
DYSLEXIA IN HIGH PERFORMERS – A STUDY ACROSS 4 DEGREE DISCIPLINES

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Background: Dyslexia is a reduced reading comprehension despite normal IQ. This may affect sufferers' ability to be competitive in high end degrees. We investigated the prevalence of dyslexics in 4 degree disciplines.

Method: 4 cohorts were analysed consisting of Engineering, Medical, Law, and Dentistry students. These were all students drawn from UK universities. They were polled, voluntarily through an online resource. Qualitative and Quantitative data was collected and analysed. Due to data collection being by way of a poll, ethical approval was not required

Results: 18 Engineering, 46 Medical, 22 Law and 11 Dentistry students responded. Of these 5/18 (28%) Engineering students classified themselves as dyslexic in comparison to 7/46 (15%) Medical students, 1/22 (5%) Law students and 1/11 (9%) of Dentistry students. Qualitative analysis showed the importance of teachers in the pre university years. Students felt they benefited from extra time in exams and that this 'leveled the playing field'.

This study is limited by self-reporting of dyslexia, and the potential for respondent empathy to the subject.

Discussion: This study highlights a larger than previously reported prevalence of dyslexia in high performing disciplines, markedly Engineering. Other studies have focused on dyslexics IQ-reading gap, and our results support this, with Law – a literature intensive subject, actually having the lowest prevalence. Engineering focusses on mathematic methods, and the increased dyslexic prevalence suggests they are more comfortable with subjects not focused on reading.