

Psychosocial factors in the development of inclusivity and accessibility in the student environment under crisis conditions

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ABSTRACT

Aim: Identifying key psychosocial factors that contribute to the development of inclusivity and accessibility among students in contemporary crisis conditions, as well as assessing their impact on readiness for social and professional interaction in an inclusive environment.

Materials and Methods: The materials of the research were based on the results of an anonymous online survey of students from Ukrainian higher education institutions, conducted in the summer semester of 2025 using Google Forms. The questionnaire included blocks of questions aimed at identifying the psychosocial factors influencing the development of inclusivity and accessibility. Descriptive statistics, elements of comparative and correlational analysis, as well as qualitative processing of open-ended responses were used for data analysis, which allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the relationship between students' psychosocial resources and their readiness for inclusive and barrier-free interaction.

Results: The development of inclusivity and accessibility among students is formed through a complex interaction of psychosocial factors: personality traits, social environment, interaction experience, and value orientations. Effective development of readiness for inclusive behavior requires a systematic approach that combines theoretical training, practical tasks, and socio-psychological support.

Conclusions: The research findings indicate that the development of inclusivity and accessibility in the student environment is determined by the interaction of personal resources (empathy, tolerance, communication skills), the social environment, participation in communities, family values, the educational context, and experience of living in crisis conditions. Crises can create barriers but at the same time stimulate social empathy, solidarity, and collective support. Effective formation of an inclusive culture requires a comprehensive approach that combines personal development, social integration, and structural changes in the educational environment.

KEY WORDS: inclusivity, accessibility, psychosocial factors, students, crisis situations, social support, resilience, emotional well-being, professional training, higher education

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INTRODUCTION

The modern academic community of Ukraine is influenced by numerous crisis factors, including prolonged war, social instability, internal student mobility, and digital threats. These challenges create a significant psychosocial burden, requiring a high level of adaptability from students and the implementation of systemic mechanisms of support and development by higher education institutions. Under such conditions, inclusivity and accessibility become especially important, as they ensure equal access to education, promote social integration and professional development of young people, and help form a resilient and adaptive educational environment.

Despite the considerable attention given to issues of inclusive education, contemporary research insuffi-

ciently addresses the psychosocial mechanisms of forming inclusivity in the student environment, especially under crisis conditions. In particular, a limited number of studies focus on examining the impact of crisis circumstances on the development of value orientations, empathy, tolerance, and readiness for non-discriminatory interaction among students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research materials were based on the results of an online survey of students from Ukrainian higher education institutions conducted in 2025. The survey was created using Google Forms and distributed through university student groups, academic communication channels, and social networks. Participation in the

study was voluntary and anonymous, which ensured openness of responses and compliance with ethical standards. The total sample consisted of more than 150 participants, making it possible to consider the results representative of the typical socio-demographic characteristics of contemporary Ukrainian students.

The research instruments were aimed at identifying psychosocial factors that influence the level of inclusivity and accessibility in the student environment. The questionnaire included blocks of questions covering the level of social support, sense of belonging to the academic community, emotional state, stress-coping strategies, experience of interaction with vulnerable groups, attitudes toward inclusive practices, and self-assessed readiness for barrier-free interaction under crisis challenges. A separate section focused on assessing the impact of military events, internal migration, changes in learning formats, and digital risks on students' psychological well-being.

The methodological framework included the use of descriptive statistics, comparative analysis, and elements of correlational analysis to identify relationships between psychosocial variables. A combined approach was applied, integrating quantitative measures (rating scales, Likert scales) and qualitative open-ended questions, which allowed for deeper interpretation of students' individual experiences and their attitudes toward inclusive practices in crisis conditions. Methods of logical-analytical generalization and content analysis of open-ended responses made it possible to identify key psychosocial trends affecting inclusivity and accessibility. Additionally, the obtained data were compared with the results of contemporary international studies, which made it possible to identify both universal factors and those specific to the Ukrainian context.

The ethical principles of the study complied with recommendations for conducting social and humanitarian surveys in crisis conditions, in particular by ensuring confidentiality of responses, voluntary participation, the possibility to withdraw at any stage, and the absence of risks for respondents.

AIM

The aim of this study is to identify the key psychosocial factors that contribute to the development of inclusivity and accessibility among students in contemporary crisis conditions, as well as to assess their impact on readiness for social and professional interaction in an inclusive environment.

RESULTS

The issue of developing inclusivity and accessibility in the student environment becomes especially relevant in the

context of contemporary crises, including military actions, forced displacement, the COVID-19 pandemic, and prolonged educational transformations. The combination of psychosocial factors, institutional characteristics, and students' individual resources determines their ability to maintain educational engagement, adaptability, and a sense of safety. Contemporary research indicates that inclusive educational systems become a key mechanism for reducing students' vulnerability and strengthening their psychosocial resources in crisis conditions. UNESCO reports emphasize that accessibility of educational services, inclusive policies, and support for high-risk groups are critically important for ensuring sustainable learning during emergencies [1]. Similar conclusions are presented in practical documents of UNICEF/EiE Hub, which stress the necessity of universal design for learning, psychosocial support, and the creation of adaptive educational environments capable of responding quickly to crises [2].

Ukrainian studies confirm the findings of international reviews. In the works of H. Bilavych et al. [3; 4], it is emphasized that the development of inclusive education in Ukraine is taking place amid a significant increase in the needs of students with special educational and psychosocial needs. The authors highlight the importance of intersectoral cooperation, staff training, improvement of communication accessibility, and the integration of technologies that enhance the learning autonomy of students from vulnerable groups.

Reviews of research on education in emergencies (for example, Burde et al., 2017 [5]) indicate that crises sharply intensify social inequality, increase levels of psychological distress, and deepen barriers to access to education. Disruptions to the learning process, breakdown of social ties, and uncertainty lead to decreased student motivation, reduced cognitive resources, and a growing need for social and emotional support. Similar findings are reported by J. Forsberg et al. (2023) [6], showing that school and university interventions focused on psychosocial support significantly reduce anxiety levels, enhance a sense of community, and facilitate young people's return to educational pathways. Importantly, these models assign a leading role to educators and educational institutions in restoring social integration.

Ukrainian authors (S. Bogdanov, I. Pinchuk) [7] proposed a multi-level model of psychosocial support in educational institutions that combines preventive, counseling, and crisis interventions. The model confirms the importance of early identification of students' needs, mobilization of community resources, and the creation of a safe environment in which inclusivity is regarded as an element of psychological safety.

Recent studies focusing on the Ukrainian context show a sharp deterioration in students' mental health

during the war. Among them are the works of S. Hozak [8], I. Pinchuk et al. [9], and T. Kuprii et al. [10], which document significant increases in anxiety levels, emotional exhaustion, cognitive difficulties, and feelings of social isolation. At the same time, studies by M. Błaszczuk [11] and S. Londar et al. [12] demonstrate that universities are developing new models of institutional resilience that include digital support, flexible learning formats, psychological service units, and the development of student communities.

International studies on student well-being in crisis situations [13; 14; 15; 16], among others) indicate the presence of a range of psychosocial factors that directly influence the development of inclusivity and accessibility in the educational environment. Among these, social support—received by students from peers, instructors, and institutional services—plays a key role, as does a sense of belonging to the academic community. Emotional stability, levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms, and the stress-coping strategies chosen by students are also important. Additionally, the level of digital accessibility and the availability of necessary technical resources that ensure effective participation in the learning process, the quality of communication with the university, and the ability for self-regulation and maintenance of academic motivation are significant. All these factors are interconnected and together create the conditions necessary to ensure accessibility and support for students in crisis situations.

Publications by INEE/JEiE (2024–2025) [17] and numerous studies on education in emergencies emphasize the role of universities as centers of psychosocial support and safety. Institutions that provide access to psychological services, create opportunities for student initiatives, and support academic communities demonstrate a higher level of adaptive resilience.

The literature review shows that psychosocial factors are central determinants of inclusivity and accessibility in the student environment under crisis conditions. War, pandemics, and other traumatic events not only increase young people's psychological vulnerability but also exacerbate existing barriers to access to education. The most critical factors include social support, emotional well-being, a sense of belonging to the academic community, access to resources, and the quality of institutional communication.

The concept of inclusivity in the student environment means not only creating conditions for the presence of representatives of various social, physical, or cognitive groups, but also ensuring their full participation in the academic, social, and cultural life of the institution. This implies equal opportunities for learning, social interaction, and development, based on respect for diversity,

empathy, tolerance, and social justice (L. Zadorozhna, [18]). In the context of the university community, inclusivity refers to the readiness of students, faculty, and administration to provide support and engage in interaction regardless of physical or social differences. This approach corresponds to the understanding of inclusive education as a practical embodiment of social justice.

At the same time, accessibility (barrier-free environment) functions as a socio-pedagogical category that encompasses physical, informational, communicative, and social accessibility, as well as the elimination of architectural, infrastructural, social, and psychological barriers. Accessibility is not only about adapting the environment but also about creating a culture of tolerance, respect, and willingness to support anyone in need. In educational institutions, accessibility means not only access to facilities, but also adaptation of the learning process, information resources, communication methods, and social support.

Psychosocial factors in the context of inclusivity and accessibility are understood as a set of individual, interpersonal, social, and contextual components that influence behavior, values, attitudes, and readiness for inclusive interaction.

Individual components include personal qualities such as empathy, tolerance, and communication competence, as well as prior experience interacting with different categories of people. Empirical studies confirm that a high level of communication competence correlates with empathetic abilities and prosocial behavior among students. Analysis of contemporary practices indicates that empathy significantly contributes to the development of inclusive behavior in the learning environment (O. Chaikovska, L. Melnyk, L. Kuzo [19]). Interpersonal and social components include the influence of the social environment, particularly family, friends, colleagues, and instructors, as well as family values that shape students' attitudes toward diversity and their readiness for inclusive interaction. Research shows that support from the social environment and mutual assistance are key factors in the formation of inclusive behavior, especially within the university setting [20].

Contextual and institutional components encompass the educational, cultural, and institutional environment, including the policies and practices of higher education institutions, the availability of adaptation mechanisms and resources, as well as social and crisis conditions that may affect students. The study N. Dub "Inclusion in Higher Education: Key Ideas, Challenges and Barriers" [21] demonstrates that the absence or presence of support systems and inclusive practices in higher education institutions largely determines the level of

inclusivity and accessibility in the student environment.

Individual, interpersonal, and contextual components function interactively to ensure the development of inclusive behavior. The presence of empathy, communication skills, and tolerance among students, combined with a supportive social environment and inclusive university policies, creates favorable conditions for socially responsible interaction, readiness to support vulnerable groups, and adaptation to diverse social situations. University practices that foster the development of empathy and communication competence simultaneously cultivate a culture of support and responsibility, which contributes to the resilience of an inclusive environment.

Thus, psychosocial factors determine the extent to which students are prepared for barrier-free interaction, support, and social participation. The complex interplay of personal qualities, social environment, and institutional context is a necessary condition for fostering an inclusive culture in higher education and ensuring the sustainability of barrier-free practices, particularly under crisis conditions.

Crisis situations—such as war, social instability, displacement, economic difficulties, pandemics, and digital risks—significantly alter students' living conditions and require them to adapt and mobilize internal resources. In this context, psychosocial consequences may manifest as anxiety, insecurity, isolation, or loss of motivation and social support. At the same time, crises can stimulate solidarity, empathy, mutual assistance, social mobility, and active participation in community life, creating conditions conducive to the development of inclusivity.

In student communities under conditions of instability, the ability for collective support, building social connections, adaptability, and the development of resilience becomes particularly important. Interaction among students with diverse experiences, social statuses, backgrounds, and needs can serve as a source of social support resources and foster the development of an inclusive culture.

Based on current scientific approaches [6; 9; 11; 13], a research model was developed, which assumes the following relationship: psychosocial factors (personal traits, social environment, family values, prior experience, educational context) lead to mechanisms of social support, interaction, solidarity, and adaptation (emotional, informational, and communicative support; social connections; participation in communities; volunteering), which in turn result in readiness for inclusive interaction, barrier-free thinking, social resilience, tolerance, empathy, and active participation in social life.

In the empirical study of psychosocial factors influ-

encing the development of inclusivity and accessibility in the student environment under crisis conditions, 152 students at the bachelor's and master's levels from eight Ukrainian higher education institutions participated: Carpathian National University named after Vasyl Stefanyk, Ivano-Frankivsk National Medical University, Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, King Danylo University, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukrainian Catholic University, and Kherson State University. The representativeness of the study was ensured by a wide range of respondents' fields of study, including preschool education (A2), primary education (A3), secondary education (A4), vocational education (A5), special education (A6), physical culture and sports (A7), psychology (C4), management (D3), public administration (D4), law (D8), ecology (E2), medicine (I2), therapy and rehabilitation (I7), social work and counseling (I10), and child and youth services (I11). This diverse composition of respondents allowed the study to include both students who are just beginning their professional training and those who already have a developed vision of their professional activity.

Respondents evaluated the areas where they considered accessibility to be most relevant. The largest number of students, as shown in Figure 1, indicated public spaces, education, and transportation (105 respondents in each category), accounting for 69.1% of the total. The high selection of these areas reflects students' awareness of the social and practical impact of accessibility on their participation in the educational process and social functioning. The significance of the informational space was noted by 88 respondents (57.9%), and social services by 86 (56.6%), highlighting the importance of digital accessibility and the availability of support from social institutions. The option "Other / difficult to answer" was chosen by 23 students (15.1%), which may indicate insufficient awareness of specific or less obvious areas of accessibility.

Analysis of these data demonstrates that students' perception of accessibility encompasses not only physical access but also social and informational integration, emphasizing the psychosocial aspect of social inclusion.

Regarding practical experience in interacting with individuals who require additional support, 28.3% of respondents reported regular interaction with such groups, 50% indicated occasional experience, and 21.7% had no such experience. These data suggest that while most students have basic experience interacting with vulnerable groups, systematic engagement remains limited. From a psychosocial perspective, this underscores the importance of integrating practical skills for inclusive interaction into educational programs

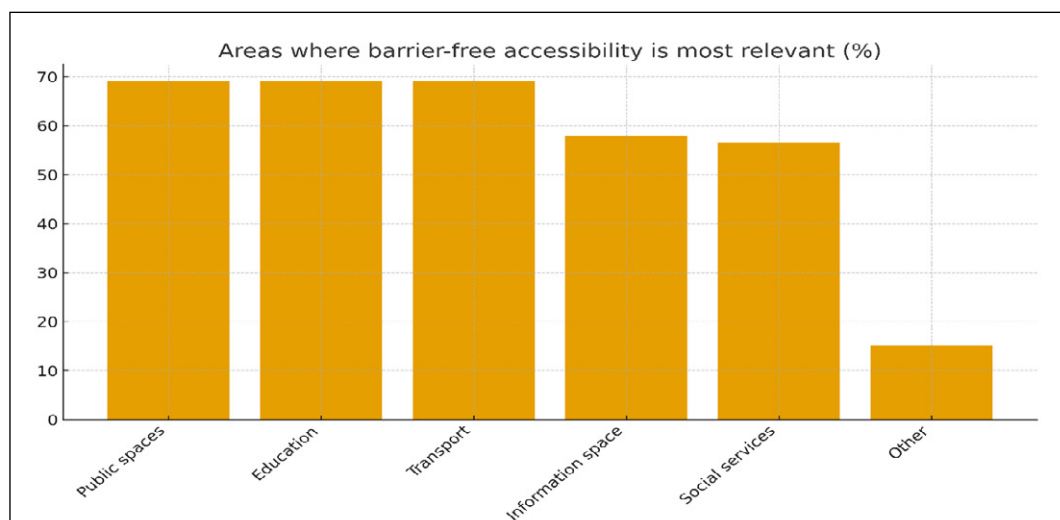


Fig. 1. Areas where barrier-free accessibility is most relevant (%)
Source: compiled by the authors of this study

to develop stable social and emotional competencies in future professionals.

The level of students' confidence (Figure 2) in interacting with vulnerable groups was assessed on a five-point scale. Among respondents, 38.2% selected level 3, another 38.2% chose level 4, 12.5% indicated the maximum level of 5, and 11.2% reported a low level of confidence (1–2 points).

These results indicate a moderate to high level of students' readiness for socially responsible interaction, while simultaneously pointing to the presence of psychological barriers and limitations due to insufficient practical experience.

The most frequently identified factors contributing to confidence (Figure 3) were personal experience and communication skills – 106 responses (69.7%), knowledge of inclusivity principles – 79 (52%), support from their environment – 53 (34.9%), and fear of "saying something wrong" – 44 (28.9%). Only 14 students (9.2%) were unable to identify a specific factor.

This demonstrates that the development of communication competence and practical experience is critically important for increasing readiness for barrier-free interaction.

Regarding value orientations, 76.3% of students (116 individuals) fully agreed that inclusivity is an important value in modern society, 18.4% (28 individuals) partially agreed, 2.6% (4 individuals) disagreed, and another 2.6% indicated difficulty answering. The statement that barrier-free access is an essential condition for social resilience in crisis situations received an average score of 4.24 out of 5: 2% of respondents rated it 1 point, 1.3% – 2 points, 17.1% – 3 points, 29.6% – 4 points, and 50% – the maximum 5 points. This indicates a high level of awareness of the role of barrier-free access in ensuring social stability and emphasizes the importance of value-based attitudes as a psychosocial factor of resilience.

The assessment of contemporary youth's openness to inclusivity and barrier-free practices showed an average score of 3.68. Among respondents, 37.5% chose 3 points, 31.6% – 4 points, 23% – 5 points, and only 7.9% rated openness at 1–2 points. This reflects a moderately high level of awareness and readiness for social inclusion among young people while highlighting the need for systematic development of socio-psychological competencies and value orientations through educational and practical programs.

Students also identified factors that shape youth readiness for inclusive interaction. The most frequently mentioned were personal traits (empathy, tolerance) – 122 responses (80.3%), social environment – 111 (73%), and family values – 102 (67.1%). Less prominent but still significant were experience in crisis situations – 71 responses (46.7%) and educational context – 74 responses (48.7%). Only 5.3% of students were unable to identify a specific factor. These data confirm that the development of readiness for inclusive behavior is a multi-level process, where internal psychological characteristics combine with social support and educational factors.

Regarding factors that strengthen barrier-free thinking, respondents noted awareness of diversity – 100 responses (65.8%), understanding of human rights – 99 (65.1%), experience in supporting others – 94 (61.8%), communication skills – 82 (53.9%), and volunteering or civic engagement – 77 (50.7%). Only 10 students (6.6%) could not identify a specific factor.

These results demonstrate that both knowledge and practical experience, combined with social skills, are key psychosocial determinants in forming an open, barrier-free worldview.

The findings indicate that the development of inclusiveness and barrier-free behavior among students is the result of a complex interaction of various psycho-

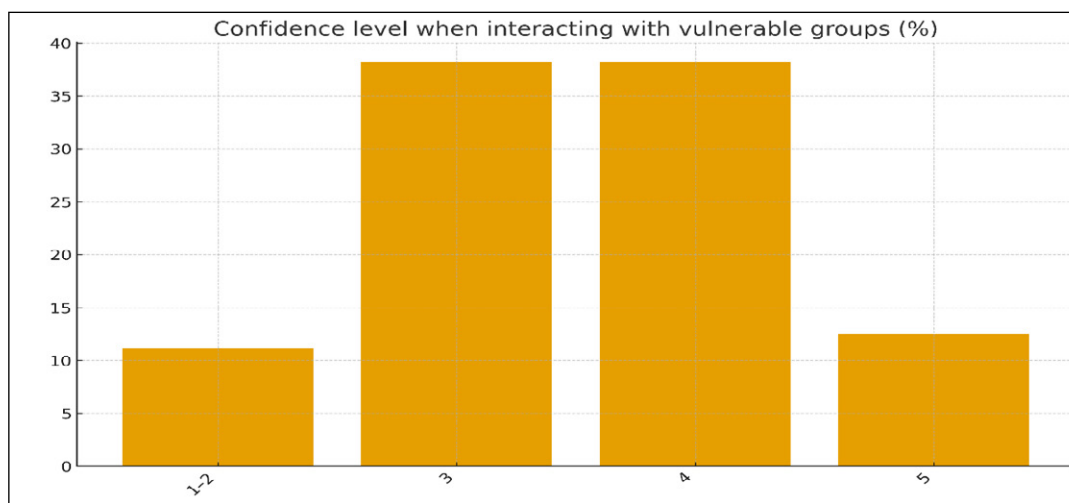


Fig. 2. Confidence level when interacting with vulnerable groups (%)
Source: compiled by the authors of this study



Fig. 3. Factors influencing confidence (%)
Source: compiled by the authors of this study

social factors. This process is not limited to personal traits or isolated external influences. It is shaped at the intersection of individual characteristics, social environment, experience in different forms of interaction, and value orientations, which are gradually built through education and practice.

Together, this creates a multi-level system within which students acquire the ability for inclusive behavior and barrier-free thinking. For these qualities to truly develop, theoretical knowledge or situational practical tasks alone are not sufficient. Effectiveness is achieved when the educational process is structured as an integrated model, combining academic preparation, practical interaction in real or simulated situations, and the presence of socio-psychological support. Such a systemic approach not only expands understanding of inclusiveness but also fosters an internal reorientation of students toward the values of accessibility, mutual respect, and non-discrimination.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study confirm that psychosocial factors significantly determine students' readiness for inclusive interaction and the development of barrier-free thinking. Personal resources such as empathy and tolerance, the social environment, and the educational context are key determinants of youth behavior.

Crisis conditions, such as war, social instability, and displacement, modify the mechanisms of inclusiveness formation. On one hand, they create additional barriers, including anxiety, uncertainty, and the risk of social isolation. On the other hand, crises stimulate solidarity, collective support, and active engagement in volunteer work and community initiatives. The study's findings show that students with experience participating in crisis situations demonstrate greater confidence in interacting with vulnerable groups, highlighting the role of crises as a catalyst for the development of social empathy and inclusive behavior. Student communities play a critically important

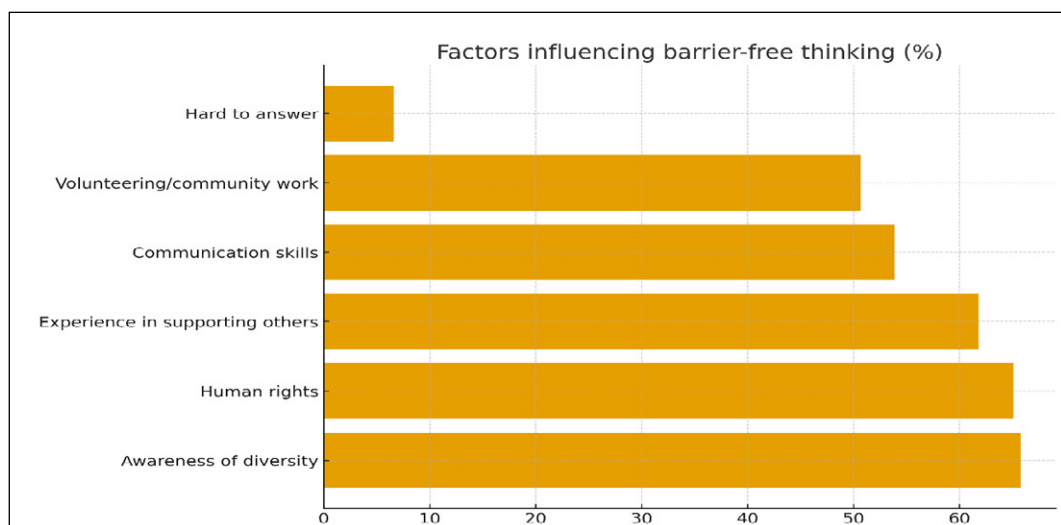


Fig. 4. Factors influencing barrier-free thinking (%)
Source: compiled by the authors of this study

role in social integration. Interaction within support groups, participation in collective activities, and projects contribute to the development of barrier-free thinking and tolerance. This emphasizes the importance of strategically involving students in socially oriented initiatives, creating conditions for interpersonal support, and teaching skills for interacting with diverse population groups.

The contribution of the study lies in the systematic identification of psychosocial determinants of inclusiveness in the student environment under crisis conditions. The practical novelty of the research consists in identifying key factors that universities can use to develop a barrier-free culture, while the theoretical generalization lies in the formation of a logical model “factors → mechanisms → outcomes,” relevant for further empirical and cross-cultural studies.

The study results have important practical implications and can be used to promote an inclusive and barrier-free culture within student communities. The practical significance lies in the need for a systemic approach to student preparation that combines the development of personal skills, social support, and the creation of an accessible educational environment. The design of educational programs aimed at developing empathy, tolerance, and communication skills should integrate theoretical knowledge about inclusiveness with practical cases and role-playing exercises simulating real-life interactions with vulnerable groups. An essential element is the development of social support systems in educational institutions through mentorship, collective activities, and mentoring programs that enhance emotional safety and group cohesion among students. Adapting educational and informational resources to ensure physical and digital accessibility, as well as involving students in volunteer and community initiatives, fosters barrier-free thinking and the development of socially responsible behavior under crisis conditions.

At the level of educational policy, the study results emphasize the need to create strategies that ensure equal

access to educational resources and services for all students, regardless of physical, social, or psychological limitations. Integrating psychosocial support into educational programs provides adequate conditions for the adaptation and development of students in vulnerable or crisis situations. Establishing student support services and inter-university platforms for experience exchange promotes university cooperation and the dissemination of best practices in inclusion and barrier-free education. It is also important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of educational and social programs, which allows for strategy adjustments and the development of new practices based on empirical evidence.

CONCLUSIONS

A synthesis of the results indicates that psychosocial factors exert a significant influence on the development of inclusivity and barrier-free environments within the student community. Personal resources—such as empathy, tolerance, and communicative skills—alongside the social environment, participation in student communities, family values, the educational context, and the experience of navigating crisis conditions, shape practical skills and confidence in inclusive behavior. While crises create additional barriers, they simultaneously act as a catalyst for social empathy, solidarity, and collective support. The findings emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive approach to developing an inclusive culture in higher education, one that integrates students’ personal development, the creation of conditions for social integration, and structural changes within the educational environment. These conclusions hold practical value for universities, student support services, and educational policymakers, while also opening new perspectives for further research aimed at refining the psychosocial mechanisms involved in fostering accessibility and inclusivity.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Authors declare no conflict of interest

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