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Psychosocial support and academic experiences of university students

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The university population has increasingly sought support to face the psychosocial difficulties experienced in Higher Education. Academic experiences; mental illness; socioeconomic and educational conditions; and the current COVID-19 pandemic may change the perceptions of security, comfort and student belonging to the university. It is important that these institutions enable students to experience this phase in a more adaptive way, in order to avoid the emergence of mental disorders and socioeconomic inequalities. In this study, the contributions of psychosocial care in the academic experiences of university students were analyzed. **Method:** This is a qualitative study, in which a bibliographic survey of Brazilian research and legislation involving student assistance was carried out; psychosocial support; and academic experiences. **Results:** Institutional support services can promote student empowerment in the face of their adversities. For this, it is understood the need to identify data such as: the student profile of each institution, at all levels of education; the profile of the student who uses student assistance; the health profile of these students; what health care models exist in student care; actions and strategies for coping with interpersonal conflicts; the balance between academic and personal life; and intervention actions in academic experiences. Based on this identification, the university must develop a model of psychosocial assistance that is adequate for the needs of the student body. **Conclusion:** Psychosocial care should strengthen the link between the student-institution and promote satisfactory academic experiences and their permanence at the university.

KEYWORDS

Politic policy. Support network. Higher Education. University student. Support assistance.

O apoio psicossocial e as vivências acadêmicas dos estudantes universitários

RESUMO

Introdução: A população universitária tem, cada vez mais, buscado suportes para enfrentar as dificuldades psicossociais vivenciadas no Ensino Superior. As vivências acadêmicas; o adoecimento mental; as condições socioeconômicas e educacionais; e a presente pandemia da COVID-19 podem alterar as percepções de segurança, conforto e pertencimento do estudante à universidade. É importante que essas instituições possibilitem os discentes a vivenciarem essa fase de forma mais adaptativa, a fim de evitar o surgimento de distúrbios mentais e desigualdades socioeconômicas. Nesse estudo, foi analisado as contribuições da atenção psicossocial nas vivências acadêmicas dos universitários. **Método:** Trata-se de estudo qualitativo, no qual foi realizado um levantamento bibliográfico de pesquisas e legislações brasileiras que envolvem a assistência estudantil; o apoio psicossocial; e as vivências acadêmicas.

Resultados: Os serviços institucionais de apoio podem promover o empoderamento do estudante frente as suas adversidades. Para isso, entende-se a necessidade de identificar dados como: o perfil do estudante de cada instituição, em todos os níveis de ensino; o perfil do estudante usuário da assistência estudantil; o perfil de saúde desses estudantes; quais modelos de atenção à saúde existem na assistência estudantil; ações e estratégias para enfrentamento dos conflitos interpessoais; o equilíbrio entre a vida acadêmica e a vida pessoal; e ações de intervenção nas vivências acadêmicas. A partir dessa identificação, a universidade deve elaborar um modelo de assistência psicossocial adequada para as necessidades para o corpo estudantil. **Conclusão:** A atenção psicossocial deve fortalecer o vínculo entre o aluno-instituição e promover vivências acadêmicas satisfatórias e a sua permanência na universidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Políticas públicas. Rede de apoio. Educação superior. Estudante universitário. Assistência estudantil.

Apoyo psicossocial y experiencias académicas de estudiantes universitarios

RESUMEN

Introducción: La población universitaria ha buscado cada vez más apoyos para afrontar las dificultades psicosociales presentes en la Educación Superior. Experiencias académicas; enfermedad mental; condiciones socioeconómicas y educativas; y la actual pandemia de COVID-19 puede cambiar la percepción de seguridad, comodidad y pertenencia del estudiante a la universidad. Es importante que estas instituciones permitan a los estudiantes vivir esta fase de una manera más adaptativa, para evitar el sufrimiento mental y las desigualdades socioeconómicas. En este estudio se analizaron los aportes de la atención psicossocial en la experiencia académica de los estudiantes universitarios. **Método:** se trata de un estudio cualitativo, realizado un relevamiento bibliográfico de la investigación y la legislación brasileñas que involucran la atención al estudiante; apoyo psicossocial; y experiencias académicas. **Resultados:** Los servicios de apoyo institucional pueden promover el empoderamiento de los estudiantes frente a sus adversidades. Para ello, es necesario identificar datos sobre: el perfil socioeconómico y de salud de los estudiantes en todos los niveles educativos; qué modelos de atención a la salud existen en la atención al estudiante y cuáles se utilizan; acciones y estrategias de intervención y afrontamiento de conflictos interpersonales y experiencias académicas insatisfactorias; y cómo se produce el equilibrio entre la vida académica y personal. A partir de esta identificación, la universidad debe desarrollar un modelo de asistencia psicossocial adecuado a las necesidades de los estudiantes. **Conclusión:** la atención psicossocial debe fortalecer el vínculo estudiante-institución y promover experiencias académicas satisfactorias y su permanencia en la universidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Política pública. Red de apoyo. Educación superior. Edudiante universitário. Asistencia estudiantil.

CRediT

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1 Introduction

Entry into Higher Education (HE) can promote the development of new cognitive and people skills, as well as the student's openness to new personal values and beliefs, through the opportunities for introspective exploration and learning that this stage provides (SILVA; FERREIRA, 2009). ES is a unique and important social experience for human development, involving expectations, challenges, and the construction of personal identity. The way the student-institution relationship occurs is of extreme importance, because in this way, the university can provide the necessary resources for the student to overcome his difficulties, as well as make him stay in the institution and complete the degree.

After the initial enthusiasm of entering university, it is common for students to present disappointments with the course, the faculty, and the institution, and as well as they may face financial and material difficulties, such as resources to buy groceries, clothes, medicines or access to health services, books, and materials for classes, depending on the family socioeconomic context (FONAPRACE, 2019). In addition, the transition from high school to higher education may involve changes of city, or even state, new study habits emerge, transformations in the students' networks of friendships and daily life and is experienced in a unique way.

According to data from the Census of Higher Education (INEP, 2019), the attendance rate in ES by young people aged 18 to 24 has stabilized at the percentage of 32.7%, with the majority being in private institutions of higher education. In 2019, about three million students entered Higher Education, distributed in 2,608 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which corresponds to an increase of 5.4% from the 2018 edition.

The expansion of vacancies offered in higher education through the Restructuring and Expansion Program of Federal Universities (REUNI), established in 2007, and also by the reservation of vacancies in HEIs by the Quotas Law (Law No. 12.711/2012) has enabled young people from vulnerable socioeconomic scenarios to have a greater chance of entering this level of education. However, the entry of this public into universities has led to new demands arising, as well as the need for specific actions to meet them.

Then, the National Plan for Student Assistance (PNAES) was implemented, through Decree No. 7234 of July 19, 2010, which aims to support the permanence of low-income students in undergraduate courses at federal universities, while providing equal opportunity for all students and contributing to the improvement of academic performance. The PNAES actions are defined according to the needs of the student body and the possibilities of each institution and can cover: assistance to student housing, food, transportation, health, digital inclusion, culture, sports, day care, and pedagogical support. Access to student assistance initiatives is restricted to the university population enrolled in undergraduate courses, coming from the public basic education network and with per capita family income of up to one and a half salaries. The HEI executes these initiatives itself and it is their duty to monitor and

evaluate their development and progress.

However, staying in and even finishing Higher Education does not imply that the academic experience achieved has been satisfactory, which can have implications for the student's mental health and quality of life. The literature has given emphasis to aspects internal and external to the institution and factors of students' daily lives that can favor retention or cause university dropout (CARMO, 2018; FERRÃO; ALMEIDA, 2018; COSTA, BISPO; PEREIRA, 2018). There is a perceived need for more research regarding psychosocial support in Higher Education, since there are many case studies in the literature involving student assistance and student support services, but without emphasizing psychosocial support (BLEICHER; OLIVERA, 2016; IMPERATORI, 2017; DIAS, 2020).

The creation of services that involve professionals of Psychology, Psychiatry and Social Work in Higher Education was motivated mainly by the high rates of student dropout, but, also, there is the expectation of the HEIs that these professionals favor the human and academic development of the student, in order to ensure their permanence in the institution and provide adequate conditions to deal with the academic demands of this stage (SOUZA, 2011). In addition, there are issues such as gender, race, socioeconomic conditions, disabilities, interpersonal relationships, use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs and psychopathologies that affect the way of accessing, experiencing, and completing undergraduate studies. In this sense, this study aims to understand how psychosocial support services can contribute to the construction of satisfactory academic experiences by college students.

From the methodological point of view, this study is characterized as qualitative with a descriptive and explanatory approach of the processes that involve the permanence in Higher Education and student assistance in Higher Education, especially those that offer psychosocial support to college students. To this end, a narrative literature review was conducted using the following keywords: "psychosocial support"; "academic experiences"; "mental health in higher education"; "student assistance in higher education". The search sites were SciELO, PePSIC, and Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, as well as Brazilian legislation focused on higher education, mental health, and student assistance.

2 The policies of psychosocial assistance in Higher Education

The milestone of Brazilian democracy is the Federal Constitution of 1988, the fruit of political and social manifestations, which aimed to guarantee national development and the reduction of social and regional inequalities through the implementation of public policies that would guarantee social, political, educational, and health rights for the Brazilian population, especially for those from vulnerable contexts.

Education as a constitutional right for all is a result of our constitution, but it was only in 1996 that the Law of Directives and Bases for National Education (LDB) was

implemented, in which it is stated that it is the State's duty to propose actions that ensure equal access and permanence of the student in public education, at all levels of education. Higher Education is recognized in Brazil as a fundamental factor for economic development, social ascension, and improvement in the quality of individual, social, and family life. However, despite the presence of policies that affirm the need to ensure equal access and permanence in education, the reality is far from this, since 32.4% of young people aged 18 to 24 attend Brazilian Higher Education (IBGE, 2020) and 52.8% of college students have already thought of quitting the course, the main causes being: financial difficulties; the level of academic demands; difficulties to reconcile studies and work; health problems; the difficulties of the professional field itself; relationships in the course; incompatibility with the chosen course; dissatisfaction with the quality of the course; family problems; harassment, bullying, persecution, discrimination or prejudice (FONAPRACE, 2019).

Given this reality, the National Education Plan (NEP) is implemented by Law No. 13.005/2014, which proposes the expansion, in ten years of its validity (2014-2024), of inclusion policies and student assistance to students in public institutions, in order to reduce ethnic-racial, socioeconomic, and academic inequalities and increase rates of access and permanence in higher education. Identifying the reasons why students decide to drop out of higher education is extremely important for the formulation of public policies and assistance, as well as to characterize its target audience.

In the field of mental health and psychosocial assistance, an important policy in Brazil is the Paulo Delgado Law (Law No. 10.216 of April 6, 2001), which provides for the rights and protection of people with mental disorders. In this law, it is the responsibility of the state to develop policies with emphasis on mental health care and the promotion of health actions for people with mental disorders, with due participation of society and the family.

The Paulo Delgado Law was a legal landmark for the change in the understanding of the health-disease process, which had been happening since the 1970s with the psychiatric reform and the anti-mental institution struggle, making the follow-up and treatment of mental suffering more humanized and respectful of the individual's needs.

Then, in line with the 1988 Constitution, the Unified Health System (SUS) was created as a way to ensure access to health for all and the proposal of an interdisciplinary work to promote health actions, involving professionals from medicine, social work, psychology, occupational therapy, leisure activities, culture, and other areas of knowledge important for the psychosocial rehabilitation of the individual in psychic suffering. It sought to implement care rights based on the promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, sanitary and epidemiological surveillance, in a public and universal health system, incorporating political, social, and economic determinants in the understanding of the health-disease process, creating municipal programs such as the Family Health Program (FHP) and the Psychosocial Care Centers (PCC) (BLEICHER; OLIVEIRA, 2016).

In 1994, the Ministry of Health implemented the Family Health Program, to act in accordance with the principles of SUS, which performs, through a multidisciplinary team (family doctor or generalist, nurse, nursing assistant and community health workers), health promotion, prevention and recovery activities for families and their members. This is where the individual's first contact with the local health system occurs, serving as a gateway, articulated with other existing services in the municipality or region (BRASIL, 1994).

The Psychosocial Care Centers (PCC) emerged as a substitute network for the psychiatric hospital in Brazil to avoid hospitalizations. In CAPS, the social insertion of people with mental disorders is promoted through intersectoral actions; it is regulated as the entrance door to the mental health care network; and it enables the support to mental health care in the basic network. It is important to stress that CAPS function as substitutes for and not complements to psychiatric hospitals and, as of 2002, received a specific line of funding from the Ministry of Health (BRASIL, 2005).

The advances achieved by the Ministry of Health, such as the implementation of CAPS and PSFs, were not repeated in other ministries (BLEICHER; OLIVEIRA, 2016). The worker health services, and student health services continued to be disintegrated from the health network, that is, the Unified Health System (SUS), and remained federalized, with offers basically concentrated in expertise and occasional treatments.

In the case of the health of federal public servants, the Ministry of Planning, Budget, and Management created the Integrated Subsystem of Servant Health Care (ISSHC, which aims to integrate actions and programs of promotion, prevention and health care and official examinations (BRASIL, 2009). In the case of undergraduate students from federal public universities and from vulnerable socioeconomic backgrounds, they depend on the services offered by the SUS in the city where the university is located or on student assistance policies, which vary according to the institution. Graduate students were the most harmed by the ministries because they don't have a health policy aimed at them, since the public for student assistance is undergraduate students.

The support services for college students have developed in line with the expansion of higher education, increasing access and diversification of the university population, thus having an important role in the construction of academic success in contemporary times (DIAS, 2020; DIAS; SAMPAIO, 2020). These support services have gained relevance in institutions for helping the permanence of students in universities.

However, health care is not the goal of the actions of the Ministry of Education, but one of the ways to achieve the goal of reducing dropout rates and encourage students to stay in the institution. So, it is necessary a clear delineation for financial investments in each area proposed by PNAES, because there is prioritization of some areas, especially food, transportation, and housing than others also proven as relevant, such as health (BLEICHER; OLIVEIRA, 2016).

One of the difficulties faced by professionals is to understand how their performance can contribute to student assistance interconnected to social service, education, psychology, health, nutrition, culture, among others. Interdisciplinarity occurs when there are spaces for discussion of the students' academic life, involving the institutions' faculty members as well, as this favors the case study of the university, facilitates the identification of students' needs; boosts interdisciplinary work; and thinking of referral strategies, prevention, and promotion of academic well-being, such as learning support courses and workshops (DIAS, 2020).

This is confirmed by Imperatori (2017) when he states that some institutions offer university residences, in which there are furnished rooms and appliances, while other institutions will offer scholarships aimed at paying for housing expenses, with varying amounts, which also occurs for food and health assistance. The support services for the university student are able to provide quality of life, motivation, and pedagogical accompaniment for the studies, besides the access to professionals from several areas of knowledge, such as medicine, psychiatry, clinical psychology and counseling, education and among others (ALTBACH; HADDAD, 2009 APUD DIAS, 2020).

According to the Organic Law of Social Assistance (Law No. 8.742/1993), it is the citizen's right and the state's duty to provide the social minimum, accomplished through a set of actions of public initiative and society, aiming to ensure that basic needs are met. In higher education, social assistance should ensure that students from vulnerable socioeconomic and family backgrounds have access to housing, food, health, medicines, educational support, transportation, work-scholarships, and other basic needs (IMPERATORI, 2017).

In the case of work-scholarships, they are distributed to students who have good academic performance, as proposed by the National Education Plan (BRASIL, 2004). However, the reconciliation between studies and work, associated with the presence of psychosocial vulnerabilities, can have impacts on the academic performance and academic experiences of students, resulting in the need for institutional support.

In the case of social work in Higher Education, according to Nascimento, Souza and Siqueira (2021), it should promote care, welcoming, social listening and face-to-face or remote guidance to students and their families, with interventions aimed at aid; act together with socioeconomic, socio-digital, socio-affective and socio-family vulnerabilities; to the conditions of study; to the Emergency Remote Learning, which involves edicts of technological equipment loans; impacts of isolation and social distancing with the COVID-19 Pandemic; to family conflicts and challenges; to accessibility; to sexualities; to academic and professional projects; and to health demands, dialoguing with other professionals and/or institutions.

The services of psychological attention in Higher Education have been inserted in several ways by the Higher Education Institutions and are found associated to Psychology or Psychiatry departments, linked to a Dean's Office of the Institution, or unlinked to a service and acting in an isolated way or even nonexistent. All universities must have an Institutional

Development Plan (PDI), in which the presence, operation and mode of practice of these services are addressed and it is through the PDI that universities are evaluated by the National System for Higher Education Evaluation (NSHEE) of the Ministry of Education (MEC).

NSHEE, implemented by Law N°10.861/2004, establishes that for a Higher Education Institution (IES) to obtain a five-point concept, on a scale from zero to five, it must present a student attendance policy (indicator 3.11 of the evaluation):

Reception and permanence programs for students; accessibility programs, monitoring, leveling, intermediation; monitoring of non-mandatory paid internships; psycho-pedagogical support; assistance to students in all pedagogical-administrative sectors of the institution; and promotion of actions recognized as successful or innovative (BRASIL, 2004).

The presence of services aimed at the mental health of students, such as psychosocial care services, can be fundamental to the way students experience Higher Education, working as facilitators of the training process, promoting redefinition of teaching-learning strategies; improvement of social and family coexistence; permanence in Higher Education; emotional and social support; and adaptation to the academic routine.

In this sense, it is part of the psychosocial support services to care for and welcome the complaint, difficulty, insecurities, or impediments presented by the student and based on that, to encourage a dialogue of overcoming and solution, even if temporary. The main goal is to get back on track with learning and guide the student to reorganize his daily routine, offering quality of life and psychosocial well-being (NASCIMENTO, SOUZA; SIQUEIRA, 2021).

The democratization of access to higher education and the permanence of students in HEIs has been made possible through affirmative action and student assistance, and it is possible to note the importance of these policies to reduce the inequalities experienced by a large portion of the young Brazilian population.

3 The academic experiences of university students

The transition from the industrial society to the so-called knowledge society has demanded greater preparation in terms of education from young people and the postponement of their entry into the labor market (POCHMANN, 2005). However, the Brazilian educational system is outdated for most young people, preventing many from finishing high school and from accessing higher education.

When referring to the contemporary juvenile condition, it is necessary to consider "youth" in the plural, and not youth in the singular, since there are several factors that influence it, depending on each individual and the context in which he/she is inserted (ABRAMO, 2005). In this same sense, we must consider the academic experiences, in the plural, because it becomes necessary to evaluate the family, emotional, personal, and social

differences and the socioeconomic inequalities to understand the way of living the Higher Education and the various trajectories traced, depending on the factors of interference in the student's life.

The entrance to Higher Education, according to Almeida and Soares (2004), is the for most young people. When they arrive at the university, they carry within themselves unrealistic and naive visions about how the experience of university life will be, leading them to experience high levels of anxiety and stress that affect their adjustment to Higher Education.

For Penha, Oliveira, and Mendes (2020), there is a prevalence of mental disorders among college students when compared to the general population, who show signs and symptoms of stress, Burnout, anxiety, and depression. Entering this stage of education requires complex cognitive and emotional resources to deal with the transition to the new academic environment and a social support network to help with the changes of this stage.

The expansion of university education, according to Almeida and Santos (2006), has made Higher Education Institutions serve all their students with the same facilities, the same courses and curricula, and the same teaching methods, which until then had satisfactorily served the social elite. Academic satisfaction can be considered a cognitive-affective variable that reflects on students' subjective evaluation of the quality of their academic experience (SANTOS, 2019). However, academic satisfaction should not only be evaluated in parameters of grades achieved and academic progress of the student, but rather considering the entire experience lived by the student in the educational context, also encompassing cognitive, emotional, social, family, and financial aspects.

It was identified that the average age of students who seek mental health help coincides with the age of transition in human development, i.e., a period marked by the definition of sexual, professional, and ideological identity. This transition can cause to the young university student demands such as dealing with distance from family, change of city of origin, different learning styles offered by different teachers, high workload, and other factors (PENHA, OLIVEIRA; MENDES, 2020).

Integration into Higher Education, that is, the degree of sharing of attitudes, norms, and values of the student with his peers and institution, is recognized as a complex and multidimensional process, built between the individual and his daily life (SANTOS et al., 2013). It is considered that integration and academic satisfaction are a dynamic and reciprocal process because students modify the university environment and, in the norms, implemented from their perceptions, choices and actions; and at the same time, the opportunities offered by the environment interfere in the academic experiences of students (SANTOS et. al., 2013). Then, it is understood that academic integration and satisfaction are cognitive-affective variables that affect the way they experience university life.

The academic experiences, that is, the way the student experiences Higher Education, have the following dimensions: the personal dimension refers to psychological and physical well-being, autonomy, self-concept and affective stability; the interpersonal dimension which refers to the interpersonal relationships established and the quality of these relationships; the career dimension refers to the student's feelings related to the enrolled course and their perceptions and perspectives of career and the course; the study dimension refers to study habits, time management and learning resources; the institutional dimension refers to feelings of appreciation of the educational institution attended (ALMEIDA, FERREIRA; SOARES, 2002).

In the study conducted by Pachane (1998), factors were identified that interfere in academic experiences in the view of students, and they are: academic, which involves high workload and teaching-learning processes; lack of time for leisure and sports; feeling of frustration before the expectations created and the expected academic performance; feeling of competitiveness among colleagues; economic limitations; social adaptation; presence of feelings of anxiety, fear and tension; and dissatisfaction with the course. And the reasons why students drop out of Higher Education are not always related to essentially academic factors, but also to factors related to the psychic, social, institutional, family, and financial spheres. According to Tinto (1975), one should take into consideration when analyzing the issue of dropping out: the characteristics of the environment in which the student is inserted, such as social and economic status and community of residence; personal attributes such as gender, abilities, race, and ethnicity; academic expectations and motivation with the chosen career; and knowledge about the structure of the chosen HEI.

The pandemic of COVID-19, starting in 2020, has brought other challenges in the way of experiencing Higher Education, such as: the implementation of Emergency Remote Learning to respect the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations for social distancing; the return to the hometown and to family members' homes, since they previously lived in sororities or shared an apartment with other students or in student housing; the lack of technological resources to attend remote classes; the postponement of graduation and celebrations; the increase in cases of anxiety and depression during the period of social isolation and the uncertainties of this moment; being far from friends or family; the difficulties of keeping up with the pace of online classes; among other factors.

According to Albanaes (2019), a decline in the students' mental health was identified after entering the university context due to the university phase itself, but also due to the challenges in the personal, interpersonal, academic, and career dimensions, which began to interfere with their perception of psychosocial well-being, academic satisfaction, and motivation to complete their studies.

Therefore, it is important for the understanding of academic experiences to know the level of satisfaction presented by students; the aspects of their psychosocial development; the socioeconomic and educational factors presented; and the interpersonal relationships established so that, then, the Higher Education Institutions can promote actions that ensure

satisfactory academic experiences and the psychosocial well-being of college students, while promoting their permanence in the institution.

4 Psychosocial support and academic experiences

The development of mental health care strategies for university students are essential for the quality of the training process and the development of the student and the educational institution, because psychosocial care considers the potentialities of individuals, produces actions for the student's well-being, quality of life and sheltering, the prevention of emotional illness and the promotion of the quality of psycho-affective experience and academic performance of the student (PENHA, OLIVEIRA; MENDES, 2020).

The adaptation and the student's academic experience in Higher Education should be investigated, since they involve several aspects of their development, such as personal; interpersonal; learning; and institutional, and the signs and risk behaviors that interfere for the student's adaptation (ALMEIDA; CASANOVA, 2019). Affirmative action has shown that the permanence rates of beneficiary students are higher, even if these students had lower scores on the National High School Exam (ENEM) (FERRÃO; ALMEIDA, 2018).

The entry into Higher Education generates changes for the human and ecological development of the student and the presence of supportive relationships, such as psychosocial care, favor the reception of the student, the formation of a sense of belonging to the academic community and the reduction of feelings of isolation, fear, anxiety and depression, common symptoms of college students (ROGERS et al., 2018).

The psychosocial care services in Higher Education emerged from the demand for actions aimed at the student's well-being and their permanence in the institution. However, the demands are varied, since the university and the academic community are composed of a diversity of courses and people, who have different complaints; social and economic levels; values; worldviews; and other characteristics (SOUZA, 2011).

In Brazil, it stands out among the groups with greater demand for psychosocial assistance support, students who came from diverse socioeconomic conditions and underprivileged layers of the population (FRAGOSO, 2016), whose entry to Higher Education, especially in public universities, occurred after the expansion and implementation of public policies, such as: NSHEE (BRASIL, 2004); REUNI (BRASIL, 2007), PNAES (BRASIL, 2010); Quotas Law (BRASIL, 2012); and Brazilian Inclusion Law (BRASIL, 2016).

This is confirmed by Del Giudice (2013) in his research, in which 38% of students at a federal public university reported that student assistance contributed to the family budget, as parents were able to invest in other needs, such as keeping one more child studying at the university. For the parents participating in the survey, if their children did not have the benefit

of assistance, they would need to reconcile their studies with their jobs. This research has shown the existing repercussions of student assistance in the academic, personal, family, and social aspects of the beneficiary students.

According to Leitao et al. (2000), young students often lack adequate support in the academic environment to help them transform challenges into situations that enhance personal development. Thus, the authors state that it is essential to create psychological, psychopedagogical, and psychosocial support services as support strategies for young people and to help them face possible academic barriers.

For Accorsi (2015), the following are risk factors for the psychosocial well-being of university experiences: the migration aspect; student adaptation and progress; increasing demands of responsibility; psychological demands; economic, social, and psychological limitations; questioning about the chosen career and course; graduation; facing the labor market; fear of failure; and consumption of alcohol and other drugs. And, in counterpoint, the protective factors for academic experiences are the personal and environmental resources that strengthen and support the individual to face the difficulties (CARDOSO, BORSA; SEGABINAZII, 2018).

The protective factors should interact with the impact of the manifested risk factors and provide alternatives to solve the problems experienced in the daily life of psychosocial risk (AMPARO et al., 2008). In this sense, support services for college students should contemplate three aspects of intervention: preventive, remedial and research.

The *preventive intervention* advocates the student's entry into higher education, in order to promote academic success, disseminate information about possible academic barriers and programs of potential employers. Remedial intervention advocates psycho-pedagogical support, school guidance or reorientation, and individual support for personal and relational problems. Finally, the research intervention advocates studies on the conditions and factors of academic success or failure and the rates of employability of students who have completed the course (LEITÃO et al., 2000).

The student-institution relationship is extremely important to verify how the student's education process occurs, because the way this relationship is established can also bring damages to the student's mental health, psychosocial well-being, quality of life and academic experiences. After all, unhealthy institutional relationships contribute to unhealthy school representations, which interfere in the full development of activities in the educational environment and, therefore, intervention proposals directed to the promotion and prevention of mental health are necessary according to the needs identified in the academic community (BLEICHER; OLIVEIRA, 2016).

Student assistance policies are located at the intersection of social welfare and education, representing a breakthrough for the recognition of student assistance as a social right (IMPERATORI, 2017). In addition, the author states that it is necessary to understand

that academic performance is not the result of an ability-opportunity process but includes other elements such as socioeconomic situation and added here by the authors the academic University students are vulnerable to some forms of illness, especially in issues related to mental health. The most frequent complaints presented by users of mental health services at a public university were: tiredness; difficulty in learning and concentration; forgetfulness; sleep disturbance; feelings of failure; irritability; restlessness; inhibition; shyness; low self-esteem; insecurity; discouragement; and difficulties in interpersonal relationships (CERCHIARI, CAETANO; FACCENDA, 2005).

Therefore, it is necessary to identify data such as: the profile of the student of each institution, at all levels of education; the profile of the student user of student assistance programs; the health profile of these students; what models of health care services exist in student assistance; actions and strategies for coping with interpersonal conflicts; the balance between academic life and personal life; and actions for intervention and care of students' academic experiences. It is perceived that the use of the physical spaces of the university for rest and relaxation, extends the conception of the institution as a purely academic environment (BLEICHER; OLIVEIRA, 2016; PENHA, OLIVEIRA; MENDES, 2020).

The adaptation of the student in Higher Education involves several aspects of his development that must be investigated. From this identification, the university must develop a model of psychosocial assistance appropriate to the needs for the student body, as well as provide training for the technical staff, faculty and students on issues related to public health.

The institutional support services can promote the students' empowerment in the face of adversity, supporting them in mobilizing their personal resources to face new challenges in a positive way. In addition, the educational institution should pay attention to the students' academic expectations, if they do not materialize, and the situations of isolation or weak student support networks, which are identified as causes that lead to student dropout (ALMEIDA; CASANOVA, 2019).

The psychosocial care initiatives linked to the National Plan for Student Assistance (PNAES) and the managing bodies responsible for its implementation and maintenance restrict their assistance to students in a situation of socioeconomic fragility. However, its services need to be expanded to all university students, not only those who have vulnerable socioeconomic conditions, but also those who are facing difficulties in adapting to the institution; unsatisfactory or sickening academic experiences; and cover graduate students who do not have adequate psychosocial assistance for their difficulties.

Final considerations

The complexity of academic experiences and the challenges faced in higher education are often experienced with excessive anxiety and depletion of personal resources and require attention by the institution when implementing and creating institutional policies of student support. The psychosocial support services have a fundamental role in strengthening the bond

between the student and the institution, in order to generate a greater sense of belonging to the institution; greater academic performance; retention; and promotion of psychosocial well-being to the student.

According to the panorama presented, one can perceive the advances in student assistance policies present in the Brazilian legislation. However, it is possible to observe that access does not imply the permanence of the student in the institution and the quality of his or her learning and, therefore, the presence of public policies and psychosocial care services are important to reduce the services are important to reduce inequality rates and provide equal opportunity in higher education, psychosocial well-being, and improvements in academic performance.

The relationship between student assistance policies and the academic experiences of university students is important because the personal feelings experienced by students, associated with their perception of safety, comfort, and belonging to the academic community, imply not only in their permanence in higher education, but also in the quality of their learning and knowledge production. In order for students to develop in Higher Education, achieve good academic performance and finish their studies, it is necessary to associate the quality of the education offered with student assistance policies, which involve psychosocial support and satisfactory and healthy academic experiences.

Therefore, the psychosocial policies present in Higher Education emerge as a social right with the objective of providing equal opportunities for the production of knowledge, the improvement of academic performance, and psychosocial well-being. It is understood that the professional performance in these services is complex and that many activities are not performed due to lack of time and overload of demand in the sectors, but it is emphasized the importance of these services for the construction of a healthier learning, development, and socialization environment for students.

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