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**Soft skills from the perspective of john dewey's problem-based learning for tenth semester psychologists in training at the villa del rosario campus of the university of Pamplona**

Habilidades blandas desde la perspectiva del aprendizaje basado en problemas de john dewey de los psicólogos en formación de décimo semestre de la sede de villa del rosario de la universidad de pamplona

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**ABSTRACT**

**Keywords:**

Soft Skills; Problem-Based Learning; Knowledge; Skills; Competences.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are called upon to develop skills for work and life. That is to say, the formation of values and attitudes for every human being is of great importance for the development and balance between the professional, work, and social spheres. However, at present, higher education students have an education focused on work performance, leaving aside the development or training of soft skills or competences. This research set out to characterize the soft skills of tenth semester psychologists in training at the Villa del Rosario campus of the Universidad de Pamplona using John Dewey's Problem-Based Learning Theory (PBL). It was done under a qualitative, cross-sectional and phenomenological design approach, by means of interviews with psychologists in training and the application of a PBL. It can be concluded that Problem-Based Learning as a learning theory offers education a strategic framework for psychologists in training to develop competencies, as well as hard and soft skills from an experiential perspective. Regarding the latter, the evaluation identifies an imperative need, from this theoretical framework (PBL), to redefine the teaching-learning processes. As well, to promote values and traits that foster, in addition to communication, effective individual and collective relationships in the context in which the psychologist develops.

**RESUMEN**

**Palabras clave:**

Habilidades Blandas; Aprendizaje Basado en Problemas; Conocimiento; Habilidades; Competencias.

Las Instituciones de Educación Superior IES están llamadas a desarrollar habilidades para el trabajo y la vida. Es decir, la formación de valores y actitudes para todo ser humano es de gran importancia para el desarrollo y el equilibrio entre el ámbito profesional, laboral y social. Sin embargo, en la actualidad los estudiantes de Educación Superior tienen una educación enfocada al desempeño laboral, dejando de lado el desarrollo o formación de habilidades o competencias blandas. Esta investigación se propuso caracterizar las habilidades Blandas de los Psicólogos en Formación de Décimo Semestre de la Sede de Villa del Rosario de la Universidad de Pamplona desde la Teoría del Aprendizaje Basado en Problemas de John Dewey, bajo un enfoque cualitativo, transversal y con diseño fenomenológico, por medio de entrevistas a psicólogos en formación y aplicación de un Aprendizaje Basado en Problemas (ABP). Se puede concluir que el ABP como teoría del aprendizaje, ofrece a la educación un marco estratégico para que desde lo experiencial los psicólogos en formación desarrollen competencias y habilidades duras y blandas. Con respecto a estas últimas, la evaluación permite identificar una imperante necesidad de que, desde este marco teórico (ABP), se resignifiquen los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje, en aras de impulsar valores y rasgos que fomenten, además de la comunicación, la relación efectiva de forma individual y colectiva en el contexto en el que se desenvuelve el psicólogo.

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## Introduction

Gómez, (2019) indicates that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are called upon to develop competences for life and work. That is to say, the formation of values and attitudes for every human being is of great importance for the development and balance between the professional, work and social spheres. However, at present, Higher Education students have an education focused on work performance, leaving aside the development or training of soft skills or competences (Araya & Garita, 2019). However, the development of these skills complements the training of the individual and allows them a broader field with regard to the work environment. However, this problem faced by future professionals in different areas goes beyond the boundaries of academia.

Thus, HEIs, with their training purpose which is aimed at training from different pedagogical approaches, configured in curricular models focused on competence training, prioritising professional qualification and interdisciplinarity, leaving soft skills to one side, without recognising the current labour demand, which recently demands skills that enable the graduate to perform efficiently and effectively in the labour sector. Therefore, there is little evidence of a link between education and employment in relation to soft skills (Tito & Serrano, 2016). From this perspective, educational institutions are called upon to evaluate and rethink their curricula in order to integrate and promote the soft skills required for personal success and the demands of the labour market (Pazil & Razak, 2019).

In this sense, HEIs must implement curricula with methodological instruments that respond to the real labour demands of the market, with innovative and creative pedagogical strategies that contribute to the sustainable development and competitiveness of the country (Vera, 2016).

With regard to the training of psychologists, soft skills are of great importance, taking into account

that they enable effective interaction from the socio-emotional point of view and, therefore, the resolution of problems and the achievement of objectives. After the COVID-19 pandemic, humanisation in the services provided from different health areas has suffered a decline, and it has become common to hear complaints, claims and disagreements from the patient, evidenced in the provision of care in a supportive, dignified, respectful and empathetic manner (Urbina-Soto, 2019).

Given this panorama, the strengthening of soft skills in academic training in HEIs is fundamental as a set of non-cognitive skills essential for learning and performing successfully at work, and they are also related to the emotional component and the way of relating to others (Espinoza & Gallegos, 2020). However, psychologists, as health and human sciences professionals, in addition to investigating, assessing, analysing, evaluating, diagnosing and intervening, must inform about the causes, consequences and diagnosis, while accompanying patients and families during processes that sometimes last for long periods of time. It is therefore important that psychology professionals know the correct way to empathise with others and thus provide safe spaces for the users of this service (Urbina-Soto, 2019).

On the other hand, Ruiz (2012), states that Colombia stands out for having a group of health professionals with a high degree of knowledge, as these workers have a demanding profile; with an intellect in line with and specific to the area, capable of responding appropriately in the design and implementation of plans for promotion, prevention, evaluation, and also in the recovery of both physical and psychological illnesses at the individual, family or community level. This is why there is currently greater interest and motivation in carrying out analyses, both in the curricula of HEIs that offer programmes in health and social sciences, due to their closeness to people and their behaviour. However, the human competences and the integrality of each professional, a fundamental pillar within this area, are left aside.

Thus, it is important that universities that offer programmes, especially in psychology, restructure their programme content by offering courses where students develop both soft skills and hard skills, the latter understood by Serrano (2016) as the theoretical knowledge specific to the profession. Therefore, these two skills would be integrated transversally, generating integral and competitive professionals, i.e., they would learn not only technical training and theoretical bases but also socioemotional skills, favouring assertive communication and empathy between professionals and their patients, meeting the demands of today's world of work, as companies are looking for competent individuals who stand out in the intellectual field and also demonstrating the particular qualities that transform them into employees with the ability to adapt, resilience and commitment.

In this order of ideas, it is transcendental that HEIs carry out modifications within the curricula of careers related to health sciences, where an integral professional training is reinforced or imparted, contributing to the creation of a qualified human, scientific and labour profile.

Based on the above, the main objective of this article is to characterise the soft skills of professionals in training in the last semester of the psychology programme at the University of Pamplona with the aim of training new generations of health science professionals who are characterised by having a suitable human, scientific, work and professional profile, seeking a humanised and empathetic praxis with patients.

### ***Problem Based Learning***

It is a methodological proposal that seeks in a collaborative way to develop competences and cognitive skills faced by students in the face of a given problem. They are related to communication, listening and coordination skills, among others (González-Morales, 2011).

As stated by Mendieta (2021), in this methodology, learning is centred on the student through individual and collective participation. "In other words, PBL is a strategy that allows the improvement and strengthening of skills and abilities, as well as the acquisition of knowledge and concepts of the academic curriculum. Therefore, higher education institutions should aim to guide learning from the student's own experience, effectively solving everyday situations, understanding the needs of the context, thus forming the ability to respond to real situations; PBL is positioned as an appropriate technique for this type of learning purposes.

### ***Soft Skills***

Soft skills are defined as the much more subjective and intangible set of skills acquired by the individual that optimise the individual's performance in different areas such as personal, psychological, academic and professional (academic-professional, occupational, emotional, psychological, personal) (Duckworth, 2015).

On the other hand, according to Guerra-Báez, (2019) cited by the WHO, it is defined as a "set of socio-affective skills necessary for interaction with others and that allow the person to cope with daily demands and challenging situations, i.e., they allow the person to make decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, recognise the emotions of others and build healthy physical and emotional relationships" (World Health Organization, 2003).

### ***Learning***

The concept of learning can be understood from different theoretical points of view, which over time have tried to explain how it is produced or how individuals have access to it. It can be defined as: "learning is more or less the stable modification of behavioural patterns, understood as behavioural modifications of the human being in any area, in this sense there can be learning, even if there is no

intellectual formulation" Bleger, quoted by (Zapata, 2015). This concept has been addressed from different approaches according to the discipline of the authors; philosophers, physiologists, biochemists, biophysicists, formulate concepts in reference to learning; carrying out studies aimed at understanding how this phenomenon occurs.

According to the author Dewey, quoted by Ruiz (2013) the theory of "Learning by Doing", is a practical teaching programme, which focuses on the experiences of students; it is related to the student's personal experiences. Learning and theories dealing with the processes of knowledge acquisition have developed in the last century due to advances in psychology and its instructional theories, which have tried to systematise mechanisms associated with mental processes. His method was based on and relied on an education based on practical activities, which he called the "problem method"; a main characteristic that takes some empirical situation as a starting point. Based on this theory Dewey was confident that these educational practices decrease behavioural and disciplinary problems in students. Learning can be understood from different points of view, depending on the theory, how it is produced or how it is accessed by the subject.

### *Categorisation of Variables*

For the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting the information, categories of analysis were used. These were organised into categories and subcategories as presented in Table I.

Table I. Organisation of categories

Category	Subcategory
Problem Based Learning	Knowledge
	Skills
	Attitudes
Soft Competences	Teamwork
	Empathy
	Active listening
	Development of critical and reflective thinking

## **Methodology**

The research is based on the qualitative research approach, understanding and explaining the soft skills of psychologists in training at the University of Pamplona. According to Salgado (2007), qualitative research allows us to get closer to the reality of the participants, "*approaching the deep understanding of the meanings and definitions of the situation as it is presented to us by the people*" where intersubjectivity is the key element for the results. This study is descriptive, according to Hernández et al. (2015) the purpose of this scope is to know particularly how the phenomenon is developed, composed and defined. For the present, John Dewey's problem-based learning theory was addressed in the characterisation of soft skills in psychologists in training.

Thus, the phenomenological research design of Husserl (1938) cited by Leal (2003) focuses on the knowledge of reality, from the internal frame of reference of the individual, which is formed from his experiences, perceptions, beliefs, etc. In other words, this method allows the understanding of each individual's own subjectivity. Based on this, the aim was to characterise the soft skills of tenth semester psychologists in training at the Villa del Rosario branch of the University of Pamplona through the perspective of John Dewey's problem-based learning.

According to Robledo (2009), key informants are understood as people who, due to their characteristics, experiences, qualities and belonging to the study environment, facilitate the collection of information, as well as other sources of data related to the object under investigation. In addition, convenience sampling will be carried out (Hernández et al., 2014). Therefore, psychologists in training in their tenth semester at the University of Pamplona, Villa del Rosario campus, will participate in the study.

Semi-structured interviews were used in the first instance as instruments for the collection of information, which contains a guide of questions



that is flexible to the integration of new questions, reaching depth in the knowledge of the phenomenon of study, i.e. to determine the soft skills in psychologists in training. An interview was applied to the psychologists in training in their tenth semester.

In addition, according to Hernández et al. (2014), this technique is based on the search for realism and the interpretation of the environment, in other words, thanks to this we get to know more about the subject of interest based on individual or group acts such as gestures, actions and postures. Thus, it is considered a useful tool in research as it facilitates, orients and focuses the collection of information.

### Design of APB

In order to characterise the soft skills of the psychologists, a PBL strategy is proposed that seeks to review the performance of the participants in the soft skills (categories) established for this study: Active Listening, Teamwork, Empathy, Development of Critical and Reflective Thinking. The purpose was to apply a PBL strategy on soft skills in tenth semester psychologists in training at the Villa del Rosario branch of the University of Pamplona in order to describe the characteristics of these skills.

Table II Problem-Based Learning Proposal For The Assessment Of Soft Skills In Trainee Psychologists

Description	Resources	Evaluation
<b>Stage 1: Problem Recognition</b> A role-play with a simulated patient with a diagnosis of paranoid personality and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.	Case study Medical history	Observation grid
<b>Stage 2: Defining the General Objective</b> Through the therapeutic approach, participants should generate rapport and empathy, achieve fluid communication, create a safe and trusting environment, determine background information, predisposing factors and triggers relevant to the case, inquire about areas of adjustment and establish a diagnostic impression and set therapeutic goals.		
<b>Stage 3: Implementation of the analysis</b> In a collaborative way, the participants must describe the case and its approach, systematise and outline the case study and delimit the solution alternatives.		
<b>Stage 4: Evaluation</b> Through the review of the clinical history form and observation by expert evaluators of the development of the session.		

For the organisation of the information, the results were grouped into two matrices, which include the synthesised information from the interview and observation.

Table III Interview Matrix

Category	Subcategory	Microanalysis
Problem Based Learning	Knowledge	As mentioned by the participants, trainee psychologists must acquire knowledge from the different areas of psychology such as selection processes among other techniques from the organisational area, additionally they refer to the importance of knowing, handling and applying therapeutic techniques and instruments in clinical interventions, symptomatology of mental disorders and the appropriate use of manuals such as DSM V and ICD10 in the clinical area. Now, the participants state that the knowledge acquired favours the development of soft skills, as it allows them to understand both the patient and the worker from a humanised and integral perspective, and also enhances the development of skills such as creativity, communication, teamwork, assertiveness, among others, which are indispensable and useful in both the professional and personal spheres. Lastly, the participants reported that their teachers used strategies such as debate, round table discussions, practical workshops and group activities with methodologies that favoured the development of written and communicative skills, generating and enhancing soft skills during their academic training.

	<b>Skills</b>	The participants stated that psychologists in training must possess skills and abilities in interview application, group management, enquiry, emotional control, communication skills, as well as theoretical knowledge in problem solving, psychotherapeutic interventions, conflict resolution, among others; all of which favour the adequate performance of psychologists' functions within the work context. Also, among the skills referred to as most relevant in the training are listening and active listening, communication, adaptability, creativity and different therapeutic skills.
	<b>Attitudes</b>	Among the essential attitudes for training as psychologists, participants express a critical attitude, positivity, openness to learning and knowledge and collaboration. However, among the most relevant attitudes in the profession is the critical attitude.
<b>Soft skills</b>	<b>Teamwork</b>	According to the participants, teamwork is defined as the work of several people focused on a common goal and its effectiveness is the result of the synergy between the members and the goal, the work must be accompanied by constant feedback and evaluation of alternatives for action, taking into account the opinion of each person in the team. Teamwork is also a way of acquiring and strengthening personal skills and new knowledge. In relation to the importance of teamwork in psychology professionals, all the participants concluded that this lies in the need for interdisciplinary work with other training as it is necessary for the comprehensive approach to patients or users, in addition, it can focus on the application of different strategies that promote well-being. The role assumed by the participants in the work teams is characteristically that of leader or of directing the work; only one participant mentions being in the leadership role or following instructions from the leader in charge. Only one participant mentions as a preference to follow the instructions suggested to him. Finally, the preference of working as a team or individually, most of the participants refer to teamwork, as more alternatives for action and security can be obtained. However, they point out that the team is committed and focused on the goal. Only one participant said that he preferred individual work because of the lack of time for working together.
	<b>Empathy</b>	Now, based on the concept of empathy, the participants state that, among the ways to detect emotions from non-verbal language, are: the coherence between verbal and non-verbal language, in eye contact, body language, facial and gestural expression, posture and body reaction when dealing with a specific topic. The concept of empathy for the participants is defined as: the ability to understand from the perspective of another person particular situations, it is also understood as the ability to identify, perceive and understand and manage emotions of others, and their feelings about different circumstances, in turn, as the ability to perceive. The participants as a whole refer to connecting in an agile and precise way with other people, trying to understand the context of the situation experienced, through active listening, attention to emotions, projecting themselves into the situation exposed to a when their way of discerning or acting in the situation is contrary, providing alternative solutions, evoking similar personal emotions in order to understand the current feeling. Finally, psychologists in training say that the importance of being empathic at a professional level lies in the fact that: it is a necessary skill for every field of psychology without which there would be no integrity in the professional. In addition, it is essential in order to make the patient or individual feel confident and allow them to express themselves, to be able to understand and comprehend the current state of the consultant from different spheres, to achieve a harmonious intervention environment focused on results and, finally, it is the basis of the relationship with the patient, client or user.
	<b>Active listening</b>	According to psychologists in training, active listening can be defined as an exercise, technique or communication strategy that goes beyond the physical act of listening, it implies attention and understanding of what is expressed, as well as the feelings and emotions present; this exercise should also allow the sender to feel listened to and understood. It is also stated that it is a communication technique and strategy. In training as psychologists, active listening is necessary, as it is essential to infer, evaluate, receive, understand and approach users and patients correctly, contributing to the quality of communication, teamwork, interaction and the effective process of intervention, i.e. it allows us to know in essence the problem solution of the patient or user and thus apply the appropriate strategies for that situation. Delving into the role of active listening in the psychologist's practice, the participants state that this is an indispensable skill for the development of techniques and strategies for the application of the profession such as: interviewing, assessment, interdisciplinary work, patient and user care in the different areas of work in psychology. For this, the psychologist must have the tools to diligently achieve a conscious and effective listening process. They must also have a disposition that enables the psychologist to connect with the user with total concentration and to avoid being distracted by internal or external aspects. This is a constant task of the psychologist's work.
	<b>Development of critical and reflective thinking</b>	The participants consider that the development of critical thinking is important for the work of psychologists in each of the areas in which they are required to approach, evaluate and intervene. This subcategory can be seen in processes such as psychotherapeutic approaches and processes, intervention plans, definition, description and resolution of problems, evaluation and diagnosis, in other activities specific to the psychologist's faculty. Strategies implemented for the formation of this category in academic training: Readings, debates, construction of essays, presentations, treatment designs and intervention in cases, analysis of hypothetical cases, role-playing.

Table IV. Observation Matrix

Category	Subcategory	Observed behaviours
Soft skills	Teamwork	This category takes into account the trainee psychologists' ability to get involved and solve tasks, as well as the ability to maintain good relationships by accepting the different points of view of the team members. It is found in this category that, although the importance of building good relationships is recognised, the behaviour is only evident in one of the participants. Likewise, tolerance with team members is a key part of this skill, which is not clear in most of the participants; only half of them show interest in integrating with the other members. Another of the behaviours evidenced is related to finding points of agreement with others, promoting organisation and planning to solve tasks, observing that the participants seek to mediate in the different situations presented, but there is a marked lack when determining the necessary actions that will allow them to achieve the objective.
	Empathy	Behaviours associated with the category are observed, evidenced in the interaction with the patient, being flexible, cordial in their treatment and with active listening. However, in relation to the recognition of the needs of others, the psychologists in training show shortcomings, with most of the participants having none.
	Active listening	Listening as a soft skill is related to the ability to understand what the other communicates, from an attitude of openness and resulting in the prioritisation of information provided by the patient. The identification of findings makes it possible to delve deeper into antecedents and predisposing factors, while at the same time broadening the information to investigate necessary aspects within the clinical assessment; in the behaviours observed this is evidenced to a lesser extent. Listening should also be characterised by the respectful and attentive manner, as well as the corporeality of the listener, observing in the evaluation exercise that there is a dispute between tranquillity in some of the participants and insecurity in others.
	Development of critical and reflective thinking	Among the behaviours observed in the psychologists in training for this category, it is found that sometimes the interventions carried out are not adjusted to the needs posed by the patient, as a result of the processing of the information, not being clear, precise and relevant. In some cases it is found that the diagnosis is consistent with the symptoms and background, which shows the correct application of theoretical knowledge and therefore an adequate functional analysis of the case presented, within a therapeutic process, of which its course is understood and each of the moments are approached.
	Decision-making	With regard to decision-making, the psychologists in training generate spaces for reflection with the aim of evaluating alternatives based on the information available and specific criteria of the clinical interview process. Regarding the analysis of situations, there is evidence of difficulty in systematically disaggregating the situations presented by the patient and establishing priorities, finding the most appropriate responses.

## Discussion of Results

The analysis of the results based on the collection and interpretation of the data obtained will be presented below. For this, the theoretical bases supporting the research were taken into account in comparison with the data from the different sources. However, it is worth mentioning that the categorisation for this research allowed the establishment of two main categories, Problem-Based Learning and Soft Skills, so the following discussion is based on the concatenation of the information provided by each data collection instrument in relation to these categories and their respective subcategories.

Starting with the category Problem Based Learning (PBL) and the subcategory Knowledge, it is

taken into account that PBL proposes the development of knowledge that is adjusted to the students' need to respond in the real world (Gregori & Duran, 2004). In this regard, the participants recognise that the knowledge obtained throughout the academic training should be oriented from the different areas of psychology such as: selection processes, among others of organisational psychology, additionally they refer to the importance of knowing, handling and applying therapeutic techniques and instruments in clinical interventions, symptomatology of mental disorders and appropriate use of manuals such as DSM V and ICD10 of the clinical area. In addition to this, the knowledge acquired favours the development of soft skills as mentioned, which is consistent with what is referred to by Marrero, Mohamed, & Xifra, (2018), the teaching-learning

process should aim for comprehensive training where priority is given not only to knowing-knowing and knowing-how to do but also to knowing-how to be, tending towards effective interaction in the social context. To conclude with the subcategory Knowledge, the participants mention that strategies were implemented in their academic training that enabled them to acquire the knowledge necessary for their professional development.

In the subcategory skills, it is found that psychologists in training refer as fundamental to have skills and abilities for the application of interviews, group management, enquiry, emotional control, communication skills, in addition to handling theoretical knowledge in problem solving, psychotherapeutic interventions, conflict resolution, among others; which favours adequate performance and according to the professional profile within the work context. According to Morales et al. (2013), skills are made up of a group of related elements, which are not formed independently and, in turn, are associated with knowledge and values, fortifying each other. In relation to these, the participants point out that, among the most relevant skills are listening and active listening, communication, adaptability, creativity and different therapeutic skills, which in agreement with Vera (2016), are developed as soft skills through "modelling and active learning", pedagogical strategies that have to be implemented as part of the curriculum.

Finally, in the subcategory Attitudes, the participants highlight the need to foster a critical attitude, positivity, openness to learning and knowledge and collaboration. Of these, the critical attitude stands out as the most significant in the work of the profession, since, as Wong et al. (2016) states, the critical attitude is conceived as the ability to "think for oneself and decide according to rational criteria are decisive aspects that every student should develop", as well as a virtue that stimulates the intellectual capacity of the student, by giving him/her tools, which, according to Wong et al.

will allow him/her to evaluate knowledge, actions and decisions. Therefore, within the educational processes, it must be stimulated in order to form autonomous subjects with critical capacity based on programmatic content that includes logic and argumentation.

Now, to begin the analysis of the Soft Skills Category, in the subcategory Teamwork, it is found that, as a soft skill, it allows psychologists in training to use their individual resources and contribute to the construction of solutions to different situations presented, involving each of the parties in the planning and organisation of activities for the fulfilment of the objectives. In the group evaluated, it is found that the students lack the ability to work cohesively and communicate adequately to achieve the proposed goal; therefore, it is pertinent that, in the training of soft skills, the collaborative spirit is fostered from the assumption of responsibilities and leadership roles, where collective development is also achieved. This is in agreement with Álvarez (n.d.) who states that teamwork implies a personal disposition and collaboration between individuals in the execution of tasks that lead to the achievement of common objectives.

In the subcategory Empathy, it can be seen that the development of the soft skill is at a basic level, finding that, at times, in order to respect the approach to the patient, the psychologists in training do not go into the information provided by the patient. It should also be noted that non-verbal communication is an important part of this category, and is related to the disposition shown by the trainee psychologist towards the patient. On the other hand, it is found that in relation to the recognition of the needs of others, it is necessary to integrate within the training process, the development of skills for the recognition of others as similar, strengthening the interpersonal area. The above, based on Olivera (2010) cited by Cardona (2017), who defines empathy as "the ability to put ourselves in the situation of the other, an act of recognition of others as subjects", thinking it



from the interest, attention and understanding of the emotional or rational states of the other in a specific scenario.

Regarding the subcategory active listening, Moreira & Véliz (2017), refer that active listening should be developed at a high level, given that it strengthens the predisposition of the person, guaranteeing warmth and acceptance, resulting in effectiveness in the intervention, so that the behaviour influences improvement to the extent that the patient is given confidence, through a fluid discourse and timely information is offered on the diagnostic impression. In view of this, active listening is fundamental to create an atmosphere of trust, where the professional's attitude and conscious disposition allows the patient to express themselves freely and authentically and where, based on previous knowledge, the psychologist is able to prioritise and establish intervention plans and objectives that respond to the individual needs of the patient.

An emerging subcategory is Decision-making, as a skill that needs to be strengthened to the extent that, within the clinical processes, the capacity for analysis and the systematic disaggregation of information will allow them to guide the therapeutic objectives that are established. Likewise, the evident lack of analysis of the information provided by the patient indicates a priority for intervention from the academic sphere, especially in relation to the psychologists' ability to attend to detail and establish relationships between the different elements of the information provided by the patient. To this end, it must also be important to ensure that the prior knowledge of future professionals is sufficient to establish the criteria that will allow them to select the relevant information, its organisation and, finally, decision-making. According to Claver et al. (2000), decision making drives the implementation of an action, which will generate novel information, feeding back into the process and generating the need to make new decisions.

The last subcategory reviewed, as part of the soft skills category, corresponds to the development of critical and reflective thinking, where it is found that, as a cognitive process, students have difficulties in analysing and evaluating the information available. For this, reflective practice is indispensable and must be constituted as an almost permanent attitude, which is also related to the principles of psychology. Likewise, it is necessary to start from the nature of the problem, since it is from this that the purpose of thinking derives, where the efficient and effective application of knowledge to achieve the given ends must be evidenced. As part of the development of critical thinking, students need to strengthen processes of analysis, inference, evaluation and deduction in order to be able to develop, in the face of a clinical process, rational, reflective thinking aimed at providing solutions to problems, being objective and making use of previously acquired theoretical knowledge. In line with this, Olivares & Heredia (2012) cite Ennis (1962), to define critical and reflective thinking as a correct evaluation of arguments that must include a diversity of essential cognitive skills to address the dimension of the end of the certainties of knowledge.

## Conclusions

Problem-based learning as a learning theory offers education a strategic framework for psychologists in training to develop competences and hard and soft skills from the experiential aspect. With regard to the latter, the evaluation identifies an imperative need, from this theoretical framework (PBL), to re-signify the teaching-learning processes, in order to promote values and traits that foster, in addition to communication, the effective relationship of a professional in this area with the people around them, especially with their patients, which will also allow them to recognise and manage on an emotional level, to set goals and plan specific actions to achieve them, developing quality clinical practices for individual and group assistance.

The tenth semester psychologists in training at the Villa del Rosario campus of the University of Pamplona recognise the importance of developing soft skills, and manage to identify the definition of these and their operationalisation within clinical practice. However, in the staging, shortcomings were identified in their level of development, especially in those such as empathy, development of critical and reflective thinking, and even in the emerging subcategory related to decision-making, these being essential in this area of psychology, where the patient's confidence must be aroused, to the extent that emotional openness is allowed in a safe environment, which also promotes active listening and which leads to an intervention plan in accordance with the needs identified.

As a teaching-learning method, PBL allows psychologists in training to approach complex problems that arise in the reality of work, while at the same time allowing them to learn concepts and principles of this science. Likewise, the application of PBL orients the promotion and development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, empathy, emotional management and communication skills, especially active listening skills, soft skills addressed in the development of this research project.

Bearing in mind that both hard and soft skills are indispensable in the training of trainee psychologists as both can be indicators of success of future professionals.

As a result of the results obtained from the evaluation of soft skills such as teamwork, empathy, active listening, decision making and the development of critical and reflective thinking in psychologists in training in their tenth semester at the University of Pamplona, it is considered appropriate to strengthen and train them more effectively within the academic process, decision making and the development of critical and reflective thinking in tenth semester psychologists in training at the University of Pamplona, it is considered pertinent to strengthen and train them more effectively within

the academic process where teachers really ensure that students are developing these skills through didactic methodologies such as Problem Based Learning. Problem Based Learning whose interest is to know how the student is able to give solutions to real problems and in this way the psychologists in training are able to play their role integrating both hard skills i.e. the theoretical knowledge acquired during the academic training and the soft skills that are essential for an adequate praxis.

Integrate in the curricula, micro-curricula and study plans of the psychology training programmes of HEIs the training in the skills of BEING, competences or soft skills so that the acquisition of this type of skills is encouraged in the development of the subjects.

Implement education and training plans for university teachers in soft skills or competences so that educators are promoters of training not only in technical or hard competences but also in soft competences, the skills of BEING and living together.

Generate soft skills assessment systems to guarantee the effective training of soft skills, in other words, the aim is to apply strategies such as PBL, among others, which not only assess theoretical knowledge but also the personal skills required in the work of the psychologist in the different contexts in which the discipline has developed.

Promote educational research oriented towards the comprehensive training of professionals in training at HEIs, generating knowledge about different pedagogical and didactic strategies that promote humanised professional development that is adaptable to the world of work.

It is for this reason that a proposal is put forward in which teachers can implement a didactic proposal based on John Dewey's problem-based learning model for the training of soft skills in psychologists in training at the University of Pamplona and thus be

able to strengthen the need to train soft skills specific to the role of the psychologist working in the health context, as the absence of these competencies in the curricular content of the psychology programme is evident.

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