

Attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of university teachers towards students with ADHD: a systematic review

Atteggiamenti, convinzioni e percezioni dei docenti universitari nei confronti degli studenti con ADHD: una revisione sistematica della letteratura

Actitudes, creencias y percepciones de los docentes universitarios hacia los estudiantes con TDAH: una revisión sistemática

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Summary

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that can persist into adulthood and affect attention, organization, and self-regulation in university students. The objective of this study was to analyze faculty attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding university students with ADHD through a systematic literature review. The research adopted a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach and followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure transparency. The search was conducted in Scopus and Web of Science. Science, ERIC, PubMed, SciELO, and Redalyc were searched using terms related to ADHD, higher education, teacher attitudes, teacher perceptions, and educational inclusion. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, eliminating duplicates, and assessing thematic relevance, 12 scientific articles were selected for final analysis. The results show that teacher attitudes significantly influence the inclusion and academic success of students with ADHD. Furthermore, the level of knowledge and training of teachers shapes their beliefs and perceptions, favoring inclusive practices when there is an adequate understanding of the educational needs of this population. The reviewed studies highlight the importance of implementing curricular adaptations, flexible pedagogical strategies, technological resources, and teacher training programs. It is concluded that teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are fundamental elements for promoting inclusive university environments. However, the limited scientific output in Ecuador demonstrates the need to develop new research and strengthen institutional policies aimed at the educational support of university students with ADHD.

Keywords: ADHD; higher education; educational inclusion; pedagogical strategies; inclusive practices.

Abstract

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that can persist into adulthood and significantly affect the academic performance, organization, attention, and self-regulation of university students. In this context, the present study aimed to analyze faculty attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding university students with ADHD through a systematic literature review of scientific publications between 2021 and 2026.

The research was conducted using a literature review methodology, following the guidelines established by the 2020 PRISMA statement to ensure the transparency and rigor of the study selection process. The search was carried out in the Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PubMed, SciELO, and Redalyc databases, using keywords related to ADHD, higher education, faculty attitudes, faculty beliefs, faculty perceptions, and educational inclusion. Initially, 25 potentially relevant bibliographic sources were identified; Subsequently, after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, eliminating duplicates, and assessing thematic relevance, 12 scientific articles were selected for final analysis.

The main findings demonstrate that teachers' attitudes significantly influence the inclusion and academic success of university students with ADHD. Furthermore, it was identified that the level of knowledge and training of faculty regarding the disorder shapes their beliefs and perceptions, fostering even practices when there is an adequate understanding of the characteristics and needs of this population. Similarly, the analyzed studies highlight the importance of implementing curricular adaptations, flexible pedagogical strategies, technological resources, and teacher training programs to improve the educational experience of students with ADHD.

It is concluded that the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of university faculty are fundamental elements for promoting inclusive educational environments. However, the reviewed literature shows a limited scientific production in the Ecuadorian context, which highlights the need to develop new research that will strengthen teacher training and the implementation of institutional policies aimed at the educational support for university students with ADHD.

Keywords: ADHD; higher education; educational inclusion; pedagogical strategies; even practices.

Riassunto

The Disturbance of Attention Deficiency / Iperattività (ADHD) is a condition of neurodevelopment that can persist into adulthood, influencing the attention, organization and self-regulation of university students. The objective of this study is to analyze the attitudes, the convictions and the perceptions of teachers in comparison with university students with ADHD through a systematic review of the literature. The research has adopted an application qualitative descriptive-analytical and has followed the line guide of the announce PRISMA 2020 to ensure the transparency of the process Methodological. Research bibliographic was conducted in the data bases Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PubMed, SciELO and Redalyc, using terms related to ADHD, higher education, attitudes of teachers, perceptions of teachers and educational inclusion. After the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, elimination of duplicates and the evaluation of the relevance theme, 12 scientific articles were selected for the final analysis. The evidence shows that the attitudes of teachers influence significantly the inclusion and the academic success of students with ADHD. In addition, the extent of knowledge and staff training teaching conditions their convictions and perceptions, favoring even when I saw it is an adequate comprehension of the educational needs of this population. The studies analyzed evidence the importance of implementing adaptations curriculum, pedagogical strategies flexible, resources technology and training programs for teachers. It concludes that the attitudes, the convictions and the perceptions of the body teaching represent fundamental elements to promote environments even. However, the limitation of scientific production in Ecuadorian evidence the need to develop new research and strengthen the institutional policies aimed at the educational support of university students with ADHD.

Parole key : ADHD; higher education ; even educational; pedagogical strategies ; inclusive practices

Introduction

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by persistent difficulties with attention, impulse control, and motor activity. According to Escofet Soteras et al. (2022), it can affect approximately 7% of school-aged children and persists in 4% of adults. Although for many years its study was primarily associated with childhood and the school setting, there is now greater recognition of its presence in adolescence and adulthood, including among university students. Entering higher education

represents a new scenario of academic and personal demands for many students with ADHD, where they must face challenges related to time management, activity planning, fulfilling responsibilities, emotional regulation, and maintaining concentration. These difficulties can impact their academic performance, university adjustment, and personal well-being (Lefler et al., 2023; Cohen, Shavel & Lovett, 2024).

The increase in students with ADHD in universities has led to reflection on the need to strengthen educational inclusion processes within higher education. Inclusion does not only mean allowing students access to university, but also ensuring that they can actively participate, learn under equitable conditions, and develop their abilities within environments that recognize their differences. In this process, the role of the university professor is fundamental, since their knowledge, experiences, and perceptions influence how they understand the needs of their students and respond with appropriate pedagogical strategies (Paz-Maldonado & Flores-Girón, 2021).

Several studies have indicated that teachers' attitudes are a key element in either fostering or hindering the development of inclusive educational spaces. Teachers with training in diversity and specific educational needs are more likely to implement flexible methodologies, provide appropriate support, and reduce barriers to student participation. In this regard, Paz-Maldonado and Flores-Girón (2021) emphasize that positive teacher attitudes promote inclusive processes, while Guillemot, Lacroix, and Nocus (2022) point out that factors such as professional development, prior experience, and institutional support influence how teachers perceive and address diversity in the classroom.

In recent years, the neurodiversity approach has allowed for a broader understanding of ADHD, recognizing that cognitive differences are part of human diversity and should not be interpreted solely as difficulties or limitations. This perspective highlights the need for higher education institutions to create environments where different ways of learning and participating are considered within their academic practices. Along these lines, Clouder et al. (2023) argue that universities should move towards more inclusive models that recognize neurocognitive diversity, while Fierros and Clouder (2022) emphasize that the experience of neurodivergent students

depends, to a large extent, on the level of understanding and support they receive from teachers and institutions.

Regarding university students with ADHD, recent research shows that their difficulties are not limited exclusively to the academic sphere, but also involve processes of adaptation, social interaction, and perception of institutional support. Lefler et al. (2023) identify problems related to academic organization, self-regulation, and managing university responsibilities, while Cohen, Shavel, and Lovett (2024) demonstrate that faculty support and understanding can positively influence the retention and well-being of these students. Similarly, Álvarez-Godos (2024) highlights the importance of strengthening institutional strategies that allow for a timely response to the needs of students with ADHD.

Similarly, scientific evidence indicates that teachers' perceptions have a direct relationship with students' educational experiences. The ways in which teachers interpret ADHD can influence their methodological decisions, the provision of support, and the quality of educational interaction. Suriá and Villegas (2024) point out that relationships based on understanding and support promote students' academic well-being, while Paredes Floril et al. (2023) emphasize that ongoing teacher training is a necessary element for consolidating inclusive educational practices.

Despite the growing interest in educational inclusion and neurodiversity in higher education, limitations remain in the scientific knowledge regarding faculty attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of university students with ADHD. Most research has focused on the characteristics of the disorder, student experiences, or institutional support mechanisms, leaving the role of faculty as key actors in the inclusive process less explored. This situation is particularly relevant in Latin America and Ecuador, where scientific evidence on this topic is still limited (Baidal Tircio, 2026).

For this reason, analyzing teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward ADHD is a research necessity, since these elements can directly influence the creation of more inclusive university environments. Understanding how teachers interpret this condition allows us to identify training needs, strengthen pedagogical strategies, and provide useful information for the development of

institutional policies aimed at guaranteeing higher education based on equity and the recognition of diversity.

In this context, the present research aimed to critically analyze the scientific evidence published between 2021 and 2026 on teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding university students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), with the purpose of identifying the factors that influence educational inclusion processes and the implementation of inclusive pedagogical practices in higher education. This review seeks to provide an updated understanding of the phenomenon and generate elements that contribute to strengthening universities that are more accessible, inclusive, and sensitive to neurocognitive diversity.

Methodology

This research is a systematic literature review with a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach, aimed at critically examining the scientific evidence published between 2021 and May 2026 on university faculty attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The search process initially identified 25 publications potentially related to the topic. This design allowed for the identification of research trends, the comparison of empirical findings, and the analysis of factors influencing educational inclusion processes and the development of inclusive pedagogical practices in higher education. The literature review is an appropriate strategy for systematizing and integrating the available knowledge on a specific phenomenon, facilitating an understanding of the current state of research. In this context, several studies have indicated that teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions significantly influence the participation, retention, and academic success of students with ADHD and other neurodivergent conditions (Paz-Maldonado & Flores-Girón, 2021; Clouder et al., 2023).

Scopus and Web of databases. Science , ERIC, SciELO, Redalyc, Dialnet, and Google Scholar were searched using a combination of Spanish and English keywords related to ADHD, higher education, teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, educational inclusion, and neurodiversity, employing the Boolean operators AND and OR. Scientific articles published between 2021 and

May 2026, peer-reviewed, developed in higher education contexts, and related to teachers' attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, or practices linked to ADHD, neurodiversity, or educational inclusion were included. Duplicate documents, research focused exclusively on clinical or pharmacological aspects of ADHD, studies conducted at other educational levels, and publications unrelated to the research objective were excluded. The process of identifying, selecting and evaluating the studies followed the guidelines of the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021), initially identifying 25 potentially relevant publications and finally selecting 14 scientific articles after removing duplicates, screening titles and abstracts and reading the documents in full.

The information obtained was organized using a document analysis matrix that recorded the authorship, year of publication, context, objectives, methodology, and main findings of each study. Subsequently, the evidence was analyzed through a thematic analysis process that allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and the grouping of the information into three study categories: teachers' attitudes toward university students with ADHD; beliefs and knowledge about the disorder and neurodiversity; and perceptions related to educational inclusion, institutional support, and inclusive pedagogical practices. The review incorporated research by Paz-Maldonado and Flores-Girón (2021), Guillemot, Lacroix, and Nocus (2022), Fierros and Clouder (2022), Lefler et al. (2023), Clouder et al. (2023), and Paredes Floril et al. (2023), Álvarez-Godos (2024), Cohen, Shavel and Lovett (2024), Suriá and Villegas (2024), Álvarez-Godos, Ferreira and Vieira (2025), Vivanco Arciniegas (2025) and Baidal Tircio (2026). Because it was a documentary study, the participation of human beings or the application of data collection instruments was not necessary; however, throughout the process the principles of scientific integrity and the proper recognition of intellectual property were respected through the citation and referencing of sources according to the APA (7th edition) standards.

Results

The literature search process initially identified 25 publications potentially related to teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding university students with Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). After removing three duplicate records and applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria established by the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021), thirteen documents were excluded for not addressing the research objective, resulting in a final sample of twelve scientific articles published between 2021 and 2026. The selected studies primarily consist of systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and qualitative research conducted in Europe and Latin America, focusing on educational inclusion, neurodiversity, pedagogical practices, and support for university students with ADHD.

The reviewed scientific evidence shows that faculty attitudes are one of the main factors associated with the inclusion and retention of university students with ADHD. Studies by Paz-Maldonado and Flores-Girón (2021), Guillemot, Lacroix, and Nocus (2022), and Paredes Floril et al. (2023) concur that teachers with a positive attitude toward diversity are more willing to implement flexible methodologies, make curricular adaptations, and foster accessible learning environments. Additionally, Clouder et al. (2023) and Fierros and Clouder (2022) highlight that the adoption of the neurodiversity paradigm has driven a transformation in higher education by promoting practices focused on students' strengths rather than their limitations. Along the same lines, Hamilton and Petty (2023) argue that compassionate pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning promote the participation of neurodivergent students through inclusive strategies aimed at addressing the cognitive diversity present in universities. Similarly, Korthals Altes et al. (2024) emphasize that the development of inclusive university cultures depends not only on the pedagogical skills of the faculty, but also on the institutional commitment to equity and the recognition of neurocognitive diversity.

Regarding teachers' beliefs and perceptions, the studies analyzed show that differences still exist in how faculty interpret ADHD within the university context. While some teachers recognize this condition from a neurodiversity perspective, others continue to associate it primarily with academic difficulties and self-regulation problems. These perceptions are closely related to the level of teacher training, prior experience with neurodivergent students, and available institutional support (Fierros & Clouder, 2022; Clouder et al., 2023; Suriá & Villegas, 2024). Similarly, Lefler et al. Cohen, Shavel, and Lovett (2024), Álvarez-Godos (2024), Álvarez-

Godos, Ferreira, and Vieira (2025), and Vivanco Arciniegas (2025) all agree that the implementation of academic tutoring, reasonable accommodations, technological resources, flexible teaching strategies, and institutional support programs significantly contributes to the well-being, retention, and academic performance of university students with ADHD. These findings support the need to strengthen ongoing professional development for faculty and consolidate university policies focused on inclusive education.

The review identified significant gaps in the scientific literature related to teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions toward university students with ADHD. Although during the In recent years there has been an increase in research on inclusion education and neurodiversity In higher education , most studies continue to focus on student experiences or institutional strategies, with fewer specifically analyzing the role of faculty as agents of inclusion. This situation is particularly evident in Latin America and Ecuador, where scientific production continues to be limited (Baidal Tircio, 2026). Taken together, the studies by Paz-Maldonado and Flores-Girón (2021), Guillemot, Lacroix and Nocus (2022), Clouder et al. (2023), Hamilton and Petty (2023), Korthals Altes et al. (2024), Álvarez-Godos, Ferreira and Vieira (2025) and Vivanco Arciniegas (2025) agree that strengthening teacher training, developing inclusive institutional policies and implementing evidence-based pedagogical practices are essential elements to ensure a more equitable higher education for students with ADHD. Table 1 summarizes the main contributions of the studies included in this systematic review. Taken together, the evidence shows an evolution in research interest from the analysis of teachers' attitudes toward broader approaches related to neurodiversity, teacher training, institutional inclusion policies, and the academic experiences of university students with ADHD. This synthesis allows us to identify the main thematic axes that underpin the study's conclusions and highlights the areas that require further scientific development, particularly in the Latin American context.

Table No. 1 *Scientific studies included in the systematic literature review*

No.	Author(s)	Year	Main contribution to the study
1	Paz-Maldonado and Flores-Girón	2021	They analyze the influence of university faculty attitudes on inclusive education processes.

2	Guillemot, Lacroix and Nocus	2022	A meta-analysis shows that teacher training, professional experience, and institutional support promote positive attitudes toward inclusion.
3	Fierros and Clouder	2022	They analyze the experience of neurodivergent students in higher education and the importance of institutional recognition of neurodiversity.
4	Lefler et al.	2023	They describe the academic, organizational, and self-regulation challenges faced by university students with ADHD.
5	Clouder et al.	2023	They address neurodiversity as an approach to transforming inclusive practices in higher education.
6	Hamilton and Petty	2023	They analyze the relationship between compassionate pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning, and the participation of neurodivergent students.
7	Paredes Floril et al.	2023	They study the relationship between teaching attitudes and willingness to implement inclusive strategies.
8	Álvarez- Godos	2024	It examines the inclusion of students with ADHD and the need to strengthen university institutional support.
9	Cohen, Shavel and Lovett	2024	They synthesize qualitative evidence on the academic experiences of university students with ADHD.
10	Suriá and Villegas	2024	They analyze how teachers' perceptions influence well-being and educational inclusion.
11	Korthals Altes et al.	2024	They highlight the importance of inclusive university cultures and the institutional commitment to neurocognitive diversity.
12	Álvarez-Godos, Ferreira and Vieira	2025	They analyze institutional policies and best practices to strengthen university inclusion.
13	Vivanco Arciniegas	2025	Review pedagogical strategies aimed at improving the academic performance of university students with ADHD.
14	Baidal Tircio	2026	Analyzes teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in Ecuadorian public universities.

Discussion

This review demonstrates that the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of university faculty are a decisive factor in the inclusion of students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The studies analyzed agree that learning and participation opportunities depend not only on the individual characteristics of the student but also on the university environment's capacity to recognize diversity and offer pedagogical responses tailored to their needs. In this context, the faculty member plays a central role as a facilitator of inclusive processes, since their knowledge, expectations, and practices can either promote or hinder access, retention, and academic success. These findings are consistent with those of Paz-Maldonado and Flores-Girón (2021), who maintain that positive faculty attitudes contribute to reducing barriers to learning,

and with Guillemot et al. (2022), who indicate that such attitudes are strengthened through professional development, prior experience, and institutional support.

From a broader perspective, the results support the social model of disability and contemporary approaches to inclusive education, which shift the focus from individual limitations to the elimination of barriers present in the educational context (Ainscow, 2020). In this sense, teachers' responses to ADHD should not be understood solely as a personal decision, but rather as the result of training processes, institutional policies, and organizational cultures aimed at ensuring equitable education. This interpretation aligns with the proposals of Booth and Ainscow (2002), who argue that inclusion involves transforming practices, policies, and institutional culture to respond to student diversity.

Another relevant finding is the consolidation of the neurodiversity approach as a conceptual framework for understanding ADHD in higher education. Recent literature shows a progressive shift from deficit-centered models to perspectives that recognize cognitive differences as an expression of human diversity (Clouder et al., 2023; Fierros & Clouder, 2022). Under this conception, the university's objective shifts from compensating for individual difficulties to focusing on creating accessible, flexible, and participatory learning environments. This approach is consistent with the contributions of Singer (2017), who popularized the concept of neurodiversity, and Armstrong (2015), who argues that neurological differences should be understood from a strengths-based approach and not exclusively from clinical or deficit-based models.

Regarding students' academic experience, the reviewed studies show that the main difficulties are concentrated in organizing university work, time management, self-regulation, and maintaining attention in the face of increasing academic demands (Lefler et al., 2023; Cohen et al., 2024). However, the evidence also demonstrates that these difficulties can be significantly reduced when there are sensitive teachers, flexible methodologies, and institutional support systems. Consequently, the inclusion of students with ADHD should not be limited to recognizing their needs, but requires the implementation of diversified pedagogical strategies,

reasonable accommodations, and ongoing academic support mechanisms, in accordance with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (CAST) (2024) .

The results also highlight that teacher training remains one of the main challenges for consolidating inclusive processes in higher education. A lack of knowledge about the characteristics of ADHD can lead to misinterpretations of student behavior, reinforce stereotypes, and limit the application of effective teaching strategies. Along these lines, Paredes Floril et al. (2023) and Suriá and Villegas (2024) emphasize that teacher preparation directly influences students' perception of support and well-being. Similarly, Álvarez-Godos (2024) and Álvarez-Godos, Ferreira, and Vieira (2025) argue that inclusion requires moving beyond individual initiatives to consolidate institutional policies focused on ongoing professional development, interdisciplinary support, and continuous improvement of educational practices.

Despite the growth of research on inclusion and neurodiversity in higher education, significant knowledge gaps persist regarding university faculty perceptions of ADHD. Most studies have focused on student experiences or the evaluation of support strategies, while research specifically analyzing how faculty construct their beliefs, interpret educational needs, and make pedagogical decisions in inclusive contexts remains scarce. This limitation is particularly evident in Latin America and, especially, in Ecuador, where scientific output on ADHD in the university setting continues to be limited. In this context, Baidal Tircio (2026) provides relevant evidence by demonstrating that the consolidation of inclusive universities requires linking institutional policies with ongoing processes of faculty development, awareness-raising, and strengthening an inclusive culture.

Finally, this review contributes to integrating recent scientific evidence on the role of university faculty in the inclusion of students with ADHD, identifying factors that may facilitate or hinder their academic progress. The results suggest that improving the educational experiences of this population requires strengthening initial and ongoing faculty training, promoting flexible, evidence-based pedagogical practices, and consolidating institutional policies that recognize neurodiversity as an inherent part of higher education. Furthermore, opportunities are identified

for future research aimed at longitudinally analyzing the relationship between faculty perceptions, inclusive practices, and the academic outcomes of students with ADHD, especially in Latin American contexts where empirical evidence remains limited.

Conclusions

This systematic literature review allowed for the synthesis and critical analysis of scientific evidence published between 2021 and 2026 regarding university faculty attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The results demonstrate that inclusion in higher education transcends the characteristics of the disorder itself and depends, to a large extent, on how faculty understand diversity, implement inclusive pedagogical strategies, and have the necessary institutional support to respond to students' needs. In this sense, faculty perceptions are a determining factor in promoting the participation, learning, and academic retention of students with ADHD.

The reviewed evidence demonstrates that teachers' attitudes directly influence the adoption of educational practices, the provision of academic support, and the creation of more inclusive learning environments. Furthermore, teacher training, prior experience in diverse contexts, and institutional commitment emerge as elements that strengthen teachers' capacity to address the needs of neurodivergent students and promote more equitable higher education.

Another relevant finding is the conceptual evolution observed in recent literature, which reflects a shift from approaches focused exclusively on individual limitations to perspectives that recognize the interaction between student characteristics and the conditions of the educational context. This view fosters a broader understanding of ADHD and guides the development of institutional policies and practices that promote accessibility, participation, and equal opportunities within the university setting.

The review also identified a limited body of scientific research on university faculty perceptions and beliefs regarding ADHD, particularly in Latin America and Ecuador. This gap highlights the need to expand research in Latin American contexts, considering the characteristics of higher

education systems and the challenges associated with consolidating inclusive processes based on scientific evidence.

Finally, this study provides an updated synthesis of the available knowledge and highlights the importance of considering faculty as strategic actors in building inclusive universities. The findings offer a foundation for strengthening teacher training, guiding the design of institutional policies, and promoting pedagogical practices that recognize neurodiversity as part of the diversity present in higher education. Furthermore, it recommends developing future research that delves deeper into the relationship between faculty perceptions, teaching strategies, and the academic outcomes of students with ADHD, especially in Latin American contexts where evidence remains insufficient. The accompanying table lists the main authors consulted.

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