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## Implementation of a Popular Education Strategy to Strengthen Bonds of Solidarity.

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** The following article examines how the implementation of a popular education strategy at the Technical Industrial Educational Institution (IETI) in Tuluá, Valle, strengthens the bonds of solidarity among high school students; this is based on popular education and the theory of Paulo Freire, which promotes an education centered on love and social transformation. This pedagogical and investigative practice adopts a qualitative and participatory approach, using the systematization of experience and a qualitative grid for data analysis, allowing for a deep evaluation of student reflections compared to existing theories. In the end, the implications of the pedagogical practice are analyzed, presenting fragments of participants' ideas about popular education and solidarity, enabling this analysis to help identify convergences and divergences between students' experiences and established theories. It evaluates the effectiveness of strategies to promote solidarity and social commitment in the educational field, highlighting the importance of popular education as a tool for social change and emancipation. It is argued that it is essential to continue developing these practices in various Latin American communities, fostering meaningful dialogue and learning that transcends the classroom.

**Objective:** To analyze how the implementation of an educational proposal based on popular education strengthens the bonds of solidarity among high school students at the Technical Industrial Educational Institution of Tuluá, Valle, through educational outings focused on practical and reflective experiences.

**Methods:** This research is framed in the interpretive paradigm, with a qualitative approach and the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR). Its purpose is to analyze how the implementation of an educational proposal based on popular education contributes to strengthening the bonds of solidarity among high school students at the Technical Industrial Educational Institution of Tuluá, Valle, through educational outings focused on practical and reflective experiences.

**Result:** The results show that popular education strengthens solidarity and reality-based learning, promoting social commitment. Students develop empathy, responsibility and appreciation of life, moving away from harmful environments. In addition, they make vulnerable populations visible, transforming perceptions through dialogue and respect, which reinforces the construction of a more just and supportive society.

**Conclusions:** The experience shows the impact of popular education on social transformation, promoting respect and non-discrimination. Based on Freire and Dussel, it highlights dialogue as an emancipatory tool. It is recommended to strengthen these practices in Latin America, promoting student autonomy and linking them with public policies to combat violence and exclusion through critical education.

**Keywords:** Popular Education, Solidarity, Paulo Freire, Social Vulnerability

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## 1. Introduction

This paper is intended to show a pedagogical and investigative experience developed in the municipality of Tuluá-Valle del Cauca, by the research and social projection project called “School on the Street”, which is an initiative that has been developing popular education practices and strategies to strengthen community ties in the Tulueño territory, with eleventh grade students from the Carlos Sarmiento Lora Technical Industrial Educational Institution and people who present high rates of social vulnerability such as homeless people, people in situations of forced displacement, hallucinogen users, sex workers, among others, most of whom participate in the public space of the civic plaza of Boyacá in the same municipality.

The title “School on the Street” is born from the importance of generating and informalizing formal education today, which is sometimes understood in closed spaces such as schools, colleges and universities; seeking to pave the way for educational groups to take ownership of their cities or municipalities in order to make them learning, solidarity and commitment scenarios where the student recognizes the importance of dialoguing with their environment and the people who pass through it, understanding that not only the teachers or professionals who teach them are people capable of teaching; also, those subjects who for family or cultural reasons were thrown into life on the street, have from their life experience an elementary knowledge to share to contribute to social development, which can help young people recognize the value of the human being; seeking to mitigate feelings of aporophobia against the most disadvantaged in a society and involve actions of recognition and work in favor of social equity. According to data from the Municipal Mayor's Office (2020), the municipality of Tuluá had 412 homicides, 253 extortion complaints (it must be taken into account that many people do not report for fear of reprisals) and 1,977 thefts between 2016 and 2019; which demonstrates the great social disorder and intolerance faced by this territory, which currently faces a greater dilemma, due to the fact that the current elected mayor (Salazar, 2014) is accompanied by a large fort of escorts due to the counterattack that he has exercised against criminal gangs, which had managed to infiltrate municipal institutions to carry out their illegal activities more easily, which led the elected leader to receive threats, attacks against his life, that of his family and the tranquility of the community in general.

This fear that has been influencing a general malaise of the people of Tuluá has led to collective silencing (Foucault, 2018) as a power practice of groups outside the law; speaking out becomes a threat to those who wish to report those criminal acts. Therefore, it is important in the academy to reveal these practices; from exercises of pacification, of liberation as proposed by Paulo Freire, which face this truth from other spheres, through a contextualized education that responds to the principles of popular education, such as: radical respect for life, solidarity, generosity, love, integral democracy where everyone has the right and guarantees to participate (Mejía, 2011).

The present study aims to analyze how the implementation of popular education at the Carlos Sarmiento Loro Technical Industrial Educational Institution in the municipality of Tuluá, Valle, strengthens the bonds of solidarity between students in grades 11-2 and 11-4, through a pedagogical outing focused on practical and reflective experiences; this practice was carried out on March 13 of this year.

## 2. Methods

Oriented from the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative approach and the use of IAP, to achieve the objective of analyzing how the implementation of an educational proposal based on popular education strengthens the bonds of solidarity between the students of Secondary Education of the Technical Industrial Educational Institution of Tuluá, Valle, through pedagogical outings focused on practical and reflective experiences.

To achieve this objective, the Action-Participation Research (IAP) method and the systematization of experiences were used, framed in a qualitative design, this qualitative approach is based on an integral perspective that seeks to understand the subjectivities of the participants in the research.

The method (IAP) is particularly suitable for this type of studies, since it allows the active participation of those involved, facilitating the co-construction of knowledge and critical reflection on educational practices, through the systematization of experiences, it is possible to organize and analyze in a rigorous way the experiences of the students during the pedagogical outings, which It allows for the identification of patterns, relationships, and shared meanings.

In the use of PAR, it was important to use observation as an information gathering technique, as an essentially

human activity, where the individual uses his or her senses, highlighting sight, in order to acquire knowledge about an object of study or a specific phenomenon, Martínez et al. (2024).

In addition, the qualitative design facilitates the exploration of the multiple perspectives and meanings that students attribute to their experiences, allowing for a deeper and more contextualized analysis of how these educational practices influence the strengthening of solidarity. According to Sampieri et al. (2006), this type of qualitative research focuses on the discovery and interpretation of general patterns and relationships, which provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of the educational phenomena studied.

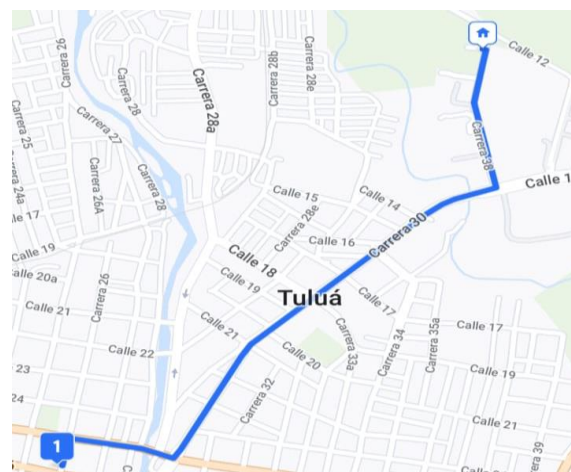
The approach was participatory (Durstun and Miranda, 2002), by virtue of the involvement and active commitment of the subjects of the research, who carried out an action learning exercise, establishing collaboration, dialogue and joint decision making, understanding that students are not passive subjects in knowledge, who do not only learn within the classroom. The chosen groups were considered through the need for them to have class during the first two hours of Wednesday, March 13 of this year, in the classroom of the English teacher and the philosophy teacher of the Technical Industrial Educational Institution, who would ensure the discipline and care of the students on the excursion; the study population was 50 students, days before they filled out a permission form together with their parents or guardians to safeguard the ethics of the research when taking data and photographs as evidence.

The methodological process was carried out in two distinct stages. The first stage focused on raising students' awareness of the categories relevant to the research. This was done with the aim of providing students with a thorough understanding of the research topic, introducing them to the concept of popular education and its impact on promoting solidarity both inside and outside the institution, recognizing the great value of being able to be supportive in different spaces. During this phase, work was done on understanding how popular education can contribute to the development of solidarity and commitment in different contexts.

The second stage consisted of an educational outing in which students made a tour from the Carlos Sarmiento Lora Technical Industrial Educational Institution to the Plaza Cívica Boyacá, located in the center of Tuluá-

Valle (see figure 1). During this tour, students interacted with people who face high levels of social vulnerability, such as homeless people, informal workers, and sex workers, among others. The purpose was to encourage recognition of others regardless of their social conditions, in line with the categories worked on in the article. On the other hand, students shared snacks with people they found on the sidewalks, thus reinforcing the exercise of solidarity and creating a space for meeting and mutual support, which generated well-being in the students since for some it was the first time they shared with people with high rates of social vulnerability. This practical approach allowed students to apply the concepts learned in a real context, promoting empathy and social commitment.

"Figure 1. Map of the route taken during the educational outing, created with the Circuito application" (2024; source of own elaboration).



During the reflection, the students analyzed what they observed in their interactions with homeless people, how they felt when sharing with them, and how these dialogues promoted attitudes of solidarity, discovering realities of their environment. They also reflected on the way in which what they learned can positively influence their daily lives, promoting values of respect, understanding and mutual support. This reflective process allowed the students not only to document their experiences, but also to internalize the acquired learnings, reinforcing the idea that solidarity is not just an isolated act, but a practice that has the potential to transform realities and contribute to the construction of a more just and peaceful society.

The data analysis was carried out using the Gibbs approach (2012), which emphasizes the importance of identifying relationships or differences in the information collected. According to Gibbs, organizing the data using grids facilitates coherence, reliability and clear presentation of the results. This method allows the data to be structured in a way that maintains an internal logic, which is essential to interpret the findings accurately and clearly. The systematic organization of information ensures that the results are understandable and can be analyzed effectively, thus achieving a deeper and more structured understanding of the data collected, which contributes to a richer and more detailed interpretation of the phenomena studied, as demonstrated in the results presented below.

### **3. Conceptual and theoretical bases: Development**

This section develops the arguments of the state of the art, understood as the most recent information on the subject (Martínez et al., 2024), and the theoretical framework, composed of classic and contemporary testimonies that support the research (Salcedo et al., 2022). Both elements are essential to understand the categories of popular education and the notion of solidarity ties, since they allow to articulate updated perspectives with consolidated theoretical foundations. These approaches provide a key conceptual basis for the analysis of social interaction and collective learning, facilitating a deeper understanding of educational and community processes.

#### **3.1. Popular education**

Popular education is a teaching-learning process, where people acquire skills, values, attitudes and competencies around principles of participation, dialogue, horizontality, contextualization, reflection

and action. From this perspective, it is necessary to think of the popular not as a synonym for poverty, but as an allusion to “groups and social movements that share a situation of social and economic dominance” (Gajardo, 1983, p. 9) that are organized in order to implement methodological strategies that start from the subjects' own realities; in order to meet the objectives of empowering communities for social transformation, the development of critical thinking, the promotion of autonomy and solidarity.

Carrillo (2011) proposes the idea that education is popular because it finds its reason for being in popular subjects, their organizations and their struggles. This type of education is different because its objectives, content and methodologies are designed to contribute to the project of social emancipation, oriented towards justice and collective well-being. Popular education focuses on community development in solidarity, promoting the active participation of subjects in processes that strengthen the social and cultural fabric of their communities. This educational approach is closely linked to historical memory, a fundamental process for individuals and groups to be able to read and reinterpret their local realities from a critical perspective. Through this dynamic, what Foucault (2011) calls “counter-history” is configured, an approach that allows subjects, by immersing themselves in these processes, to recognize both their individual and collective life, with the aim of better understanding the current order that governs their realities. By understanding their history and context, the subjects participating in these popular education processes not only acquire knowledge, but also develop a critical awareness that allows them to question and challenge the power structures that perpetuate inequality. In this way, popular education not only informs, but also empowers individuals, betting on social change through conscious and transformative action in their own contexts.

As expressed by Mangendo (2004, cited in Carrillo, 2011, p. 17), popular education (...) is the most significant contribution that Latin America has made to the world of education; the fundamental author of this educational movement is the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire, who through his works invited the creation and recreation of a process of liberation from positions that dominate man, instrumentalizing him and not allowing any progress towards his freedom (Freire, 1995).

In the pedagogy of the oppressed, Freire (1975) lays the foundations of an educational exercise which includes the actions that marginalized groups should have, which are grouped in the category of "oppressed" against others, who exploit them, who are grouped in the category of "oppressors"; the role of the mistreated is historical, which is why their organization is transcendental to achieve liberation from "cultural alienation" (Fals Borda, 2013), to which they are subjected by a system; understanding that subjects are freed through common-union.

Educating from the Freirean position implies not promoting teaching models in the classroom based on transmission; but on criticism which can be developed through a model of thinking in which it is interrelated with metacognition, argumentation, emotions and problem solving (Loaiza et., 2020); so that the subjects can think from their individual self about the collective problems they face as a group; using the vehicle that is language to reach consensus (Habermas, 1999), which are a fundamental basis for decision-making in spaces where problems or difficulties are faced.

Promoting critical thinking is getting students to build autonomy and hope (Freire, 2005; Freire, 1995), where people expect transformations as they take ownership together, moving in vogue to develop strategies for change, without staying only in the discursive exercise, they also go out to appropriate public space, to build local identity. In relation to the previous argument, McLaren in a conversation with Bosio (2022), expresses that critical theory is needed to better interpret, understand and transform everyday experiences; understanding that education has to lead to the creation of a better world and not the recreation of violence, a fact that makes it important to validate the knowledge of students, their experiences, what they know about the world; in order to build from their foundations.

Therefore, the popular educator must be someone who takes into account the historical and contextual moments that the people he teaches are going through. As Giroux (2004) suggests, this form of literacy goes beyond the simple teaching of basic skills; it requires investigating the meanings and cultural practices of different social groups. It is essential that the educator understands how these practices, although often contradictory, can be used to foster a critical understanding of reality. The aim is not only to train more competent students or teachers, but also citizens

committed to promoting democracy and social change. This critical literacy implies that both educators and students assume an active role in the transformation of society, understanding education as a political, cultural and supportive process. In doing so, a type of learning is promoted that is not only informative, but also formative, preparing individuals to participate consciously and critically in the democratic life of their communities.

Although when speaking of popular education, many recognize it as adult education, in which it has had its greatest significance, it is optimal to clarify that it also manages to participate in the processes of formal education, where under the themes of human rights and intercultural education it has provided a contribution to solidify nuclei of justice in educational institutions (Mejía, 2011). In general, its practices are sedimented under the dialogue, which is based on cultural negotiation, through horizontal exchange, where everyone, recognizing themselves as unfinished beings, contributes and learns around the topics raised, managing to take advantage of empirical and rational knowledge; subjects who are formed in a popular way, find the ability to listen to the homeless person, as well as to the doctor in education with the same interest in unraveling the truth of who speaks, that is, the individual truth of the other, to add it to the conceptual framework after its previous analysis.

This education is essential because it is based on the capacity of these latitudes, which situate Latin thought, which situate the localities themselves, the neighborhoods (Freire, 2005), of the wrongly called third world, to make us inventors of solutions to our own problems; managing to build systematic processes that allow feedback about the needs that are faced in each specific place where teachers and students are, thinking about the dynamics, the ways of relationships that exist, which invites the creation of alternative paths, through the recognition of the different, through otherness and the confrontation with current totalities that do not allow the well-being of the people (Dussel, 2006; Dussel, 1995).

### 3.2. Bonds of Solidarity

The importance of solidarity training generates a union within the social fabric, since it allows and lays the foundations for the construction of a society that works on its sensitivity and recognition of the other, respecting diversity, which generates great strength in the process of wanting to achieve a significant

transformation and that shows that affection for the community within its different sectors. Within the process of in-depth teaching, it manages to reflect commitment to the other and respect for their cultural identity, which becomes a supportive, transformative and influential act towards improvement and change in daily life. Freire (1995)

Freire (1995) highlights that one of the fundamental pillars to promote solidarity is the development of humility in each individual. According to him, humility is not only a personal virtue, but a key tool for deep reflection that leads to collective improvement. This concept implies recognizing that, as human beings, we all have limitations and that, by being aware of our own faults, we become more open to listening and learning from others, the importance of humility helps us to put aside pride and self-sufficiency, allowing us to cultivate empathy and understanding towards those around us, Espinoza et al. (2024).

Freire argues that true humility opens the doors to self-criticism, an essential process for personal and social growth, being by assuming a humble attitude is more likely to understand the experiences and challenges of others, which strengthens the bonds of solidarity and encourages more genuine collaboration, thus humility becomes a catalyst for the creation of environments where respect, cooperation and mutual support predominate, in this sense, working on humility not only improves individual life, but also contributes to the well-being of the community, since a climate of trust and solidarity is favored in which everyone can develop and contribute to the common good.

According to Santos (2006), in a society where extreme individualism, an obsession with efficiency, excessive competition, social conformism and moral relativism predominate, it is not easy to recognize that competition is manipulated. The main objective should not be who comes first, but how we can ensure that everyone reaches their maximum potential by working as a team and for the mission of transformation. In a fair society, it is essential to provide support to those who require special attention due to their vulnerable situation. Therefore, attending to diversity and working in unity is a fundamental principle of justice. When disadvantaged people, passing through the educational system, once again face discrimination and prejudice, the school ceases to be a means to correct inequalities and becomes a mechanism that aggravates and perpetuates them, contravening its mission of

equity. Within the framework of solidarity, living and recognizing humility becomes a fundamental part of the process. It is essential that the processes are constantly fed back with the need to generate empathy for the situations of others. Through Dussel's invitation (2011), where within the philosophy of liberation, Latin American philosophical thought has generated a social model that emphasizes the importance of recognizing the other, a concept driven by the notion of otherness. That is why this idea is associated with solidarity, where it actually represents a deeper process that involves sharing, growing, listening and respecting, as well as integrating the community in various manifestations of sharing; these interactions not only strengthen the sense of unity and belonging, but also grant a fundamental recognition to identity, fostering the pride of being part of it by actively getting involved in groups and working towards greater social union, it is vital to respect local practices and recognize the essential importance of valuing one's neighbor.

For Boal (2013), it is fascinating to observe how cultural spaces can play a key role in strengthening community development, especially by promoting social cohesion, by integrating diverse strategies, individuals in a community develop a sense of collective belonging, which contributes to their overall well-being, these cultural spaces not only provide a meeting place, but also encourage active participation and engagement of citizens with their environment.

A clear example of how sharing and social cohesion can be promoted is Boal's 'theatre of the oppressed' (2013). This cultural model and approach is presented as a powerful response to social injustices, using art as a tool for critical reflection and union between subjects. Boal proposes a participatory theatre where people not only observe, but also act and reflect on the situations of oppression they face in their daily lives, through stage performance, individuals can address these injustices and explore possible solutions, all this associated with the reality in which they participate where they recognise their social and democratic space.

The 'theatre of the oppressed' integrates the population, giving them the role of protagonist in the construction of their own history, while at the same time encouraging reflection and collective action, this cultural strategy not only contributes to individual empowerment, but also strengthens the social fabric, inviting people to unite and fight together for positive

change in their community, using art as a transformative medium.

The solidarity that Boal (2013) promotes through his popular theatre approach manifests itself as an effective social intervention strategy, capable of sensitising, engaging and mobilising people to reduce marginalisation. His legacy represents a clear example of the power of the act of solidarity and the importance of recognising the territory in which we operate in order to work on its improvement and generate a positive impact on the community.

The importance of sharing with others, as Touraine (2013) says, allows the recognition of the processes that have fractured the social fabric, where its negative impact on human development is evident and apathetic individualism is reflected. Touraine (2013) invites us to reflect on how certain models imposed through globalisation have generated the imposition of certain rules worldwide, leaving minorities and local identities in oblivion, forgetting the political and social importance, which should be an element of resistance and preservation of culture, which generates that only the market regulates collective life (Touraine, 2013).

This phenomenon becomes a heartbreaking reality, due to globalisation trends that privilege the exclusion of the other and establish a global economic order that prevails worldwide where apathetic individualism is highlighted (Bauman, 2003). All this invites us to consider how to work towards a balance that allows peaceful and respectful coexistence between different cultures and communities, preventing globalisation and economic factors from becoming a mechanism of exclusion and social fracture.

Solidarity is achieved, according to the perspective of Giraldo and Ruiz (2019), through three key aspects, aid without distinction, specialised mediation and the promotion of justice; this category encompasses a wide range of meanings, from actions motivated by compassion, such as providing aid to those in need, to continuous and meaningful efforts to reduce human suffering and promote justice.

Solidarity action therefore aims to produce and develop compassion for others; it also infers commitment and support for individuals without thinking only of the personal good, it is evident that solidarity in recent years is losing great value in a society driven by the striving (Bauman, 2007), which does not allow subjects to think of the other, damaging

the solidity of the community, due to the race that human beings face; it is recognised that in times past living and working for others was one of those virtues most respected (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009), esteemed and exalted, hence the reflection on how it is necessary to re-implement actions of sharing, in order to participate in the construction of a meaningful action.

It is important to see how Geertz (1987), through his work as an anthropologist, offers an enriching perspective on the importance of understanding and respect for diverse cultures, a fundamental point when working with communities that have not yet been addressed before. In his theory Geertz (1987) does not focus exclusively on the concept of solidarity, but highlights the relevance of empathy and respect towards cultural differences, this approach is closely linked to the notion of solidarity, as it implies listening to and valuing each person's social frameworks, which contributes to a greater understanding and recognition of different ways of thinking and lifestyles, allowing one to grow culturally and socially.

When considering the cultural relativism proposed by Geertz (1987), the importance of adopting an attitude of solidarity in recognising and respecting cultural diversity is highlighted, Geertz argues that understanding and valuing different cultural expressions is not only an academic exercise, but also an act of commitment towards the promotion of mutual understanding and respect between diverse communities, this action implies a conscious effort on the part of individuals to open themselves to cultural perspectives and practices different from their own, which can be interpreted as a form of solidarity.

Cultural relativism, according to Geertz (1987), challenges us to go beyond our own norms and values to appreciate the richness and complexity of other cultures, this openness not only enriches knowledge, but also fosters a greater sense of collaboration and mutual support among people, by integrating cultural relativism into our social interactions and practices, this legacy of Geertz, therefore, invites us to reflect on the importance of cultural diversity and its role in creating supportive ties between individuals, respecting the other and working towards constant improvement for mutual development.

Accordingly, Tabra (2017) examines how the concept of solidarity has evolved over time, showing both its enrichments and the distortions it has undergone. For

Tabra (2017), as the concept has been interpreted and redefined, there have been contributions that have enriched its understanding, but also changes that have distorted its original essence, in the early days, Aristotle conceptualised solidarity as a form of friendship that is based on reciprocal love between people. According to Tabra (2017, p. 23), Aristotle considered that this friendship should not be guided by reasons of utility, pleasure or profit, but by the character and formation of people.

This Aristotelian approach to solidarity suggests that solidarity action should be guided by authenticity, empathy and genuine recognition of the other, rather than being motivated by personal interests or advantages, it is evident over the centuries that the concept of solidarity has been subject to various interpretations and adaptations, Tabra (2027) stresses the importance of maintaining the original essence of the concept, centred on disinterested help and mutual support, in order to preserve its value and relevance in the current context.

On the other hand, in modernity, the new concept of solidarity focuses on promoting the common good of people and ensuring the quality of the spaces in which they find themselves, highlighting the importance of the role of the state in establishing development and inclusion policies aimed at all members of society, all with the aim of acknowledging that, although as subjects we have this responsibility with the act of solidarity, the different entities must also promote and participate so that these practices can be carried out, which establishes and generates a culture of solidarity that is the primary objective of all this action in favour of social and human growth and the concrete realisation of this.

In order to recognise the importance of continuing with social work through pedagogical means and therefore the development of solidarity, we have Zamanillo (2008), who in his theory, makes known how through this discipline it is possible to implement means so that solidarity fulfils the objectives of social union, in what is expressed by Zamanillo (2008 quoted in Dahrendorf, 2005, p. 153) 'opportunities only make sense when they are inscribed in the coordinates of solidarity, integration and cohesion. If society collapses and anomie breaks out, all possibilities of choice are annihilated' this reflects the importance of solidarity, making it known that it is a community work which is based on integration in order to generate possibilities

in which everyone can participate in the construction of a better community.

#### 4. Results

The main categories addressed in the following section of the results have been identified through a methodological process and are reflected in the corresponding section. This systematic approach has allowed us to effectively organize and present the findings obtained by the research participants, making known their point of view on basic issues for community construction and social transformation.

Popular education manages to create and strengthen a supportive and cooperative social space in which people, through various activities, learn and find satisfaction in recognizing the importance of popular educational events. Where these events encourage sharing, socialization and the discovery of new forms of learning, based on reality, students assume responsibility for change, promoting socialization, active listening, friendship and, above all, generating in themselves and in the community an education for life, this education of which is needed in the territory and must be present in the moments in which one works with others to contribute to the development of society and the understanding of reality.

Within the emotional field, students can allow themselves to experience and recognize the positive impact that their emotions can generate both in their own lives and in those of others. By getting involved and caring for those who lack constant support, students contribute to creating a peaceful and respectful environment that encourages reflection and appreciation of life. This approach invites students to assume a social and individual commitment, where solidarity and love promote a transformative union that generates a constant motivation to provide help and find satisfaction in serving others. The understanding that not everyone has the same possibilities manages to generate great value for what they have. In addition, it generates a commitment to stay away from spaces that can affect physical and emotional well-being, prioritizing health, integral and social well-being.

Through this exercise, students manage to recognize and make visible people who, for the most part, are in highly vulnerable situations with whom they had not previously interacted. After carrying out the activities, a development of empathy and a desire to know beyond the stigma is observed on the part of the



students, who are open to dialogue, show willingness to listen and, above all, demonstrate kindness, by understanding the valuable contribution that these people make in the lives of those who listen to them, this process contributes to changing certain appreciations associated with certain population groups and allows understanding the background or consequences that originated the situation in which they are immersed; the treatment stood out for its respect and great attention to listening and recognizing the other.

The commitment developed by the participants becomes an act of solidarity that is reflected in each of the actions carried out, the experiences generated, the awareness achieved, and the strategies used show how the importance of thinking about the future where one must continue contributing in a positive way, show the need to worry about the well-being of others. This establishes that, through solidarity, a more pleasant and healthy environment must be built together, where people reflect that effort to continue working for the benefit of others, with the satisfaction of having done the work in a supportive way and full of will for change with those who need it most. That is why by recognizing, respecting and listening to other people, we generate a state of solidarity that can be multiplied in the different socially active spaces.

## 5. Discussion

Next, the implications of the pedagogical and research practice are analyzed, contrasting the ideas arising from the students' reflection with the theoretical proposals of the authors mentioned in the conceptual section. Fragments of the basic ideas proposed by the participants in the research on popular education and solidarity ties will be presented. Thanks to this analysis, it will be possible to evaluate how the students' perceptions and reflections align or contrast with established theories, providing a deeper understanding of how popular education and solidarity ties can be effectively integrated into educational practice. The comparison of realities between the experiences lived by the students and the theoretical approaches will help to identify points of convergence and divergence, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies implemented to promote solidarity and social commitment in the educational and social context.

**Popular education,** Regarding popular education, student 1 (E1) states that "this experience helps us see

the reality of Tuluá" for "a more successful future" (E33); which is the primary task of this type of exercises; from what Fals (2013) suggests in his book "Raizal socialism and territorial ordering" education should allow us to get closer to the identity of the peoples, with the conviction of doing exercises adapted to the contexts themselves, which respond to the identity needs of the territories; on the other hand, there is an agreement that one can "change the interaction of every day" (E7) understanding that not only is there learning within the classrooms of the educational institution, but also the street has something to share, through the life story of the people who walk through it. From the Freirean position, working with communities is an opportunity to break social stigmas, as demonstrated by young people who appreciate that "not all people are bad" (E17) so that by working with them their problems are recognized and it is recognized that in situations appearances lead to making a priori judgments, which is a product of the colonization of minds (Dussel, 2006), in which only those who succeed economically in life are recognized as someone who can say their words.

This type of practice generates awareness, as seen in the following: "this activity made me reflect on how bad I thought my life was and now understand my privileges" (E21), "reflect on the things we do not value and what we have" (E31) these appreciations are framed in how education can help generate a change of mentality (Carrillo, 2011). In the subjects, who thanks to their training can realize the bad actions they are having with life or help others to correct their behavior? On the other hand, arguments appear such as; "I saw that some inhabitants are in a bad state for consuming" (E22), others are homeless "due to a situation they cannot overcome" (E9) and that this type of practices can "generate a social change" (E30), these ideas are developed by Freire around all his texts, in which he expresses that the joint work between teachers and students should help to recognize the difficulties that people face and that by recognizing this reality they should work in order to generate the transformation of these problems.

**Solidarity bonds,** Students link that by sharing food or a conversation with people, they learn to improve their communication skills, "through sharing we can socialize more with people" (E11), this is explained by Zamanillo (2008), who explains that solidarity fulfills objectives of social union. If it is shared without expecting anything in return, young people "realize the

reality that many people go through” (E31) because they have an intersubjective practice, which is direct, it is not told; which allows them to have to digest the difficulties that different personalities have faced in their life project.

Being supportive allows us to face the disunity that people face, which can be produced by the neoliberal system which sells the idea of every man for himself (Bauman, 2006). Leaving people with higher vulnerability rates in a population adrift; Regarding this idea, the students state that “if more people give opportunities to people who need it, there would be fewer people living on the streets” (E46), recognizing the need to reach out to others with the intention of helping them and also allowing themselves to be helped by them, because thanks to their knowledge they can open a new perception of the world that was not previously had (Mejía, 2011).

Being supportive focuses on promoting the common good, as it appears in Tabra (2017), providing help without distinction (Giraldo and Ruiz, 2019); to which the need to offer something to the other is stated, so “people would not be so arrogant” (E44) and an example of how to achieve a “peaceful environment” would be given (E5). Contributing to supportive action is understanding that I can help the different, that in the act of helping them, one is recognizing and cooperating with them; the only excuse necessary to provide support is their human condition.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

The contribution of this experience to the field of research in popular education is based on the results obtained from the students' reflections. Throughout the experience, it is observed how students assume a leading role when interacting with homeless people where a space of non-discrimination is established, starting from respect and leaving stigmatization aside. This change of perspective, in which dialogue and sharing food become tools of recognition and dignification of this social group, shows the impact of a transformative education. Freire's dialogical perspective (2022) is fundamental in this process, as it proposes that dialogue is a path to freedom, promoting intersubjective work that is based on otherness (Dussel, 2011). Otherness implies the recognition of the other as a being equal in dignity and rights, thus promoting collaboration between human beings to build a more just social fabric.

The findings of this experience are in line with what Freire said about the importance of an education that not only teaches academic content, but also promotes the recognition and understanding of the social contexts in which individuals live, and in this education, students learn to “read the world” critically, with the aim of transforming it through conscious action. In this sense, the experience confirms the relevance of popular education as a tool for social change and emancipation.

Therefore, it is necessary to continue working on this type of pedagogical practices in the different latitudes of Latin America, thinking about the social dynamics that populations face, as was the case of Tuluá, exposed here in an entertaining way. This type of practice requires a great commitment from researchers and academic institutions, understanding the need to safeguard the integrity of students, therefore, they are required to have commitment and respect in the places they pass through, ensuring the care of everyone along the way, in order to leave a good image of the school.

It is recommended to continue encouraging students' autonomy and motivate them to share with their social contexts, invite them to look each other in the eye, have kind actions among themselves, to make classroom exercises more enjoyable. Finally, it is essential that the school breaks its barriers, goes out into the street, so that this type of practice can reach government agencies in municipal mayors' offices, in order to find ways to make the exercise more macro in the places where they are taken, in order to combat violence and oppression through an education that accepts the problematization of their own environment, touching on the social issues that concern the neighborhoods in which the students are immersed.

Academic Spin Offs (Romero et al., 2023) can serve as a bridge between the university and society, applying scientific and technological knowledge in projects with social impact. This approach allows spin-offs to transcend their traditional role and become drivers of social transformation, strengthening bonds of solidarity and promoting more inclusive and participatory development.

In this context, it is essential that academia addresses social problems arising from power dynamics that generate collective silencing and unrest, as is the case in Tuluá, where fear has led to widespread silencing (Foucault, 2018). This practice of power, exercised by

groups outside the law, turns denunciation into a latent threat.

Therefore, academia must play an active role in unveiling these realities through exercises of pacification and liberation, in line with the postulates of Paulo Freire. It is necessary to promote a contextualized education that responds to the principles of popular education, based on radical respect for life, solidarity, generosity, love and integral democracy, guaranteeing the participation of all (Mejía, 2011).

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

### Ethical implications

The authors declare that this article has no ethical implications in the development, writing or publication.

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