

**SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION:
A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW**

***A PRODUÇÃO CIENTÍFICA SOBRE SAÚDE MENTAL E ENSINO SUPERIOR: UMA
REVISÃO BIBLIOGRÁFICA***

***PRODUCCIÓN CIENTÍFICA SOBRE SALUD MENTAL Y EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR:
UMA REVISIÓN BIBLIOGRÁFICA***



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ABSTRACT: Mental health within the university context is gaining more and more notoriety and importance due to the high rates of mental illness. This article is based on an excerpt from the dissertation of the postgraduate program of the Professional Master's in Education and aims to discuss psychological suffering in the university context and the mental health policies offered by the Federal University of Southern Minas Gerais. As a methodology, bibliographical research was carried out, with a survey of works on the topic researched through bibliographical research with the CAPES, SciELO, BDTD, and Educ@ databases. With the mapping, a total of 272 works were found, distributed in 145 articles and 127 theses and dissertations. The results of the analyzed works show that there is no unanimity in the concepts, but despite this, publications and scientific works have demonstrated the importance and role of mental health in the University context.

KEYWORDS: Mental health. University environment. University education. Student assistance.

RESUMO: *A saúde mental dentro do contexto universitário ganha cada vez mais notoriedade e importância devido aos altos índices de acometimento psíquico. Este artigo é parte de uma dissertação de Mestrado Profissional em Educação que teve como objetivo discutir o sofrimento psíquico no contexto universitário e as políticas em saúde mental oferecidas por uma Universidade Federal do Sul de Minas Gerais. Enquanto metodologia realizou-se de uma pesquisa bibliográfica, com o levantamento de trabalhos sobre o tema pesquisado nas bases de dados da CAPES, SciELO, BDTD e Educ@. Com o mapeamento foram encontrados um total de 272 trabalhos, distribuídos em 145 artigos e 127 teses e dissertações. Os resultados dos trabalhos analisados mostram que não existe uma unanimidade nos conceitos, apesar disso, as publicações e trabalhos científicos vêm demonstrando a importância e o papel da saúde mental no contexto Universitário e o interesse de pesquisadores por esta área de estudo.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Saúde mental. Ambiente Universitário. Ensino Superior. Assistência estudantil.*

RESUMEN: *La salud mental dentro del contexto universitario está ganando cada vez más notoriedad e importancia debido a los altos índices de enfermedad mental. Este artículo se basa en un extracto de la disertación del programa de posgrado de la Maestría Profesional en Educación y tuvo como objetivo discutir el sufrimiento psicológico en el contexto universitario y las políticas de salud mental ofrecidas por una Universidad Federal del Sur de Minas Gerais. Como metodología se realizó una investigación bibliográfica, con levantamiento de trabajos sobre el tema investigado a través de búsqueda bibliográfica con las bases de datos CAPES, SciELO, BDTD y Educ@. Con el mapeo se encontraron un total de 272 trabajos, distribuidos en 145 artículos y 127 tesis y disertaciones. Los resultados de los trabajos analizados muestran que no existe unanimidad en los conceptos, pero a pesar de ello, publicaciones y trabajos científicos han demostrado la importancia y el papel de la salud mental en el contexto universitario.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Salud mental. Entorno universitario. Enseñanza superior. Asistencia al estudiante.*

Introduction

It is estimated that currently there are around 800,000 people who take their own lives each year, with a global mortality rate of 10.7 per 100,000 inhabitants (World Health Organization, 2019). This statistic becomes more alarming when considering that the rate is higher among young people aged 15 to 29 years, a period when they are preparing to enter higher education, pursuing undergraduate or graduate studies, or preparing for the workforce.

In this scenario, there is a significant increase in the number of suicidal episodes and psychological distress emerging within universities. Institutions of higher education are supposed to be places for human development and social emancipation through education. As mentioned by Almeida, Soares, and Ferreira (2014), university settings encompass academic, social, personal, and vocational domains. Unfortunately, cases of hazing, humiliation, and abuse among peers—whether freshmen and seniors or between professors and students—can occur in university environments. These practices are harmful and can have significant impacts on mental health, academic performance, and, consequently, the quality of life of those involved. Addressing these issues is essential for promoting a safer university environment, given the recognition that universities are not always welcoming.

This article presents a section of a dissertation defended in the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Lavras (UFLA), which aimed to discuss psychological distress in the university context and the mental health policies offered by a Federal University in the South of Minas Gerais.

Raising this issue in the university context and the role of educational public policies is pertinent for pedagogical, political, and social aspects, as it allows us to understand the specificity of education and psychology when working with university students. It acknowledges the responsibility of the university institution in seeking knowledge acquisition and, as a result, producing relevant and high-quality outcomes, while refusing to accept that this journey leads to severe mental disorders.

To achieve this, we initially conducted a bibliographic survey based on publications from the last 10 years (2010-2020). The materials were selected through a combination of descriptors related to the topic from databases such as CAPES, BDTD, *Educ@*, Google Scholar, and SciELO. Subsequently, they were filtered using criteria relevant to the research theme. This article aims to present the results of this survey.

This work aims to present the results of bibliographic research based on scientific productions related to the theme of mental health in the university context. The objective was

to investigate the state of the art from a theoretical perspective of other studies and research already produced regarding the object of study in question.

Materials and Methods

In order to gather scientific productions related to the research theme, a bibliographic survey was conducted by collecting materials published in the last 10 years. This timeframe was chosen based on the research goals and the temporal guideline of decree no. 7,234, dated July 19, 2010, which establishes the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES). The databases searched included the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), the Educ@ Portal for online education publications by *Fundação Carlos Chagas*, the Periodicals Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), Google Scholar, and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD).

Following the data collection procedures, we proceeded with the description of the works, detailing their objectives, methodology, and, finally, the results. Works that showed similarity in any of these aspects were grouped together, thus allowing us to identify convergences and divergences among the studies. The categories analyzed were "university environment/university," "psychological distress," and "mental health/institutional policies."

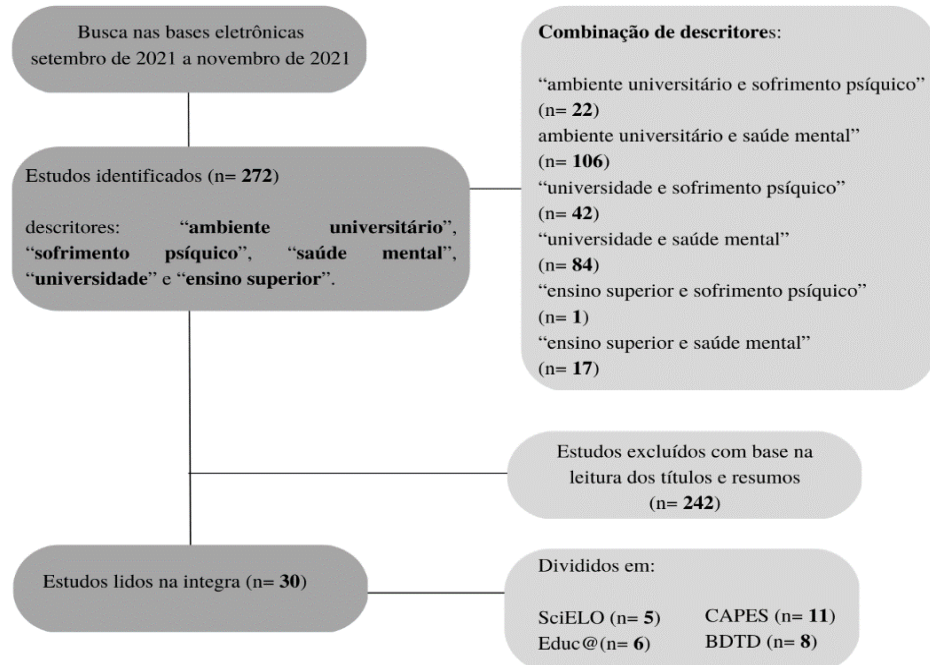
Results

The following descriptors were considered: "university environment," "psychological distress," "mental health," "university," and "higher education." A total of 272 published works were initially retrieved. To obtain a representative result of the publications, a combination of descriptors was necessary to ensure delimitation in the search related to the researched theme. Below, we detail the outcomes obtained through the association of descriptors.

When using the terms "university environment and psychological distress," a total of 22 works were found. For the terms "university environment and mental health," 106 works were found. For "university and psychological distress," 42 works were found. Searching for "university and mental health" yielded a total of 84 articles. Only 1 work was found for "higher education and psychological distress." For "higher education and mental health," a total of 17 works were found. From this material, a filtering process was conducted to select works that specifically addressed the researched theme. Publications were initially screened based on title

and subsequently on abstract, resulting in the selection of 30 relevant works, as depicted in the flowchart below:

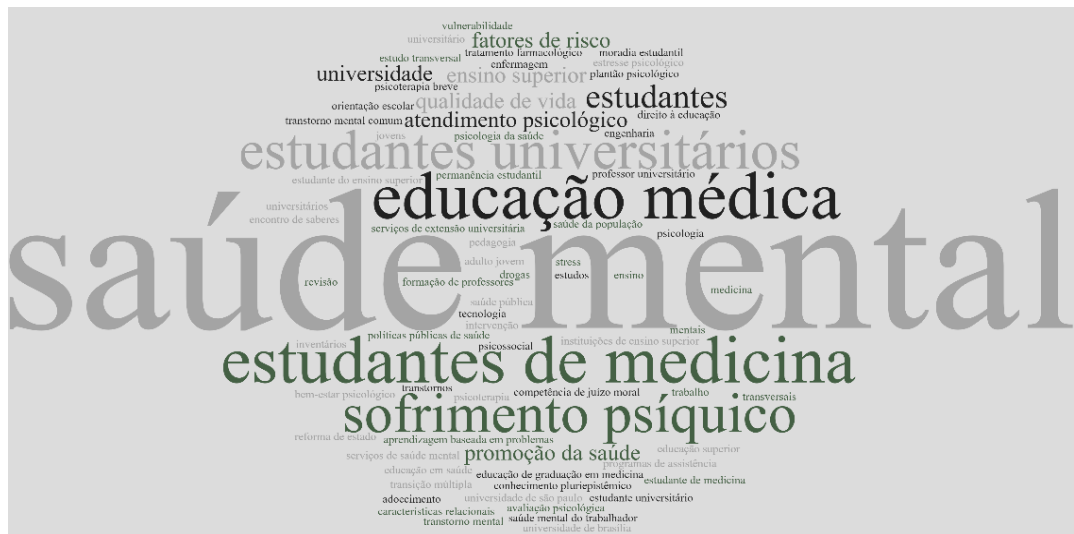
Figure 1 – Flowchart of the stages of the study review process



Source: Authors (2021).

Analyzing the keywords from the 30 publications, we found 76 words or word combinations. It is possible to observe the prevalence of the following words: mental health with a frequency of 18 occurrences in the texts (15.3%); followed by medical education with 6 mentions (5.1%); medical students with 6 mentions (5.1%); university students with 5 mentions (4.2%); psychological distress also with 5 mentions (4.2%); students with 3 mentions (2.5%); psychological counseling, higher education, risk factors, health promotion, quality of life, university with 2 mentions each (1.7% each); the remaining 64 words had only 1 mention each (0.8% each), as highlighted in the word cloud presented in Figure 1 below:

Figure 2 – Highlighted keywords from the publications depicted in a word cloud



Source: Authors (2021).

From the study of keywords present in the papers, it is observed that the authors discuss issues related to mental health most frequently, highlighted eighteen times in the texts; followed by medical education with six mentions; medical students with six results, university students with five; and psychological distress also with five results.

The next step involved organizing the publications into a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel), with data sorted into tables indicating the productions (year, type of publication, publication venue, authorship, title of the work, and references). Subsequently, another document (Microsoft Word) containing a reading sheet gathered production indicators (identification, objective, methodology, data collection procedures, and research results). This analysis sheet allowed the grouping of selected works in the bibliographic research, highlighting the articles' objectives, methodology, and research outcomes.

Through the mapping of publications, a total of 272 works were found, distributed as 145 articles and 127 theses and dissertations. From this total, we selected, based on titles and abstracts, those studies directly related to the topic of interest, resulting in 30 works, comprising 21 scientific articles, 8 dissertations, and 1 thesis, as shown in Table 1. The results indicate that the works focused predominantly on the years 2019 and 2020, with six publications each, followed by the years 2016, with four publications, 2017 with three publications, and 2011 and 2018, with two publications each. The remaining years (2004, 2005, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015) each had one publication.

The works organized in spreadsheets with indicators of productions are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Selection of scientific productions published on the topic (2004-2020)

YEAR	TYPE	PUBLICATION PLACE	DATA BASE	AUTHORITY	JOB TITLE
2004	Article	<i>Estudo em psicologia</i>	Capes	Maria Luisa Sandoval Schmidt	<i>Plantão psicológico, universidade pública e política de saúde mental</i>
2005	Article	<i>Psicologia: ciência e profissão</i>	Capes	Cerchiari, Ednéia Albino Nunes; Caetano, Dorgival; Faccenda, Odival	<i>Utilização do serviço de saúde mental em uma universidade pública</i>
2006	Article	<i>Revista eletrônica de enfermagem</i>	Capes	Luciane Prado Kantorski; Leandro Barbosa De Pinho; Toyoko Saeki; Maria Conceição Bernardo De Mello E Souza	<i>Expectativas de docentes sobre o ensino do cuidado em saúde mental</i>
2011	Article	<i>Estudo em psicologia campinas</i>	Capes	Cleuser Maria Campos Osse, Ileno Izidio Da Costa	<i>Saúde mental e qualidade de vida na moradia estudantil da universidade de Brasília</i>
2011	Dissertation	Not included	BDTD	Silva, Rachel Rubin Da	<i>O perfil de saúde de estudantes universitários: um estudo sob o enfoque da psicologia da saúde</i>
2012	Article	<i>Revista iberoamericana de educación superior</i>	SciELO	Dias, Isabel Simões	<i>Promover a saúde no ensino superior: o exemplo do ppcppe</i>
2013	Dissertation	<i>Fundação edson queiroz, universidade de fortaleza – unifor. escola de pós-graduação em direito – ppgd, mestrado em direito constitucional</i>	BDTD	Osse, Cleuser Maria Campos	<i>Saúde mental de universitários e serviços de assistência estudantil: estudo multiaxial em uma universidade brasileira</i>

2014	Article	<i>Revista brasileira de educação médica</i>	Educ@	Andrade, João Brainer Clares De et al.	<i>Contexto de formação e sofrimento psíquico de estudantes de medicina</i>
2015	Article	<i>Colloquium humanarum</i>	Capes	Kelly Cristina Tesche Rozendo, Carmen Lúcia Dias	<i>Possibilidades de sofrimento psíquico do professor universitário de uma licenciatura</i>
2016	Article	Unpublished	Capes	Maria José Carvalho Nogueira	<i>A saúde mental em estudantes do ensino superior. Relação com o gênero, nível socioeconômico e os comportamentos de saúde</i>
2016	Article	<i>Revista brasileira de educação médica</i>	Scielo	Tenório, Leila Pereira; Argolo, Vanessa Araújo; Sá, Helena Pinho De; Melo, Enaldo Vieira De; Costa, Edméa Fontes De Oliva.	<i>Saúde mental de estudantes de escolas médicas com diferentes modelos de ensino</i>
2016	Article	<i>Psicologia: ciência e profissão,</i>	Scielo	Andrade, Antonio Dos Santos; Tiraboschi, Gabriel Arantes; Antunes, Natália Amaral; Viana, Paulo Vinícius Bachette Alves; Zanoto, Pedro Alves; Curilla, Rafael Trebi	<i>Vivências acadêmicas e sofrimento psíquico de estudantes de psicologia</i>
2016	Article	<i>Psic. Da ed.</i>	Educ@	Lameu, Joelma Do Nascimento, Salazar, Thiene Lívio And Souza, Wanderson Fernandes	<i>Prevalência de sintomas de stress entre graduandos de uma universidade pública</i>
2017	Article	<i>Ciência & saúde coletiva</i>	Capes	Karen Mendes Graner, Ana Teresa De Abreu Ramos Cerqueira	<i>Revisão integrativa: sofrimento psíquico em estudantes universitários e fatores associados</i>

2017	Doctoral thesis	Unpublished	Capes	Maria José Carvalho Nogueira	<i>Saúde mental em estudantes do ensino superior: fatores protetores e fatores de vulnerabilidade</i>
2017	Dissertation	Not included	BDTD	Bezerra, João Ernesto Moura Sobreira	<i>Saúde mental de estudantes dos cursos de graduação em engenharia: experiências psicoemocionais na universidade</i>
2018	Dissertation	Not included	BDTD	Soraya Da Silva Trajano	<i>Aspectos psicossociais, consumo de drogas e transtorno mental comum em ambiente universitário</i>
2018	Dissertation	<i>Biblioteca Digital USP</i>	BDTD	Ariana Celis Alcantara	<i>Trabalho, adoecimento e saúde mental na universidade de São Paulo</i>
2019	Article	<i>Ciência & saúde coletiva</i>	Capes	Thiago Ferreira De Sousa, Mathias Roberto Loch, Alexandre Justo De Oliveira Lima, Dayana Chaves Franco, Aline Rodrigues Barbosa	<i>Concorrência de fatores de risco à saúde em universitários de uma instituição de ensino superior brasileira</i>
2019	Article	<i>Revista sociedade e estado</i>	Capes	José Jorge De Carvalho, Makota Kidoiale, Emílio Nolasco De Carvalho, Samira Lima Da Costa	<i>Sofrimento psíquico na universidade, psicossociologia e encontro de saberes</i>
2019	Dissertation	<i>Arquivos de ciências da saúde</i>	BDTD	Oikawa, Fabiana Midori	<i>Implicações do contexto universitário na saúde mental dos estudantes</i>

2019	Dissertation	Not included	BDTD	Freitas, Maria Rosalda Pinheiro	<i>Os direitos à saúde mental e o direito à educação do discente nas instituições de ensino superior: o caso do programa de apoio psicopedagógico na universidade de fortaleza</i>
2019	Article	<i>Revista brasileira de educação médica</i>	Educ@	Ribeiro, Maria Mônica Freitas, Melo, Jordan Diego Costa And Rocha, Andreia Maria Camargos	<i>Avaliação da demanda preliminar de atendimento dirigida pelo aluno ao núcleo de apoio psicopedagógico ao estudante da faculdade de medicina (napem) da universidade federal de minas gerais.</i>
2019	Article	<i>Revista brasileira de educação médica</i>	Educ@	Dias, Lineker Fernandes et al.	<i>Promoção da saúde: coerência nas estratégias de ensino-aprendizagem</i>
2020	Article	<i>Colloquium humanarum</i>	Capes	Luciana Marolla Garcia, Vera Lucia Messias Fialho Capellini, Verônica Lima Dos Reis	<i>Saúde mental na universidade: a perspectiva de universitários da permanência estudantil</i>
2020	Article	<i>Psico-usf</i>	SciELO	Marília Guimarães Leal Jardim, Tathyane Silva Castro, Carla Fernanda Ferreira-Rodrigues	<i>Sintomatologia depressiva, estresse e ansiedade em universitários</i>
2020	Article	<i>Revista brasileira de educação médica</i>	SciELO	Rocha, Andreia Maria Camargos; Carvalho, Maria Bernadete De; Cypriano, Cristina Petersen; Ribeir, Maria Mônica Freitas.	<i>Tratamento psíquico prévio ao ingresso na universidade experiência de um serviço de apoio ao estudante</i>
2020	Dissertation	<i>Repositório Institucional UNESP</i>	BDTD	Souza, João Paulo Pereira De	<i>Saúde mental de universitários: relação entre transtorno mental comum e competência moral</i>

2020	Article	<i>Revista brasileira de educação médica</i>	Educ@	Silva, Carlos Emanuel Chaves Da <i>et al.</i>	<i>Saúde mental de alunos de medicina submetidos à aprendizagem baseada em problemas: revisão sistemática da literatura.</i>
2020	Article	<i>Revista brasileira de educação médica</i>	Educ@	Silva, Raily Crisóstomo, Pereira, Alexandre De Araújo And Moura, Eliane Perlatto	<i>Qualidade de vida e transtornos mentais menores dos estudantes de medicina do centro universitário de caratinga (unec)</i>

Source: Authors (2021).

Regarding the authors of the productions, we looked for those who appear most frequently, and as shown in Table 1, three authors had two publications each: Maria José Carvalho Nogueira (University of Lisbon), Andreia Maria Camargos Carvalho (UFMG), and Maria Mônica Freitas (UFMG).

When examining the most cited authors as theoretical references in the discussions present in the analyzed articles, those with two cited publications are prominently: Carmita Helena Najjar Abdo (UPS), Joel Sales Giglio (UNICAMP), Miriam Abreu Albuquerque (FUNEC), Max André dos Santos (UFMG), Maria Cristina Pereira Lima (UNESP), Mariana de Souza Domingues (UNESP), and Ana Teresa de Abreu Ramos Cerqueira (UNESP). Authors with three cited publications include: Rosely Moralez de Figueiredo (UFSCar), Cleuser Maria Campos Osse (UnB), Heidi Miriam Bertolucci Coelho (UNESP), and Rodrigo Sanches Peres (USP). Authors with eight cited publications are: Dorgival Caetano (UNICAMP), Ednéia Albino Nunes Cerchiari (UEMS). The author with the highest number of cited publications is Odival Faccenda (UEMS), who has nine citations.

Discussion

According to Minayo *et al.* (2002) data analysis initially focuses on organizing the data found, categorizing them, and organizing them into themes that show parity in order to identify patterns. Based on the procedures of describing the works and detailing their objectives, methodology, and results, we will now present a brief content analysis of these works. The presentation of this material aims to optimize understanding without delving into detailed conceptual aspects.

In this regard, we propose to present how the researched topic is addressed in the literature. With the research purpose in mind, we will address three aspects that we consider

central to a comprehensive and integral understanding of the subject: "university environment," "psychological distress," and "university mental health policies."

Conceptualization of the University Environment

Entering university is part of the dream of the majority of Brazilians; it is within the university environment that we experience significant and meaningful moments. Rocha *et al.* (2020) point out that the discussion on this topic has been catalyzed by public debate, and media coverage has heightened social sensitivity regarding the increasing demands placed on mental health professionals within the university environment.

According to Almeida, Soares, and Ferreira (2014), within this context, we find not only the academic domain but also the social, personal, and vocational domains. Similarly, Garcia *et al.* (2020) contribute to the understanding that the university environment encompasses personal and social domains. According to Graner and Cerqueira (2019a), students within the university context undergo biological, psychological, and social changes during their academic lives. It is in the university setting that academic experiences unfold. Andrade *et al.* (2016) introduce the term "academic experience" in the literature of psychology applied to higher education, referring to a comprehensive set of issues related to university experiences within the university environment that reflect student performance and success.

Entry into the university environment marks a transitional moment. According to Lameu (2016), entering the university environment represents an important and decisive stage of life, which can potentially be stressful, qualifying as a factor that requires adaptation and may affect the quality of life. Andrade *et al.* (2014), in an attempt to understand the construction of mental suffering subjectivity, highlight the transitional space from the pedagogical model of secondary education to the undergraduate pedagogical model. According to Da Silva (2021), entering the university environment intensifies the student's pace of life, whether due to increased study hours, geographic distance from the family nucleus in some cases, external pressures from society and the institution, and internal pressures such as feelings of disappointment, irritability, worry, and impatience regarding graduation.

Discussing the concept of quality of life, Silva (2020) notes that there is no consensus in the literature regarding the quality of life of academics. However, Da Silva (2021) demonstrates that the university environment involves norms, methodologies, groups, and new people, requiring professional and personal skills and competencies from students. This

environment enables new opportunities and reconfigurations of social interaction and serves as a space for both positive and negative impacts (Da Silva, 2021).

Psychological Distress: Convergences and Unifications

According to Lameu *et al.* (2016), when considering stress, it is necessary to revisit the concept of "stressor," which refers to any event that requires the organism to adapt, whether positive or negative, internal or external. The university environment can be stressful when there are no norms facilitating the healthy development of affective bonds, effective communication between students and teachers, parents and family members, and social and environmental relationships.

Lameu (2016) identifies several types of stressors within the university environment. External stressors include evaluative activities, deadlines, teaching methodologies, aspects related to living arrangements, among others. Internal stressors involve difficulties with assertiveness, relationship inadequacies, issues related to self-esteem, among others. According to the same author, students in the university environment face uncertainties inherent in their chosen professional path, adaptation to new living arrangements, and separation from parental support. In line with this perspective, Jardim (2020) asserts that within the literature, authors recognize that entering and leaving university life exacerbates psychological illness.

Therefore, stress, as described by Lameu (2016), can manifest throughout undergraduate studies, from the initial adjustment phase to new relationships with faculty and peers, fulfilling responsibilities, undergoing evaluations, cognitive fatigue, and the desire to complete the academic period, among other factors.

According to Figueiredo *et al.* (2014), the likelihood of developing mental health issues in early adulthood, particularly during the university years, is higher. Jardim (2020) argues that the literature discusses the origins of the high prevalence of mental distress among student populations, attributing it to the university environment being a time of transformation and transition, requiring students to adapt to new teaching and learning methods, and new emotional and relational configurations. According to Jardim (2020), the added demands can lead to insecurities and conflicts, resulting in anxiety, stress, and depression.

The literature provides a possible explanation for this high prevalence. Initially, entering university is a period that demands a high level of adaptation and flexibility from students. According to Jardim *et al.* (2020a), students must assimilate new teaching and learning

methods, during which new affective configurations, such as forming new social bonds, are established

Segundo Jardim *et al.* (2020a) also point out that students tend to manifest some form of mental disorder during their academic life, with anxiety being the most common. We believe that, as previously mentioned, the university environment brings about changes and mental stressors inherent in the educational phenomenon; however, we also understand that it is within this environment that the maturation process occurs. Regarding the concept of maturation, we emphasize that we do not interpret it solely as a biological substrate.

As argued by Kantorski *et al.* (2006), academic spaces initiate the humanization of care through a process of action-reflection-action. These spaces are significant as they encourage students to consider their possibilities, needs, and particularities. In this sense, educators play a crucial role in integrating students into this context. According to Garcia *et al.* (2020), the outcomes of the learning process encompass the interrelation of the student's personal issues, including organic, cognitive, affective, and motivational factors, as well as factors related to family and social spheres, pedagogical strategies, and governmental decrees guiding education.

Beyond students, Rozendo and Dias (2014) caution that new work models within university contexts can fuel exhaustion and illness, posing risks to the physical and mental health of workers. They note a lack of sufficient literature on this specific aspect concerning workers in this context. According to Graner *et al.* (2019), research has shown that students with greater engagement in academic activities may experience higher levels of mental health. It has also been observed that students' perceptions of their experiences can influence their sense of well-being.

Thus far, it is evident that issues related to mental health within the university environment are emerging themes and constitute a public health concern. Despite their significance, Dias (2006) asserts that programs of this nature targeting young adults in higher education remain scarce.

University Mental Health Assistance Policies

According to Andrade *et al.* (2014) it is the role of universities to ensure that psychological support services are cohesive and integrated with educational plans. Dias (2012) asserts that the implementation of such programs results in a decrease in the intensity and symptoms of depression among students who participate, thereby serving as an essential

instrument in promoting mental health. Thus, in accordance with Tenório's (2016) understanding, we deduce that universities are tasked with continually engaging in reflections that lead to a heightened awareness of their role in promoting, preventing, and caring for students' mental health.

In this regard, Andrade *et al.* (2014) enrich the discussion by stating that universities should actively intervene in providing psycho-pedagogical support services to recognize, map, and evaluate stressors. This enhances teaching quality and pedagogical improvement for smoother transitions between different periods and cycles. According to Garcia *et al.* (2020) it is the social responsibility of universities to create strategies that facilitate the integration of students, ensuring their persistence until course completion.

To illustrate this point, reference can be made to Dias's (2012) perspective, which considers that promoting mental health within the university environment through programs that equip students with tools to identify risk behaviors related to psychological distress has spurred global movements and efforts.

Final considerations

Over time, issues related to mental health conditions have increasingly come into focus, and access to information has demystified many prejudices regarding the subject. Stigmatization and labeling no longer fit into our relationships. Being in a condition of psychological distress or psychopathological state should not be a cause for embarrassment. Finding oneself in a state of psychological distress does not necessarily imply an inability to lead a meaningful life or pursue higher education. However, the likelihood of experiencing mental disorders in early adulthood, particularly during the university years, is high.

Regarding the bibliographic research presented in this article, it is noted that the vast majority of works published from 2010 to 2020 are linked to the health sciences and focused mainly on 2019 and 2020. This highlights that over time, the topic has increasingly become a focal point of scientific investigation, gaining greater relevance and recognition.

The literature found in the research provides a potential explanation for this significant prevalence. Initially, entry into university constitutes a period that demands a high degree of adaptation and flexibility from students. Another essential aspect demonstrated by the research is that students with greater engagement in academic activities may represent one of the variables associated with higher levels of mental health. Furthermore, it was observed that

students' perceptions of their educational and personal experiences can influence their sense of well-being.

Regarding the concept of quality of life, it is noted that there is no consensus in the literature data on the quality of life of academics. However, it is evident that the university environment offers norms, methodologies, and social groups, demanding professional and personal skills and competencies from students. This environment provides new opportunities and reconfigurations in social interaction, constituting a space with both positive and negative impacts.

In the university context, we encounter various external stressors, such as assessment activities, deadlines, methodologies adopted by professors, and housing-related aspects. Additionally, there are internal stressors, including difficulties with assertiveness, social relationship inadequacies, and factors related to self-esteem, among others. Within this environment, university students face inherent uncertainties related to career choices, national economic conditions, adaptation to new living arrangements, and separation from parental support. Literature acknowledges that entry into and departure from the university environment can exacerbate mental health issues.

It is recognized that universities have a role in integrating psychological support services into educational plans. The implementation of these programs reduces depressive symptoms in students, serving as a significant tool in health promotion. Institutions should actively intervene in providing psychopedagogical services to recognize, map, and evaluate stress-inducing elements, thereby enhancing teaching quality and pedagogical improvement for smoother academic transitions. Additionally, universities have a social responsibility to create strategies that facilitate student integration, ensuring their persistence until course completion.

In summary, the findings of the analyzed studies indicate that there is no consensus on concepts. Nevertheless, scientific publications and studies continue to demonstrate the importance and role of universities in developing educational public policies aimed at the university community, focusing on mental health promotion and prevention.

Finally, we emphasize that this research is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive. On the contrary, we acknowledge the need for ongoing studies and improvements on how universities can act as agents of transformation and social empowerment, particularly concerning the mental health of students. We understand that mental health is a public health issue, and in this regard, universities could play an extremely important role in addressing the

needs of individuals experiencing psychological distress with a particular focus on ethics of care.

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