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Editorial

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ABSTRACT

The present issue of JCDP offers an occasion for reflection on different nascent themes within the domain of psychology, encompassing youth civic engagement, the promotion of mental well-being across diverse life stages, and the influence of cultural contexts on psychological processes. The articles contained within this issue underscore the manner in which psychological research is undergoing a transformation to address contemporary challenges, including climate change, democratic participation, and social inclusion. The articles encompass a diverse array of subjects (socio-emotional learning, grief processing, eco-anxiety, and neurodivergent entrepreneurship) providing actionable insights for psychologists, educators, and policymakers.

Keywords: civic engagement, socio-emotional learning, eco-anxiety, neurodivergence, grief processing, mental health

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The field of psychology continues to evolve in response to the complexities of contemporary society. This issue of the *Journal of Clinical and Developmental Psychology* (JCDP) brings together contributions that exemplify how psychological research addresses pressing global challenges. A series of studies were conducted by the authors, exploring a wide range of topics. These topics include the development of social and emotional competence in school settings, the impact of demographic variables on the mental health of the elderly population, the experiences of neurodivergent women in the workforce, the reprocessing of grief as a psychological resource, eco-anxiety and its connection to climate change, and the role of social-emotional learning programs in children. This diversity of approaches and perspectives reflects the richness and complexity of the interactions between individuals, society, and cultural contexts. The article by **Baviera et al.** focuses on the “Youth Voices” curriculum, an educational project designed to foster civic engagement and democratic competences among adolescents. This initiative, grounded in the Positive Youth Development (PYD) model and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) by the Council of Europe, emphasizes collaboration between students and teachers to regenerate urban and school spaces. Initiatives of this nature are in line with the Positive Youth Development framework, which places emphasis on the importance of empowering youth through engagement in community-based activities (Damon et al., 2018). The activities are designed to cultivate skills such as empathy and respect, in addition to fostering stronger bonds between young people and their respective communities. Programs such as "Youth Voices" are of particular significance in this regard, given their capacity to address global challenges, including climate change and democratic disengagement. Schools, as key sites of socialization, have been identified as pivotal in fostering active citizenship, thereby underscoring the pivotal role of education in nurturing more inclusive and resilient societies. **Herdian et al.** address a topic of growing relevance: the demographic and social factors influencing mental health in the elderly. Using the Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90), the authors analyze how variables such as gender, education level, participation in religious organizations, and past work experiences affect psychological symptoms. The present study's findings are consistent with extant literature pertaining to the impact of

demographic and social variables on mental health, with a particular emphasis on notable gender disparities, wherein female subjects exhibit elevated levels of anxiety and depression in comparison to their male counterparts (Stephoe et al, 2015). Furthermore, the study establishes a positive correlation between involvement in religious organizations and reduced psychological symptoms. These findings necessitate a re-evaluation of intervention policies for the mental well-being of the elderly, emphasizing the need for personalized approaches that consider the demographic and cultural characteristics of this population. The article by **Iacomini et al.** explores the experiences of neurodivergent women in the entrepreneurial world. Through qualitative interviews, the authors shed light on challenges related to “masking,” caregiving responsibilities, and industry resistance. These findings build on prior research that highlights the holistic needs of neurodivergent individuals, including the reduction of structural and cultural barriers to foster their inclusion in professional environments (Bennett & Gibb, 2022). Nevertheless, the participants' creative and innovative potential also emerges, suggesting that targeted support could reduce barriers and foster their professional success. This contribution is of particular significance in the current context, where gender equity and the inclusion of neurodivergent individuals are central themes. Practical implications of this research include the need for inclusive policies, employer training, and specific funding programs. **Lombardo et al.** analyze the grieving process through the lens of Massimo Recalcati's text “*The Light of Dead Stars.*” This work invites a re-reading of grief, distinguishing between chronic melancholy and nostalgia-gratitude. These distinctions find resonance with frameworks proposed by Klass et al. (1996), who conceptualize grief as a transformative process that can facilitate sustained bonds and personal growth. Nostalgia-gratitude is described as a psychic resource that allows individuals to transform loss into a point of light that illuminates the future. This article, directed towards mental health professionals, offers theoretical instruments with which to address clinical challenges related to the treatment of grief. The article emphasizes that grief is not only a traumatic event, but also a transformative process that can lead to renewed vitality. **Marchi et al.** provide a review of major socio-emotional learning (SEL) initiatives in primary schools. The review highlights how universal and practice-oriented programs are the most effective in improving competencies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and responsible

decision-making. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Taylor et al. (2017), who demonstrated that SEL programs involving direct teacher engagement significantly enhance their effectiveness. The significance of socio-emotional learning in children's psychological well-being is emphasized, with implications for both the school climate and future challenges. This article is a valuable resource for educators and school psychologists. Finally, **Rocchi** explore the role of eco-anxiety in promoting pro-environmental behaviors, adopting the perspective of Semiotic-Cultural Psychology Theory. The study identifies four cultural worldviews and demonstrates how anxiety about personal impact represents a significant mediator between eco-anxiety and sustainable actions (Pihkala, 2020). This research sheds light on the cultural dimension of eco-anxiety, proposing targeted interventions that consider cultural specificities to encourage environmental engagement. These insights are of relevance in the context of climate emergency, as a comprehensive understanding of the psychological dynamics behind sustainable behaviors is essential for fostering widespread engagement.

The contributions presented in this issue demonstrate the capacity of contemporary psychology to respond to the challenges of contemporary society. Utilizing a combination of theoretical and practical approaches, these articles encourage consideration of the influence of cultural context, age, gender and other variables on psychological well-being and human behaviour. We hope this issue will inspire further reflection and research.

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