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## Resilience profile of students of the National University of Misiones (UNaM)

### Perfil de resiliencia de estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional de Misiones (UNaM)

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#### Abstract

In order to study academic performance, dropout, and enrollment breakdown in higher education, attention is generally focused on the socioeconomic aspects and family environment of the students, resorting to hypotheses and explanations of a complex situation and analyzing external variables that influence on student behavior. This presentation analyses the resilience of university students in the first years of UNaM faculties, namely Bachelor of Business Administration (LAE), Bachelor of Economics (LE) and Certified Public Accountant (CP) of the Faculty of Economics (FCE), as will be described in the body of the text. Using online surveys, qualitative features of the group were delineated regarding the topic of interest and quantitative parameters were obtained to describe its demographic characteristics. The results show that the students perceive themselves as highly resilient, they state that they usually find a way out of a difficulty, they maintain their interest, they feel friends with themselves and they question themselves about the relevance of the contents that make up the curricula of the subjects they study. To a large extent, the lack of equanimity is a characteristic that would define these students.

Keywords: Resilience; Equanimity; Capacities; University students.

#### Resumen

Generalmente, para estudiar el rendimiento académico, el abandono y el desgranamiento de la matrícula en la educación superior, se centra la atención en los aspectos socioeconómicos y entorno familiar de los estudiantes, recurriendo para ello a hipótesis y explicaciones de una situación compleja y analizando variables externas que influyen en el comportamiento de los estudiantes. En esta presentación se analiza la resiliencia de los estudiantes universitarios en los primeros años de carreras de facultades de la UNaM, a saber Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas (LAE), Licenciatura en Economía (LE) y Contador Público (CP) de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas (FCE), como se describirá en el cuerpo del texto. Utilizando encuestas online se delinearón rasgos cualitativos del grupo respecto al tema de interés y se obtuvieron parámetros cuantitativos para describir características demográficas del mismo. Los resultados obtenidos dan cuenta que los estudiantes se perciben altamente resilientes, manifiestan que usualmente encuentran una salida ante una dificultad, mantienen su interés, se sienten amigos de sí mismos y se cuestionan sobre de la pertinencia de contenidos que integran las curriculas de las asignaturas que estudian. En gran medida la falta de ecuanimidad es una característica que definiría a estos estudiantes.

Palabras claves: Resiliencia; Ecuanimidad; Capacidades; Estudiantes Universitarios.

#### Introduction

The percentage of university graduates is significantly lower than the number of entrants, as mentioned by Fanelli (2015) [1] “Despite the fact that young people have a high level of access to higher education in Argentina, the proportion of graduates with a tertiary level in the working population is equivalent to half that in these

European countries (sic)”. For example, in the period from 2000 to 2007, the Faculty of Exact, Chemical and Natural Sciences registered an intake of 1,375 students for a degree in Genetics, and of these cohorts, by 2013 it had only 240 graduates. Current data show a similar situation in the Faculty of Economics. Thus, reports from the System Manager of the Records Management Technology Directorate, from the Statistics Directorate of the FCE,

in the 2015 and 2016 cohorts the number of incoming students was 848 and 811 respectively. Contrasting these figures with the number of graduates in 2020 and 2021, as an indicator of degree efficiency, which is the quotient between those enrolled and those graduating after five years, which is the ideal trajectory time for FCE degree courses. (according to records there are 42 and 58) results in a percentage of graduates according to entrants of 5 and 7%, this information is broken down by career in the following table.

**Table 1:** Entrants and Graduates of FCE degree courses.

	Entrants 2016	Graduates 2021	Percentage
LAE	185	3	2%
CP	555	48	9%
LE	71	7	10%
	Entrants 2015	Graduates 2020	Percentage
LAE	172	4	2%
CP	603	35	6%
LE	73	3	4%

In the subjects of the first years, the number of students passed is significantly lower than the number enrolled, for example, in the subject Algebra of the basic cycle of the FCE degree courses in 2019, 60% of the students achieved free status and around 15% promoted the subject. The object of analysis of the research carried out is limited to the description of the pre-existing resilience profile of the students, in order to use it as a factor of reinforcement and motivation for learning. The objectives of the research are to compare variables that allow the elaboration of possible resilience profiles of university students in the first years of some of the UNaM degree courses.

## Conceptual Framework

In the early days of resilience research, resilience was seen as a natural disposition of subjects or a stable personality trait. However, there is no empirical evidence to support this perspective, and progress has been made in understanding resilience as the result of a process of adaptation to stressors (Hu, Zhang, & Wang, 2015) [2]. Resilience is influenced by neuro-biological, psychological and social resources that support the subject. This could include natural predispositions or personality traits as one factor of resilience among the multitude of factors that contribute to positively influencing and determining adaptation to stressors. The idea of resilience has reinforced a more contemporary, contextual and systemic perspective on human development. It is argued that an unhappy, precarious and troubled childhood is not a determinant for future maladjustment and psychological disorders, the resilience perspective emphasises the

complexity of human interaction and the active role of the individual in its development. Likewise, it insists that unfavourable contexts do not affect all people equally and that the change that characterises human beings also influences the evolution of their conflicts and disorders (Uriarte Arciniega, 2005, p. 62) [3].

At present, the accumulating evidence points to a conception of resilience as a process. According to this, people evolve during their exposure to stress, acquiring experience, new attitudes, points of view, strengths, skills and competencies, leading to changes that provide some immunity to future stressors. Resilience is now understood as a dynamic, lifelong process, nurtured by the interaction between the person and the environment, and changing in different areas and stages of life (Kunzler, Gilan, Kalisch, Tüscher, & Lieb, 2018, cited in Hiebel et al 2021) [4].

Resilience is not a defined and stable state, but rather a path of growth. It is built on the strong bonds of affection that are woven throughout life. Changing the way we look at people and their capacities implies, for example, systematically including questions about positive aspects of development and health in the medical history. For the professional, the development of resilience requires a different way of looking at reality in order to make better use of intervention strategies. Beyond symptoms and behaviours, this approach aims to detect and mobilise the resources of individuals, their environment, services and social networks (Cortés Recaball, 2010, p. 31) [5].

Strengthening resilience could reduce the gap between psychological development and the potential development of individuals. Resilience is learned through social bonds, so social and affective support networks are a key factor in the development of this capacity. Having resilience facilitates overcoming pressures and moments of crisis, without going to the extreme of avoiding confronting the situation, but rather going deeper into the cause of the negative impact, actively working to solve the problem, managing the construction of a new reality and working to create possible and effective solutions to the conflict. By virtue of all this, it is affirmed that resilience is a proactive attitude (Turienzo and Salas, 2011) [6].

Through resilience, the negative forces faced by the subject are transformed, to the point of not acting negatively, or attenuating their harmful effects. These are thus converted into coping factors and capitalised by the subject as experiences and skills that make it easier to face stressful situations in the future, generating a virtuous circle.

We can flee from external aggression, filter it or stop it, but when the environment is structured by a discourse or an institution that makes aggression permanent, we are forced to use defence mechanisms, denial, secrecy or aggressive anguish. It is the healthy subject who expresses a malaise whose origin is to be found around him, in a sick family or society.

To achieve the improvement of the subject who suffers the resumption of his psychic evolution, his resilience, that capacity to withstand the blow and resume development in adverse circumstances, it is necessary to take care of the environment, act on the family, fight prejudices or shake cultural routines, insidious beliefs with which, without realising it, we justify our interpretations and motivate our reactions (Cyrulnik, 2013, p. 10) [7].

Likewise, research on resilience suggests that subjects with higher levels of this ability perceive difficult situations within the range of their abilities and skills to cope with them, as they are confident in their positive adaptive behaviours in the face of negative events. In turn, resilience has been associated with stress reduction and prevention, and appears to be associated with well-being, for which subjects draw on positive emotions, beliefs and affect, and thereby manage not only to recover from negative situations, but also to improve significantly in multiple aspects, including self-esteem (Mehta, Grover, DiDonato, & Kirkhart, 2019) [8].

Resilience requires constructive and bidirectional transactions between the subject and his or her way of experiencing the world and life. The subject must negotiate or move towards the necessary support to face adversity, actively seek solutions, interact with the environment, so that the social environment is an aspect that also participates in this positive adjustment of the resilient subject in the face of adversity, as it is fundamentally an environmental, social and collaborative process. Although the person is responsible for his or her positive adaptation to the threats presented in life, his or her capacities to relate to the social ecology and to obtain help from the environment, lead us to consider resilience as not always centred on the subject, but rather on the relationship between the subject and his or her social environment.

## Dimensions of resilience

This capacity has different dimensions: autonomy, identity, satisfaction, pragmatism, networks, goals, models, affectivity, generativity, self-efficacy, bonds and learning, which are described, from the point of view of the authors Saavedra, Castro, & Inostroza (2012, p. 168) [9], mentioned in the following table:

**Table 2:** Resilience dimensions.

<b>Identity</b>	Basic self-definition, self-concept relatively stable over time, personal characterisation.
<b>Autonomy</b>	Feeling of competence in the face of problems, good self-image, independence in acting. Internal control.
<b>Satisfaction</b>	Perception of achievement, self-worth, effective adaptation to environmental conditions, perception of development.
<b>Pragmatism</b>	Practicality in assessing and dealing with problems, action orientation.
<b>Bonding</b>	Structural conditions that serve as a basis for personality formation. Bonding relationships, attachment. Belief system.
<b>Networks</b>	Social and family conditions that constitute a support for the subject. Support and reference system nearby and available.
<b>Models</b>	People and situations that serve as a guide for the subject to face his/her problems. Previous experiences that serve as a reference for problem solving.
<b>Goals</b>	Defined objectives, actions directed towards an end, projection into the future.
<b>Affectivity</b>	Self-recognition of the subject's emotional pathway, valuation of the emotional, personal characteristics around the emotional life. Emotional tone, humour, empathy.
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	Ability to set limits, control impulses, take responsibility for actions, manage stress, finish what is proposed.
<b>Learning</b>	Learning from experience, learning from mistakes, evaluating one's own actions, correcting one's actions.
<b>Generativity</b>	Ability to create alternative responses to problems, construct responses, plan action.

This differentiation and recognition of dimensions facilitates the establishment of resilience profiles, in which more and less developed dimensions are distinguished, allowing a more precise knowledge of the type of resilience that the person has achieved.

Resilience also provides other benefits for the well-being and protection of the subject:

- **Consistent self-esteem.** It is the basis of the other pillars and is the fruit of consistent affective care of the child or adolescent by a significant adult, “good enough” and capable of giving a sensitive response.
- **Introspection.** This is the art of asking oneself questions and giving oneself an honest answer. It depends on the strength of self-esteem that develops from the recognition of the other. [...]
- **Independence.** This was defined as knowing how to set boundaries between oneself and the troubled environment; the ability to maintain emotional and physical distance without becoming isolated. It depends on the reality principle that allows one to judge a situation independently of the subject's desires. [...]
- **Relationship skills.** That is, the ability to establish bonds and intimacy with other people, to balance one's own need for affection with the attitude of giving oneself to others. Low or exaggeratedly high self-esteem leads to isolation: if it is low because of shameful self-exclusion, and if it is too high it can lead to rejection because of the arrogance that is assumed.
- **Initiative.** A taste for self-improvement and testing oneself in progressively more demanding tasks.
- **Humour:** Finding the comic in one's own tragedy. It allows us to avoid negative feelings, even if only

temporarily, and to endure adverse situations.

- Creativity. The ability to create order, beauty and purpose out of chaos and disorder. The fruit of the capacity for reflection, it develops from childhood play.
- Morality. Understood as the consequence of extending the personal desire for well-being to all fellow human beings and the ability to commit oneself to values. It is the basis for good treatment of others.
- Critical thinking skills. This is a second-degree pillar, which is the result of the combination of all the others and allows for a critical analysis of the causes and responsibilities of the adversity suffered.

All these processes of resilience take place on different levels: intra-psycho and social, starting with interpersonal relationships. It combines attitude and capacity, learning and coping processes in which the individual overcomes difficult situations, to develop the ability to adapt to obstacles and the rapid recovery of vital development.

### Academic resilience

In an academic context, resilience is understood as the ability of students to successfully overcome possible environmental adversities. They draw on personal traits, conditions, and experiences to develop these skills (Trigueros, *et al.*, 2019) [10]. Resilient students are academically successful, even if they come from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, or suffer from a lack of material resources, access to media, peaceful study environments or a family social support network.

The following have been shown to be predictors of academic resilience: intrinsic motivation, positive self-concept, academic self-efficacy, internal locus of control, non-parental sources of support or advice from peers and teachers, and the availability of community organisations and services (Williams, Bryan, Morrison, & Scott, 2017) [11].

### Resilience in Organisations

Based on the observations made by psychology in different organisations and the importance of developing and reinforcing resilience in them, it was considered important to describe the variables that make up the resilience profiles, and the characteristics of this, in university students with professional training profiles in the field of organisations, companies or institutions based on inter/multidisciplinary work.

Some authors use the term resilience as a synonym for returning to normality, and it is a term derived from Latin (from the verb *resilio*, *resilire*: “to jump backwards, to bounce”). Others define it as a return to normality, a return to a natural state, especially after some critical and

unusual situation.

Resilience is considered as the capacity to avoid the negative consequences of an event that has already occurred; also, as the capacity to prevent a situation with negative consequences that have worsened over time; and finally, it is assumed as the capacity to recover after having faced the negative consequences of an event (Westrum, 2006). This is mentioned in Reyes Hernández. (2017) [12].

Organisational resilience refers metaphorically to the search for the “silver lining” (seek opportunities during a crisis in order to emerge stronger and in better conditions than those prevailing before the critical event) (McManus, 2008) [13].

Organisations with a higher degree of flexibility and resilience, as opposed to those less resilient (McManus *et al.*, 2007) [14], are those that:

1. They have an organisational ethos of constant effort aimed at building greater resilience to catastrophes.
2. They have a good knowledge of the situation, threats and opportunities faced by the organisation, through active monitoring of strong and weak signals coming from the context.
3. They have a strong commitment to proactively identify and manage key vulnerabilities.
4. They have a culture that promotes their capacity for adaptation, agility and innovation within the organisation.

### Scientific or research innovation

Improving teaching practices, and making this effective in the development of students’ university careers, is a permanent quest for teachers. In this sense, a study to understand the emotions and attitudes of students in the first years of their degree courses can provide valuable information for making pedagogical and academic decisions aimed at solving the basic problems of academic dropout and desertion.

The search for internalist explanations, together with the externalist ones that are already available, as well as the generation of spaces for communication and dialogue with people undergoing training at university level, would make it possible for students to improve their expectations and consequently for them to continue, leading to an increase in the percentage of graduates, which would mean an increase in professional graduates for the university, who would be inserted into the local and regional labour market.

### Methodology

In the first stages of this research, pilot tests were carried out taking as a pilot cohort intentional samples of



first year students from the UNaM, using in this instance the instrument adapted from the Resilience Scale (ER) by Wagnild and Young (1993) [15], selected to determine the level of resilience of the students. These tests were carried out in order to establish the internal consistency of the instrument and to make the necessary adjustments for its application in the population of interest.

In subsequent stages, the adapted instrument was applied to various samples of interest, including students of various subjects in the first years of undergraduate and graduate courses at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration.

Online survey platforms and statistical data processing software tools were used for data collection and analysis.

Hernández Sampieri, R., Fernández Collado, C., & Baptista Lucio, P. (2010) [16] propose framing the study in a non-experimental way, given that the researcher does not manipulate any variable and does not work with a control group, the predominant type of information is quantitative and it is a primary source of information as it is obtained directly from the students. In this case, the research aims to be explanatory, but it starts with the descriptive studies - usually descriptive - which are the basis for correlational research, which in turn provide information to carry out explanatory studies that generate a sense of understanding and are highly structured.

With regard to temporality, this is cross-sectional, as the instrument is administered at a single point in time, although responses may be received over a defined period of time. With respect to temporality, this is transversal, given that the instrument is administered at a single point in time, although the responses may be received over a defined period of time. As for the type of sampling, it is probabilistic, since everyone has an equal chance of being surveyed. In the piloting and research stage, online surveys are implemented, using the Google Drive platform, which allows us to delineate qualitative features of the group with respect to the topic of interest and to obtain quantitative parameters that allow us to describe demographic characteristics of the group. Data corresponding to cohorts of selected first-year subjects are analysed using statistical data processing tools.

In particular, we detail aspects relevant to the analysis of data obtained from students of first-year subjects, selected from undergraduate degrees (LAE, LE and CP) of the UNaM, obtained in both semesters of 2020, as described above. The items that make up the structure of the instrument, which was adapted by this working group in the pilot phase, are 25 in number and are presented in a positive form, which allows for direct evaluation.

Table 3 presents a summary of the groupings of items (or variables) that made up a dimension or factor:

**Table 3:** Description of factors and items ER instrument.

**Source:** Own elaboration.

Description of the factors and their respective items	
Personal Satisfaction	16, 21, 22, 25
Equanimity	7, 8, 11, 12
Feeling good on your own	3,5, 19
Self-confidence	6, 9, 10, 13, 17, 18, 24
Perseverance	1, 2, 4, 14, 15, 20, 23

## Results

### Analysis by variable

As a result of the processing of the data collected, a first approximation is obtained in Table 4, which presents the 25 variables ordered according to the score obtained in the answers selected by the students.

**Table 4:** Strengths and Weaknesses Resilience.

**Source:** Own elaboration.

Resilience		
	Item	Sum
18	In an emergency, I am a person who can be trusted.	969
4	It is important for me to stay interested in things.	961
25	I accept that there are people who don't like me.	961
5	I can be alone if I have to.	950
6	I am proud that I have achieved things in my life.	937
2	I usually get by in one way or another.	929
16	I usually find something to laugh about.	898
19	I can usually look at a situation in a variety of ways.	897
20	Sometimes, I force myself to do things even if I don't want to do them.	890
3	I am more dependent on myself than on other people.	872
21	My life has meaning.	858
7	I usually look at things in the long term.	851
17	Believing in myself, allows me to get through difficult times.	832
1	How satisfied are you with your grades?	822
23	When I am in a difficult situation, I usually find a way out of it.	813
13	I can cope with difficulties because I have experienced them before.	800
8	I am a friend to myself.	798
15	I keep myself interested in things.	779
10	I am determined.	759
14	I have self-discipline.	755
9	I feel that I can handle several things at the same time.	735
24	I have enough energy to do what I have to do.	734
12	I take things one at a time.	681
22	I don't complain about things I can't do anything about.	636
11	I seldom ask myself what is the purpose of everything.	571

Considering that those variables with which the students find a higher degree of agreement define a higher value on the scale, and, consequently, those items in which they do not perceive themselves to be reflected produce a result of lower magnitude, the assessment of the first and last items presented in the ordered table are interpreted as

strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation of the first and last items presented in the ordered table are interpreted as strengths and weaknesses, and this assessment leads to the interpretation of strengths and weaknesses of factors that make students resilient.

The 3 variables that make up the **Strengths** that the students have can be typified as people who: in an emergency are reliable, retain interest in different subjects and accept that not everyone can like them. From an academic point of view, which is what the study is about, these characteristics that students identify with would be beneficial in their resilience profile, since in their student career they will face emergencies with deliveries, exams, presentations, debates, etc. Staying interested is a quality that helps to keep learning new concepts and knowing that one will not always be liked by colleagues or teachers reduces a lot of the stress of trying to please everyone.

The 3 variables that make up the **Weaknesses** that students have can be typified as people who: tend not to focus on one problem at a time, but on several, lament when they feel they can no longer do anything else, and constantly question their goals. As a student strategy, tackling several problems at the same time may not be the right thing to do, because in the end none of them ends up being solved. This can lead to feeling bad or regretting issues that could have been solved but were not, and the self-demand to know the purpose is not always possible and leads to discomfort. Many subjects become meaningful as one progresses through the degree course, so the instrument considers that one should not be dealing in the smallest detail with the aims of each subject.

Regarding the purposes, perhaps we can go more deeply into the uses that these subjects will have in the student's professional future.

In reference to **Weaknesses**: they are not happy with their grades, expect to get more marks and are bored in class.

At this point, the **Strengths** are the causes of the **Weaknesses**. Evidently, there is a problem with the grading system, the reasons may be multi-causal, many are young and have moved from a secondary to a university education system, the rules change in terms of eligibility for promotion and perhaps this is something that should be explored further. At this point, it would be necessary to find out more about their expectations.

### Multiple Regression

This statistical analysis is used to analyse which of the variables that make up the total Resilience score are the important ones, given that not all variables have the same importance, nor the same predictive power.

With 5 variables, 78.9% of the Resilience phenomenon can be explained.

**Table 5:** Summary of the Model.  
**Source:** Own elaboration.

Model summary				
Model	R	R-squared	R-squared Adjusted	R-squared Standard error of estimate
1	0,628	0,394	0,390	12,36879
2	0,765	0,572	0,566	10,42894
3	0,815	0,665	0,568	9,26192
4	0,860	0,739	0,732	8,20509
5	0,892	0,796	0,789	7,26807

23. When I'm in a difficult situation, I usually find a way out.

15. I keep myself interested in things.

8. I am a friend to myself.

2. I usually get by in one way or another.

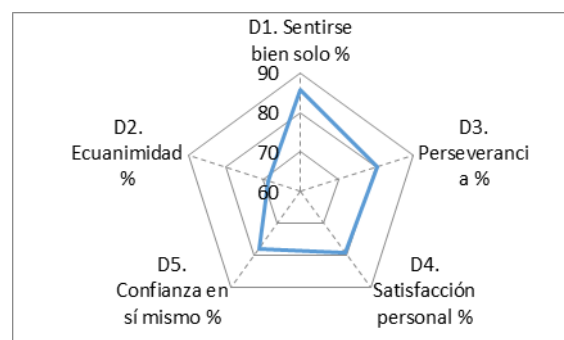
11. I rarely ask myself what is the point of everything.

Students, when they are in a difficult situation, usually find a way out, maintain their interest, feel friends with themselves, cope in one way or another and constantly ask themselves about the purpose of what they are studying. This is what explains the degree of resilience of students. Although broadly consistent with the analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses, these variables better shape the profile as they are predictive and have statistical significance.

### Factor Analysis

In order to identify how the different factors contribute to the resilience profile of the students who participated in the research, factor analysis is carried out using specific statistical tools.

**Figure 1:** Descriptive statistics Resilience.  
**Source:** Own elaboration.



Descriptive statistics	
Dimensions Resilience	Mean
D1. Feeling good alone %	85,7459
D3. Perseverance %	80,4033
D4. Personal satisfaction %	79,3049
D5. Self-confidence %	77,9301
D2. Equanimity %	68,6142

What had been evidenced in the responses of the Weaknesses, appears as an imbalance in the polygon that forms the radial graph, with the lowest proportional score. This imbalance in the equanimity dimension would be related to the way in which students are linked to immediacy, to facing several tasks at the same time and to over-rationalising the purposes of what is being done.

## Conclusions

The training of university professionals requires a comprehensive effort from teachers and students involved, this joint task is affected by the context in which this practice is immersed, but it is also affected by the internal realities of each participant. The search for knowledge of the resilience profile of our students can contribute to the enrichment of these practices and, in some cases, lead to an improvement in retention rates. These initial studies show that, in the sampled groups, students perceive themselves as highly resilient, demonstrating from these first years of university education the acquisition of behaviours and cognitions that allow them to adequately face the problems inherent to the educational level, which could be valuable in the future in the workplace.

To a large extent the lack of equanimity, which was identified in the factor analysis presented, is a defining characteristic of these students. It was also found that, in terms of resilience, students when in a difficult situation generally find a way out, maintain their interest, feel friends with themselves, cope in one way or another and question the purpose of what they are studying. These present conditions explain the degree of resilience of this group of students.

Since resilience is a dynamic process that can vary over time, in different contexts, in different people during their lives, in different groups, as it is a process that is naturally subject to change, we understand that this is where the educational sciences can make their contribution, offering tools that from their expertise are appropriate for students to reinforce their behaviours and cognitions that strengthen their resilient profiles.

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