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Systematic Reviews, Meta-Analyses, and Scoping Reviews in Spanish Education Journals: A Scoping Umbrella Review Protocol

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. No financial, institutional, or personal relationships have influenced the development of this protocol. The study is conducted independently and aims to ensure transparency, methodological rigor, and objectivity throughout all stages.

Review Stage at time of this submission - Preliminary searches.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

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Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 17 April 2026 and was last updated on 17 April 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective Using the PICo framework, this scoping umbrella review (overview of reviews with a scoping approach) aims to characterize systematic reviews (SRs), scoping reviews (ScRs), and meta-analyses (MAs) published in Spanish education journals indexed in SSCI between 2015 and 2025.
- Population (P): Systematic reviews, scoping reviews, and meta-analyses within the field of education.
- Interest (I): Their characteristics, themes, methodological approaches, transparency, quality, and main findings.
- Context (Co): Spanish high-impact journals indexed in the Education & Educational Research category of SSCI.

General review question:
- What is the state of synthesis research (SRs, ScRs, and MAs) published in high-impact Spanish education journals?

Specific objectives:
- Describe publication trends and bibliographic features (year, language, quartile, authorship).
- Identify the educational themes, populations, and contexts addressed.
- Examine methodological approaches, protocols, reporting standards, and tools used (e.g., PRISMA, AMSTAR, ROBIS).
- Assess transparency in search, selection, and extraction processes.
- Explore management of duplicates, reviewer participation, and resolution of discrepancies.
- Analyze analysis techniques used (qualitative, quantitative, mixed).
- Identify practices of transparency, data availability, and open materials.

- Summarize conclusions, limitations, and recommendations of the included reviews.

Background The volume of systematic reviews, scoping reviews, and meta-analyses in education has increased substantially in the last decade. This growth, together with the expansion of evidence-informed educational practice, requires researchers to synthesize information efficiently. High-impact Spanish journals in education have also experienced a rise in these synthesis studies, yet no umbrella review has mapped their collective characteristics, methodological rigor, and thematic distribution.

This scoping umbrella review addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive overview of evidence synthesis in Spanish education journals indexed in SSCI. Mapping the characteristics of these reviews will facilitate understanding of the evolution of synthesis research, thematic concentrations, methodological practices, and transparency standards in the Spanish educational research ecosystem. This overview will also support researchers and policymakers in identifying strengths, limitations, and research gaps.

Rationale An umbrella review with a scoping approach is appropriate because the aim is not to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions but to map and describe the characteristics, scope, and transparency of SRs, ScRs, and MAs published in Spanish SSCI-indexed journals. This design allows for a broad and flexible synthesis of evidence and is especially useful in fields with heterogeneous topics, populations, and methodologies, such as education. By reviewing secondary studies rather than primary research, this protocol responds to the need for higher-level synthesis that supports decision-making and offers a panoramic understanding of research practices in the field.

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis The scoping umbrella review will include studies retrieved from Web of Science (SSCI, Education & Educational Research category). Searches will be conducted in titles, abstracts, and indexing fields using Boolean operators and controlled/uncontrolled terms for systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and scoping reviews in English and Spanish.

Search equation (preferred): ("systematic review" OR "systematic reviews" OR "revisión sistemática" OR "revisiones sistemáticas" OR "revision sistematica" OR "revisiones sistematicas" OR "metaanalysis" OR "meta-analyses" OR "meta analysis" OR "meta analyses" OR "meta-análisis" OR "metaanálisis" OR "meta analisis" OR metaanalisis OR (meta* NEAR/1 analy*) OR "scoping review" OR "scoping reviews" OR "revisión de alcance" OR "revisiones de alcance" OR "revision de alcance" OR "mapping review" OR "revisión de mapeo")

Publication years: 2015–2025

Languages: English and Spanish

Journals included: International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education; Revista de Psicodidáctica; Educación XX1; RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia; Porta Linguarum; Revista de Educación; Psicología Educativa; Enseñanza de las Ciencias; Revista Española de Pedagogía.

Data synthesis will combine descriptive statistics, frequency tables, figures, and thematic/narrative synthesis aligned with scoping methodologies.

Eligibility criteria Inclusion criteria:
- Study type: SRs, ScRs, and MAs.
- Language: Spanish or English.
- Source: Spanish education journals indexed in SSCI with JIF.
- Discipline: Education & Educational Research.
- Time frame: 2015–2025.

Exclusion criteria:
- Primary studies.
- Reviews not published in SSCI-indexed Spanish journals.
- Editorials, commentaries, letters, protocols without full review.

Source of evidence screening and selection Four phases will be conducted: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.
Two independent reviewers will screen titles/abstracts and full texts. Discrepancies will be resolved through consensus or a third reviewer. Duplicates will be removed using a reference manager. Covidence will be used to support screening and eligibility phases. The process will be reported using a PRISMA flow diagram adapted for umbrella reviews.

Data management Data extraction will be performed independently by two reviewers using a structured tool (IED-MRE) containing 68 items across seven dimensions. A pilot test will ensure consistency. Extracted data will be stored in Excel/

Sheets and maintained securely. Missing information will be coded as “NA.”

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence Data will be summarized using descriptive statistics, tables, and frequencies. Qualitative data will undergo thematic or narrative synthesis. Findings will address the review questions, focusing on methodological characteristics, transparency practices, and thematic patterns in synthesis studies.

Presentation of the results Results will be presented in tables summarizing authors, year, objectives, type of review, themes, sample characteristics, number of included studies, methodological tools, and key findings. Figures and charts will illustrate distributions (e.g., years, themes, methodologies). An initial example of a results table structure is included in the protocol.

Language restriction English and Spanish.

Country(ies) involved Spain.

Other relevant information None at this stage.

Keywords Systematic reviews; meta-analyses; scoping reviews; umbrella review; education; Spain; SSCI journals.

Dissemination plans Results will be disseminated through publication in a peer-reviewed journal, presentations at national and international conferences, and deposit in an open institutional repository. The findings will support methodological improvements, transparency, and evidence-informed educational research.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Francisco José Rubio Hernández - He designed and drafted the protocol and the scoping meta-review, including the rationale, research questions and objectives, search and selection strategy, quality and bias assessment guidelines, data extraction procedures (Education Meta-Review Extraction Instrument), data synthesis, and evaluation of publication and reporting biases.
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Author 2 - Adoración Díaz López - Contributed to protocol design, methodological decisions, and refinement of eligibility criteria.
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Author 3 - Inmaculada Pedraza Navarro - Contributed to the design of the protocol, particularly regarding the extraction tool, the screening strategy, and the refinement of the research questions and objectives.
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Author 4 - Guiomar Merodio Alonso - Provided support in protocol design and methodological guidance. Contributed significantly to improving the data extraction instrument and to refining the Web of Science search guidance in accordance with the established search equation.
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