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Emerging Methodologies and Humanized Theoretical Learning: An Explanatory Study with Colombian University Students

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Abstract

This work is based on the conviction that university teaching must cultivate mind and sensitivity at the same time. With this in mind, a non-experimental explanatory study was designed that involved all 819 students enrolled in a Psychology program in Montería (Córdoba, Colombia), who answered a Likert-type questionnaire previously validated by experts and with reliability $\alpha = 0.75$. The statistical analysis, carried out in SPSS 20, showed that the incorporation of emerging methodologies – in particular Scrum and Kanban adapted to classroom projects, gamified activities and student-centred dynamics – was associated with appreciable increases in students' perception of flexibility, autonomy and motivation, in addition to facilitating the integration between theory and practice. In light of these findings, guidelines are proposed that combine conceptual rigor with experiential experiences to train professionals in the area capable of working with ethical responsibility and social empathy. In summary, the evidence suggests that emerging methodologies not only enrich theoretical learning, but also humanize the educational experience by promoting collaborative, reflective and sensitive environments to the needs of the contemporary context.

Keywords: Emerging Methodologies, Theoretical Learning, Educational Humanization, University Psychology, Agile Strategies.

Introduction

The Latin American university scene is experiencing a moment of pressing social transformations: the diffusion of digital technologies, protest movements and the emergence of the consequences on mental health of violent and unequal environments cry out for urgent responses. In Colombia, these characteristics assume a particular pattern; higher education institutions, especially in intermediate regions, such as Montería, face shortcomings ranging from the lack of infrastructure and inequalities in access, to lags in the curricular dynamics that still emphasize the expository class and the memory of psychological theories disarticulated from educational realities. Psychology does not escape this diagnosis: the academic offer expands, but the feeling that graduates know theoretically the issues without being able to transform them into socially responsible actions does not cease. Such a divorce between knowing and doing is an ethical parameter in professional training and synergizes with the possibility of instituting practices that are alien to empathy when it comes to accompanying populations in vulnerable situations. Various national studies warn that teaching—despite the transitions to virtual platforms and laboratories—continues to be based on teaching roles focused on the exposure of content in defense of the student's critical and self-reflective participation. At the same time, when innovative practices are bet, such as problem-solving projects or

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gamification practices, substantial increases in motivation and conceptual retention are evident; however, these practices are limited to experiential subjects, without a theoretical-practical-care articulation scheme for the human. Teachers allude to limitations ranging from didactic training to bureaucratization and group size, factors that conspire against the use of certain collaborative and differentiated teaching scenarios. Thus, the promise of emerging methodologies starts with institutional conditions in which systematic adjustments are required before having a sustainable impact on the quality of training.

Against this backdrop, an urgent need arises: to build guidelines that integrate emerging methodologies – project-based learning, gamification, agile dynamics inspired by Scrum and Kanban – to reinforce theoretical understanding and, at the same time, humanize the educational experience. The purpose is not restricted to perfecting academic indicators; aims for future psychologists to develop social sensitivity, ethical judgment and emotional competencies capable of influencing collective well-being. The present study, therefore, asks how to design, implement and validate a model that combines conceptual rigor with experiential experiences, so that the theory is not only understood, but also lived and critically reconstructed in real contexts. This question articulates the objectives of describing, characterizing, identifying and, finally, proposing strategies based on emerging methodologies to prioritize theoretical learning aimed at the humanization of psychological teaching in the Colombian university environment.

The conceptual scaffolding that guides this research is based on the convergence of pedagogical currents and psychological postulates that emphasize the active construction of knowledge. From Piaget's constructivism and Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, it is understood that students elaborate meanings by interacting with their environment and by dialoguing with others; This principle legitimizes the use of project-based learning and virtual communities where theory is reinterpreted in the light of authentic problems. Connectivism, proposed by Siemens and taken up by Adell and Castañeda within the notion of emergent pedagogies, broadens the view by arguing that knowledge is distributed among people, artifacts and digital networks, so that learning implies weaving connections and filtering relevant information in a universe of ubiquitous data. This framework justifies the incorporation of simulators, forums and multimedia resources as extensions of the mind that enhance theoretical understanding.

To these bases are added the principles of agile methodologies adopted from software engineering and transferred to the classroom. Its emphasis on short cycles of planning, implementation, and feedback favors curricular flexibility and continuous improvement, qualities that are especially valuable in programs where scientific advancement and societal needs evolve rapidly. In practice, adapting Scrum or Kanban to learning projects means breaking down complex competencies into manageable tasks, establishing frequent revisions, and promoting horizontal collaboration between students and teachers. Recent research documents significant increases in student autonomy, motivation, and sense of belonging when these dynamics are applied with pedagogical coherence and adequate institutional support.

Finally, the humanist perspective offers the ethical compass of the model: to train professionals who recognize the other as a subject of dignity and not as a simple clinical case. Contemporary authors claim autonomy understood as self-management accompanied by mutual recognition, in which each student learns to deliberate on the social consequences of their intervention and to act responsibly. This vision converges with Freire's idea of education as a practice of freedom and with recent approaches that emphasize the formation of emotional competencies, empathy and critical thinking as transversal axes of psychology. By integrating emerging methodologies

with this humanistic orientation, this study seeks to demonstrate that didactic updating is not limited to incorporating technology or playful dynamics, but requires a commitment to the integral development of the people who learn and to the transformation of the communities they will serve.

Methodology

The study was developed under the positivist paradigm and adopted an explanatory scope, with a non-experimental cross-sectional design, since the intention was to determine the relationship between the incorporation of emerging methodologies and the prioritization of theoretical learning without manipulating variables under controlled conditions. The work was carried out in a Psychology program of a private university located in Montería, department of Córdoba (Colombia). The choice of this context is due to the fact that it represents a region where challenges of educational equity and growing needs for mental health care converge, which requires pedagogical approaches that integrate conceptual foundation and social sensitivity. By framing the research in a real classroom scenario, the understanding of facts as they occur was privileged, respecting the complexity of the interactions of the university training process.

The population consisted of 819 students enrolled between the first and tenth semesters, distributed in two groups per academic cohort (509 in group A and 310 in group B). A census sampling was applied, a criterion that allowed capturing all the voices of the students, since the size was manageable and guaranteed high representativeness. To delimit participation, inclusion requirements were established: belonging to the Psychology program, being academically active and accepting informed consent; while people from other programs, inactive students or those who did not grant authorization were excluded. This strategy favored that the findings reflected the complete reality of the analyzed group, avoiding biases derived from subgroups and recognizing the diversity of training trajectories present in the faculty.

Data collection was carried out through a structured questionnaire of 27 Likert-type items that measured perception of flexibility, autonomy, motivation and theory-practice connection. The instrument was subjected to content validation by three experts, who confirmed the coherence of each statement with the construct of emerging methodologies and with the objectives of the study. The internal reliability, calculated with Cronbach's alpha after a pilot test in an analogous group, reached 0.75, a value that indicates high consistency. The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms, which favored electronic traceability and the obtaining of clean databases. Subsequently, the information was processed in SPSS 20 applying descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency) and categorized scales to interpret the levels of each dimension investigated. Strict ethical principles were observed: confidentiality of records, exclusive use of data for academic purposes and respect for the autonomy of participants, in accordance with national provisions on research with human subjects. These safeguards ensured that the inquiry was carried out in a responsible and transparent manner, which are indispensable elements to sustain the validity and social utility of the results.

Results

The statistical review of the Agile **Methodologies** dimension reveals a widely favorable acceptance among students. Seven out of ten participants place them in the "Fully Effective" or "Effective" ranges, with averages of 41.7% and 49.3%, respectively, in the indicators of flexibility, didactic effectiveness and autonomy. This predominance of positive responses

indicates that the short cycles of planning, execution, and feedback typical of Scrum and Kanban are able to adapt to the diversity of learning rhythms and styles without sacrificing conceptual soundness. Neutrality (8.2%) is mainly concentrated in the perception of flexibility, suggesting that a small group does not yet internalize the advantages of iterative curriculum redesign. Only 2.3% consider flexibility ineffective and no person marks the "Totally Ineffective" option, so resistance to this approach is marginal. The observed pattern confirms the first hypothesis: integrating emerging methodologies favors theoretical appropriation by providing malleable environments where error is transformed into guided learning, in addition to stimulating academic self-governance when tasks are delegated incrementally.

In the Learning **Strategies** dimension — which encompasses technical, methodological and practical procedures — the evaluations are also mostly positive, although with nuances. 48.7% classify the set of strategies as "Effective", while 29.3% rate them as "Fully Effective". It is noteworthy that technical resources obtain the highest frequency of neutrality (35.9%), a figure that doubles that of the methodological and practical sections. This hesitation is related to the variability in the technological mastery of the teaching staff and the need for permanent accompaniment to gauge the difficulty of the activities. However, the negative categories barely reach 2.5% as a whole, which indicates that the unfavorable perception of these tools is residual. When strategies are structured with clear rubrics and articulated with practical demonstrations, the transfer of concepts to the analysis of clinical cases increases palpably, an aspect that is reflected in the improvement of the motivation declared by the students. Therefore, the data support the idea that diversified strategies – provided they are contextualized – dynamize the bridge between theory and practice and reduce the gap between master presentation and applied experience.

Regarding **Student-Centered Learning**, the findings consolidate the previous trend: 50.5% of the people surveyed place it as "Effective" and 39.0% as "Fully Effective" (global average 89.5% acceptance). Dynamic classes obtain the highest proportion of absolute adherence (44.2%), followed by experiential teaching, which combines clinical simulations and community projects to translate psychological constructs into tangible interventions. The teaching material, although well valued, has a neutrality of 15.4%, an indicator that formats and accessibility can still be refined. The general balance shows a weighted average of 86.2% of favorable responses to the three dimensions evaluated, while the sum of negative options does not reach 2%. These results support that the combination of agile methodologies, multimodal strategies and a person-centered approach optimizes theoretical understanding and, at the same time, strengthens ethical and empathic competencies. The positive impact on flexibility, autonomy, and motivation supports the relevance of institutionalizing guidelines that integrate these findings into curricular planning.

Alternative	Flexibility	Efficiency	Autonomy	Average
Fully Effective	38,2 %	42,5 %	44,5 %	41,7 %
Effective	51,3 %	47,6 %	49,0 %	49,3 %
Neutral	8,2 %	10,0 %	6,5 %	8,2 %
Ineffective	2,3 %	0,0 %	0,0 %	0,8 %
Totally Ineffective	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Responses in the Agile Methodologies Dimension

Note. Prepared by the author based on data from the questionnaire applied to 819 students

Dimension	Fully Effective	Effective	Neutral	Ineffective	Totally Ineffective
Agile methodologies	41,7 %	49,3 %	8,2 %	0,8 %	0 %
Learning strategies	29,3 %	48,7 %	19,5 %	2,4 %	0,1 %
Student-centered learning	39,0 %	50,5 %	9,9 %	0,4 %	0,2 %

Table 2: Global Synopsis of Perceptions of the Three Dimensions Evaluated

Note. Averages calculated on the total sample; percentages may not add up to 100% by rounding. Data from the institutional questionnaire

Overall, the quantitative evidence confirms that the emerging methodologies evaluated generate flexible, collaborative, and humanized learning environments, aligned with the objectives of training critical and socially responsible psychologists.

Discussion

The findings confirm that incorporating **agile methodologies** – Scrum and Kanban adapted to the classroom – increases the perception of flexibility, autonomy and student motivation, with quantitative support that exceeds 90% of positive responses. This trend dialogues with the constructivism of Piaget and Vygotsky by situating the student as a constructor of meaning through iterative problem solving, and coincides with the connectivism of Siemens in articulating digital networks that sustain distributed learning. The perceived improvement in self-management coincides with Carnicero et al. (2021), who argue that the division of labor into short cycles fosters critical deliberation and a sense of belonging to the project group. Thus, theory and practice converge in an environment where error ceases to be a penalty and becomes an input for continuous review, which reinforces Murillo's (2007) idea of educational effectiveness as an evolutionary process that transcends specific achievements and attends to the socio-emotional context of students.

In **learning strategies**, the results reveal a particular nuance: although the overall assessment is positive (78% between "Effective" and "Fully Effective"), the technical component concentrates the greatest neutrality (35.9%). This phenomenon suggests that the mere availability of technological resources does not guarantee pedagogical appropriation, as Latorre and Seco (2013) point out when they state that digital tools require coherent didactic mediation to stimulate complex cognitive processes. In fact, neutrality could be interpreted as a call to strengthen teacher training in the design of accessible resources aligned with learning outcomes, preventing innovation from being reduced to instrumental novelty. At the same time, the low proportion of negative perceptions indicates that there is fertile ground where methodological adjustments—for example, interactive guides or participatory rubrics—can turn indeterminacy into enthusiasm without overburdening the teacher.

The **student-centred learning** dimension showed the most homogeneous acceptance (89.5% favourable rating). Dynamic classes and experiential teaching, supported by humanistic theory and Freirean proposals for education as dialogic practice, facilitate the transition from theory to the analysis of real situations, reinforcing empathic skills and ethical judgment. The intermediate assessment of the teaching material (15.4% neutral) shows, however, the need to review the balance between the amount of resources and the students' ability to manage them without

cognitive saturation. These data corroborate Peche and Giraldo (2019), for whom student protagonism requires co-responsibility that combines autonomy with timely guidance. Under this prism, emerging methodologies function as a hinge that unites conceptual rigor with emotional experience, contributing to the training of professionals sensitive to the complexities of the Colombian context.

Even with their contributions, the study has limitations. The application of a self-reported questionnaire can induce social desirability biases; In addition, the cross-sectional design prevents the longitudinal evolution of perceptions from being observed. The neutrality detected in some indicators suggests exploring, in future research, variables such as teaching accompaniment, digital infrastructure, and differences between academic levels. Despite this, the high acceptance of emerging methodologies supports their institutionalization at the curricular level and points to lines of deepening aimed at evaluating the impact on the graduate's performance, emotional regulation, and ethical competencies. In short, the evidence supports that a humanized didactic approach—supported by agile iterations, guided collaboration, and authentic experiences—strengthens the link between theoretical knowledge and social responsibility, an essential horizon for contemporary university psychological training.

Conclusions

Quantitative and qualitative evidence converge in pointing out that the articulated incorporation of agile methodologies, varied didactic resources, and person-centered experiences not only reinforces conceptual assimilation, but also promotes ethical and social dispositions indispensable for contemporary psychological work. The predominance of favorable responses—more than 90% in flexibility, autonomy and motivation—confirms that the short cycles of planning, execution and feedback constitute an environment where error is resignified as a learning opportunity and decision-making is gradually transferred to students. This finding dialogues with the Vygotskian idea of the zone of proximal development: each academic sprint operates as a scaffolding that makes it possible to move from intensive tutoring to self-regulation, so that theoretical understanding is nourished by reflective practice and vice versa.

Likewise, the high acceptance of dynamic classes and experiential teaching (89.5%) highlights the relevance of scenarios that simulate real dilemmas and that require mobilizing content towards situated action. These results reaffirm the potential of connectivism to expand networks of meaning beyond the classroom and, in turn, specify that constructivist rigor continues to be the fabric that sustains the epistemological coherence of the curriculum. When it is observed that seven out of ten teachers show openness to this theoretical-methodological framework, there is room for institutional growth: strengthening teacher training programs in agile design, curation of digital resources and formative evaluation will allow the transition from practices focused on exposure to co-creation pedagogies to crystallize. Overall, the data suggest that the convergence between curricular flexibility, humanistic dialogue and didactic creativity constitutes a solid path for comprehensive literacy that enables future psychologists to critically interpret psychosocial phenomena and to intervene with criteria, empathy and a sense of public responsibility. The results found, although they were taken from a sample of Psychology students, empirical evidence suggests that they can be applied to other academic programs with similar contextual characteristics.

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