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Awareness and Attitudes towards Dyslexia in Higher Education Academic Staff

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Dyslexia is the leading neurodiversity, affecting 5-10% of the UK population (Knight, 2018; Clouder et al., 2020), and being the most prevalent neurodiversity within Higher Education (HE) (Stampoltzis et al., 2015). Despite mostly positive lecturer attitudes for dyslexia in HE (Černickaja & Sokolová, 2024), many staff believe training and resources available to them for supporting dyslexic students are inadequate (Dymock & Nicholson, 2022). The present study aimed to investigate HE academic staff awareness and attitudes towards dyslexia to inform the development of support mechanisms for students with dyslexia in HE and enhance inclusivity within learning. 132 participants were recruited, and 97 responses were analysed. Ten participants had formal diagnosis of dyslexia. Mean age was 43 years (range = 24-69, SD = 11). Participants were asked to complete a Qualtrics online 3-part survey, including (i) demographic questions on participant background, educational experience and individual expertise (n=19); (ii) the Dyslexia Belief Index (DBI, Wadlington & Wadlington, 2005) (n=30) assessing participant knowledge about dyslexia; (iii) closed-ended and open-ended questions on self-reported perceptions of dyslexia-knowledge and dyslexia-support ability (n=10). Overall, a significant lack of dyslexia awareness was found, with DBI-scores averaging 20.46 points (SD=6.44), deviating from the criterion value of 27 that indicates sufficient dyslexia knowledge. A significant relationship between DBI scores and self-perceived dyslexia knowledge was also found. Years of teaching had a significant positive correlation with DBI scores. However, staff with a formal dyslexia diagnosis did not perform better than those without dyslexia. The open-ended questions were thematically analysed, indicating the varied attitudes of HE staff in supporting dyslexia and the diverse challenges in providing support to dyslexic students. In light of these findings, the mechanisms and challenges for upskilling academic staff on student neurodivergence are discussed, and relevant recommendations are made for a more inclusive HE learning environment.

Is the first author also the speaker?

Yes

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Please indicate up to five keywords regarding the content of your contribution

dyslexia, awareness, attitudes, staff, university

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