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Learning disabilities, psychological well-being and emerging technologies in a university context
Discapacidades de aprendizaje, bienestar psicológico y tecnologías emergentes en contexto universitario

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ABSTRACT

The research objective is described as analysing the pedagogical approach to learning disabilities, psychological well-being and emerging technologies in a university context. The research article was carried out under the typology of review, once the 30 articles to be reviewed as a population segment were configured, a content analysis was carried out to extract the relevant information and process it in the results section. The results show that the relationship between learning disabilities, psychological well-being and emerging technologies is an essential topic in educational psychology, especially in higher education. Students with disabilities face challenges that affect their academic performance and mental health, but they must also develop strategies to adapt to the student community; while emerging technologies, such as self-assessment tools and simulations, offer new possibilities for personalising learning and making it more accessible.

Descriptors: educational psychology; educational guidance; learning disabilities. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Se describe como objetivo de investigación analizar el abordaje pedagógico de las discapacidades de aprendizaje, bienestar psicológico y tecnologías emergentes en contexto universitario. El artículo de investigación se llevó a cabo bajo la tipología de revisión, una vez configurados los 30 articulos a revisar como segmento poblacional, se procedió a realizar un análisis de contenido para extraer la información relevante y procesarla en la sección resultados. Los resultados muestran que la relación entre las discapacidades de aprendizaje, el bienestar psicológico y las tecnologías emergentes es un tema esencial en la psicología educativa, especialmente en la educación superior. Por cuanto los estudiantes con discapacidades enfrentan desafíos que afectan su rendimiento académico y su salud mental, pero también deben desarrollar estrategias para adaptarse a la comunidad estudiantil; mientras que las tecnologías emergentes, como herramientas de autoevaluación y simulaciones, ofrecen nuevas posibilidades para personalizar el aprendizaje, hacerlo más accesible.

Descriptores: psicología de la educación; orientación pedagógica; dificultad en el aprendizaje. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).

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Review articles

INTRODUCTION

The university environment poses significant challenges for students, especially those with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other specific learning disorders. These conditions not only affect students' ability to process and retain information, but also influence their emotional well-being, their self-efficacy and their ability to adapt to the academic and social demands of higher education (Al Otaiba & Petscher, 2020; Matteucci & Soncini, 2021). In this context, research has begun to explore more comprehensively how these students face their challenges, develop compensation strategies and benefit from technological and pedagogical advances.

Learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, affect a significant proportion of university students, who often face difficulties in areas such as reading, writing and time management. However, recent research has highlighted that many of these students develop compensatory strategies that enable them to overcome their limitations and achieve academic success (Cavalli et al. 2017).

Likewise, qualitative studies have revealed that students with dyslexia adopt specific learning practices, such as the use of assistive technology, detailed planning and seeking support from social and academic networks (MacCullagh et al., 2017). However, these strategies are not always enough to overcome the emotional and social barriers they face, such as the stigma associated with their disabilities and the pressure to meet high academic standards (Stoeber & Rountree, 2021).

As for psychological well-being being a critical factor for academic success, especially in students with learning disabilities, self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to achieve specific goals, plays a central role in this context, while Matteucci & Soncini (2021) found that university students with specific learning disorders tend to report lower levels of self-efficacy, which in turn negatively affects their psychological well-being and academic performance. Similarly, Elgendi et al. (2021) highlighted that students with a history of reading difficulties

experience higher levels of anxiety, which can limit their ability to fully participate in academic activities.

On the other hand, factors such as sleep quality and stress management also have a significant influence on student well-being. In response to this, Alghwiri et al. (2021) used advanced machine learning techniques to identify predictors of sleep quality in university students, highlighting the importance of interventions that promote healthy sleep habits.

On the other hand, the advancement of emerging technologies has transformed higher education, offering new opportunities to support students with learning disabilities (Crompton et al., 2020), while these technologies can facilitate the development of 21st-century skills, such as self-regulation, creativity, and problem solving, which are essential for academic and professional success (Graesser et al., 2022).

Based on the above, the research objective is to analyse the pedagogical approach to learning disabilities, psychological well-being and emerging technologies in a university context.

METHOD

The research article was carried out as a review, for which a narrative review was used. The search for information was carried out in recognised academic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, ERIC and Scielo. Keywords related to the three main topics of the study were used, combined with logical operators to obtain more precise results. The keywords were:

1) Learning disabilities: ‘dyslexia’, ‘learning disorders’, ‘learning difficulties’, ‘ADHD’.
2) Psychological well-being: ‘mental health’, ‘self-efficacy’, ‘academic anxiety’, ‘academic stress’, ‘resilience’.
3) Emerging technologies: ‘educational technology’, ‘adaptive learning’, ‘accessible technologies’, ‘universal design for learning (UDL)’.
4) University context: ‘higher education’, ‘university students’, ‘educational inclusion’.

The search was limited to studies published between 2017 and 2023, to ensure that the results were current. The following criteria were applied to choose the studies included in the review:

Included:

a) Studies that addressed at least one of the three main topics (learning disabilities, psychological well-being or emerging technologies) in the university context.

b) Peer-reviewed publications, such as scientific articles, systematic reviews or book chapters.

Excluded:

a) Studies focused exclusively on educational levels other than university.

b) Publications that were not available in full text.

c) Research that did not explicitly address the relationship between the main topics.

The titles and abstracts of the articles found were then reviewed to identify the most relevant ones. The full texts of the pre-selected studies were then analysed to confirm that they met the inclusion criteria. Once the 30 articles to be reviewed as a population segment had been configured, a content analysis was carried out to extract the relevant information and process it in the results section.

RESULTS

The relationship between learning disabilities, psychological well-being and emerging technologies constitutes a relevant field of study in educational psychology, especially in the context of higher education. In this sense, the following is presented:

Learning disabilities

Students with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, face significant challenges that affect both their academic performance and their psychological well-being. In this regard, Al Otaiba & Petscher (2020) highlight the importance of multi-level support systems and response to intervention (RTI) interventions to identify and serve students with dyslexia. These strategies allow for early detection and more effective support, which is crucial to prevent academic lag.

In the university context, Brunswick & Bargary (2022) mention that creativity and a positive self-image can be protective factors in students with dyslexia, although these benefits depend on the timing of the diagnosis. For their part, Cavalli et al. (2017) identify that students with dyslexia develop compensatory strategies, such as phonemic-morphemic dissociation, which allow them to mitigate some of the difficulties related to reading. However, these strategies do not completely eliminate the barriers, which reinforces the need for continuous support.

From a psychological perspective, Elgendi et al. (2021; Stoeber & Rountree (2021), explore how factors such as anxiety, self-efficacy and perfectionism affect students with learning difficulties. These factors can generate a cycle of stress and low self-esteem, which highlights the importance of specific psychological interventions. In this line, Matteucci & Soncini (2021) project that self-efficacy is closely linked to psychological well-being, suggesting that strengthening academic confidence can improve the quality of life of these students.

Likewise, Kreider et al. (2020) address the development of disability identity in students with learning and attention disorders, highlighting how self-acceptance and advocacy can be powerful tools for overcoming the stigma associated with these conditions. On the other hand, MacCullagh et al. (2017) explore the learning strategies and challenges faced by university students with dyslexia, emphasising the importance of fostering self-regulation and providing personalised support to improve their academic experience.

Psychological well-being in university students

The psychological well-being of university students is influenced by multiple factors, including sleep, academic stress, social relationships and learning conditions, in the face of which, Alghwiri et al. (2021) identify that sleep quality is a key predictor of psychological well-being, while Yeo et al. (2023) show how class start times affect students' academic performance and daytime behaviour, with direct implications for their mental health.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also been significant, with Hossain et al. (2022) documenting how the prolonged closure of universities in Bangladesh exacerbated mental stress and anxiety among students, especially those with

limited access to online learning resources. Similarly, Janc et al. (2023) and Janc et al. (2023b) highlight how remote learning has contributed to an increase in musculoskeletal disorders due to the poor ergonomics of home study spaces.

In the context of mental health, Herrmann-Werner et al. (2022) present a teaching model for medical students that integrates psychological well-being into the curriculum, which could be replicated in other educational fields. In this way, Morales-Rodríguez et al. (2020) explore how psychosocial factors, such as social support and resilience, are related to psychological well-being in university students .

On the other hand, Niazov et al. (2022) analyse how academic stress and procrastination affect students with learning disabilities, highlighting the importance of time management strategies and emotional support. Likewise, Sumner et al. (2021) identify the needs for academic support and confidence in students with dyslexia and developmental coordination disorder, which reinforces the need for personalised interventions.

The study by Cui et al. (2024), which develops a nomogram to predict the risk of temporomandibular disorders in university students, highlights how physical and psychological stressors can interact in the educational context. This result provides an understanding of how physical health conditions can influence the overall well-being of students, especially those with learning disabilities.

Emerging technologies

Emerging technologies have the potential to transform higher education, especially for students with learning disabilities, as Crompton et al. (2020) and Graesser et al. (2022) highlight how these technologies can personalise learning, improve accessibility and foster 21st-century skills. In this sense, Räty et al. (2023) show how tablet-based self-assessment tools can empower students with intellectual disabilities, promoting autonomy and confidence.

In the field of vocational training, Golombick et al. (2024) explore how simulation-based learning can improve clinical self-efficacy in speech pathology students, suggesting that immersive technologies may also be useful in other educational fields. However, the use of technologies also poses challenges, therefore,

Hossain et al. (2022) warn that unequal access to online learning platforms can increase educational gaps, while Janc et al. (2023) point out that prolonged use of electronic devices can have negative effects on physical health.

In this sense, Hanham et al. (2023) point out that the integration of cognitive load theory with other educational theories has direct implications for the design of pedagogical interventions for students with learning disabilities. The combination of theoretical approaches can optimise the use of emerging technologies to reduce cognitive overload and improve learning.

In the context of virtual education, Garrido-Sacán et al. (2020) and Vivero-Quintero et al. (2023) reflect on how psychology and pedagogy can be integrated to improve educational practices in virtual environments, highlighting the importance of a student-centred approach. Consequently, Yoong et al. (2022) analyse the educational effects of service-based learning community service-based learning in nursing education, which can be adapted for students with disabilities, promoting social skills and a sense of belonging, thus contributing to psychological well-being.

Inclusion and diversity in higher education

The inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education requires comprehensive attention that addresses both academic and social barriers. Johnson et al. (2024), meanwhile, mention the importance of positive student-teacher relationships in improving the university experience of autistic students. Similarly, Nowland (2023) explores how physical education teachers can develop their self-efficacy to teach students with disabilities, promoting greater inclusion in the classroom. On the other hand, Zhang et al. (2025) analyse how bullying affects anxiety in students with and without dyslexia, highlighting the moderating role of self-confidence, which reinforces the need for interventions that promote a safe and supportive educational environment.

Likewise, Zysberg & Kasler (2017) address the relationship between learning disabilities and emotional intelligence, suggesting that the development of emotional skills can be an effective strategy for improving the well-being and academic performance of these students. It is important to take into account the

use of universal design for learning (UDL), which seeks to create learning environments accessible to all students, regardless of their abilities or needs. In this regard, Crompton et al. (2020) and Graesser et al. (2022) describe how emerging technologies can facilitate the implementation of UDL, allowing for personalisation of learning and the elimination of barriers, taking into account that tools such as text readers, dictation software and adaptive learning platforms can significantly benefit students with learning disabilities.

In addition to pedagogical strategies, it is essential to create a safe and emotionally supportive environment. In this context, Zhang et al. (2025) indicate that self-confidence can protect students with dyslexia from the negative effects of bullying. Universities must therefore implement clear anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies, as well as offering psychological support services and mentoring programmes that strengthen students' resilience and self-esteem.

In addition to the above, Sumner et al. (2021) and MacCullagh et al. (2017) also highlight the importance of providing personalised academic support, such as individual tutoring, exam accommodations and access to materials in accessible formats. These measures not only improve academic performance, but also strengthen students' confidence and motivation. In this sense, emerging technologies also play a crucial role in promoting inclusion, in which case, Räty et al. (2023) show how tablet-based self-assessment tools can empower students with intellectual disabilities, promoting their autonomy and active participation in learning.

Similarly, Golombick et al. (2024) explore how technology-based simulations can improve self-efficacy in speech pathology students, suggesting that these tools may also be useful for students with learning disabilities. Therefore, Hanham et al. (2023) highlight the importance of integrating cognitive load theory with other educational theories to optimise the use of emerging technologies, helping to reduce cognitive overload in students with disabilities and enabling them to participate more effectively in academic activities.

In the context of virtual education, inclusion presents both challenges and opportunities. In this sense, Hossain et al. (2022) warn that unequal access to

online learning platforms can increase educational gaps, especially for students with disabilities. However, Garrido-Sacán et al. (2020) and Vivero-Quintero et al. (2023) emphasise that the integration of psychology and pedagogy in virtual education can improve inclusive practices, promoting more equitable learning. Likewise, Yoong et al. (2022) analyse the effects of community service-based learning in nursing education, highlighting how this approach can foster social skills and a sense of belonging in students with disabilities. This model can be adapted to other educational contexts to promote inclusion and active participation.

As for the promotion of diversity in the university community, it not only involves attending to the needs of students with disabilities, but also fostering a culture of respect and valuing diversity throughout the institution. It is important to bear in mind that Vivero-Quintero et al. (2023) and Garrido-Sacán et al. (2020) reflect on how the integration of psychology and pedagogy can contribute to more inclusive educational practices, especially in contexts where cultural, social and functional diversity is broad.

According to Johnson et al. (2024), positive relationships between students and teachers are essential to improve the university experience of autistic students. However, these relationships can be hindered by prejudice, ignorance or lack of teacher training on the specific needs of these students. For his part, Nowland (2023) points out that many educators lack the confidence and skills necessary to adapt their pedagogical practices, which can limit the active participation of students with disabilities in academic and extracurricular activities.

Another significant challenge is bullying and discrimination, which persist even at university level. In this vein, Zhang et al. (2025) analyse how bullying affects anxiety in students with and without dyslexia, highlighting that self-confidence can moderate these negative effects, emphasising the importance of fostering a safe and supportive educational environment where students can develop their self-esteem and feel valued.

In order to promote inclusion, it is essential that higher education institutions implement effective strategies. One of the most important is teacher training.

Nowland (2023) emphasises that training programmes should focus on developing the self-efficacy of educators, providing them with tools to identify and address the needs of students with disabilities. This includes adaptive pedagogical strategies, the use of accessible technologies and the promotion of an inclusive environment in the classroom. Consequently, Kreider et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of sensitising teachers to disability identity, helping them to understand how the experiences of students with disabilities influence their personal and academic development.

CONCLUSION

The results show that the relationship between learning disabilities, psychological well-being and emerging technologies is an essential topic in educational psychology, especially in higher education. Students with disabilities face challenges that affect their academic performance and mental health, but they must also develop strategies to adapt to the student community; while emerging technologies, such as self-assessment tools and simulations, offer new possibilities for personalising learning and making it more accessible, although it is important to address problems such as unequal access, as well as cognitive overload. It is important to bear in mind that in order to create an inclusive and emotionally assertive educational environment it is essential to strengthen the self-esteem and well-being of these students.

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