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Prevalence of minor mental disorders in health students and related factors

Prevalencia de trastornos mentales menores en estudiantes de salud y factores afines

Prevalência de transtornos mentais menores em estudantes da área da saúde e os fatores relacionados

ABSTRACT

Objective: this study was to investigate the prevalence of minor mental disorders in health students, and the risk factors that facilitate their triggering. **Method:** the present study is of the Integrative Literature Review type, it was carried out from February to December 2020, the articles selected to support the study in question were searched in the following LILACS e ScieLO. **Results:** Two categories were identified I- Prevalence of common mental disorders in university students in the health field. II- Factors associated with the risk of depression and anxiety in the university environment. **Conclusion:** And with this study it was possible to evidence the prevalence of common mental disorders among university students, and the risk factors associated with this event such as academic pressure and overload, dissatisfaction with the course, unsatisfactory relationships with colleagues and teachers and residing away from the family.

DESCRIPTORS: Mental health; University; Emotional disorders; Risk factors; Mental disorder.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: este estudio fue investigar la prevalencia de trastornos mentales menores en estudiantes de salud y los factores de riesgo que facilitan su desencadenamiento. **Método:** el presente estudio es del tipo Revisión Integrativa de Literatura, se realizó de febrero a diciembre de 2020, los artículos seleccionados para sustentar el estudio en cuestión fueron buscados en las siguientes bases de datos LILACS e ScieLO. **Resultados:** Se identificaron dos categorías I- Prevalencia de trastornos mentales comunes en estudiantes universitarios del campo de la salud. II- Factores asociados al riesgo de depresión y ansiedad en el ámbito universitario. **Conclusión:** Y con este estudio se pudo evidenciar la prevalencia de trastornos mentales comunes entre estudiantes universitarios, y los factores de riesgo asociados a este evento como presión y sobrecarga académica, insatisfacción con el curso, relaciones insatisfactorias con colegas y docentes y residente de la familia.

DESCRIPTORES: Salud mental; Universidad; Trastornos emocionales; Factores de riesgo; Trastorno mental.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Esse estudo foi investigar prevalência de transtornos mentais menores em estudantes da área da saúde, e os fatores de risco que facilitam para o desencadeamento dos mesmos. **Método:** O presente estudo é do tipo Revisão Integrativa de Literatura, foi realizada no período de fevereiro a dezembro de 2020, os artigos selecionados para fundamentação do estudo em questão foram buscados nas seguintes bases de dados LILACS e ScieLO. **Resultados:** Foram identificadas duas categorias I- Prevalência dos transtornos mentais comuns em universitários da área da saúde. II- Fatores associados ao risco de depressão e ansiedade no ambiente universitário. **Conclusão:** E com esse estudo foi possível evidenciar a prevalência dos transtornos mentais comuns como depressão e ansiedade entre os estudantes universitários, e os fatores de risco associados a esse evento tais como pressão acadêmica e sobrecargas, insatisfação com o curso, relacionamentos insatisfatórios com os colegas e docentes e residir longe da família.

DESCRIPTORES: Saúde mental; Universitário; Distúrbios emocionais; Fatores de risco; Transtorno mental.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the desired professional training, university life is usually a moment of satisfaction, however many are not completely prepared to face this challenge, often finding it difficult to adapt to academic life due to major changes and end up suffering from it. ¹ Studies show that university students mainly in the health field suffer from common mental disorders (CMD) such as depression and anxiety. ²

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), suicide generates 800 thousand deaths per year in the world, being the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 29, precisely the age group of students about to enter college or who are already attending. ³ Recent national and school-based studies have shown that 30% of adolescents had common mental disorders, identified by symptoms of depression, anxiety and unspecified somatic complaints. ⁴

Anxiety and depression are the most common disorders in the lives of college students. Depression is a disease characterized by mood changes, insomnia, loss of energy and fatigue, lack of self-care,

disinterest in general, while anxiety, which is also a mental disorder, is characterized by sleep disorders, fatigue and tremors. Both can be triggered by emotional pressure, fear, insecurity, stress and great responsibilities, which is recurrent in the academic environment. ⁵

Diagnosing to treat mental disorders as soon as possible is essential for mental well-being in the lives of university students. Most of the studies suggest a therapeutic approach that includes both drugs and psychotherapy aiming at a positive quality of life. In addition to these previously mentioned, it is considerable to highlight the importance of prevention through debates, lectures, that is, the dissemination of information. ⁶

In view of what was exposed in the present study, it is worth highlighting the following question: How far can academic life affect the psychological aspects of university students to the point of causing mental and emotional disorders?

Mental problems can damage the lives of those affected. Therefore, it is necessary to cover even more subjects involving mental health in the academic environment through lectures and debates focusing on the identification, prevention and treatment of the most common

disorders. It is important to investigate the university students' perception of academic life and its associations in the face of psychological distress. It is considered that in order to identify protective factors in order to favor the well-being of students and make their experiences more positive in the academic environment, it is necessary to explain the importance of planning interventions and include psychological aspects such as coping and resilience, so the college tends to take a more comprehensive approach, not just academic and professional. ²

Thus, the main objective of this study was to investigate through the literature the prevalence of minor mental disorders in students in the health area.

METHOD

This is an integrative, exploratory, descriptive review of a bibliographic nature, concerning the prevalence of common mental disorders and their risk factors. The survey of the articles was carried out in the following databases: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS) in a paired way during the

months of January to February 2021. To search for data, the following descriptors indexed in the DeCS (Health Science Descriptors) were used: “Saúde mental”, “Universitário”, “Distúrbios emocionais”, “Fatores de risco” and “Transtorno mental”. Researches were carried out with multiple combinations between the descriptors in association with the Boolean operator And.

For the selection of articles, the following inclusion criteria were used: articles published from 2016 to 2021, articles available online in the databases, full and free texts, published in Portuguese, related to the theme. Exclusion criteria: articles duplicated in more than one database and that do not answer the guiding question of this study, in addition to excluding dissertations, dossiers, letter to the author, theses, literature review studies, Course Completion Work

and those who did not accurately describe the method.

For the construction of the Integrative Literature Review, the four stages proposed were followed⁷, namely, the 1st stage of data collection started with the reading of the title and the abstract, in the 2nd stage the methodology and results of the article were read, in the 3rd stage an in-depth reading of the results was made, highlighting those that responded to the proposed objective for this study, in the 4th stage, a review of the articles was carried out for the synthesis of knowledge, where a summary of the main result was conceived. Next, the flowchart explains the data collection procedures (Figure 1).

RESULTS

The selection of articles was carried out by carefully reading the title, abs-

tract and full text, in order to answer the guiding question. In the sequence, the variables for analysis were delimited, such as: approached methodology, year of publication, study scenarios, as well as the thematic focus for data analysis and discussion. Thus, the following categories were defined: Category I- Prevalence of common mental disorders in a university student in the health area and Category II- Factors associated with the risk of depression and anxiety in the university environment.

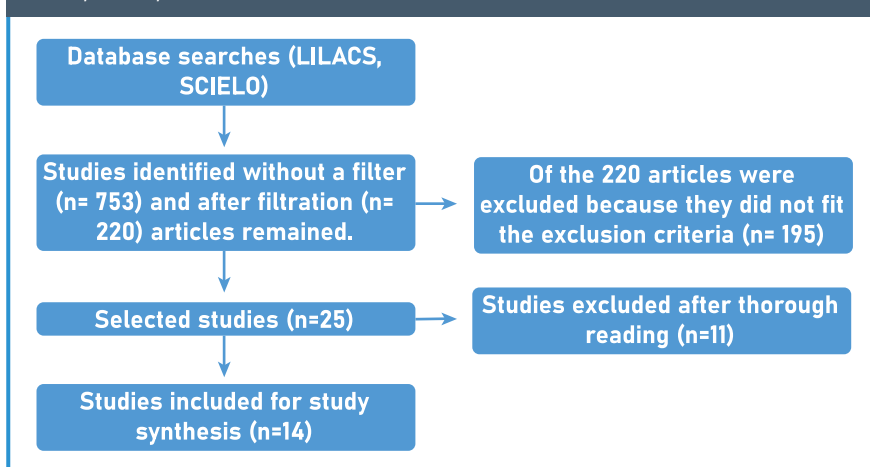
753 publications were identified, 129 articles in the database of the scientific electronic library online (scielo), and 624 in the database of Latin American and Caribbean literature in health sciences (lilacs). After applying the criteria such as year of publication and language, 82 studies remained in the scientific electronic library online (scielo) and 138 in Latin American and Caribbean literature in health sciences (lilacs). Of these, 40 duplicate articles were excluded, 65 did not respond to the study theme, 45 were excluded by title, 25 were excluded because they were bibliographic in nature and 20 because of the abstract. 25 studies remained, however, after a thorough reading of the articles, 11 were excluded. Thus, 14 articles made up the final sample.

DISCUSSION

Category I - Prevalence of common mental disorders in a university student in the health field.

According to studies carried out,⁸ the high prevalence of anxiety, depressive and stress symptoms in university

Figure 1: Flowchart representing the data collection process, Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, Brazil.



Source: Own authorship based on PEREIRA E GALVÃO (2014)

Chart 1: Characterization of the articles found according to the author, title, type of study, objectives, results and databases, Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, Brazil, 2021.

AUTHOR/ YEAR	TITLE	TYPE OF STUDY	OBJECTIVES	RESULT
Arruda, ES et al. 2020	Assessment of anxiety degrees in academics from a private college	Cross-sectional research with a descriptive, quantitative and observational approach.	Assess the degree of anxiety of academics at a private higher education institution.	It was observed that of the total sample, 62,3% had some degree of anxiety, with health courses being the ones with the most students with degrees of anxiety.

Guedes, AF et al. 2019	Prevalence and correlates of depression with health and demographic characteristics of medical students.	Descriptive, cross-sectional study with a quantitative approach.	To evaluate the prevalence of depression and correlate it with the health and demographic characteristics of medical school students from a college in the interior of northeastern Brazil.	It was observed that the prevalence of depression in students was 52,8%, distributed in mild (39,1%), moderate (12,3%) and severe (1,4%) depression. Higher scores of depression in women ($r = 0,24$; $p < 0,01$)
Lima, SO et al. 2019	Prevalence of Depression in Health Academics.	Qualitative and quantitative approach.	The article analyzes the different degrees of depression in health courses and correlates this disorder with gender and age.	It is noted by the BDI that depressive symptoms among students in the health field have been shown to be superior to other populations of corresponding age
Ribeiro, IBS et al. 2020	Impact of self-esteem and sociodemographic factors on the self-efficacy of undergraduate nursing students	Research with type of cross-sectional study.	Identify the levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem in undergraduate nursing students and verify the relationship of these constructs with each other and with sociodemographic variables.	Self-efficacy was associated with the male gender, a priority option in the entrance exam for nursing, satisfaction with the course and absence of overload, in addition to positively correlating with age and self-esteem.
Flesch, BD et al. 2020	Major depressive episode among university students in southern Brazil.	Cross-sectional census study.	This study evaluates the prevalence and factors associated with major depression in university students, with an emphasis on the influence of the academic environment, the chosen study area and the environment in which they are inserted.	It was observed that a total of 32% of university students have a major depressive episode, the problem was more frequent among women, between 21 and 23 years of age with a family history of depression who lived with friends.
Lelis, KCG et al. 2020	Symptoms of depression, anxiety and medication use in university students.	Descriptive, cross-sectional study with quantitative analysis..	Evaluate the symptoms of anxiety and depression and the use of medications in university students.	It was observed that the symptoms of depression and anxiety were identified in 52,3% ($n = 153$) and 41,1% ($n = 120$) of the participants, respectively.
Leão, AM et al. 2018	Prevalence and Factors Associated with Depression and Anxiety among University Students in the Health Area of a Large Urban Center in Northeast Brazil.	Cross-sectional analytical study.	To estimate the prevalence and factors associated with depression and anxiety in university students in the health field.	It was observed that the prevalence of depression and anxiety were 28,6% and 36,1%, respectively. Students less satisfied with the course were almost four times more likely to have depression.
Fernandes, MA et al. 2018	Prevalence of anxious and depressive symptoms in university students at a public institution.	Census, cross-sectional and analytical study.	Identify the prevalence of anxious and depressive symptoms and their correlations with sociodemographic characteristics.	It is observed that the average prevalence of depression in university students is 30,6%, while in the non-university population it is 9%.
Andrade, AS et al. 2016	Academic Experiences and Psychological Suffering of Psychology Students.	Cross-sectional research with a qualitative and quantitative approach.	This article presents data from a survey whose objective was to survey the students' academic experiences.	In open questions regarding experiences and psychological distress, explicit indicators of university malaise were presented.

Ribeiro, IBS et al. 2020	Prevalence of Factors Associated with Depression and Anxiety in Brazilian Medical Students	Cross-sectional study.	1. estimate the prevalence of scores indicative of anxiety, depression and anxiety and 2. analyze the factors associated with such conditions in students.	It was observed in this study that anxiety was the most common condition (41,4%), followed by depression (8,2%) and simultaneous depression and anxiety (7,0%).
Cardoso, JV et al. 2019	Stress in university students: an epidemiological approach.	This is a quantitative, descriptive, epidemiological and cross-sectional study.	Identify the occurrence of stress and socio-demographic and academic vulnerabilities in university students.	This study revealed that the occurrence of stress in all participants of this study, with an average stress of 26,18 and mode 28, with 192 (49,1%) university students presenting a score for a stress level above the average of all participants..
Ariño, DO; Bardagi, MP, 2018	Relationship between Academic Factors and the Mental Health of University Students.	This is a correlational, descriptive, cross-sectional research.	Analyze the relationship between anxiety, depression and stress with the quality of academic experiences and self-efficacy.	It was observed that the Academic Experiences presented negative relationships, statistically significant with the dimensions of Psychological Vulnerability.
Mesquita, AM et al. 2016	Depression among students of health courses at a university in mato grosso	This is a cross-sectional, descriptive study with a quantitative approach.	To identify the depressive trend among students of health courses at a public university.	It was observed that the tendency to depression was present in 41% of the university students, being more relevant in the nursing course (55%).
Lameu, JN; Salazar, TL; Souza, WF, 2016.	Prevalence of symptoms of stress among undergraduate students at a public university.	This is a cross-sectional study.	To assess the prevalence of stress symptoms among undergraduate students.	It was observed that the prevalence of stress found was 50%, with most of these students being in the resistance phase.

students is shown, even higher than those found in the general population. Psychological morbidity does not only affect the health, performance and quality of life of university students, but it can also lead to important and significant complications in the family environment. In view of this, national and international analyzes handling different instruments aimed at investigating mental health have pointed out the vulnerability of the university population to the occurrence of psychopathological signs and symptoms.

Studies indicate that university students in the health field are more predisposed to develop CMD (common mental disorders) compared to university students from other courses. The appearance of common mental disorders in the academic environment can

In view of the studies, it was seen that there is a divergence among some authors regarding the prevalence of CMD among university students in health courses.

be observed soon after the student enters the university, being more frequent in university students in the health area, as they have to learn daily to deal with pain.⁹ It states that depression is more prevalent among medical courses and other areas of health.¹⁰

In view of the studies, it was seen that there is a divergence among some authors regarding the prevalence of CMD among university students in health courses. The highest levels of anxiety and depression are among female medical students.¹¹ The main psychic disorders triggered in a university environment are depression and anxiety. Among medical students, the greatest evidence was anxiety with (41,4%), followed by depression (8,2%) and simultaneous depression and anxiety (7,0%). Still with the same author, the prevalence of depression among students

as a whole was 28,6%, varying between mild, moderate and severe symptoms. The prevalence of anxiety among students was 36,1%.¹²

The CMD index, mainly depression and anxiety found in university students, is high, even higher than that found in the general population, and students in the first years of college have a greater degree of anxiety and depression symptoms. An analysis of data was made from questionnaires and it was observed that depression was the most prevalent mental disorder. Of these students 14% suffered from symptoms of depression, 3% with anxiety symptoms and 3% eating disorders. Still with the same author, it can be shown that depression harms students, as it significantly influences low academic performance.¹³

Category II – Factors associated with the risk of depression and anxiety in the university environment.

Admission to the university can subject students to specific stressors, leaving this population vulnerable to the development of some mental disorders such as anxiety, depression and stress. Mental health would be a mental stability between internal feelings and external experiences. Overworking academic demands and uncertainties of the future professional can generate a state of physical and psychological fatigue, devastating the mental balance and making the individual distressed, depressed, nervous and neurotic.¹⁴

Common mental disorders involving the university population are often acquired through academic pressure and overload, with fatigue, insomnia, irritability and difficulty in concentrating as main elements. 15 Studies show that 18,5% to 44,9% of Brazilian university students, mainly in the health field, have CMD variations.²

Factors such as dissatisfaction with the course, insufficient amount of hours of sleep, unsatisfactory relationship with classmates and teachers are associated with a higher prevalence of depression

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among students. He also pointed out that religion, income, relationship with fellow students, age group, payment method for the course, if he drinks, smokes, marital status are factors that do not have significant associations with the presence of depression. In the case of anxiety, factors such as female gender, insomnia, concern about the future, not practicing physical activity, unsatisfactory relationships with family members, friends and colleagues are significantly associated with the prevalence of anxiety.¹⁶

Students in the health field have a higher prevalence of mental illness, and mentioned that one of the risk factors for CMD in this population is the period of the course in which the student is, considering that the initial period is marked by the substitution of high school for the superior and for the first contact with professional practice, while the last period is marked by the process of abandoning the student role and entering the job market. Academic demands are also significant factors that can impact the mental health of this group, aspects such as the high workload of study,¹⁷ financial resources, expenses with work, lack of leisure time, quality of sleep, and course load the degree of demand in the training process, and new demands for time planning and study, become stress points that are experienced with great intensity by the student.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

This review made it possible to highlight the prevalence of CMD among university students, showing that depression and anxiety are in high prevalence. The analysis of the risk factors that most related to psychological distress among university students was academic pressure and overload, dissatisfaction with the course, unsatisfactory relationships with colleagues and teachers, living far from the family, in addition to academic and relational life, which were more often associated with the presence of psychological distress among university students. It

is important to carry out more studies of this nature in view of the prevalence of depressive factors in university students, having characterized the problem that affects all social classes and that requires greater attention. ■

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