

Strengths of character to undertake in times of COVID-19**Fortalezas de carácter para emprender en tiempos de COVID-19**

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Abstract

During the pandemic caused by COVID -19, the economy has slowed down in all areas, which has impacted the generation of jobs, the continuity of companies of all sizes. In this sense, the business environment is critical, and the creation of new companies is difficult. Faced with such adversity, it is necessary to identify possible critical success variables. In this sense, this research presents the results of a study of character strengths among young university students, through a mixed study, in which a sample of 323 higher-level students was surveyed, based on the inventory proposed by the VIA Institute. The objective was to identify the character strengths that have been favored and those that have been most affected during the time of social distancing due to confinement, due to COVID-19 through the correlation coefficient and calculation of dispersion measures. Research findings help identify strengths that require special attention.

Strengths of Character, entrepreneurship, COVID-19, social distancing**Resumen**

Durante la pandemia a causa del COVID -19 La economía se ha desacelerado en todos los ámbitos, por lo que ha impactado la generación de empleos, la continuidad de empresas de todos los tamaños. En este sentido el ambiente de negocios es crítico y se dificulta la creación de nuevas empresas. Ante tal adversidad, es necesario identificar posibles variables críticas de éxito. En este sentido, en esta investigación se presentan los resultados de un estudio de fortalezas de carácter entre jóvenes universitarios, mediante un estudio mixto, en el cual se encuestó a una muestra de 323 estudiantes de nivel superior, a partir del inventario propuesto por el VIA Institute. El objetivo, fue identificar las fortalezas de carácter que se han favorecido y las que han sido más afectadas durante el tiempo del distanciamiento social por el confinamiento, a causa del COVID-19 mediante el coeficiente de correlación y cálculo de medidas de dispersión. Los hallazgos de la investigación permiten identificar las fortalezas que requieren atención especial.

Fortalezas de Carácter, emprendimiento, COVID-19, distanciamiento social

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Introduction

This research was carried out in the Toluca Valley among university students aged 18 to 27, 15 months after the COVID-19 contingency, in the context of a slowdown in employment, and based on the possibility of starting a business, as an option to generate jobs and self-employment. In a generation that has certainly shown interest in starting new businesses, the analysis was carried out based on the VIA Institute on Character inventory compiled by Ryan M. Niemiec (2021), to assess the strengths of character based on the competencies that are required for entrepreneurship. From this, the key strengths that can favor entrepreneurial success are discussed.

The entrepreneur: more than knowledge is required, attitudes are necessary, among them: the ability to move forward, not be intimidated by conflicts, be persistent, be a leader, creative, innovative and persuasive. You must have the ability to convince customers that your product/service is good, as well as to persuade your partners to make a decision, your employees and collaborators of the importance of certain measures (Leite, Correia, & Sánchez-Fernández, p284 2015).

When an entrepreneur is in his development stage, he receives help and advice such as incubators. The entrepreneur must relate to people capable of putting them in contact with key people or with those people who can offer advice and relevant information. (Leite, Correia, & Sánchez-Fernández, p284 2015).

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Formal education is essential. There are countries where education and entrepreneurship are encouraged, and others where an education is offered that instills in people a dependent employee mentality. In Mexico, there are universities that even promote entrepreneurship as part of their identity. At the end of his studies, a university student has the expectation of being hired by a company.

However, in order to favor their students, Higher Education institutions should not limit themselves to providing knowledge and sending their graduates to the market, but rather encourage entrepreneurship as part of their training, so that they are able to create their own job. (Leite, Correia, & Sánchez-Fernández, p284 2015).

Some of them have the need to start a business, generally individuals with few resources who find it necessary to contribute to the family expense in some business activity or in an informal activity. For this, it is possible to promote from formal education the mechanisms that favor the development of hard and soft skills of the student.

Also, it is common for them to have a family business, which, if they do not apply formal strategies and knowledge, could not cross the generational barrier and perish with the founder.

On the other hand, according to the Entrepreneurship expert Emanuel Leite, he suggests that the most important strengths for entrepreneurship are: Perseverance, Creativity, Honesty and Teamwork (Leite, Entrepreneur's most important strengths, 2021).

Character strengths

According to a study in which the use of strengths as a predictor of well-being and health-related quality of life was evaluated, an increase was observed in research on the examination of character strengths according to the strengths classification system of Values in Action (VIA).

Although there is not yet enough research examining the use of generic strengths and their relationship to well-being, health-related quality of life (HRQoL), and character strengths. In one study, 135 undergraduate college students completed an instrument on strengths, subjective well-being (SW), self-esteem, self-efficacy, and HRQoL, passing five of the top strengths. The results revealed that the use of strengths is the only predictor of SWB, but not of HRQoL. VIA strengths of hope and enthusiasm were significant positive predictors of life satisfaction. The most commonly endorsed VIA strengths were: love, humor, kindness, social intelligence, and open-mindedness.

The strengths with the least development were: leadership, perseverance, wisdom, spirituality and self-control. Overall, the results suggest an important link between the use of generic strengths and specific strengths.

Character strengths are qualities that are expressed in specific circumstances that produce authentic positive emotions, such as optimism, hope, honesty, perseverance, the ability to flow (or optimal experience), and perceived competence, among others. These types of emotions favor physical, emotional and social well-being (Contreras & Esguerra, 2007) cited by (Perandones González, Herrera Torres, & Lledó Carreres, 2014).

In this regard, this research seeks to identify the strengths and weaknesses, to favor entrepreneurship, focusing on the key strengths. To specify the meaning of Character strengths, the definitions that were presented were (Institute, 2015):

- **Judgment:** Thinking about things and examining them from all sides are important aspects of who you are. It does not jump to conclusions and relies solely on hard evidence to make its decisions. You can change your mind.
- **Perseverance:** You work hard to finish what you start. No matter the project, you "get it out the door" in a timely manner. He is not distracted when working and feels satisfied when completing tasks.
- **Social intelligence:** You are aware of other people's motives and feelings. You know what to do to fit into different social situations and you know what to do to make others feel comfortable.
- **Spirituality:** You have strong and consistent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe. You know where you fit into the larger scheme. Your beliefs shape your actions and are a source of comfort to you.
- **Forgiveness:** You forgive those who have wronged you. You always give people a second chance. His guiding principle is mercy and not revenge.
- **Teamwork:** Excels as a member of a group. You are a loyal and dedicated teammate, always doing your part and working hard for the success of your group.
- **Appreciation of beauty and excellence:** You notice and appreciate beauty, excellence, and/or skillful performance in all domains of life, from nature to art, mathematics, science, and everyday experience.
- **Love:** You value close relationships with others, particularly those in which sharing and caring are reciprocal. The people you feel closest to are the same people who feel closest to you.
- **Prudence:** He is a careful person and his choices are always prudent. You don't say or do things that you later regret.
- **Gratitude:** You are aware of the good things that happen to you and never take them for granted. Your friends and family know that you are a grateful person because you always take the time to express your appreciation.
- **Honesty:** You are an honest person, not only for telling the truth, but for living your life in a genuine and authentic way. You are down to earth and unassuming; you are a "real" person.
- **Hope:** Expect the best in the future and work to achieve it. You believe that the future is something you can control.
- **Kindness:** You are kind and generous to others and are never too busy to do a favor. You enjoy doing good deeds for others, even if you don't know them well.
- **Curiosity:** You are curious about everything. He is always asking questions and finds all topics and topics fascinating. You like exploration and discovery.
- **Equity:** Treating all people fairly is one of its permanent principles. He does not allow his personal feelings to influence his decisions about other people. You give everyone a chance.

- **Perspective:** Although you do not consider yourself wise, your friends have this opinion of you. They value your perspective on matters and ask for your advice. You have a way of seeing the world that makes sense to others and to yourself.
- **Encouragement:** Regardless of what you do, you approach it with enthusiasm and energy. You never do anything halfway or by half. For you, life is an adventure.
- **Creativity:** Thinking of new ways of doing things is a crucial part of who you are. It is never content to do something the conventional way if a better way is possible.
- **Leadership:** Excels at leadership tasks: encouraging a group to get things done and preserving harmony within the group by making everyone feel included. You did a good job organizing activities and seeing what happens.
- **Humility:** You do not seek the spotlight, preferring to let your achievements speak for themselves. You do not consider yourself special and others recognize and value your modesty.
- **Courage:** You are a brave person who does not shy away from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain. You stand up for what is right even if there is opposition. You act on your convictions.
- **Self-regulation:** You consciously regulate what you feel and what you do. You are a disciplined person. You are in control of your appetites and your emotions, not the other way around.
- **Love of learning:** You love to learn new things, either in class or on your own. You have always liked school, reading and museums; anywhere and everywhere there is an opportunity to learn.
- **Humour:** You like to laugh and joke around. Making other people smile is important to you. You try to see the bright side of all situations.

Methodology

The objective of this research is to analyze a university population through a mixed analysis to identify key character strengths.

For this research, the instrument was applied to a sample of 323 students of careers related to Business and Marketing from 18 to 27 years old who come from the municipalities of Lerma, Toluca, Metepec, San Mateo Atenco, Ocoyoacac and Otzolotepec, of which the 62% were female and 38% male. Of the sample, 44% are working for a company. For the calculation of the sample, the unknown population formula was used:

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha pq}^2}{i^2}$$

Formula 1 Calculation of the unknown population sample (1)

From where it was obtained with a probability of 0.70 and a margin of error of 0.05:

n	323
Z	1.96
p	0.70
q	0.30
i	0.05

Table 1 Calculation of the sample
Source: Own elaboration

Instruments

An online form was developed for data collection over a period of 7 days. Where the degree of affectation of each of the fortresses was asked on a scale of -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3, where -3 implies that the fortress was negatively affected in the extreme and +3 that it had been favorably affected had even developed. When tabulating the results, they were ordered from highest to lowest based on the count of values from -3 to +3. Below is a segment of the tabulation as an example of the scale:

Strenght	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Encouragement	-30	-36	-35	71	37	63	126

Table 2 example of counting results
Source: (Own elaboration)

An assessment scale was obtained from the sum of negative and positive results of each character strength to identify those that have been most affected, as well as strengthened.

The mean for each variable, standard deviation and correlation coefficient were also calculated to identify the variables with the greatest association.

To what extent do you consider yourself to have an entrepreneurial spirit? And what is the probability that in the medium term you will choose to start a business? derived from which results were obtained that were represented graphically.

From the data obtained, the analysis of the variables was carried out to identify the key strengths and their association between them.

Results obtained

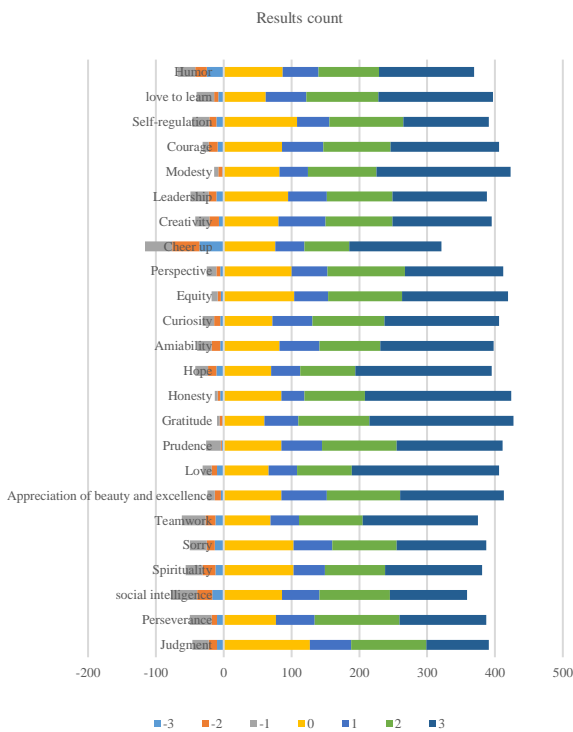
For the analysis of results, the sum of both positive and negative values was identified in the first instance, where the variables with the highest positive values were love, honesty, gratitude, hope and humility, in that order of importance; marked in green is Table 3. Likewise, in column 3, those that had a lower degree of positive development were recorded: Forgiveness, Perseverance, self-regulation, social intelligence and Judgment, which does not necessarily indicate that they are weaknesses, in such a way those that concentrated the greatest number of negative points were identified, in order of magnitude they were: Encouragement, Humor, Social Intelligence, Forgiveness, Self-regulation, leadership and hope. From this, some findings could be deduced, that is, to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Considering that love is valuing close relationships with others, particularly those in which sharing and caring are reciprocal. The people you feel closest to are the same people who feel closest to you, it can open the opportunity for ventures related to bringing people together, such as video conferencing and social media applications, as well as related services, such as video on demand, connectivity and interconnection devices. Honesty is a highly developed quality among the study sample, which opens the opportunity to establish transparent relationships in business and have clarity in terms and conditions. Gratitude is the next strength, with which you can establish long-term relationships with potential customers. Humility is a strength that can provide an opening for criticism and an opportunity for learning.

On the other hand, from the greatest weaknesses: Encouragement, Humour, Social Intelligence, Forgiveness, Self-regulation, leadership and hope, the prevailing need to attend to the emotional state of entrepreneurs is deduced, since the lack of encouragement can lead to a rapid demotivation and give up the attempt; social intelligence speaks of a great difficulty in relating to people in new or challenging situations; Lack of humor and forgiveness can lead to strain in both personal and professional relationships. The affectation of leadership, affects the integration of high performance teams and add the necessary talents for the success of the business; Finally, hope determines the relationship with the future and the ability to withstand moments of emotional or financial pressure.

	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Judgment	-10	-12	-24	127	61	111	92
Perseverance	-10	-8	-32	77	57	125	128
social intelligence	-17	-22	-39	86	55	104	114
Spirituality	-12	-19	-25	103	46	89	143
Sorry	-13	-12	-25	103	57	95	132
Teamwork	-12	-15	-35	69	42	94	170
Appreciation of beauty and excellence	-4	-9	-11	85	67	108	153
Love	-10	-8	-13	66	42	81	217
Prudence	-3	-1	-22	85	60	110	156
Gratitude	-2	-4	-4	60	50	105	212
Honesty	-5	-4	-4	85	34	89	216
Hope	-11	-12	-19	70	43	81	201
Amiability	-5	-13	-21	82	59	90	167
Curiosity	-5	-9	-17	72	59	106	169
Equity	-4	-5	-9	104	50	109	156
Perspective	-5	-6	-14	100	53	114	145
Cheer up	-36	-40	-40	76	43	66	136
Creativity	-7	-14	-21	81	69	99	146
Leadership	-11	-11	-27	95	57	97	139
Modesty	-2	-6	-6	82	42	101	198
Courage	-9	-13	-9	86	61	99	160
Self-regulation	-11	-10	-25	108	48	109	126
love to learn	-8	-6	-26	62	60	106	169
Humor	-25	-17	-26	87	53	89	140

Table 3 Count of results
Source: Own elaboration



Graphic 1 Count of results
Source: own elaboration

Once the strengths and weaknesses were identified, the correlation coefficient was calculated with Microsoft Excel® to find the strengths with the greatest association. Table 4 presents a segment of the table to demonstrate the results, where values greater than 0.099 were considered the ones with the greatest association, for example, Spirituality - Forgiveness.

From the calculation of the previous correlation coefficient, the strengths with the highest degree of association were arranged in descending order from highest to lowest, from which Table 5 was prepared.

Strengths of character	Judgment	Perseverance	Social intelligence	Spirituality	Sorry	Teamwork
Judgment	1					
Perseverance	0.92	1				
Social intelligence	0.964	0.989	1			
Spirituality	0.931	0.958	0.97	1		
Sorry	0.949	0.970	0.984	0.997	1	
Teamwork	0.823	0.955	0.931	0.964	0.957	1

Table 4 Sample of the correlation coefficient table
Source: Own elaboration

Strength of character	Correlation coefficient	Strength of character
Hope	0.9983	Love
Humor	0.9980	Leadership
Creativity	0.9979	Appreciation of beauty and excellence
Courage	0.9970	Appreciation of beauty and excellence
Curiosity	0.9970	Teamwork
Sorry	0.9969	Spirituality
Leadership	0.9968	Sorry
love to learn	0.9968	Curiosity
Courage	0.9960	Creativity

Table 5 Results of the correlation coefficient
Source: Own elaboration

Derived from the correlation coefficient, the close association that exists between hope and love is appreciated, which are the ones with the highest coefficient, so that one can support the other, depending on the relationship with the future, which is very necessary for an entrepreneur. The association between humor and leadership is representative, which can even lead to a specific leadership style, far from autocratic, for example. Creativity and courage show a close relationship with appreciation of beauty and excellence, which can be interpreted as a passion for innovation, quality and good service; Curiosity and teamwork are also associated, which can be of great interest, since it is essential to be able to collaborate harmoniously and achieve results, in a context of involvement. How important is the association between forgiveness and spirituality, that is, between there is a greater spiritual development, the person tends to forgive more easily, or vice versa, spirituality develops based on the ability to forgive. Similarly, leadership is associated with forgiveness, so it follows that an entrepreneur with the ability to forgive can develop better leadership skills. Likewise, curiosity with the love of learning, in such a way that the need for the entrepreneur to be constantly updated based on it can be satisfied. Lastly, a courageous person tends to creatively solve her own problems.

Conclusions

During the contingency, the economy has slowed down and it is necessary to generate new jobs, however, economic conditions have not allowed it, in this sense, it is very important to generate entrepreneurial opportunities, in such a way that entrepreneurs need to focus on their strengths to take the step. Derived from the correlation study on character strengths, those that are key were identified, as well as those that need to be improved. On the other hand, the strengths that manifest a greater degree of association were identified, which is of particular importance for those who promote entrepreneurs, be they universities, incubators, associations, chambers and even government entrepreneurship agencies. With this research, the knowledge of the soft skills of the entrepreneur is contributed, as well as the future well-being of the organizations that are undertaken.

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