salary, in this new model, the role of women stands out above that of men. Finally, experience and resilience are another level, which can be demonstrated by observing those professionals who do not give up, continue to train and take risks throughout their careers, and are seen as successful professionals. Top managers in private companies stand out, but professors are also a stratum to be taken into account in this model.

In the case of the person who is subjectively successful, unlike in the previous conclusions, other values that were already observed in the theoretical analysis take precedence. In this regard, success no longer depends on the person's professional stratum. In contrast to the objective model of success, a better position, more money, or more fame is not always equated with the fulfilment of personal goals or one's own conception of success. The successful self-assessment of creativity or resilience is more humanistic in women and more rationalistic in men.

Peace of mind, medium or low stress, and a certain degree of job stability make us perceive ourselves as more successful in this category. Therefore, subjective success is associated with a working life without too many problems, allowing us to enjoy our free time, family, and social ties. Women prevail over men on this issue. Aspects, such as work-life balance or the importance of the family, seem to be more necessary and important for women. Perhaps in this sense, maternity policies should evolve in order to make both sexes participate in this necessary balance between family and work.

The study conclusions referring to the resilient person determine that resilience increases with age, through the sum of experiences and lifelong learning. As we age, we become stronger, more elastic, and, in short, more resilient. When referring to resilience, and contrary to the case of career success, we are not talking about gender. Thus, greater physical strength does not guarantee a better attitude towards life's problems or constraints. Job stress can be an important learning experience for those who know how to redirect it, can see learning where there was defeat, and can endure and carry on despite the stones in the road. Resilience is built more on the personal level and different life experiences, rather than on the work environment itself [140]. We can apply what we have learned and improve on it, but it is clear that we have to acquire a foundation before we can successfully face a competitive, stressful, or overly challenging work environment.

In the case of the creative person, based on the above, we can conclude that creativity is a value that is associated with youth, a capacity that we must not stop stimulating and training if we want to maintain it throughout our development. Creativity is postulated as a value that is strongly associated with objective career success. Perhaps following the most innovative and hitherto untraced route can guarantee an advantage in this competitive

society. Although the difference is not significant, in the sample of participants, men outperform women in terms of creativity.

The conclusions of the study help us to draw a creative and resilient profile of the successful person in his or her profession. Although there are various external factors (luck, recommendations, social, economic, or personal circumstances, etc.), it is clear that creativity and resilience are both strongly positioned as internal advantages for achieving career success in the proposed company.

The limitations of the current study are mainly associated with the relatively small sample size, due to the difficulty in finding a balanced sample across the different strata. Second, we cannot infer with certainty the causal direction of our variables due to our cross-sectional design. Therefore, we recommend that future studies employ longitudinal research designs. A study like this one could also be enriched by incorporating a qualitative approach into the research to help understand the complexity of the constructs under investigation.

Despite the limitations, we believe that this study can be the starting point for further research in this field, and it can also serve as a guideline for future researchers in finding new topics. Thus, we suggest the following as a collaboration method: investigate success from the perspective of its influence on the behavior of men and women in identical situations; analyze the relationship between creativity and innovation and determine the definitions of the two concepts; extend the study of creativity in the field of career success and identify which creative values are required by different professional profiles; compare the professional performance of people who show greater resilience than others; and, deepen the study and systematization of values, such as resilience and creativity, in the school stages because these two professional qualities will greatly influence people's careers.

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