

Resilience in the university context, a mixed exploratory study Roman

La resiliencia en el contexto universitario, un estudio mixto exploratorio

Resiliência no contexto universitário, um estudo exploratório misto

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Luis Alberto Monzón Pinglo

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2753-8799>

Maestría en Ciencias de la Educación. Docente de la UGEL Chiclayo y del CEBA Bruning Collage, UGEL - Chiclayo, Chiclayo (Perú). E-mail: luisalbertomonzonpinglo@gmail.com.

Juan Diego Dávila Cisneros

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2700-8830>

Doctor en Sociología. Docente universitario y asesor del Vicerrectorado Académico, Universidad Nacional Pedro Ruiz Gallo, Lambayeque (Perú). E-mail: jdavilaci@unprg.edu.pe.

Esteban Rodríguez Torres

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3571-6899>

Maestría en ciencias de la educación. Docente e investigador, Universidad de Ciego de Ávila Máximo Gómez Báez, Ciego de Ávila (Cuba). E-mail: ert931025@gmail.com.

Alfredo Javier Pérez Gamboa

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4555-7518>

Doctor en Ciencias de la Educación. Docente e investigador, Universidad de Ciego de Ávila Máximo Gómez Báez, Ciego de Ávila (Cuba). E-mail: frejavier92@gmail.com

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Resumen

Introducción: los contextos educativos actuales, evidencian disímiles niveles que muestran cómo son variadas las problemáticas que están presentes en los estudiantes universitarios en cuanto a factores sociales y psicológicos se refiere. Dichas problemáticas emergen debido a las exigencias que, cada vez más, aumentan su nivel de dificultad. De ahí la importancia de lograr un diagnóstico eficiente de los niveles de resiliencia en los educandos universitarios, que facilite el trabajo resiliente y orientador en los mismos; **Objetivo:** diagnosticar los niveles de resiliencia y las vías para su desarrollo en los estudiantes universitarios de la Especialidad de Ciencias Naturales de la Facultad de Ciencias Históricas Sociales y Educación en la Universidad Nacional Pedro Ruiz del Gallo; **Metodología:** la investigación se llevó a cabo a través de un estudio mixto exploratorio, donde se combinaron métodos de recolección y análisis, tanto cualitativo como cuantitativos, así como la producción de meta inferencias mediante los resultados obtenidos; **Resultados:** se evidencia como la conceptualización de la resiliencia, así como su presencia en los discursos y la propia cultura organizacional, son insuficientes; **Conclusiones:** la resiliencia juega un papel determinante en los contextos educacionales en la actualidad, pues contribuye favorablemente a alcanzar índices elevados en la resolución de problemáticas. Asimismo, propicia niveles efectivos de desarrollo en los estudiantes y contribuye a la disminución de afecciones como el estrés y otras afecciones que inciden en la vida estudiantil universitaria.

Palabras clave: Resiliencia; Transformación; Comportamiento; Universidad; Investigación¹

Abstract

Introduction: current educational contexts show dissimilar levels that demonstrate how the problems that are present in university students are varied in terms of social and psychological factors. These problems arise due to the demands that increasingly raise their level of difficulty. Hence, the importance of achieving an efficient diagnosis of university students' resilience levels, which facilitates resilient and guiding work in them; **Objective:** to diagnose resilience levels and pathways for their development in university students of the Natural Sciences Major of the Faculty of Social Historical Sciences and Education at the National University Pedro Ruiz del Gallo; **Methodology:** a mixed exploratory study was conducted, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods, along with the production of meta-inferences based on the results obtained; **Results:** the conceptualization of resilience, as well as its presence in discourse and the organizational culture itself, were found to be insufficient; **Conclusions:** resilience plays a decisive role in today's educational contexts, as it contributes favorably to achieving high levels of problem-solving. Likewise, it promotes effective student development and contributes to the reduction of conditions such as stress that affect university students' lives.

Keywords: Resilience; Transformation; Behavior; University; Research.

¹ Los términos clave han sido recuperados a partir del Tesoro UNESCO (Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades).



Resumo

Introdução: os contextos educacionais atuais apresentam diferentes níveis que demonstram a variedade de problemas presentes nos estudantes universitários em termos de fatores sociais e psicológicos. Esses problemas surgem devido às demandas que aumentam cada vez mais seu nível de dificuldade. Daí a importância de se obter um diagnóstico eficiente dos níveis de resiliência dos estudantes universitários, o que facilita o trabalho de resiliência e orientação dos mesmos; **Objetivo:** diagnosticar os níveis de resiliência e as formas de seu desenvolvimento em estudantes universitários da Especialidade de Ciências Naturais da Faculdade de Ciências Históricas, Sociais e Educacionais da Universidade Nacional Pedro Ruiz del Gallo; **Metodologia:** a pesquisa foi realizada por meio de um estudo exploratório misto, no qual foram combinados métodos qualitativos e quantitativos de coleta e análise, bem como a produção de meta-inferências por meio dos resultados obtidos; **Resultados:** fica evidente como a conceitualização de resiliência, bem como sua presença nos discursos e na própria cultura organizacional, são insuficientes; **Conclusões:** a resiliência desempenha um papel decisivo nos contextos educacionais atuais, pois contribui favoravelmente para alcançar altos níveis de resolução de problemas. Da mesma forma, favorece níveis efetivos de desenvolvimento nos alunos e contribui para a redução de condições como o estresse e outras condições que afetam a vida do estudante universitário.

Palavras-chave: Resiliência; Transformação; Comportamento; Universidade; Pesquisa.



INTRODUCTION

The history of humanity is marked by the struggle for survival. Today, this struggle, with other nuances and dimensions, demands active subjects capable of facing, in a manner committed to development and well-being, multiple adversities.

Among other phenomena and complex social processes, society is facing socio-health problems such as the increase in anxious and depressive disorders, addictions, criminality and new forms of violence, as well as diseases of various kinds. In the specific case of university students, this population suffers from comorbidities and concomitances related to social, psychological and biological factors, as they must face environments characterized by high levels of demand (Said-Hung et al., 2021; Bermúdez Villarroja et al., 2021; Awad-Sirhan et al., 2022; Fábregas-Rodado et al., 2023).

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, its abrupt irruption and wide range of consequences, the socio-psychological and structural tools that condition the response of individuals, groups and populations have gained special interest within academic circles. Multiple studies have focused on understanding the factors, variables or units of analysis that condition the way in which human beings deal with stressful situations, complex demands and their own evaluation of this process (Prosser et al., 2020; Tasso et al., 2021; Hernández Belaidés et al., 2023).

These studies have highlighted the cognitive and affective aspects involved, the socio-psychological mechanisms and other structures that underlie the normative and paranormative life course, and their consequences on motivation, commitment and the continuity of the daily life in which these processes converge. Thus, two major categories emerge, either separately or jointly, in the literature: resilience and coping (Cruwys et al., 2020; Yang & Wong, 2020).

According to these authors, these two categories have been studied in association with others that, at a glance, mark concerns that are vital for development. Issues such as the meaning of life, well-being and hope, adherence to treatment, social bonding, problem solving, adaptation to new contexts, response to stressful situations or closure, are some of the most frequent.

However, in an increasingly complex and fast-paced world, preparing for life from a resilient perspective is a priority for political and educational agendas. Adopting a passive approach to this need seems a bet doomed to fail, hence countries and institutions discuss and design programs to promote resilience.

Recognizing the possibility of influencing resilience in a preventive and development-oriented manner points to the importance of preparing educators, students and other significant university agents. This preparation and its organization in concrete actions linked to social and institutional programs constitutes a fundamental challenge and has been recognized by organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) (Wamsler & Johannessen, 2020; Chirisa, 2021).

In this regard, the Universidad Nacional Pedro Ruiz Gallo (UNPRG) presents as one of its main pro-

The purpose is to train innovative, ethical, critical and competitive scientists and professionals, capable of actively and pragmatically contributing to the integral and sustainable development of the community. With this premise as an articulating axis, it is necessary to diagnose the levels of resilience and the ways for its development in university students.

As has been argued, the final purpose is the formation of active citizens, capable of positively and successfully facing diverse adverse situations, aimed at learning and transforming reality through their experiences. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the students' abilities and potentialities to positively confront, without renouncing a critical approach, the situations of daily life and the stressors and potentially disruptive factors.

However, the screening process conducted showed concern among the faculty of the Natural Sciences Specialty of the School of Social-Historical Sciences and Education regarding the resilience of students. Through participant observation, interviews with gatekeepers and discussion within the research team, several problems were identified, such as limited problem-solving skills, deficient critical evaluation of situations perceived as adverse and poor affective development.

If one considers the students' future employment after graduation, the professional problems they will face and the importance of their social role as educators of future generations, the results are unfavorable. This state of affairs supports the intention of preparing students to be resilient in their future lives, in all areas of development.

For this reason, it is considered urgent to establish ways for the solution of the problem, its attention from the study plan, the curricular transformation and the orientation of university processes to reinforce resilient attitudes. This claim, which can be contrasted in the international literature, must be channeled from the awareness of the problem and the preparation of those involved in order to transform their practices. Hence the need to have a diagnosis of the resilience of the students of the Natural Sciences Specialty of the Faculty of Historical-Social Sciences and Education.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Resilience refers to a behavior linked to adaptive behavior, all this through an optimistic vision of one's own competencies, in the emotional, cognitive and social order, respectively. It also includes various components such as the social component, which benefits the quality of life, as well as the achievement of an integral well-being of the person, both at a structural and physical level and at a psychological and emotional level (Brewer et al., 2019; Dohaney et al., 2020; Tudor et al., 2020; Páez, 2020, Appolloni et al., 2021; Castro et al., 2021).

In this sense, Páez (2020) and Castro et al. (2021) have mentioned that it is a capacity that human beings have to face and withstand complicated situations, which can be manifested through effective responses and actions when a risk situation arises. These responses are initially considered to be innate reactions; however, with the passage of time they can be assimilated and elaborated through experience.



On the other hand, resilience can be considered as an element of adaptability, set in motion once the individual experiences dangerous situations, where it increasingly gains prominence in current times, due to the difficult socio-cultural and economic situations through which societies are passing (Appolloni et al., 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was supported by the mixed research route, as its approach allowed the design of a research strategy that combined both qualitative and quantitative methods of collection and analysis, as well as the production of meta-inferences from the results (Hernández Sampieri & Mendoza Torres, 2018). The specific strategy employed was the sequential exploratory one, recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2017), this type of mixed design involved an initial phase of data collection and analysis from a qualitative perspective, followed by a second phase on the basis of the results achieved.

This approach allowed, initially, to explore the attitudes, behaviors and coping processes with the purpose of achieving a descriptive framework of the state of resilience of the students of the Specialty of Natural Sciences of the School of Historical-Social Sciences and Education. This initial approach confirmed the need to delve deeper into aspects of resilience, and thus achieve a clearer picture of the state of the phenomenon from the students' perception, all with a view to informing future interventions.

Although both Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Hernández Sampieri and Mendoza Torres (2018) have pointed out that the main strategy of this type of mixed designs is the construction of a questionnaire, two ready-made techniques were used in the research conducted. This decision was made based on what was analyzed in a group discussion of the team of researchers on the validity of both and their approval by a committee of experts (2 educational psychologists, 1 sociologist and 2 pedagogues).

Due to the exploratory-descriptive scope of the study, the overall mixed design was not aimed at generalizing the results. Instead, an accurate diagnosis and clarification of the conditions for future psychoeducational, psychological and pedagogical care processes were pursued.

The first was conducted through the guidance of a basic qualitative research design. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), this type of design differs from more advanced qualitative studies because, although it adheres to the general principles of qualitative methodology, it does not pursue the specific purposes of the other designs (phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography).

In order to achieve epistemological coherence throughout the study, this design was adopted to weight the descriptive aspects and lay the groundwork for more complex qualitative studies. In this phase, semi-structured participant observation, in-depth interview and document review were used, all in accordance with the recommendations of Merriam and Tisdell (2015). The sample consisted of four teachers, six students and two managers. Different teaching and non-teaching activities were also observed, as well as the review of study plans and other official documents.



The analysis of the data collected was carried out simultaneously with the collection, which, in addition to an in-depth approach, allowed the creation of a joint database composed of transcripts and observations. The final analysis was based on the identification of raw codes, as well as the processing and elaboration of a network of categories, with the assistance of the ATLAS program. ti 7.5.4 .

The second phase was carried out transactionally with the application of the techniques in two moments. First, the resilience questionnaire for university students (CRE-U), recommended by Morgan Asch (2021), was applied, followed by the inventory of personal resilience factors, recommended by Meza-Cueto et al. (2020). The analysis of the results was carried out according to the protocols, with the assistance of the Excel tool.

The final sample was composed of 75 intentionally selected students, since, being an exploratory study, the entire population (N=135) was asked to sign the informed consent form after the objectives of the study were explained. The final sample was formed in this way due to the non-signing of the consent form (unwillingness to participate in the study), the non-presence in both doses of the technique, and the poor completion of the protocol.

Finally, the main partial results obtained were presented, as well as the integration of both and their dissemination. This decision was due to the fact that the convergence of the etic and emic perspectives of qualitative research was weighted in the study, which favored the achievement of a more critical, less biased view of the results (Bergman & Lindgren, 2018).

4. RESULTS

The field work began guided by a fundamental question: are the students of the Natural Sciences Specialty of the School of Historical-Social Sciences and Education resilient? This question synthetically expressed the desire to understand attitudes and behaviors observed in the students, evaluated with concern by the faculty and in terms of an "ideal mode" of posture before university studies.

Although the beginning of the study was mediated by this perception of "insufficient" approach of students (as a population) to university studies, it soon took shape in an emerging set of aspects related to their ability to cope with objective or subjectively unfavorable situations. At the beginning, both in the observation and in the interviews, the notes taken, as well as the direct and indirect mentions to "resilient attitudes" or "resilient behaviors", were mainly directed to the "academic" or "educational" aspects of university life and its adversities.

This "gateway" to the problem was represented as logical by both key participants and researchers, as it referred to issues rooted in the social representation of the university, the purpose and tasks of students, as well as the approach and work of the faculty. In this sense, it was assessed that, for some participants, certain difficulties (failing or failing an exam) were "natural" events and part of "being a university student", while for others, they were "natural" and part of "being a university student".



others advocated a more coping-oriented view of the event.

From the discussion of the data, the authors assessed that, in both cases, these responses and behaviors expressed limitations in terms of a more or less conscious appreciation of the causes. As a result, it was assumed that resilience could be considered as a natural process, an inherited factor or a posture adopted in the face of a circumstance.

This approach to resilience based on interpretations anchored to specific points by the participants suggested the need to explore the conceptualization of resilience and its perceived importance in the context. This new purpose made it possible to delve deeper into the way resilience was manifestly represented and the contrast with the factors or conditions to be observed according to the documentary study conducted.

From the genesis of the exploration, essential aspects of *r e s i l i e n c e* quickly appeared in the discourse of the participants. Some of the clearest mentions were "style or way of solving problems", "how you cope with life circumstances", "what you do when you feel bad". However, it could not be affirmed that they constituted a regulatory element or an aspect dealt with in processes such as teaching or academic tutoring.

An essential aspect identified was the need for the teaching-learning process itself to contribute to resilience (not yet defined as a style, state, behavior, attitude or trait). A fact mentioned on multiple occasions is that teaching as a process can contribute, through project-based or problem-solving approaches, to enhance a "solution-oriented attitude", which, according to consensus, is one of the main limitations of students.

From this vision aimed at aspects of the educational context that may or may not promote resilience, the responses offered by the participants revealed associations with external conditions or factors that also affect the way in which people cope with "life's own circumstances". The most frequently mentioned were the external support that the person receives or has received, previous education, the role played by peers, and specific situations such as discrimination or violence.

Other relevant aspects highlighted in the interviews were personal aspects which, although they tended to appear directly linked to specific narratives and not as a conceptual component of resilience, were mentioned as "factors of the individual". These "factors" could explain, according to the participants, why certain "resilient behaviors" did or did not occur, as "some people were better equipped than others".

Aspects such as intelligence and capabilities, motivation and future goals were identified as positive. In contrast, aspects such as addictions (especially to technology and social networks), poverty or other "situations of vulnerability", diseases or medical (and psychological, although not directly mentioned) conditions, were identified as negative.

The analysis of the results yielded a total of 19 codes, organized into four major categories (daily life disruptors, pre-existing and present conditions, pedagogical, educational and psychological supports, personal factors) (see Figure 1). In addition, two categories appeared mo-

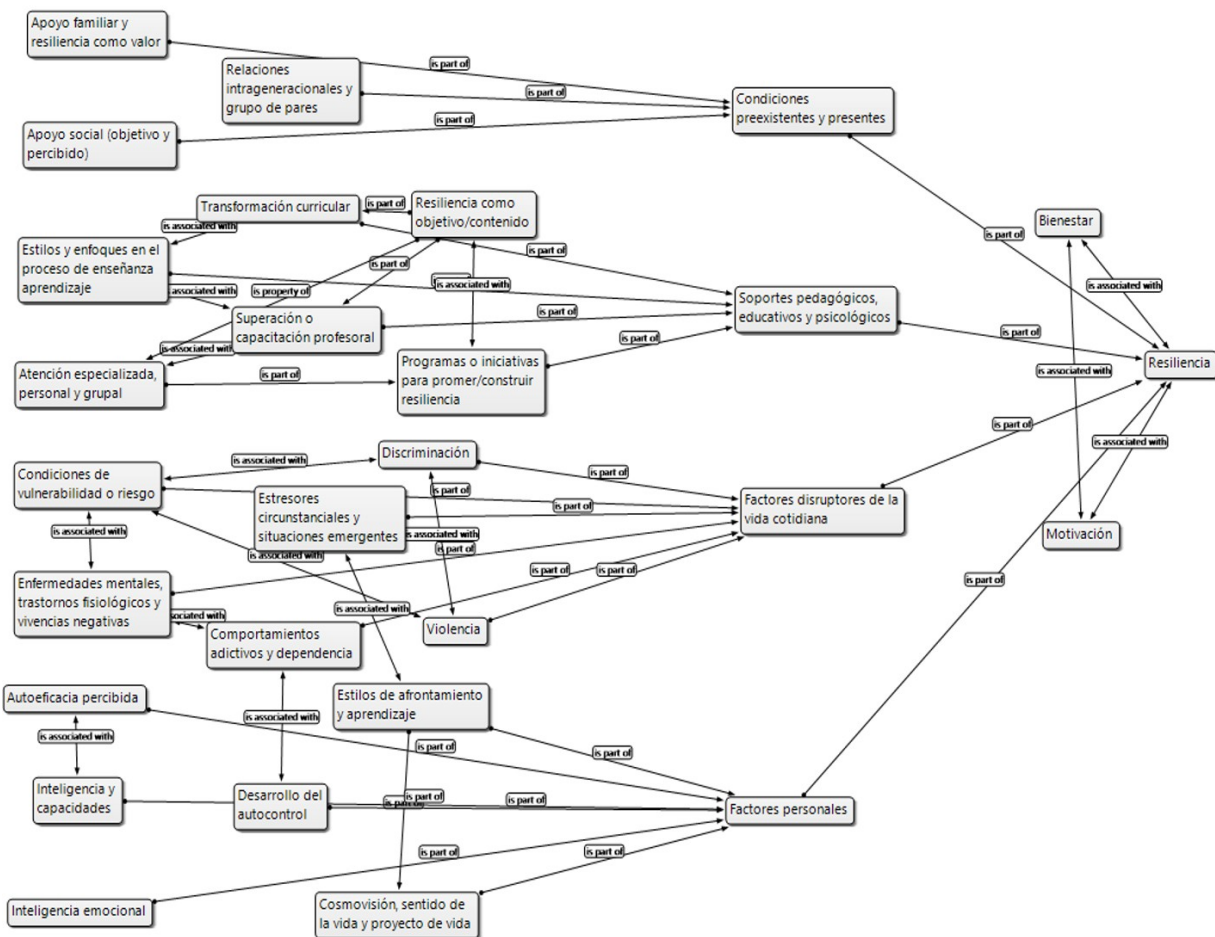
These factors should be analyzed in greater depth, as they structure the way in which resilient behaviors are produced: well-being and motivation.

Another important result of the analysis was the establishment of relationships between the codes, although it is necessary to go deeper into the relationship between codes of the different categories, for which an advanced qualitative study is required, preferably a focused ethnography or grounded theory. Furthermore, it is vital to emphasize that the establishment of more complex relationships (causal) is required, but this purpose goes beyond the design and epistemological stance of this research.

In a general sense, it was appreciated that the conceptualization of resilience, as well as its presence in the discourse, activity designs and organizational culture itself, were insufficient. However, it is necessary to highlight that the way in which the research itself was received, the positive evaluation and the discussion of the results, suggest the presence of potentialities to transform this reality.

Figura 1

Red de códigos, categorías y relaciones



Nota: Elaboración propia.



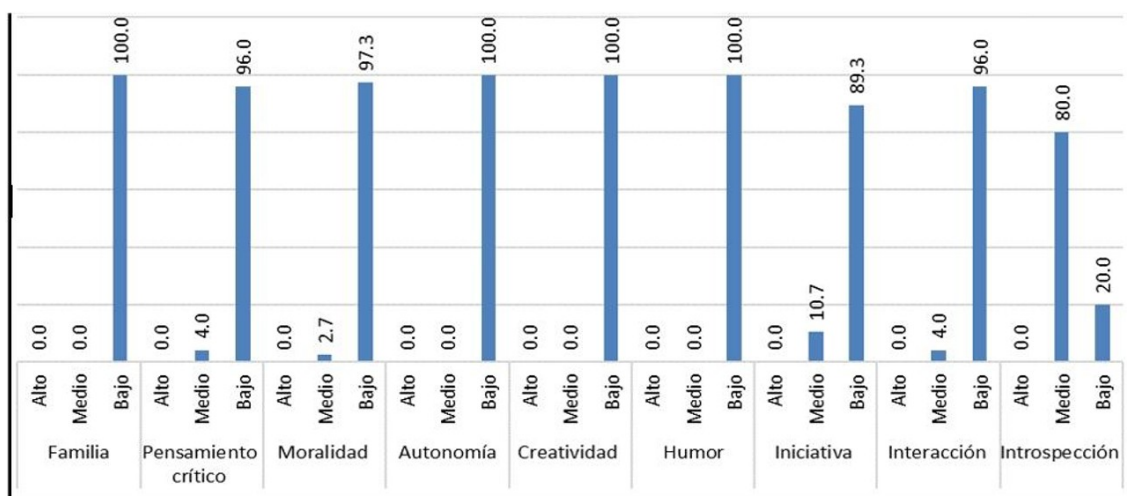
As for the results of the questionnaires, their analysis showed that, as anticipated, the level of resilience ranges from medium to low. As previously observed, levels that could be understood as high were not identified in the sample. In particular, factors associated with support networks, readiness for problem solving and active learning, personality development and self-representation as resilient were found to be affected.

A striking participatory result was related to the high frequencies of the low level identified by the students. This is due to the fact that, although it was expected that the scores would tend to be low, it was not anticipated that they would present this behavior. The interpretation of these suggests the need for a more in-depth study and the application of a test battery accompanied by at least a basic qualitative study or as part of a complex mixed design.

In essence, the results pointed toward new studies with more complex designs, as well as clear hypotheses on the possible factors or conditioning factors acting on students, professors and the university context. The discussion within the research team identified as possible study developments those with a gender focus, by academic year and in different processes of university life. It was also evaluated that these studies should include varied samples in order to achieve a holistic approach to the causes and consequences of these low levels of resilience.

Figura 2

Nivel de resiliencia en los estudiantes



Nota. La figura muestra el nivel de resiliencia en los educandos de la Especialidad de Ciencias Naturales de la Facultad de Ciencias Históricas Sociales y Educación en la UNPRG - Lambayeque, según dimensión.

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Tabla 2*Nivel de resiliencia en los estudiantes*

		Frecuencia	Porcentaje
Introspección	Bajo	15	20.0
	Medio	60	80.0
	Alto	-	-
Interacción	Bajo	72	96.0
	Medio	3	4.0
	Alto	-	-
Iniciativa	Bajo	67	89.3
	Medio	8	10.7
	Alto	-	-
Humor	Bajo	75	100.0
	Medio	-	-
	Alto	-	-
Creatividad	Bajo	75	100.0
	Medio	-	-
	Alto	-	-
Autonomía	Bajo	75	100.0
	Medio	-	-
	Alto	-	-
Moralidad	Bajo	73	97.3
	Medio	2	2.7
	Alto	-	-
Pensamiento crítico	Bajo	72	96.0
	Medio	3	4.0
	Alto	-	-
Familia	Bajo	75	100.0
	Medio	-	-
	Alto	-	-
Total		75	100

Nota. La tabla muestra el nivel de resiliencia en los estudiantes de la Especialidad de Ciencias Naturales de la Facultad de Ciencias Históricas Sociales y Educación en la UNPRG – Lambayeque, según dimensiones.

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the preceding studies and the specialized international literature allowed us to confirm the relevance of the study conducted and its implications for the future. Several studies associate low levels of resilience to different problems (Lyvers et al., 2020), such as poor development of self-esteem, anxious and depressive symptoms, perceived vulnerability and difficulties in leading a healthy daily life (Sánchez et al., 2016; Snaychuk & O'Neill, 2020; Cénat et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2023; Prada Segura et al., 2023; Torres Barreto et al., 2023).

Since the low levels were generalized in the sample studied, it is necessary to identify whether these results were conditioned by the transactional cut of the application of the tests or whether they are contrasted with the transactional cut of the application of the tests.



sistent with the presence of other factors that act as direct causes. Studies internationally have shown that resilience and support networks occupy a moderating role in the face of stress and especially challenging situations such as testing periods or more complex processes such as school success/failure or dropout (Backmann et al., 2019; Nisma et al., 2022; Hu et al., 2023).

One of the most important aspects found in the review is the relationship between psychological and social well-being and resilience (Cuartero & Tur, 2021; Etherton et al., 2022; Quintiliani et al., 2022). Concepts related to performance such as perceived self-efficacy, skills or psychological aspects such as qualities or the meaning of life, constitute variables that, in conjunction with resilience or forming part of it, depending on the approach, positively favor mental and physical health in the context of university life (Walsh et al., 2020; Ang et al., 2021).

In addition to those mentioned, two other elements stand out that should be taken into account for future research. The first has to do with the possibilities of promoting resilience through different programs, subjects or specific topics (Amsrud et al., 2019; Baker et al., 2021; Cuartero & Tur, 2021). Highlighted among the options are programs based on Positive Psychology and Mindfulness (Chow et al., 2020; Flett et al., 2020; Neufeld et al., 2020; Samuel & Warner, 2021), educational/curricular innovation and interventions (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020; Walsh et al., 2020; Sullivan et al., 2023), as well as group-based or targeted approaches to enhance social support (Cui & Chi, 2021; Srivastava et al., 2021; Warshawski, 2022).

The second element has to do with a more complex aspect, if you will, as it implies the gnoseological consideration that, in order to form resilient people, resilient trainers/educators and contexts are required. This implies recognizing the importance of the resilience of teachers, parents and other significant adults, and implementing initiatives to promote their resilience (Baker et al., 2021; Hascher et al., 2021; Naidu, 2021; Yada et al., 2021; Squires et al., 2022).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that the diagnosis carried out on the levels of resilience, as well as the ways for its development in university students of the Specialty of Natural Sciences of the Faculty of Historical, Social Sciences and Education at the UNPRG, shows indexes located between medium and low. This means that it is necessary to restructure and reorient both actions and strategies to achieve the development of resilience in these students. Nowadays, resilience is a fundamental element that should be taken into account, especially in educational contexts, because it is increasingly common to observe how students suffer from psychological and emotional conditions during their time at university. This is why university institutions should draw up plans, actions and purposes that favor the development of resilience in their students, so that they can be able to face, efficiently and effectively, the new academic challenges that take place in today's society, which is changing at an accelerated pace due to the transformations in fields such as science and technology.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.



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