



## DIMENSIONS AND LEVEL OF RESILIENCE IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### KEYWORDS

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective of the study was to assess the levels of resilience in university students. The design was quantitative, descriptive of an exploratory nature, based on the questionnaire of Resilience, Strength and Personal Security, the sample consisted of 469 students. The results show that a favorable percentage of students is highly resilient in the six factors studied. There are also some statistically significant differences in factors, according to sex. In conclusion, students with a high level of resilience have greater skills and resources to face adverse situations, such as the pandemic, both academically and personally.*

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## 1. Introduction

In the face of the health crisis caused by COVID-19, that began in 2020, economic sectors, civil institutions, social organizations were forced to drastically change their operations. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommended social isolation, among other measures to try to prevent the spread of the virus, given this, the daily work of people was modified in every way. The ensuing social isolation and health risks brought with it both cognitive and emotional stress including frustration, pain, uncertainty and fear. Faced with this critical health crisis, it is a reality that every person has gone through some level of harm, fear, insecurity, and suffering.

Young people, and specifically students of all educational levels, were not oblivious to the pandemic. All levels of the educational enterprise, from early childhood education through tertiary education were affected. Principle among these changes was the widespread adoption virtual learning in lieu of face-to-face learn. This pedagogical evolution, widely embraced by educational leaders, caused bewilderment, stress and uncertainty among students, since a large percentage of them unfamiliar with virtual learning and therefore, were not prepared for this change in pedagogical practice (Suarez et al., 2021).

This unexpected and sudden change in the teaching-learning process created enormous academic and personal challenges for many students. Given this, Gómez et al., (2021) asserted that resilience plays an essential role in education. In practice, resiliency work as follows. A student checks the strengths he/she has to face threats and demands within his/her academic context, and in response, "at the biopsychosocial level, for which, he [she] brings out his [her] skills, abilities, etc., with which he[she] faces situations effectively" (p. 37).

On the other hand, Flores Vargas (2021) mentions that it is unavoidable to have the theoretical foundations that recognize, "having a baseline for detection and care of psychosocial factors that allow people to overcome adversity" (p. 271). Hence the importance and need to study resilience in university students who find themselves in an uncertain and drastic context caused by COVID-19. As Angeles-Donayre and Manrique (2021) point out, "it could be indicated that resilience is the force that allows people who have or are experiencing a difficult moment in their lives to improve in psychological terms" (p. 90).

Within the analyzed literature, there are various studies that reveal that there are various personal elements that are obtained and that can be promoted to facilitate the promotion of resilient practices, among which are: healthy coexistence, self-esteem, ability to express emotions, altruism, creativity, control of emotions, autonomy, self-confidence, feeling of self-efficacy, faith, encouragement, integrity and sense of humor (Benard, 2004; Uriarte, 2006; Luthar, 2007). These skills and knowledge "are susceptible to be taught, and therefore, may be learned either within the family or at school" (Aguar Andrade and Aclé-Tomasini, 2012, p. 54).

For these reasons, this research study on resilience among university students will have a significant contribution to the educational, scientific and social field. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the level of resilience in undergraduate students of a public university. The study was also designed to attempt to identify the impact of certain internal and external factors that affect the process of resilient practices. In the case of university students in risky and stressful situations, there are various protective and risk factors that can increase advantages or disadvantages in their daily actions, so it is necessary to carry out research in this group of young people.

There are many ways to define resilience. For example, Manciaux (cited in González Arriata et al., 2009) asserts that there is no specific definition. Specifically, Manciaux (2003) points out that the various research studies do not fully establish whether this term "is a process in itself, a process of precursor development of a result, a set of protection agents or the anticipated absence of risk factors" (p. 248).

Some authors have considered resilience as a biological need that evolves enabling individuals to fight against difficult, stressful and threatening situations without collapsing, on the contrary, to emerge stronger from them (Bernard, 1991; Grotberg, 2006).

Under this same approach, authors such as González Arriata et al., (2009) have described it as "an innate property of a living organism and a behavioral strategy of the individual to obtain resources to recover the biological and psych sociocultural balance that has been lost due to a situation of tension and adversity" (p. 248). According to Gamboa (2008), resilience is the qualities that are formed since

the being is conceived in the mother's womb, but it is also influenced by the family, social environment, practices and beliefs that the individual has developed. in their life.

On the other hand, resilience has been pointed out as a new approach from the perspective of human development, opposed to who determines what is inherited and to social marking (Vanistaendel, 2002). This author affirms that it is the universal capacity that is found in all subjects and in adverse situations and harmful contexts, qualities that allow us to face difficult situations and emerge stronger from negative experiences.

Rutter (1993) defines resilience as a process, arguing that it is not an innate characteristic that certain individuals possess, but rather it is a social and personal process that facilitates assuming a healthy life in an unfavorable environment. This process is carried out over time (since childhood), where the attributes and the family and social context are combined; that is why Rutter mentions that resilience is not a particularity with which one is born, but that it is created and permanently interacting with characteristics of the minor and their environment.

In the analyzed definitions, some authors can be found who include both approaches, both the capacity and the process ones. Among them, we have that of Uriarte (2005), who defines resilience as:

The ability of people to develop normally psychologically, despite living in risk contexts, such as environments of poverty and multi-problematic families, situations of prolonged stress, internment centers, etc. Also, it refers both to individuals in particular, and to family or school groups that are capable of minimizing and overcoming the harmful effects of adversity and disadvantaged and socioculturally deprived contexts. (p. 12)

Beyond the deductions of the concept, some authors, such as Ortunio and Guevara (2016), have recommended a certain classification of the particularities of resilience. Polk (1997) describes a classification of four patterns of resilience: 1) dispositions pattern, where the physical and psychological qualities connected with the ego are based; 2) the relational pattern, the qualities of relationships and bonds that influence resilience are understood; 3) situational pattern, is the one that refers to the union of the characteristics with the environment and is exposed as the skills of cognitive appreciation, and of solving problems, as well as the individualities that indicate competences to face a situation; and the 4) philosophical pattern, this appears in personal beliefs. Ortuño Magaly and Harold Guevara (2016) considered three essential factors of resilience "(the personality of the individual, his family and the availability of social support) in a stressful situation" (p.98).

On the other hand, Cyrulnik (2001) considers that in adulthood it could be considered whether the person is resilient, when he/she reports an adversity that represents the reconstruction of a trauma, meaning, if a person in childhood suffered a trauma, It will be in adulthood when he will demonstrate if he is resilient, how he deals with conflicts and how he revives thoughts and perceptions from when he was a child, since he will make use of his emotional and social resources. Cyrulnik himself, according to Ortega and Mijares (2018) mention that "empathy, humor, altruism are protective factors of resilience. Also clinging to a memory: for example, a piece of an object belonging to a deceased loved one is a symbol of rootedness that makes him strong to survive; it is like choosing, as if it were the creation of a play, some memories to recreate the past acquiring another meaning" (p. 36).

From another approach, we have the contributions of Melillo and Suarez (2001), who attribute resilience to the qualities of the subjects (internal factors), with the collaboration of external factors (people and society), to counteract adversities and try to collaboratively achieve well-being.

In recent decades, several researchers have begun to analyze models for the practice and implementation of resilience, with the conviction that it is possible to build it. Most scholars on this subject point out that currently every teacher, student, parent, manager, in fact, every person needs to develop the capacity to be resilient. In this regard, authors such as Puig and Rubio (2011), mention that the issue of resilience is to broaden a vision of social intervention by highlighting those conditions that enable a healthier and more positive development of people's potentialities.

In this regard, some variables function as protective elements. Thus, protective factors minimize danger, since the person's own practices and behaviors bring with them, reduce vulnerability and benefit the resistance of the damage caused (González Arratia, 2016). In relation, Córdova (2006) divides the protective factors into:

- Internal factors: means the qualities of aptitude or temperament, reasoning and personality traits.
- External factors: they are family cohesion, support and attention with which the person, from childhood, is appreciated, protected and loved by at least one of their parents.

In this study, the two sets of factors proposed by Grotberg (1999) are considered. The first set, the internal factors (I am/am), include the variables: personal security, altruism and individual self-esteem. The second set, the external factors (I have), include the variables: affiliation and family links with which the person has to face an adverse situation.

## 2. Methodology

The research has a quantitative approach, with a cross-sectional, descriptive correlational design of analysis of resilient factors in university students. It is a non-experimental study, because resilience was observed in a group of undergraduate university students who are facing a health crisis caused by COVID-19, and subsequently analyzed (Meza, 2019).

To achieve the objective and measure resilience, information was collected by applying a questionnaire through Google Drive (online). The applied instrument "Personal Strength and Safety" is divided into five factors that evaluate the degree of resilience in university students, a test developed and validated by González Arratia et al., (2008), Instrument that has a reliability of alpha .92 and specifies 43.498% variance. The questionnaire consisted of 44 items, using a Likert scale with a 5-point score ranging from 1=totally disagree to 5=totally agree. The dimensions to be addressed in the items are the following: 14 questions that correspond to the Personal Security factor; 12 items to the Self-esteem factor; 5 questions to the Affiliation factor; 5 items correspond to the Low Self-esteem factor: 4 items to the Altruism factor, and 4 items to the Family factor, in addition, 4 demographic data questions were asked.

The research sample is made up of undergraduate students of: Administration (21%), Accounting (24%), Marketing (18%), International Business (17%) and Human Resources (20%), from the University Center of Administrative Economic Sciences (CUCEA), from the University of Guadalajara, enrolled in the 2021 "B" school year. The participants were selected in a non-representative and non-probabilistic manner, made up of 469 students, the majority being women (68%), the rest 32% male. The mean age was 20.4, with an age range of 18 to 25 years. The entire sample agreed to participate in the study, data on age, gender, program studying (bachelor's degree), and level of semester studied were requested.

The propagation of the study was carried out through the institutional email of the students and began in Google Drive on September 2, 2021, and remained online for twenty-eight days. Each participant could complete the questionnaire only once.

### 2.1. Statistical analysis

After preparing the data matrix, descriptive statistical analyzes (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) were performed on the sample and scales implemented; the reliability of the instruments was ensured through the Cronbach's Alpha test of .927 (see table 1), the result indicates an adequate consistency value, as George and Mallery (2003) point out "the instrument is very reliable as it has a value Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.8" (p. 231). Likewise, the Pearson correlation index was used; These procedures were carried out using the statistical program SPSS 25.

**Table 1. Reliability statistics.**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on the typified elements	No. of elements
,927	,935	44

Source: own elaboration of authors, 2021.

## Dimensions and Level of Resilience in University Students, During the Covid-19 Pandemic

A factorial analysis was carried out with the main components procedure and orthogonal rotation, where the six factors were established (found by González Arratia et al., 2008), with a homogeneity index greater than .40, with 217.49 total variance (results shown in image 1).

To obtain the level of resilience, the dimensions of: personal security, self-esteem, affiliation, low self-esteem, altruism and family were grouped. In each dimension, the value of each item was added, as appropriate; the total result was obtained from the total sum of the values of each dimension, designating the following score: minimum 4, maximum 70, that is, the following levels: low, medium and high. In the results section, the levels obtained for each factor are shown.

**Figure 1.** Factorial grouping of the resilience instrument with university students.

Questionnaire	Personal security	Self-esteem	Affiliation	Low self-esteem	Altruism	Family
I am a responsible person when making my decisions	0.498					
I consider knowing myself	0.648					
I do not cling, nor depend on anything or anyone	0.551					
I fully trust myself.	0.688					
I've been in control of myself	0.614					
I consider myself as someone creative	0.513					
I do not desire or envy what others have or are	0.501					
I am a person who has a high self-value	0.739					
I was able to accomplish what I wanted	0.667					
I consider myself an independent being who achieves what he has wanted	0.645					
Since I was little, I feel very proud of myself	0.657					
Although it is very difficult, I do not want to be more or less than anyone. I only want to be	0.518					
During the acts of my life, I have been free from repression	0.546					
I defend my points of view with other people	0.604					
I am my own role model and I am happy with it	0.640					
I really think I've come to love myself just the way I am	0.621					
I have tried not to lie to myself, to be honest and to tell the truth no matter how hard it is	0.653					
Although I think it's a bit selfish, I think I've come to love myself.	0.498					
I consider myself a person who lives without fear of being alone or dying	0.697					
I really feel like I live in peace with myself	0.656					
I have been optimistic about life itself	0.687					
I have been able to verify that I am a very intelligent person	0.667					
I have been able to recognize the favorable and unfavorable aspects of my life	0.748					
With all my defects and virtues, I have achieved a good personal acceptance	0.373					
I really like being alone	0.671					
I consider myself to be someone who is free from prejudice	0.672					
I have had people in the environment whom I trust and who love me		0.655				
During my life I have cultivated true friendships		0.734				
I have had teachers at school who have supported me when I needed it		0.722				
At school I have teachers who teach me how to manage myself		0.636				
During my life I have met people who have positively influenced me		0.721				
I have been a very insecure person				0.578		
I find it hard to accept myself as I am				0.675		
I avoid expressing criticism towards other people				0.397		
I've had a tendency to hate myself				0.602		
I dislike imposing my views on others				0.504		
I have let others be and do					0.515	
During my life I prefer to give love than receive it					0.521	
I have always had a good relationship with others					0.520	
I have someone who shows me by his behavior the right way to proceed					0.600	
In my family I have someone who cares about me						0.401
My family supports me in my decisions						0.411
In my family they put limits on me to learn to avoid dangers or problems						0.346
I have satisfied my projects and goals or live for something						0.334
<b>Variance by factor</b>	91.66	74.28	16.77	19.47	9.97	5.34
<b>Typical deviation.</b>	9.57	8.61	4.09	4.41	3.15	2.31

Source: Own elaboration (based on the questionnaire of González Arratia López, Zavala Borja, 2008).

### 3. Results and Discussion

In the general data, it was found that of the total number of university students who participated in the research, 31.3% are women and 68.6% are men (see table 2). On the other hand, the minimum age is 18 years; the maximum of 24 years, with a mean of 20.4 and a deviation of 2.3; Regarding the academic level, the students were studying at least the first semester and at most, the ninth semester.

**Table 2. Gender of participants.**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Female</b>	147	31.3%
<b>Male</b>	322	68.6%
<b>Total</b>	469	100%

Source: Own elaboration of authors, 2021.

Regarding the stated objective, the results show that most university students were at a high average level of resilience (75.8%), results that agree with the studies by Caldera Montes et al., (2016), González and Artuch (2014), who found that university students presented a high level of resilience. The general results reveal a high level of resilience in most of the dimensions, except in the Low-self-esteem dimension. These results show that the highest percentage of participating students has resilient tools and abilities, represented in internal and external protective factors, which favor learning, accepting and transforming adversity into opportunities for individual growth and, of course, strengthening the community, effective achievement of their projects and life goals. In contrast, in the low-self-esteem factor, where the data shows a low level of resilience, it is probably due to the situation of the pandemic, where it has led people to be insecure, negatively admit the imposition of social isolation, causing not to be accepted within this uncertain and dangerous context. In support of these findings, Denovan and Macaskill (2017), point out that resilience is related to optimism, self-satisfaction, and well-being, in the absence of these, there is weakness in resilient practices.

In this regard, Fergus and Zimmerman (2015), affirm that resilience is the attitude that the individual possesses to combat harmful situations, likewise, he has the ability to cope with the risk that represents danger, in the same way, university students must face various negative risks that presented at tertiary education institutions.

The means by factor were considered, discovering that the lowest is the dimension of low self-esteem, which indicates that the students surveyed have good self-esteem (table 3).

**Table 3. Means by factor**

Factors	X	DE
<b>Personal Security</b>	7.22	2.46
<b>Self-esteem</b>	7.14	2.57
<b>Affiliation</b>	7.59	2.59
<b>Low self-esteem</b>	4.69	3.33
<b>Altruism</b>	7.60	2.79
<b>Family</b>	8.35	2.74

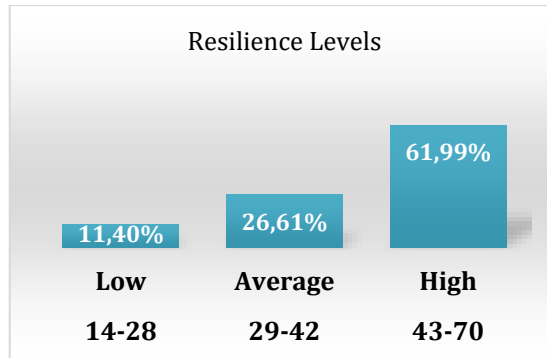
Source: Own elaboration of authors, 2021.

Next, the results found in each of the factors are presented.

Regarding the factor Personal Security, the results of Figure 2 show that 62% of the participating students are at a high level, showing that they have judgments about themselves and interpretation of

their competencies. Generate self-control, autonomy, self-worth among other resilient personalities that are essential to confront risk situations, despite the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, the result supports what has been pointed out by other authors (Palomar Lever and Gómez Valdez, 2010; Moreno López et al., 2019), that people build resilience, since they strive to achieve goals, are optimistic, tenacious and confident to face challenges.

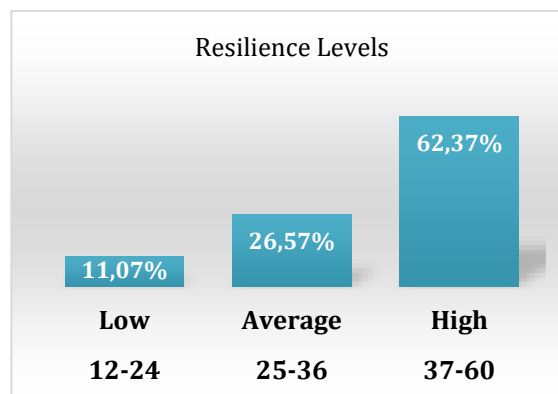
**Figure 2.** Personal Safety Factor



Source: Own elaboration of authors, 2021.

Figure 2 presents the results obtained in relation to the self-esteem factor, the participants showed that they know the meaning of life, valuing themselves, since 62.3% of the students are at a high level. According to these results, it is assumed that they have their own mental capacities, show self-esteem, optimism towards life, a high level of hope, and confidence that the situation will improve, that it will end soon. Due to the above, the majority of students (approximately 89%) develop internal resilient practices that protect, contributing to their personal strengthening and capacity for learning. In other words, the greater the capacity for self-esteem in university students, the greater the level of resilience they demonstrate. These results coincide with other studies (Morales & González, 2014; Ross, 2013), which maintain that people with high self-esteem are autonomous, proactive and critical of themselves, who manage to overcome the difficulties that arise in their context.

**Figure 3.** Self-esteem factor-



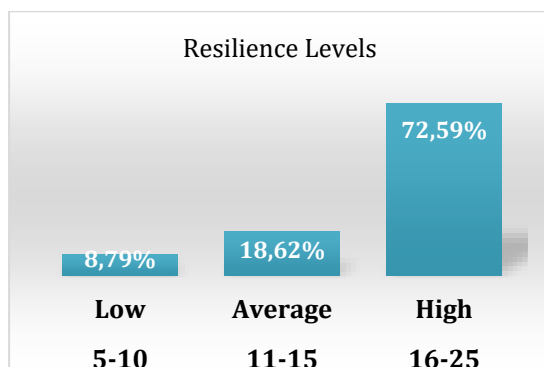
Source: Own elaboration of authors, 2021.

In relation to the "affiliation" factor, Figure 3 shows that 72.5% of those surveyed have a high level of resilience. It is shown in the results obtained that students have people who guide them, feel support when they face an adverse situation. Results that are complemented by the study by Fernández (2014), where he states that students have a resilient external protective factor that strengthens them to manage the personal and academic situation by improving their educational level.

It is important to point out that within this category in the question, if they have teachers at the university who teach them to function on their own? Only 57% of the participants indicated that they totally agreed to have support (from a teacher) to excel on their own. This perspective of the students

is worrying, since a large percentage, 43%, considers that they do not have support from teachers. The university can train students with resilient capacities by increasing significant relationships with teachers, which implies changes in academic practices.

**Figure 4.** Affiliation Factor.

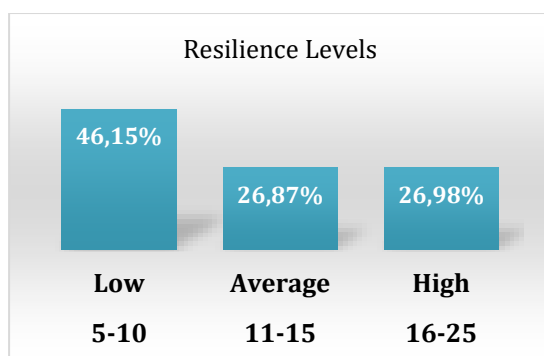


Source: Own elaboration of authors, 2021.

In this analysis factor "low self-esteem" is evidenced in the items low resilience capacities, Figure 4 indicates that a large percentage of students surveyed (46.1%) define themselves as a person who does not feel valuable; has a hard time saying no to other people without feeling guilty; sometimes they suffer from anxiety; unconsciously seek the approval of others; they find it difficult to feel free to express their feelings. Results that agree with what was stated by Jiménez Luis (2019) who maintain that low self-esteem is a risk factor for students in their school life.

In this component, the data alone is alarming, since only 27% of the participants have a high capacity for self-esteem, which leads to promoting practices to raise self-esteem in university students. It can be assumed that due to the current critical situation (health risk, confinement due to the pandemic), students perceive themselves as insecure, causing low self-esteem. It is important to develop high self-esteem in university students so that they positively face the health crisis and adversities that have arisen in their academic context. However, there are studies that show no relationship between self-esteem and academic ability (Rabell, 2012; Chilca, 2017; Morales & González, 2014). These studies explain that there are other environmental factors that could be related to student performance.

**Figure 5.** Low self-esteem factor.



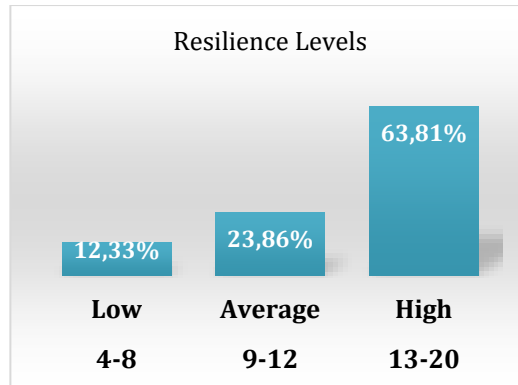
Source: Own elaboration of authors, 2021.

Figure 5 shows the results of the "Altruism" component where 64% of the participating students show a high capacity to help other people regardless of personal benefit, likewise, they have someone who guides them (by example), to develop a correct behavior. From the study we were able to observe that a high level of resilience was reached, that is, that their level of capacity for support, solidarity, caring for others, empathy, among others, is very favorable for improving lifestyle and counteracting anxiety, confinement and fear of the pandemic. These results are complemented by what was stated by Barghouti Abrini et al., (2022) who verified that altruistic people are characterized by helping and the



well-being of other people so that they recover from crises and emerge stronger from them. In the same way, studies such as Gallesi and Matalinares (2012) show that empathy and feelings towards other people increase motivation to achieve goals and will strengthen student performance. This could indicate that the relationships they have with other people intervene in favoring university students, in the face of the adversities and risks to which they are currently exposed.

Figure 6. Altruism Factor.



Source: Own elaboration of authors, 2021.

In order to compare differences with respect to the gender variable, a *student's t-test* was used, in which it was found that there are no significant results between the factors and gender, however, a trend in favor of women is detected, with higher values of resilience compared to men. Results that agree with the study by Meza-Cueto et al., (2020), who described that there are no significant disparities in the total resilience scores compared to gender. However, there is a discrepancy with other studies (Tomyn and Wemberg, 2018; Vizoso, 2019), where the male sex shows greater resilience. Probably, this dissimilarity, from the present analysis, is understood by the higher percentage of men in the sample. This shows that both genders show a high level of resilience, which means that they have the skills and competencies to successfully face crisis situations.

Under the same judgments, the comparison of the levels of resilience by career was approached, it was observed that there are no significant differences between them, a result that agrees with the findings of the study by Caldera Montes et al., (2016). Possibly these results are due to the fact that the study was developed in a single specific area, administrative economic sciences, it is presumable that significantly opposite levels of resilience are obtained in other specific areas of the university. It follows that regardless of the degree they are pursuing, students have the skills and abilities necessary to challenge challenges and contradictions in their university life, proof of this is that they have had to adapt by being resilient to the new online learning model, which in many cases it was an unknown model, likewise, it has committed itself with strength in situation of health crisis around the world.

Despite these coincident findings, it would be convenient advisable to continue carrying out other research works that investigates the effects of other particularities such as responsibility, extraversion, technostress, creativity, whether they had to establish themselves or not resilient traits in university students.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results obtained show that (70.5) percent of university students who participated in the study have a high level of resilience in general. Among these same study participants, the factor that has the highest level of resilience (indicate the factor and the percent). The factor among respondents that presents the lowest level of resilience, at 30 percent, is low self-esteem. For this reason, it is necessary to strengthen actions that promote skills necessary for build self-confidence.

Given these results, it is important to highlight the high level of resilience in students in situations of uncertainty, since they are exposed to techno-stress due to the confusion in their academic development. Thus, on the one hand, research such as that of Campuzano and Libien (2019), in university students, argue that resilience translates into the ability to recover and face adversity, as well

as to create and develop skills to achieve excellence in their university education. Due to the above, the importance of carrying out future research stands out, in the relationship that exists between resilience with techno-stress (due to exposure to Tic's in online classes) and with the quality of teaching-learning. Currently, the use of technology in the teaching-learning process is continuous and excessive, in such a way, it is essential to develop resilience in the face of this academic situation that causes stress, forced change and adverse experience, therefore, this resilient capacity leads to face the misfortunes of academic life and of course personal.

On the other hand, the instrument used in this research (Strength and Personal Security Questionnaire), is supposed to be suitable for measuring resilience in young people; however, it is convenient to reflect that in Mexico there is a great diversity of schools, universities, technological, in which there are differentiated and particular situations, political, social and cultural conditions, but, even so, it is convenient to continue working with said instrument that is valid in young Mexicans in order to analyze resilience in various factors likely to be compared with other studies.

This research work is a reference to promote educational strategies oriented to the study and promotion of resilience as an element incorporated into the academic training of students in adverse situations, as well as to establish actions in the teaching-learning process that enhance their level of resilience from admission to the university and with it, improve educational quality, including ethical professionals, committed to society, responsible and competent to face different environments and solve them.

As proposals, it is suggested to continue carrying out periodic studies on a similar sample of university students to monitor the levels of resilience during the pandemic, post-pandemic and the new virtual educational model, differentiating the factors according to sociodemographic characteristics according to various educational and personal contexts.

As for the limitations that were had in the research work, it is:

- That the data was collected electronically (Google Drive) due to the COVID-19 situation, which led to not interacting with the participating students.
- Have a biased sample due to the higher percentage of the male gender compared to the female gender, for this reason more grouped and specific results were not provided.

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