

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Resilience is an attribute of the integral education of the university student

La resiliencia como atributo de la formación integral del estudiante universitario

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**Abstract** The work aimed to propose educational actions from the methodological conception of Popular Education, which stimulated resilience as an attribute of the integral formation of the student. It was derived from the research project of the University of Sancti Spiritus “José Martí Pérez” *Scientific methodological conception for the improvement of the integral formation process of the student*. The scientific methods used were adapted to the methodological approach of participatory action research (observation, analysis of documents, Technique of the ten wishes, Technique of the Positive, Negative, and Recommendations). The actions were based on a self-triple and participatory diagnosis that offered the opportunity to design, implement, and evaluate them with the students, as they became the main protagonists. The results pointed to a more dialogic communication style, a collaborative, joyful, optimistic, autonomous, and creative behavior of the students when reflecting on or addressing situations in the socio-educational environment where they interacted, as expressions of a resilient attitude.

**Keywords** resilience, university student, comprehensive training, popular education.

**Resumen** El trabajo tuvo el objetivo de proponer acciones educativas, desde la concepción metodológica de la Educación Popular, que estimularon la resiliencia como atributo de la formación integral del estudiante. Se derivó del proyecto de investigación, de la Universidad de Sancti Spiritus “José Martí Pérez” *Concepción científico metodológica para el mejoramiento del proceso de formación integral del estudiante*. Los métodos científicos empleados se adecuaron al enfoque metodológico de investigación acción participativa (observación, análisis de documentos, Técnica de los diez deseos, Técnica de lo Positivo, Negativo y Recomendaciones). Las acciones partieron de un diagnóstico auto triple y participativo que ofreció la oportunidad de diseñarlas, implementarlas y evaluarlas, en conjunto con los estudiantes, al convertirse estos en los principales protagonistas. Los resultados apuntaron a un estilo de comunicación, más, dialógico, un comportamiento colaborativo, alegre, optimista, autónomo y creativo de los estudiantes al reflexionar o abordar situaciones del entorno socioeducativo donde interactuaron, como expresiones de una actitud resiliente.

**Palabras clave** resiliencia, estudiante universitario, formación integral, educación popular.

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## Introduction

Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development constitutes "... an action plan for people, the planet and prosperity" (United Nations, 2015, p. 2), which states with great determination that: "We are determined to take the bold and transformative measures that are urgently needed to put the world back on the path of sustainability and resilience. As we embark on this journey together, we promise no one will be left behind" (United Nations, 2015, p. 2). Aspirations are still far from being fulfilled and must be worked on jointly at the personal, family, institutional, and community levels.

In the body of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) outlined in this document, the need to promote and strengthen resilience in the sense of human habitats, application of technologies, infrastructure, communities, agricultural practices, and people who are in vulnerable situations related to the possibility or existence of natural disasters, economic, social, and health crises, among other phenomena, is repeatedly mentioned (United Nations, 2015). Aligning with these purposes implies, above all, knowing how to interpret and adjust them to each country's different realities, possibilities, and levels of development concerning its policies and priorities.

Thus, the term resilience is presented in this Agenda as closely linked to the security and efficient use of material and human resources to the growth of inclusion, equitable and affordable access for all to the capacity for adaptation, to the promotion of a culture of peace; to sustainable development; to the use of science and innovation; to the quality of processes and services; to the adoption and implementation of policies and plans integrated by States that must be materialized in each territory, municipality, community, institution and, in the case of the university, at the level of degree, academic years, disciplines and subjects.

"The concept of resilience enjoys great diffusion and prestige today in multiple areas of social life" (Pérez, 2022, p. 173). Its rise and the multipurpose approach that resilience has shown in recent decades are undeniable, originating from the accelerated increase in scientific research in different areas of knowledge, given the demand and importance of humanity becoming aware, preparing, and acting quickly when facing the pressing problems it is experiencing and which require a dynamic, bold, optimistic, self-controlled, supportive and creative spirit to help it resist, preserve itself and, at the same time, recover from the harmful effects (Pérez, 2020; Castañeda et al., 2022).

However, this notion of resilience has not yet reached, in reality, all the expressions that the concept encompasses. To achieve this, Education is essential as a sector responsible for promoting and providing inclusive, equitable, and quality learning opportunities throughout life in order to guarantee

the comprehensive training of people so that they can fully develop all their potential: biological, psychic, and social, based on a viable combination between the possibilities and resources that they have for self-transformation, with all those external influences, human and material, that they receive in the different contexts where they interact (Hernández et al., 2021; Torres, et al., 2021).

For Freire (2004), the educational process is decisive as an instrument that facilitates the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the social system and the practice of freedom; in his opinion, Education is how men and women deal, in a reflective, critical and creative way, with reality, to the same extent that they discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (National Commission for the Continuous Improvement of Education, 2024). Hence, the value that his methodological conception of Popular Education currently acquires is to energize the management of the comprehensive training process from a more democratic perspective that overcomes authoritarianism and the banking style in instructing and educating.

In the specific case of Cuban universities, the Ministry of Higher Education (MES) recognizes that the training of higher-level professionals is the process that, consciously and on a scientific basis, is developed in higher education institutions to guarantee the comprehensive preparation of students for university careers, which is reflected in solid scientific-technical, humanistic training and high ideological, political, and ethical and aesthetic values; in order to achieve revolutionary, cultured, competent, independent and creative professionals so that they can perform successfully in the various sectors of the economy and society in general (MES, 2022, p. 2).

It is a definition that offers broad possibilities for educating resilience as part of this professional training, taking into account the characteristics of the student, the profile of the career they are studying, and the demands and challenges imposed by the current context. That is why the objective of this presentation is to propose educational actions, from the methodological conception of Popular Education, that stimulate a resilient attitude as an attribute of the comprehensive training of the university student. It is derived from the research project of the Universidad de Sancti Spiritus "José Martí Pérez": Scientific-methodological conception to contribute to the improvement of the student's comprehensive training process, which has been implemented since 2022 in collaboration with other sociocultural institutions.

## Methodology

The Participant Action Research methodological strategy to be followed in the fieldwork was designed, coordinated,

organized, and executed with the team of authors, teachers, students, and other subjects who collaborated, depending on the educational settings where they interacted. The sample consisted of students and teachers from different careers where the authors taught: Bachelor of Foreign Languages (2nd year, 21 students), Bachelor of Accounting and Finance (4th year, nine students), and Bachelor of Law (4th year, 21 students), from the University of Sancti Spiritus “José Martí Pérez” (UNISS).

Develop a natural environment encompassing all those spaces where the student’s comprehensive training process occurred. Use a dynamic, interactive, and open style among researchers, research subjects, and collaborators, which fostered a sustained feedback process through different communication channels: personal (individual and group), telephone and digital.

A high level of involvement and commitment from researchers, as participating subjects, within the training process of professionals in their careers and the institution. To penetrate the reality being investigated with a high degree of self-awareness systematically and directly.

The resilience indicators identified in the literature and readjusted based on the practical perception of the authors and participants in this research, considering resilience as a dimension of comprehensive training, include various aspects. These encompass presence in actions, reflected in attendance and punctuality, and a sense of purpose, demonstrated through disposition, permanence, discipline, mood, and expression of criteria. Social interaction plays a crucial role, involving empathy, adaptive behavior in formal and informal groups, personal relationships, roles within the group, leadership, and teamwork behavior. Academic performance is another key factor, assessed through results in systematic, partial, and final evaluations, grade improvement, and performance in award exams.

Additionally, insertion into work practice is considered, focusing on socio-cognitive skills and results in integrative exercises. An investigative attitude is highlighted by self-management of scientific information, participation in student scientific groups, projects, and events, and involvement in honorary chairs. Extension activism includes both active and passive participation in cultural, recreational, sports, social, patriotic, and political activities. Furthermore, resilience is reflected in conflict resolution skills in educational settings, the ability to self-assess with a critical and self-critical spirit, and a positive level of self-esteem. Other essential aspects include self-control, independence, initiative, the manifestation of human values such as responsibility, collaboration, solidarity, honesty, patriotism, and a spirit of gratification.

Direct and covert participant observation is needed to appreciate the external manifestations of students associated with behavior. It was used in the different educational

settings where the subjects interacted in different activities that made it possible to apply the proposed actions (morning or afternoon classes, sports games, community social work, celebration of anniversaries, festivals or other cultural activities, assembly for the evaluation of the integrality, scientific events, work practice, to name a few).

Analysis of official documents with cyclical information on the reality of the comprehensive training process, such as the Student Academic Record (EAE), in order to collect important data on the student’s career with documents that accredited the teaching results and others that showed participation in scientific, labor, sports, cultural, political, socially valuable activities; as well as awards and recognitions in some regions of their training. Included in this file was the Comprehensive Student Evaluation Form derived from the Comprehensiveness Evaluation Assemblies, where the negative and positive signs of the student’s comprehensive training were specified. Also, Self-Evaluation Reports of the careers were analyzed to identify weaknesses and strengths of the five variables that were evaluated to award the grade to the career (relevance and social impact of the career in the territory; the faculty and teaching support staff; the students; the infrastructure and the curriculum) that deepens and complements the previous information.

The ten wishes technique was used to understand the fundamental aspirations associated with vocational training and deduce those favorable or unfavorable aspects of resilient behavior from them. During the application, gestural and verbal expressions, concentration, active or passive position in the execution, effort, and interest when responding, and other manifestations accompanying the writing exercise were observed.

Positive-Negative-Interesting (PNI) technique. This Technique was adapted and changed in the last element, to call it Positive-Negative-Recommendations (PNR), so that the students could freely express in writing the most significant number of ideas, without fear of being questioned for their criteria, about those aspects that they considered positive, negative and the possible viable recommendations that can help them to have resilient behavior. In the end, they were subsequently called to the analysis group that was developed, with the generating theme: “Importance of a resilient attitude to improve comprehensive training.”

Data triangulation is intended to show the level of interdependence in the information obtained by the different subjects and methods.

## Results and discussion

The actions were structured taking into account the stages of the methodological conception of Popular Education (approach, diagnosis, elaboration and execution of actions,

evaluation, and systematization) (Haddad, 2021), intended, fundamentally, to stimulate those protection factors associated with resilience reflected in the defined indicators so that students understood that they are not only part of that training but that they must act on it, so that they can help improve it from their possibilities and resources, together with those of the institutions, families, and society in general (Perero et al., 2023).

The methodology did not constitute a rigid scheme since, in reality, they were closely related; for example, from the approach stage, information was taken for the diagnosis, and in the diagnosis stage, activities were carried out, to a lesser extent, that contributed to the awareness and preparation of the students, to face and transform with resilient behavior the situations that arose in each context where it was operated. Implementing participatory techniques and other pedagogical resources in the actions, adjusted to the purposes, subjects, and educational scenarios, was very effective (Hernández et al., 2021).

Among the educational actions carried out are:

- Joint educational strategy development with the specific actions implemented based on the aforementioned stages.
- Read and discuss the objectives of the Professional Model of the careers involved and how to achieve them from an emphatic perception of the concept of resilience.
- Discussions, dramatizations, and animation techniques brought students closer to resilience, its concept and manifestations, and the importance of adopting it as an attitude to achieve a higher-quality comprehensive education as required by the Professional Model.
- Student approach to the contexts of action of the career: institutional, community, and local.
- Workshops with a triple and participatory character using the methods stated above.
- Participatory activities emerged from frameworks and spaces for discussion and reflection, of the year group, on a group and individual, among teachers, students and, representatives of the teaching units, with the guidance and orientation of the Head Teacher of the Year and the teachers in the classes themselves.
- Participatory and group work techniques led to more dynamic, attractive classes with greater student involvement.
- In most subjects, virtual classrooms within the Moodle Virtual Platform enable self-management and autonomy in carrying out tasks and independent studies in an interactive digital environment.
- The creation of WhatsApp groups at the level of groups of years, subjects, or other interests (by municipalities, between teams of students, to address different levels of learning) fostered an increase in relationships for the exchange of

knowledge and affection between members of the groups in which families and community agents were included.

- Students were encouraged to improve their grades, take award exams, and join the Student Helpers Movement.
- Strengthen professional practices and train representatives of labor institutions so that they can better tutor students and establish mutual relationships of exchange and feedback of practical knowledge about the theory received.
- Reading and audiovisual discussions helped prepare students for a resilient attitude toward situations that reflect social vulnerability, inequality, equity, exclusion, natural disasters or other environmental problems, poverty, malnutrition, migration, and epidemics, among other ills that affect humanity.
- Social transformation activities with students and residents as protagonists in the communities.
- Incorporation of students into the project research as members of student scientific groups and their participation in scientific events.
- Exchange through social networks with graduates to delve into problems they must face in the professions that represent the different careers involved.
- Student involvement in fairs and events was developed with an institutional, community, municipal, provincial, national, and international character by the different social sectors linked to the races.
- Establishment of inter-institutional and inter-sectoral relations based on student scientific works' presentation and collective reflection.
- Students are grouped as members of the Honorary Chairs created in the courses and participate in the scientific, extension, and academic activities developed by these chairs.
- Day trips to communities to accompany their leaders and residents in general environmental activities and as part of the Life Task.
- Create the Health Promoters Movement to carry out hygiene, education, and health prevention activities at the institutional, community, and municipal levels.
- Collaboration in tasks with economic and social impact to help people, families, and communities with vulnerabilities.
- Participation in sports and recreational activities at group, year, faculty, and university level.
- Incorporation into extension projects or artistic brigades that encourage participation in amateur festivals, cultural events, and Summer Plans (projects, courses, camps).
- Participation in political, patriotic, and military events at institutional, municipal, provincial, and national levels.



- Subscription as a member of social networks or academic and scientific associations (national or international) to share and discuss experiences, opinions, ideas, and knowledge.
- Participatory student evaluation workshops to identify levels of commitment and consolidation of values, as well as recommendations.
- Systemization workshops will be used to extract lessons learned about the actions developed in each of the stages.

The main effects that were observed derived from the diagnostic stage and, later, the changes that occurred in the subjects involved from the evaluation of these actions revealed expressions that resilience constitutes a way of understanding the capacity of some people to overcome and develop in contexts framed by adverse situations from their positive adaptation, to personal factors and social coexistence that are associated such as self-esteem, autonomy, creativity, empathy, and humor, as stated by Meza et al. (2022) in a study carried out to establish the relationship between personal factors of resilience and academic performance.

Currently, the socioeconomic conditions that are experienced in Cuba place students in very complex situations that they must face, both in the institutional and family and community environment; however, the actions carried out and the dynamism imbued by the teachers and the students themselves, did help them to see resilience as "... coping, responding to change and showing good adaptation, returning to a degree of normal functioning" after a crisis (Pérez, 2022), and above all "...as the competence of people to face difficult situations, to seek to overcome them and look to the future" (Lozano & Maldonado, 2023, p. 5).

In the case of students of the Law and Foreign Languages career, more feelings emerged to overcome the challenges that were presented, as well as to encourage and help strengthen each other to channel, in an appropriate way, the situations that arose, to excel and be optimistic, despite tense realities (Lozano & Maldonado, 2023); on the other hand, in those of the Accounting and Finance career, a more materialistic spirit of proposing and finding concrete solutions to some of the existing problems prevailed, but somewhat far from the capacity for self-management and, above all, from the available resources; Although they did not stop being creative and hopeful, the most important thing is that they recognized that creativity, "Also includes the ability to think flexibly, making it possible to provide new solutions to problems of different kinds and hopelessness..." (Meza et al., 2020, p. 4).

At all times, the actions were intended to promote positive experiences lived and maintained in the country as a result of the enormous efforts of the State and its economic, social, cultural, and educational institutions, particularly the university, so that students at all levels can live in controlled

environments, with good relationships, happy, free of violence and much solidarity. Aspects that, while being so familiar to them, are not widely recognized, nor are they given the significance they have for "... the quality of life and the achievement of comprehensive well-being, both physically and psychologically, amid adversity". (Páez, 2020, p. 3)

In this sense, the use of open dialogue, based on self-reflection and the encounter between the experiences, feelings, and opinions that students have and that new knowledge or explanations that teachers, directors and other subjects involved provide them, was beneficial as a fundamental method, typical of Popular Education (Haddad, 2021) to contribute to raising awareness of ideas and moving forms of action that are more consistent with the reality in which they live, in light of the relevance and correspondence with the problems they must face in their training and assume responsibility and implications of them, concerning the direct action they must carry out (Fariás et al., 2022; Freire, 2004).

The methodological triangulation of the data collected in the evaluation carried out, in its qualitative perspective, revealed these general achievements:

- Increased motivation of students and other representatives of the institutions involved towards resilience, comprehensive training, and Popular Education with its most representative figures, especially Paulo Freire.
- Cooperative relationships between academic year groups at universities where the actions are carried out.
- Resilient practices promote a more outstanding commitment to using human and material resources to achieve ethical and aesthetic values in students.
- Enrichment of scientific knowledge that supports, from a theoretical and methodological point of view, the promotion and strengthening of a resilient attitude as a dimension of the comprehensive training process of students.
- More pertinent and objective projection of resilience as a dimension of comprehensive training supported by the work of academic year groups.
- The environmental curricular strategy needs more collaborative design and appropriate adjustment of Life Task activities according to the careers, the academic year, and the environments where the students interact.
- A relaxing environment, with sound and cooperative relationships between students and between them and teachers and other people involved, undoubtedly increases self-esteem, levels of empathy, autonomy, humor, and creativity in students.
- Improving the quality of comprehensive training for university students, considering the different aspects of personality, emphasizing self-perception and perception of an attitude of resilience.

## Conclusions

The validity and richness of the data obtained from reality could be verified through the instruments, techniques, and group dynamics according to analysis criteria constructed with the direct and collaborative participation of the subjects involved. This allowed us to diagnose and evaluate the State of resilience as a dimension of the student's comprehensive training at the time and in the context investigated. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of the proposed actions, which were distinguished by a dialogic communication style and a more collaborative, joyful, optimistic, autonomous, and creative behavior when facing problems in the environment where they interact, as expressions of a resilient attitude, favorable to the harmonious development of the student, especially when becoming aware and understanding their training from the problematization of the scenarios where it takes place. Substantial changes were noted in the students in terms of improving their comprehensive training from a more conscious perception of the career and social reality.

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## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

## Author contributions

Aurelia Massip, Yanelis C. Hernández, Óscar R. Martínez and Madany I. Rodríguez: Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, supervision, validation, visualization, drafting the original manuscript and writing, review, and editing.

## Data availability statement

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Statement on the use of AI

The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI and

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