Educational Support for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties*

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Abstract

This article examines the views of secondary school students with specific learning difficulties on the educational support they receive. It is not uncommon for students with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) to perceive themselves as inferior to their peers, which in turn leads to lower motivation, a reluctance to learn, a lack of success at school and emotional overload, and in more severe cases, neurotic and depressive symptoms or risk-taking behaviour may also occur. In addition, dyslexia can have a significant impact on students' social functioning, particularly in terms of peer relationships, sociometric status and school and personal adjustment. The analysis of the research material indicates the convergence of the results obtained with the conclusions of, among others, Peter Gindrich, whose research found that school-age adolescents often do not experience sufficient support from teachers and that relationships with peers are sometimes superficial and not based on real understanding. Gindrich also highlights the clear variation in the level of support depending on the type of school and the gender of the students (Gindrich, 2014, p. 159-164), which was also confirmed in this study. The research results obtained also show convergence with the findings presented in the DysTRANS report (2018), which revealed that, although the vast majority of dyslexic students declare that their parents show interest in their education, not all receive sufficient emotional support.

Keywords: learning difficulties, dyslexia, self-assessment, educational support

Introduction

Difficulties accompany every person at different stages of life, regardless of a person's status, experiences or aspirations. They are inevitable and can occur not only in the personal sphere but also in the professional sphere. Although they sometimes seem overwhelming, it is useful to look at them as part of a process that helps the individual to develop, to learn new skills. Difficulties force you to reflect, make decisions and often step outside your comfort zone. Some of them require courage from the individual, others patience, but all teach something valuable. Much depends on the individual's approach - rather than seeing problems as obstacles, it is worth treating them as challenges that can bring valuable experience and prepare for future unusual situations.

One type of difficulty is educational difficulties, among others concerning the aspect of knowledge acquisition. Education is the process of shaping and developing an individual's life skills through a variety of influences and interactions (Kwieciński, Śliwerski, 2003, p. 25). Knowledge, on the other hand, is understood as the result of

learning about the world. It includes information, beliefs as well as skills for understanding reality. Knowledge can have different sources and forms, scientific as well as non-scientific, and its meaning derives from its social, cultural and historical contexts (PWN Encyclopaedia, 2025).

Educational difficulties occur when an individual does not achieve the expected learning outcomes despite having a high level of intelligence, attending school in an appropriate environment and having the opportunity to acquire knowledge (Ruszkowska, 2016, p. 59). The first educational difficulties most often appear when formal schooling begins. Among other things, they can manifest as difficulties in communicating with peers, but also with adults, including teachers. School is a place where children learn to establish relationships in addition to acquiring knowledge, and relationships, especially with peers, are crucial for proper social development. The aspect of emotions and motivation cannot be overlooked either, as the early school years are a time when a child should enjoy learning and gain a positive attitude towards school, developing resilience to failure. In a situation where there is a lack of motivation or emotional difficulties, the student may perceive it as a threat. Among the school difficulties in pupils, there are not only problems in learning to read and write, but also a decrease in speech comprehension, which can result in a slower rate of absorption of the information provided by the teacher. Students may not understand teaching instructions or cause-and-effect relationships, and this may consequently lead to poor performance in lessons. Students, especially those with language and speech development disorders, may have difficulty verbalising their thoughts, formulating requests for help or reporting ambiguities, so that these problems may go unnoticed by the teacher (Pantak, Słodownik-Rycaj, 2015, p. 25-27).

When educational difficulties increase and there is a discrepancy between the student's abilities and the expectations set by the school, this leads to so-called school failure, which Wincenty Okoń describes as a process during which there is a growing discrepancy between the aims of education and the student's performance in reality, leading to a negative attitude on the part of the student towards school requirements.

One of the commonly used classifications in pedagogy for learning difficulties in reading and writing is the division introduced by Marta Bogdanowicz into specific and non-specific learning difficulties. According to the Polish Dyslexia Association, specific learning difficulties are described as school failures in certain areas of learning, despite an average level of intelligence and often a high level of intellectual performance (PTD, 2025).

Specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) have numerous consequences. Those affected may be perceived by those around them as slower, less organised or having learning difficulties, but in reality their potential is not far from the norm. Sometimes their abilities are hidden behind problems related to, for example, the acquisition of written text, difficulties in remembering auditory sequences, limited working memory, as well as spoken language (Kochanska, 2023, p. 26).

Małgorzata Półtorak, focusing on the emotional and social sphere of people experiencing dyslexia, singles out as its consequences, among others, lowered self-esteem and a sense of otherness, which students often experience already at the beginning of their education. It also causes frustration and emotional tensions, which in subsequent developmental stages affect the formation of the personality, resulting in anxiety, depression or social withdrawal and sometimes even behavioural disorders. It is not uncommon for dyslexic students to perceive themselves as inferior to their peers, which in turn results in lower motivation, reluctance to learn, lack of school success and emotional overload, and in more severe cases, neurotic and depressive symptoms or risk-taking behaviour may occur. In turn, referring to the social consequences, Małgorzata Półtorak points out that dyslexia can have a significant impact on students' social functioning, particularly in terms of peer relations, sociometric status and school and personal adjustment.

Popularity in the classroom is associated with possessing qualities that facilitate acceptance, among which are honesty and responsibility. Dyslexic students show the aforementioned low self-esteem and withdrawal due to their school difficulties, but they also sometimes fail to perform their school duties, e.g. by not doing their homework, skipping lessons or even truanting regularly. In addition, there are aggressive reactions, affecting their perception in the group, lying, discouragement and, in extreme cases, dangerous behaviour in the form of reaching for stimulants. Social maladjustment, another consequence of specific learning difficulties, most often manifests itself in rebellious and anti-social behaviour, as well as emotional and psychomotor problems. Sometimes problem behaviours in dyslexic children are a reaction to cumulative failure and a sense of harm associated with it. It is also an attempt to gain peer acceptance by breaking norms (Półtorak, 2017, p. 71-77).

Educational difficulties are challenges that arise in the learning and development process, which can arise from a variety of causes and relate to different aspects, such as the student's abilities, environment or learning conditions. Everyone encounters difficulties at different stages of life and overcoming them requires the right support and approach. These difficulties can contribute to the acquisition of new skills and experiences to help deal with future challenges. These are all part of the individual's development. Many negative factors can be eliminated or their

impact reduced, but much depends on the actions and responsibility of the adults - parents, teachers (Kaczmarek, 2018, p.194).

Methodology and results of own research

The trigger for the design and conduct of the study was the analysis of a report produced as part of the international project DysTRANS - Supporting Dyslexic Individuals in Transition form Primary to Lower Secondary School. The research report indicates that although the vast majority of dyslexic students report that parents show interest in their education, not all receive sufficient emotional support (DysTrans, 2018, p. 24-31).

The subject of the research presented in this article is the assessment of the educational support received by students with specific difficulties as perceived by themselves, and the level of self-assessment of secondary school students experiencing specific learning difficulties has also been determined.

The aim of our own research was to verify how secondary school students with specific learning difficulties evaluate the educational support they receive (in the sense proposed by P. Gindrich, author of the Educational Support Questionnaire) and to determine their level of self-assessment.

A twofold understanding of the term 'educational support' can be found in the literature. The first boils down to an assessment of the institutional support provided by the school to the student. The second "reflects the student's own perception and, at the same time, evaluation and valuing of the activities that support his or her learning process undertaken by support givers important for his or her education, i.e. parents, teachers and other students in the class, specialists from the psychological-educational counselling centre" (Gindrich, 2014, p. 155-156). For the purposes of this research, the understanding of the term 'educational support' was adopted as non-institutional support, i.e. support/help provided by other people.

The main problem relates to the extent and nature of support received by secondary school students experiencing specific learning difficulties. From the main problem thus formulated, the following specific problems arise:

1. What is the level of overall self-assessment of students with specific learning difficulties?
2. Do students with specific learning difficulties receive educational support from teachers, parents and peers and how do they rate the level of support?

In the study presented here, a diagnostic survey method using a questionnaire technique was used.

The research used two standardised questionnaires and the author's questions prepared on the basis of a scientific article. These sources were the measurement tools within the chosen method:

1. The Questionnaire of Educational Support (KWE) by Peter Gindrich to measure the level of support provided by different environments significant to the teaching and learning process - family, teachers and peers. The questionnaire consists of 24 statements grouped into three categories (Gindrich, 2014, p. 166-167);
2. Morris Rosenberg's SES Self-Esteem Scale to assess self-esteem. It consists of 10 statements relating to the individual's general attitude towards himself or herself (Dzwonkowska, Lachowicz-Tabaczek, Łaguna, 2007, p. 169);

The study was conducted in an online space, using discussion groups on the social networking site Facebook, which include people with diagnosed specific learning difficulties. The survey questionnaire was made available remotely due to the nature of the research topic and the difficulty of reaching a sufficiently large group of respondents in the traditional way. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study.

The selection of the research group was purposive and was fully aligned with the assumptions made in this study. The eligibility criteria for participation in the study were being over 18 years of age, being diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty and being a post-primary school student who had not yet completed their education at that level. The purposive nature of the selection made it possible to precisely target a group of people corresponding to the specifics of the research problem. In addition, the distribution of the questionnaire in electronic form made it possible to include respondents from different regions of Poland in the survey, which enriched the analysis with environmental variation.

The questionnaire was completed by 130 participants, of which 109 questionnaires were qualified for the further procedure as the respondents met all the criteria of the research group, i.e. they were people with diagnosed specific learning difficulties, adults and still in formal education - secondary school.

The study group included both female and male students. The difference was only 4.6%. There was a predominantly female group. In terms of age, on the other hand, the 18-year-old group dominated, accounting for as much as 46.8% of all respondents. In contrast, the group of students aged 20 was the least numerous, at 20.2%.

The type of school attended by respondents was predominantly a general secondary school, with as many as 47.7% of those taking part in the survey ticking this answer. Second in order was a technical school, which 43.1% of people ticked, and a trade school, with 8.3% of people. Respondents were given the opportunity to enter their own answer, of which one person took advantage, indicating attendance at an extramural high school, commonly referred to as an 'adult high school'.

Respondents were asked to indicate which specific learning difficulties they had been diagnosed with. Due to the possibility of more than one type of difficulty co-occurring, respondents could mark as many answers as they wished. Dyslexia was the most frequently indicated. This answer was marked by 45.9% of respondents. Another was dysgraphia, which was declared by 36.7% of respondents, followed by ADHD with 34.9%. Slightly fewer ticked dysorthography with 23.9% and dyscalculia with 17.4%. Here, too, survey participants were able to add their own responses. This option was exercised by 5 people, mentioning additionally Asperger's Syndrome (2.7%) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with 1.8% of respondents. Almost half of the respondents, 43, ticked more than one difficulty.

Specific learning difficulties and the level of students' self-esteem in secondary schools

The aim of the first part of the study was to find out the level of general self-assessment of students with specific learning difficulties, for which the Polish adaptation of the Morris Rosenberg SES Self-Assessment Scale developed by Mariola Laguna, Kinga Lachowicz-Tabaczek and Irena Dzwonkowska was used. The tool consists of 10 statements rated by respondents using a four-point scale, where 1 means 'strongly agree' and 4 means 'strongly disagree'. In accordance with the procedure used in psychometric research and the recommendations of the authors of the adaptation, the scores for the five negatively worded statements - Nos. 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 - were reversed so that all items were interpretatively consistent, that is, a higher score meant higher self-esteem. After the scoring adjustment, each respondent's total self-assessment score was calculated. These values can range from 10 to 40 points, where:

- 10 - 25 points - low self-esteem,
- 26 - 30 points - moderate/medium self-esteem,
- 31 - 40 points - high self-esteem (Grabarczyk, 2020).

Analysis of the data obtained showed that more than half of the students scored indicating a low level of self-esteem, as high as 60.55%. Medium self-esteem was present in 28.44% of respondents, while high self-esteem was found in only 11.01% of people. The data obtained may indicate that students with identified specific learning difficulties are predominantly characterised by a reduced self-image. This may be due to personal educational experiences as well as insufficient social support or difficulties in school adaptation.

Taking demographic variables into account, clear differences in self-esteem levels were observed between students of different genders. Girls were more likely than boys to declare low self-esteem - as many as 64.3% of girls fell into this category, compared to 56.7% of boys. In contrast, a high level of self-esteem was achieved by 15.7% of boys, compared to 7.1% of girls, which may suggest that girls are more sensitive to social and educational assessments.

Social differences also occurred by type of school. Among general secondary school students, as many as 63.5% achieved a score indicating low self-esteem, while among technical school students it was 59.6%. High school students were more likely to have high self-esteem, 13.5%, than technical students, 10.6%.

The type of specific learning difficulty also interacted with the results obtained. Students with dyslexia were more likely to present moderate or high self-esteem, while the lowest scores were for students with mixed difficulties, which may be due to their more complex educational and emotional problems. These results partly support the hypothesis that the presence of educational difficulties can negatively shape self-perceptions. However, on the basis of our own research, we can conclude that this relationship does not exist in all cases.

Validation studies of the Polish adaptation of the Morris Rosenberg SES Scale were conducted on a sample of adolescents, students and adults and for women and men (N = 1120), yielding a mean score of SD = 4.29. The results of our own survey show that as many as 60.55% of the students achieved a result indicating a low level of self-esteem, 28.44% of the respondents achieved a moderate result, while only 11.1% of the respondents achieved a result indicating a high level of self-esteem (Dzwonkowska, Lachowicz-Tabaczek, Łaguna, 2007, 167-168). Compared to adaptive norms, there is clearly a shift towards lower values - in the study group, the rate of those

with low self-esteem is almost twice as high as the national sample, supporting the thesis that students with specific learning disabilities are more likely to evaluate themselves negatively. Due to the reliability of the tool, the reflected results can be considered reliable and correlated with the actual state of the research. The difference in self-esteem between the respondents and the representative sample suggests that specific educational difficulties have a real impact on adolescents' self-image perceptions.

Specific learning difficulties and students' level of support from teachers, parents and peers

The next section examines the extent and quality of educational support received by students. The Educational Support Questionnaire by Peter Gindrich was used to assess support from teachers, parents, peers and school professionals. This tool makes it possible to determine not only whether students are receiving assistance, but also - how students perceive and evaluate the quality of the assistance. The questionnaire consists of two parts, the first comprising 24 statements to which respondents responded by marking on a five-point scale how true they thought the given opinions were. The second part of the questionnaire consists of 6 additional statements, addressed exclusively to students who received specialised support, e.g. corrective and compensatory classes or pedagogical therapy, and was therefore preceded by a verification question. Due to the extensive research material, for the purposes of this article, a presentation of the research results in this area has been waived. The thesis adopted in this section is that pupils with specific learning difficulties receive varying levels of educational support, depending on the source - with not every source meeting their needs sufficiently. The analysis of the responses makes it possible to indicate which forms of support are rated highest and which need improvement, as well as the extent to which environmental support translates into the daily functioning of pupils with learning difficulties.

A quantitative approach was used in the analysis of the results, involving the statistical elaboration of the partial and overall results. Each area consists of eight statements rated on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 means completely false and 5 means completely true, allowing a score of between 8 and 40 for the first three types of support. The higher the score, the higher the level of perceived support. For each claim, the following has been established:

- the arithmetic mean of the responses, which makes it possible to determine the overall level of agreement with a given statement in the surveyed group;
- the most frequently selected options, indicating the most representative attitude;
- the spread of responses, i.e. the variation in indications between respondents.

The results from the scale on perceived support from teachers indicate significant deficits in this area. As many as 85 people (77.98%) classified themselves in the low support category, indicating a lack of security and understanding on the part of teaching staff. A detailed analysis of the responses to the individual claims allows the sources of these shortcomings to be identified even more clearly.

For the statement "The teachers in my class help me learn and they care how I learn", as many as 27.5% of the students answered that this statement was completely untrue and a further 22% rather untrue. This means that almost half of the students, as a total of 49.5%, do not feel supported in their daily educational process. Only 3.7% report experiencing such assistance.

Equally worrying are the results for the statement 'The teachers in my class care about me learning as much as possible'. Here, a lack of involvement on the part of the teachers was declared by a total of 42.2% of the students, with only 9.2% strongly feeling that the teachers were concerned about their performance.

A similar trend also holds for the statement "Teachers in my class like to help me learn", where 45.9% of students showed disagreement with this opinion. Interestingly, only 10.1 per cent confirmed the truth of the statement, which may suggest sporadic, rather isolated cases of positive teacher-student relationships.

The sense of understanding on the part of teachers was also assessed critically, with 22.9% of students strongly denying that teachers understood them and the situation they were in, and an additional 25.7% indicating that this was "rather untrue". In total, almost 49% of respondents do not feel understood by their instructors.

One of the most telling statements - "I trust my teachers and can rely on them in any situation, including outside of school" - was confirmed by only 10.1 per cent of students, while as many as 30.3 per cent categorically denied it. Lack of trust in teachers was declared by as many as 52.3% of respondents - 22% of whom strongly rejected this opinion as untrue. This is a very high and alarming value.

Further analysis provides an even more detailed understanding of students' perceptions of their relationship with their teachers. For the statement "The teachers in my class are fair, i.e. they treat me the same as other students", the responses were divided. A total of 36.7% of students replied negatively, indicating a sense of injustice in terms of equal treatment. Only 32.1% of pupils gave responses indicating a sense of being noticed at school, which may indicate uncertainty or ambivalent experiences of relationships with teachers.

A more pessimistic picture emerges from the statement "If I had to ask for help in a difficult situation, it would certainly be to someone who is my teacher". Here, as many as 56% of the students surveyed disagreed with this opinion and do not see teachers as people they can turn to in a difficult moment. Only 3.7% of the students surveyed would feel safe enough and would trust an educator in a crisis situation and 44% of the group surveyed have doubts but are not negative.

According to the analysis of the collected survey material, as many as 41.3% of the students expressed the belief that their feelings and perceptions are not taken into account by the teachers. This result indicates that a significant proportion of respondents do not perceive teachers as sensitive to the emotions and experiences surrounding learning. In the case of 21.1 per cent of students, they consider such a description of teachers to be completely untrue, and a further 20.2 per cent of respondents also do not see them as empathetic and sensitive to emotions. A significant group of respondents (36.7%) marked a neutral response, which may indicate a lack of noticeable signs of support. However, there are some people who feel this support and care.

There were also significant differences in the study due to demographic and educational variables. Girls were more likely than boys to rate teacher support as low - 65.2% of girls compared to 59.1% of boys. This may suggest higher expectations of interpersonal relationships or greater emotional sensitivity in girls. However, this result is also worth interpreting in the context of socio-cultural conditions and gender stereotypes operating in the school environment. According to the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy, teachers may unconsciously expect girls to be more independent, dutiful and conscientious, resulting in less support from them. Towards boys, on the other hand, permission to make mistakes and offering them extra help or forbearance is more often manifested. As a result, they may experience more direct support, while girls who are required rather than supported rate their relationships with teachers as less supportive.

An aggregate analysis of all statements from the first group of questions indicates a clear deficit in teacher support among students with specific learning difficulties. Negative responses dominated almost every statement, particularly in the areas of accessibility, equity and teachers' willingness to provide emotional support. Lack of trust and a low sense of understanding can affect not only students' overall comfort in the school environment, but also their motivation to learn, their self-esteem and their perception of their own educational opportunities.

According to the self-report survey, as many as 52.3% of students expressed attitudes indicating a lack of trust towards teachers, and only 22% felt that their feelings and perceptions were realistically taken into account in the school environment. These results are consistent with earlier findings by Peter Gindrich, who in validation studies of the Educational Support Questionnaire pointed out that the student-teacher relationship for students with learning difficulties is characterised by lower levels of trust, weaker access to emotional support and a lower sense of acceptance by teaching staff (Gindrich, 2014, p. 158-164). Both the data obtained in this study and the available results from previous analyses confirm that students with specific learning difficulties are particularly vulnerable to exclusion from supportive relationships. This poses a major challenge for the educational environment, especially in the context of the need to individualise approaches and create a school climate that encourages diversity.

The recommended direction of change is therefore not only to increase teachers' awareness of the specific functioning of this group of pupils, but also to implement training programmes on empathic communication, recognising pupils' emotional needs and creating relationships based on mutual respect and trust.

Compared to the evaluation of the relationship with teachers, the results regarding support from parents appeared more varied and in places more positive, although they also identified areas for improvement. Students with specific learning difficulties sometimes receive real support and involvement from their families, but this is not common.

For the statement "My parents help me with my studies", negative answers were indicated by a total of 31.2% of respondents, which means that almost one in three students does not receive teaching support at home. At the same time, a total of 45.8% of respondents agree with the above opinion and confirm receiving active support from their parents.

As can be seen from the analysis of the collected data, a higher percentage of positive responses appeared for the statement "My academic achievements are important to my parents", as in this case a total of 58.8% of the students

found it to be true. Students feel that their educational progress is important to their parents. This is the highest percentage of unambiguously positive responses in this category. Despite this, as many as 22% of respondents felt that the statement about parents' appreciation of school success did not apply to their situation. This may suggest that, for a fifth of students, their educational achievements, in their own opinion, are not particularly important to their parents.

Diverse opinions also emerged with the statement 'My parents make sure there are lots of books in my house'. This statement was rated as 'completely untrue' or 'rather untrue' by a total of 26.6% of students, while 39.4% of respondents found it to be rather or completely true. The percentage of intermediate ratings was also high, as many as 33.9% considered the statement neutral, which may be a sign of a lack of clear opinion on parents' care for the size of the home book collection.

In contrast, the statement concerning the encouragement of book reading by parents received the most negative marks. A total of around 39% of students rated this statement as rather or completely false, while more than 43% of respondents agreed. These data show that promoting the reading habit, in the opinions of the students surveyed, is not a common practice among families of students with learning disabilities.

The question on independent essay writing stands out positively. Some 61.5 per cent of respondents confirmed the parents' interest in this angle, while less than 20 per cent considered it to be untrue. The others took a neutral rating, which may indicate a moderate level of parental involvement in the development of writing skills. It is worth noting, however, that the students surveyed are post-primary school students, which may partly explain the limited direct parental assistance with daily school duties, such as doing homework together. At the same time, the relatively high percentage of indications can be linked to specific educational requirements, in this case the emphasis on the ability to produce independent written statements in the context of Polish language examinations. This suggests that parental involvement may be mainly focused on meeting school requirements and not necessarily on supporting the child's individual development, passions or interests. Priority may therefore be given to preparing for the baccalaureate exam and meeting formal educational requirements.

With regard to the statement "My parents are interested in what I learn at school (e.g. they look through my notebooks)", the opinions of the students were almost evenly distributed. 41.3% of students disagreed with the truth of the statement, while 40.3% confirmed it. This result indicates a very divided experience among students.

The majority, as many as 62.4% of the students surveyed expressed an opinion suggesting that their parents make sure they have everything they need to study. At the same time, 18.3 per cent of respondents chose an intermediate rating and 19.3 per cent described the statement as untrue. This result suggests that the vast majority of students are provided with material support for learning at home, but still almost one in five survey participants do not confirm such support.

The last question in the category concerning parents referred to the support given to a pupil in the situation of a lower school grade. Respondents' answers were varied: 38.5% of respondents agreed with the statement that they receive support in this situation, while 34.9% of students expressed the opposite opinion. A neutral position was taken by 26.6% of respondents. This distribution of responses may indicate important differences in the way families respond to their child's educational difficulties. In many cases, the lack of unconditional acceptance and emotional support can undermine the motivation and sense of security of students, especially those with identified specific learning difficulties. School failure, which could be an opportunity to build mental resilience and trusting relationships, is sometimes perceived by students as an experience of being deprived of support from those closest to them.

A detailed analysis of the collected research material on parental support versus the gender of the students surveyed indicated that boys were more likely than girls to rate support as high - 39.7% of boys versus 33.8% of girls. In contrast, neutral or negative responses were more common for girls. Their declarations indicated a lower level of satisfaction with the support they received or no unequivocally positive assessment in the area analysed.

The analysis of the responses regarding educational support from parents reveals a diverse picture of the family relationships of students struggling with specific learning difficulties. In many cases, respondents perceive the involvement of their parents/legal guardians in the educational process - manifested both in their interest in the progress of their studies and in their concern to provide the necessary materials or develop their writing skills for essays. Particularly evident is the attention to material conditions conducive to learning and the recognition of school achievements. On the other hand, some students indicate a lack of ongoing emotional support and low parental involvement in daily educational functioning. The students in question do not always receive help with their studies, are not encouraged to engage in additional intellectual activity, nor do they experience support in moments of failure. This points to the need to strengthen parenting and educational competences in the family environment. The results collected suggest that the role of parents in shaping students' attitudes towards education

and their overall psychological well-being is huge, but not always implemented sufficiently. Measures to support this area - through parental education, collaboration with teachers and specialists, and by raising awareness of the needs of children with learning disabilities - can improve the quality of support offered at home and thus have a positive impact on pupils' functioning in the school environment.

In light of the results obtained, it is worth referring to the broader context of the available research. In Peter Gindrich's work on the structure and properties of the Educational Support Questionnaire, the author emphasises that the family, alongside the school, is one of the most essential pillars of the support system for students. The high level of parental involvement and their attentiveness to the child's needs foster a sense of security and stability, which in the long term has a positive impact on the development of self-esteem and school motivation (Gindrich, 2014, p. 157-164). Meanwhile, the apparent signs in the self-report survey are worrying, with 22% of students surveyed declaring that, in their opinion, school success is not important to their parents, and more than 34% of those surveyed not receiving support after receiving a poor school mark. This means that, for a significant proportion of pupils with specific learning difficulties, the family home does not act as a stable emotional and educational base.

Analysing the results in the context of the report produced by the international project DysTRANS - Supporting Dyslexic Individuals in Transition from Primary to Lower Secondary School. The research report indicates that although the vast majority of dyslexic students report that parents show interest in their education, not all receive sufficient emotional support (DysTrans, 2018, p. 24-31).

This data is consistent with the results of the survey conducted, in which a division of opinion regarding parental support was also evident. In addition to the group of students perceiving a real commitment from the family, a large group emerged indicating a deficiency of emotional support, a lack of encouragement for educational activities or the absence of parents in daily school functioning.

Both our own data and foundational data (DysTRANS Report, P. Gindrich's research findings) indicate the need for systemic measures aimed at supporting parents of students with specific learning difficulties. Educating parents about the specifics of these difficulties, organising workshops and building networks between school and home can, in the long term, improve the quality of the support provided and result in greater coherence between the school and home environments.

Among students with specific learning difficulties, peer relationships can be an important source of daily support, both emotionally and didactically. Responses to questions in this area reveal a varied picture, ranging from experiences of strong acceptance and cooperation to signals of lack of understanding and isolation.

Respondents relatively often declared that they could count on the help of colleagues in educational situations. On the statement that students in the class like to help with their learning, almost 44% of respondents felt positive attitudes from their peers in situations requiring teaching support. On the other hand, as many as 30.2% found this claim to be untrue. This means that more than a third of pupils do not experience active help from their peers in learning.

An analysis of the responses to the question of whether classmates care about the respondent's ability to study well showed that 35.3 per cent of respondents considered this to be true, but as many as 39.4 per cent of pupils held the opposite view, revealing that almost every second respondent does not feel supported by peers in terms of motivation to study.

In the opinions of the students surveyed, an analysis of the responses at the extreme poles of the scale showed that a comparable number of respondents recognise that their classmates support them in difficult moments (38.5%), but there are also students who do not feel such support (41.3%). Emotional assistance from the class is therefore not the norm, but a phenomenon that depends on individual relationships and conditions in the specific school environment. In the context of students with specific learning difficulties, peer relationships can be importantly protective, fostering the maintenance of self-esteem, motivation and a sense of belonging. The lack of such support can lead to marginalisation and a deepening sense of isolation, especially during adolescence, when the opinion of the peer group plays an important role in identity formation.

Another question that was addressed to the respondents concerned empathy. The statement "My classmates feel sorry for me when something doesn't work out in class" was met with 22% answering "completely untrue" and 20.2% answering "rather untrue". As many as 42.2% of respondents do not experience empathy from peers, and only 23.9% found the statement to be true.

A clearly more favourable picture emerged with the statement "My classmates are not jealous when I get a better grade than them". Here, as many as 46.8% of students responded positively and only 30.2% negatively. This is

associated with a relatively low level of competition and greater acceptance of colleagues' success.

The question of whether students are ridiculed when they do not understand something in a lesson was found to be true by 56.9%. Only 19.3 per cent of students declared that they had experienced ridicule for this reason. This shows that most respondents do not face overt hostility from the class.

When asked about experiencing joy from peers due to their presence at school, 52.3% of respondents indicated positive responses - of which 29.4% of respondents believe that their peers are happy to see them, with a further 22.9% considering this to be completely true. In contrast, 22.1% expressed the belief that their presence in the classroom does not arouse enthusiasm among their colleagues. The remaining 25.7% of respondents remained neutral.

Respondents were asked a question about extra-curricular relationships with peers. According to the responses analysed, 57.8 % of the pupils surveyed declared that they maintain contact beyond the school walls. This result indicates that, for more than half of the respondents, peer relationships are not limited to educational situations, but also have a social and emotional dimension, which can play an important role in building a sense of belonging and social support.

A detailed analysis of the collected material by gender of the respondents showed that boys were more likely to declare high levels of peer support, with 44.7% of them indicating high values, compared to 36.1% of girls. They were the ones who were more neutral or somewhat critical in their assessment of this relationship.

School type was found to be an important factor in differentiating the level of perceived peer support. An analysis of the extreme poles of responses showed that technical school students were significantly more likely than their general high school peers to declare high levels of support from colleagues - 44.7% of technical school students indicated this response, compared to 36.1% of high school students. At the same time, responses indicating low levels of support were more common among students attending high school, which may suggest that it is in this type of school that collegiate relationships are more diverse or less stable. These differences may be related to the specifics of the class environment - at the technical school, they attend classes of a more profiled nature, which fosters more lasting group bonds and a sense of community. In general secondary schools, where classes are often more diverse in terms of interests or learning styles, social integration can be slower. It can be surmised that, due to the expectations placed on general secondary school students in relation to high matriculation exam results and passing rates at prestigious universities, these students experience competition more often than cooperation.

The analysis of the results concerning peer relationships among pupils with specific learning difficulties shows a moderately positive picture, but far from conclusive. Although some of the respondents experience acceptance, understanding and involvement from their peers, equally significant is the presence of a group that indicates a deficit in this area, particularly in terms of learning support and emotional support in situations of school failure. Students rarely declare negative attitudes from peers, such as jealousy or ridicule, but many also do not experience real support. There is a lack of empathy, interest in their difficulties or emotional involvement from colleagues, which can lead to feelings of isolation and reduced self-esteem. On the other hand, it is a positive sign that more than half of the students are keen to meet their peers outside of school, and this may indicate that social ties exist. Nevertheless, the results suggest the need to further develop empathetic and supportive attitudes among students so that collegial relationships can act as a real support in the educational process.

After a detailed analysis of the answers given by the students to the questions derived from the Educational Support Questionnaire, the summary scores obtained in the three categories: support from teachers, parents and peers were considered. For each group, score ranges were distinguished corresponding to low, moderate and high levels of support.

The results in the category of teacher support were the least optimistic. As many as 59.6% of students were classified as low support, reflecting a widespread sense of lack of understanding, lack of empathy and insufficient teacher engagement with the educational needs of struggling students. Only 10.1 per cent of respondents scored suggesting a high level of support, with the remaining 30.3 per cent ranking themselves at a moderate level. These figures are particularly worrying given the crucial role of the teacher in the day-to-day teaching process and in shaping student self-esteem and motivation.

In this context, it is worth referring to the formal and legal conditions for the provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance. According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the principles of organising and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions, every teacher, regardless of specialisation, is obliged to treat students taking into account their individual abilities and needs. They are expected both to adapt the educational requirements and to individualise the learning process and optimise the teaching conditions (Polish Journal of Laws 2023, item 1798).

In the light of the above assumptions, the results obtained may indicate deficits not so much in teachers' awareness but in their real practical competences or in the institutional support structure. Low levels of support may also be the result of staff being overloaded with responsibilities, a lack of training in working with a student with special educational needs or insufficient cooperation within teaching and specialist teams.

These results confirm the need to intensify activities to support teachers' competences, both through training in working with students with specific learning difficulties and through the development of systemic tools to facilitate the implementation of real individualisation of the learning process.

In the case of family support, a more mixed picture was obtained. 30.3% of pupils reported high levels of parental support, showing that in many homes students can count on care, interest and help with their studies. A moderate level of support was shown by 39.4% of respondents, while 30.3% were categorised as having a low level of support. These results reveal a clear dichotomy - alongside students experiencing consistent support, there is a significant group who lack both didactic and emotional support. These differences may be due to factors such as the parents' level of education, their time availability, their awareness of the child's problems or their parenting skills.

The level of support from classmates fared better than the relationship with teachers, but slightly worse than from parents. The largest number of students, as many as 43.1%, were classified as having a moderate level of peer support. A further 22% of respondents had scores indicating a high level of support, while 34.9% of students were in the low peer support range. The data shows that students with learning disabilities relatively often experience neutral or positive peer relationships. Of concern, however, is the fact that statistically one in three students does not receive any form of support from peers, which can increase feelings of isolation and loneliness. Although the level of overtly negative interactions was relatively low, at the same time many students do not feel safe enough to expect support in difficult situations.

The data collected indicates the need to intensify support activities for students with specific learning difficulties, especially in terms of improving relationships with teachers and strengthening social skills and empathy in the classroom environment.

Summarising the analysis of the data on the level of educational support, it can be concluded that students with specific learning difficulties experience support differently depending on its source. The most noticeable was the support from parents, especially in emotional and material terms. Relationships with teachers and peers were assessed less clearly, as there were both positive voices and indications of lack of commitment or indifference.

The results of our own research coincide with the findings of Peter Gindrich, author of the Educational Support Questionnaire. According to his findings, school-age adolescents often do not experience sufficient support from teachers, and relationships with peers tend to be superficial and not based on real understanding. Gindrich also points out that there is a clear variation in the level of support depending on the type of school and the gender of the students (Gindrich, 2014, p. 159-164),which was as also confirmed by this study. The compilation of results confirms the important role of a supportive family and school environment in building the resources of students with specific learning difficulties. In particular, the emotional dimension of the relationship - trust, accessibility and understanding - is proving to be one of the key elements influencing the functioning of these students at school. Thus, both parents and teachers working with young people should be particularly sensitive to the need to strengthen these areas in their daily educational work.

Summary and conclusions

Analysis of the results of the survey of pupils with specific learning difficulties in secondary schools allows some key conclusions to be drawn.

Firstly, the level of educational support received by students varies according to the source. The highest rated area appeared to be parental support, as positive responses predominated in both emotional and material terms. This points to the important role of the family as the primary factor supporting the educational process, especially in terms of motivating students, providing them with the necessary materials and building a positive attitude towards learning.

In contrast, relationships with teachers were characterised by greater ambivalence. Many students declared rather positive experiences, but there was also a noticeable group indicating a lack of emotional support and understanding from teaching staff. Girls were more likely than boys to rate relationships with teachers as less supportive, which may be due to higher expectations or greater emotional sensitivity. In addition, the research revealed the relationship that exists between teachers' stereotypes of how girls and boys are perceived and, consequently, how they are treated at school. These are mainly beliefs about the expectations placed on the sexes,

where a girl is expected to be diligent, conscientious, dutiful and a good student. Boys, on the other hand, are allowed to mess around, to wade, to make mistakes. Boys need to be supported in their learning because their failures are taken for granted, whereas girls are more likely to have to cope on their own. These are behaviours that are stereotypically attributed to a certain gender, embedded in the socio-cultural context, and still maintained by teachers. This is all the more worrying as this persistent stereotype additionally applies to girls experiencing specific learning difficulties.

In terms of peer support, a clear duality emerged, as students rarely experience openly negative attitudes, but just as rarely declare active involvement in peer support. A predominance of neutral attitudes can be seen, which may indicate a distance and insufficient level of empathy among peers. Nonetheless, there are positive signs, as a significant proportion of students declared a desire to maintain extracurricular contacts, which could be a starting point for developing deeper relationships and improving the social climate in the classrooms.

In addition, the results of the analyses carried out clearly indicate that the presence of specific learning difficulties has a significant impact on the students' level of self-esteem. Although not every student with specific learning difficulties was characterised by low self-esteem, it was in this group that more students achieved low or moderate levels of self-esteem. Respondents' statements and figures reveal that the educational experience of pupils with specific learning difficulties is often associated with reduced self-confidence, low competence scores, and a lack of a sense of self-efficacy. Environmental support - in particular teachers, parents and professionals - plays an important role in this context and can act as an element to protect self-esteem from further decline. Students who perceived their environment as supportive and accepting were more likely to report higher levels of self-esteem, despite the difficulties experienced. Thus, the significance of specific learning difficulties is not unequivocally negative, its impact depends largely on the quality of support and the psychosocial climate of the school.

It should be emphasised that the present analysis was descriptive in nature and statistical tests to verify the significance of differences between groups were not applied during the results. Therefore, the conclusions presented are exploratory rather than statistical inference. Another limitation is the size and structure of the sample, limited to 109 students attending selected types of post-primary schools, which may affect the generalisability of the results to the wider population. In addition, the data collected is based on participants' self-description, with the risk of subjectivity and limited reliability in assessing their own experiences.

In conclusion, the findings confirm that for students with specific learning difficulties, empathetic relationships, personalised forms of support and the opportunity to co-create a school environment that meets their needs are crucial. Further educational measures should focus on strengthening the role of professionals, developing teachers' competences in the area of interpersonal communication and promoting a positive peer culture based on solidarity and mutual respect.

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