



QUALITY OF LIFE AND MENTAL HEALTH OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To analyze the scientific production related to the quality of life and mental health of university students. **Methods:** This is an integrative review, focusing on the LILACS, SciELO, Index Psychology and BDEF databases, with the association of the descriptors mental health, quality of life, students and university students. In the sample, papers written in full, in Portuguese, were included in the period from 2012 to 2018. Results: Of the 180 articles identified, only twenty-two referred to the theme, all articles presented a quantitative approach and they made use of evaluation tools, the most cited tool was Whoqol-Bref. **Conclusion:** it was verified the presence of stress and low quality of life indicators in different grades, highlighting publications referring to the nursing course. In view of the findings, it is recommended that the theme should still be studied, beyond to the development of measures that promote health in the university.

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INTRODUCTION

Given the increase of young people in Brazilian universities, in the last decade, according to data from the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Brazil, 2016), it is essential to discuss the meaning of Quality of Life, as well as its configuration and subjective expression. Thus, with the growth of the university population, reflections are raised, due to the greater heterogeneity regarding the characteristics of students, as well as the academic or psychosocial needs presented (Wanderei; Costa, 2015). The feelings experienced by students may indicate a risk situation for the development of mental disorders (Silva; Costa, 2015), considering that university students are considered a special social investment group in the country, it is necessary to undertake studies focused on this area, giving emphasis on the

most vulnerable dimensions at this stage of life, in order to identify the factors that predispose to the occurrence of mental health problems (Padovani *et al.*, 2014). Studies on university students have been increasing in recent decades, and some of these studies have analyzed students' health and its relationship with the university context (Souza, Baptista & Baptista, 2015; Bolsoni-Silva, Loureiro, 2016). Thus, the national literature draws attention to the observation of reports of suffering, such as negative experiences, feelings of nervousness, depression, discouragement, which may affect concentration in studies, and compromising mental and emotional health, as well as affecting quality of life. Related to health (Artigas; Moreira; Campos, 2017). Entering the university life is a moment of change, expectations and difficulties. During this period, the university student is submitted to a series of challenges. Thus, academic life is hectic, causing these individuals to receive a load of new information that forces them to live in search of updating and requiring adaptations, which can lead to physical and emotional wear (Borine; Wanderley; Bassitti, 2015).

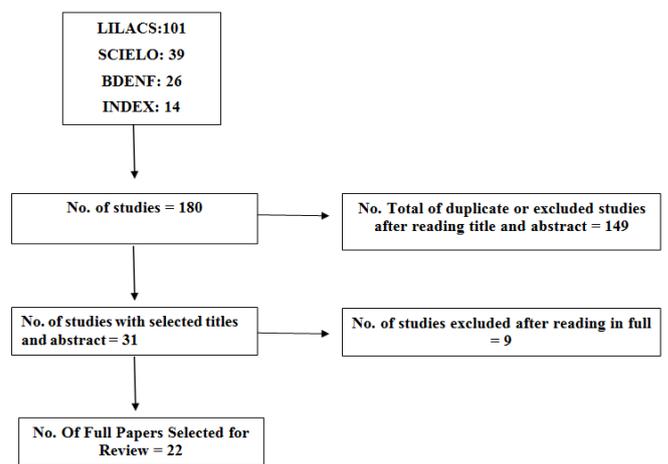
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Given the above, it is indispensable to expand the research, highlighting the need to understand how the quality of life is related to the mental health of college students. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the knowledge about the way young people experience the university, the difficulties faced and the repercussions of this experience. Thus, it aims to analyze the scientific evidence about the quality of life and mental health of college students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is an integrative review, a method that provides the synthesis of knowledge on a given theme, systematically in order to identify the gaps in scientific production (Ercole; Melo; Alcoforado, 2014). The research followed the six suggested steps for method development, theme identification and selection of the research question; establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria; identification of pre-selected studies and definition of information to be extracted; evaluation and categorization of included studies; analysis and interpretation of results and presentation of the review (Ganong, 1987; Botelho; Cunha; Macedo, 2011). Given this context and the pertinence of understanding the possible interferences of the academic formation process in the quality of life of undergraduate students, the following guiding question was elaborated for the research: What is the knowledge produced about the Quality of Life and Mental Health of university students? For this purpose, articles were searched in the Online Scientific Electronic Library (SCIELO), Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS) and BDEFN and INDEX databases. In the SCIELO, LILACS and BDEFN databases, the association between the descriptors "University Students" OR "University" OR "Academic" AND "Mental Health" AND "University Students" OR "University" OR "Academic" AND "Quality of Life" was used. "While for the INDEX database the association of the descriptors "University Students" AND "Mental Health" and "University Students" AND "Quality of Life" was used.

In order to identify relevant and up-to-date productions, we used the full-text articles available in the Brazilian Portuguese language, and with the timeframe for the years 2012 to 2018. Excluded were: duplicate productions, integrative reviews, epidemiological bulletins and studies that did not address a relevant theme within the scope of the research objective. Articles that were restricted to the quality of life of students using psychoactive substances were also removed. The research included the analysis of 22 articles, divided between five from SCIELO, 11 from LILACS, five from Index Psychology and three from BDEFN. At SCIELO two articles were in the group "University Students" OR "University" OR "Academic" AND "Mental Health" and three articles in the group "University Students" OR "University" OR "Academic" AND "Quality of Life". In LILACS two articles were in the group "University Students" OR "University" OR "academics" AND "mental health". In the index Psychology had an article in the group "University Students" OR "University" OR "Academic" AND "Quality of Life" and four in the group "University Students" OR "University" OR "Academic" AND "Mental Health", Na BDEFN Three articles were present in the grouping "University Students" OR "University" OR "Academic" AND "Quality of Life", presented in Figure 1.



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure . Sample presentation from selected articles after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, Sobral, Ceará, Brazil 2019

In order to enable the analysis of the articles, an instrument was built that made it possible to systematize some information considered important in the productions found, such as article title, database, year of publication, objective and results (Chart 1). Subsequently, the theoretical deepening was performed from the existing literature. After analysis of the articles, the most important information was condensed, the results constructed, and the discussion from the relevant literature.

RESULTS

The 22 articles selected for the research were divided among different journals, and it was not possible to establish a concentration of the theme in specific journals. Regarding the year of publication, 2016 had the largest number of publications, totaling seven. In 2014 and 2018 four studies were analyzed per year, while in 2017 three articles were analyzed, 2015 two articles, 2012 and 2013 contributed one publication each. The articles are authored by different professionals: nursing, medicine, social sciences, demonstrating that the concept of Quality of Life and Mental Health is widely worked by several professionals. These concepts have received increasing attention in the various literary and scientific productions of areas such as Sociology, Education, Medicine, Nursing, Psychology and other specialties, besides the evidence in the media, thus becoming a prominent theme in society. current. Despite a number of publications, most studies have an exploratory quantitative cross-sectional approach in which data are collected at a single moment without future interventions. Only one article presented an intervention strategy, acting on anxiety symptoms and quality of life factors (Lantyer *et al.*, 2016). In order to assist in the analysis, a table was built that summarizes the main characteristics of the articles.

Academic environment as an influencing factor in the quality of life of university students: Academic experience can be potentially detrimental to students' quality of life. The impact of experience on students is an important research focus, as it demonstrates the consequences of the association between stressors, poor quality of life, and the appearance of mental health problems. It is evidenced in the publications that the low quality of life is related to the consequences caused by the process of adaptation to higher education, because at this

Chart 1. Characterization of the manuscripts included according to title, authors, journal, database, objectives and results. Sobral, Ceará, Brazil 2019

Title	Authors, journal, year and database	Objective	Main Results
1- Perception about quality of life of undergraduate nursing students	Bampi LNS, Baraldi S, Guilhem D, Pompeu RB, Campos ACO Rev Gaúcha de Enfer. 2013SCIELO	Know the perception about the quality of life of nursing undergraduates.	Concentration, sleep, daily energy degree, ability to perform activities, leisure opportunities were shown to be compromised.
2-Factors perceived by nursing students as triggers of stress in the formative environment.	Hirsch CD, Barlem ELD; Almeida LK, Tomaszewski-Barlem JG, Lunardi VL, Ramos AM Texto e Contexto -enfer. 2018. SCIELO	Identify the factors perceived by nursing students as stress triggers	Difficulties in the relationships established between students and teachers were related to feelings of poor academic quality.
3- Quality of life in students entering physical education courses	Claumann GS, Maccari FE, Ribovski M, Pinto AA, Felden EPG; Pelegrini A J of Physical Education. 2017. SCIELO	Analyze the quality of life of students entering Physical Education courses	Differences in quality of life were observed. The physically active, have superior quality of life.
4- Positive mental health assessment of nursing students	Ferreira MS, Cortez EA, Silva JLM, Ferreira MJ Rev Port Enfer de Saúde Mental. 2016. SCIELO	Evaluate the positive mental health of nursing students.	Nursing students have difficulty coping with stress
5- Quality of life perception in university students: comparison between undergraduate periods	Artigas JS, Moreira NB; Campos W Arq. ciên saúde UNIPAR, 2017. LILACS	To compare the perception of health-related quality of life among first and last year students of Physical Education	The findings show that the perception of quality of life for independent students has similar values
6-Quality of life of nursing students	Araujo MAN, Filho WDL, Leite LRC, Regiane TR, Silva AA, Souza JC Rev Rene, 2014. LILACS	Evaluate the quality of life of nursing students	The 3rd and 2nd year students had the lowest Quality of Life scores.
7- Stress in the daily life of nursing undergraduates of a federal institute of education	Santana LL, Beljaki WD; Gobatto M, Raeffner R, Antonacci MH Rev enferm. Cent.-Oeste Min, 2018. LILACS	Identify stress levels and characterize symptoms among undergraduate nursing students	73.7% of students have some level of stress, especially symptoms in the resistance phase, predominating psychological symptoms,
8-University student quality of life and academic achievement	Langame AP, Chehuen Neto JA, Melo LNB, Castelano ML, Cunha M Rev bras promoç. Saúde, 2016. LILACS	To characterize the quality of life of Students from the areas of human, exact and health, related to academic performance	The area of human sciences presented the highest average values in all domains except the environment domain.
9- Comparative study on sleep quality among university students from a southern Santa Catarina educational institution	Fonseca ALP, Zeni LB, Flügel NT, Sakae TM, Remor KVT ACM Arq catarin. Med, 2015. LILACS	Study the sleep quality of 309 medical, civil engineering and law students	It was found that Medicine had 64.7% of students with bad sleep quality, in Law, 60.3% and, in Civil Engineering, 44.6% of students.
10- Factors associated with short sleep duration in incoming university students	Felden EPG, Junior GJF, Andrade RD, Claumann GS, Pelegrini A, Teixeira CS Rev bras ciênc Mov, 2015. LILACS	Analyze short sleep duration in university students newcomers and associations with sociodemographic factors	High prevalence of low sleep duration, poor sleep quality and excessive daytime sleepiness.
11- Prevalence of depression cases in nursing students at a teaching institution in Brasília	Camargo RM, Sousa CO, Oliveira MLC Reme- rev min Enferm, 2014. LILACS	Identify cases of depression and prevalence levels in nursing students	All have symptoms of depression. (62.6%) had minimal depression, (25.2%) mild to moderate, (10.9%) moderate to severe depression.
12- Lifestyle indicators and negative self-rated health in university students of a public institution in northeastern Brazil	Silva DAS Rev bras. ativ. fis. Saúde, 2012. LILACS	To determine lifestyle indicators associated with negative self-assessment in Physical Education students.	20% of the students had negative self-rated health associated with lifestyle.
13- Stress among undergraduate nursing students at a public university	Mota NIF, Alves ERP, Leite GO, Sousa BSMA, Filha MOF, Dias MD SMAD, Rev. eletrônica saúde mental álcool drog, 2016. LILACS	Estimate stress level and symptomatology presented by nursing students at a public university	49.7% of the students had symptoms of stress, with most individuals attending the 8th and 9th periods. Psychological symptoms were more present (50.7%).
14- Assessment of Lifestyle in University Health Students through the Fantastic Questionnaire.	Tassini CC, Val GR; Candido SS, Bachur CK Int J cardiovasc. Sci, 2017. LILACS	To compare the determinants of quality of life from the Fantastic questionnaire among health students.	The domains that need the most change are related to Physical Activity and drugs and alcohol.
15- Quality of life: perception of undergraduate nursing students	Pereira MO, Pinho PH, Cortes J M J nurs. Health, 2016. BDEF	Analyze the perception of quality of life of nursing students	41.67% and 38.33% thought they were dependent on medication use and medical help, respectively.
16- Quality of life of nursing students from Amazonas, Brazil	Gama ASM Rev baiana enferm, 2016. BDEF	To evaluate the quality of life of nursing students at a university in the state of Amazonas	The domains with the highest and lowest mean scores were, respectively, social relations (71.2) and physical domain (57.4).
17- Perception of stress in nursing students.	Preto VA, Garcia VP, Araújo LG, Flauzino MM, Teixeira CC, Parmegiane RS Rev enferm. UFPE, 2018. BDEF	To evaluate the perception of stress in low, medium and high in nursing students.	Most students (63 = 46.3%) have a medium perception of stress.
18- Prevalence of stress symptoms among undergraduates of a public university	Lameu JN, Salazar TL, Souza WF Psicol educ, 2016. INDEX PSICOLOGIA	To evaluate the prevalence of stress symptoms among undergraduate students.	Higher occurrence of stress in students who have less contact with family. The high prevalence of students in the resistance phase with psychological symptoms.
19- University student psychological vulnerability and well-being	Padovani RC, Neufeld CB, Maltoni J, Barbosa LNF, Souza WF, Cavalcante HAF Rev bras ter cogn, 2014. INDEX PSICOLOGIA	Identify indicators of psychological vulnerability and well-being in university students from six educational institutions	42.7% of students have symptoms of stress in the resistance phase and 13.5% have anxiety symptoms.
20- The impact of depression on social interactions of college students	Bolsoni-Silva AT, Guerra BT Estud. pesqui. psicol. 2014. INDEX PSICOLOGIA	Compare a group of university students and social skills responses.	University students with depression have significant social skills deficit.
21- Anxiety and Quality of Life Among Incoming University Students: Assessment and Intervention	Lantyer AS, Varanda CC, Souza FG, Padovani RC, Viana MB Rev bras ter comport cogn, 2016. INDEX PSICOLOGIA	To evaluate anxiety and quality of life among health university students at a public university.	The university students had higher anxiety and worse scores in different domains of Quality of Life.
22- Quality of life in university travelers from the interior of Ceará	Moura DPF, Silva LF, Sousa EMP, Costa TM Rev Psicol, 2018. INDEX PSICOLOGIA	To evaluate the quality of life of university students from the interior of Ceará.	Quality of life was impaired, and some of the variables involved

time young people are going through several new situations. Although this adaptive commitment is evident in the first semesters, in the other undergraduate years a progressive health impairment is identified, suggesting that, as the student comes into contact with the specific disciplines of the course, emotional conflicts tend to emerge (Lantyer *et al.*, 2016; Mota *et al.*, 2016). The publications emphasize the major transformations brought about by university entry. Among the significant changes are the establishment of new affective bonds, doubts, greater responsibilities, adjustments to the learning mechanism, double or triple journey and social interaction (Lantyer *et al.*, 2016). Thus, the articles stimulate a reflection about lifestyle and obligations during this period, which may root unhealthy behaviors for working life. In the literature, studies indicate that student entry into the university is associated with strong pressure to meet expectations, and that these can generate a state of anxiety and stress, which are risk factors for negative lifestyle changes. In the academic context, external stressors such as assessments and deadlines can be found, and internal stressors such as lack of assertiveness, relationship difficulties and self-esteem (Lameu; Salazar; Souza, 2016).

Research provides important information that can assist in the orientation and planning of university intervention projects, stimulating reflections and changes in student behaviors and university organization, emphasizing the need for studies on mechanisms that assist academic adaptation (Oliveira; Padovani, 2014). The term "Quality of Life" is a concept analyzed in different areas, highlighting that this is a varied expression of meanings, considering its subjective, complex and with different possibilities of focus. In view of this, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines Quality of Life as the perception of individuals about their position in life, culture and value systems in life, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns (Organização Mundial da Saúde, 1995). The publications with the concept of quality of life refer to the one proposed by the WHO, however, it has been evident articles that perform their analysis on the consequences caused by the quality of life on the mental health of different social actors, among them, the student public. For this purpose, they make use of other health constructs, such as well-being, health-related Quality of Life (Artigas; Moreira; Campos, 2017), positive mental health (Ferreira *et al.*, 2016), health perception (Silva, 2012), indicating in fact that the concept is embracing.

With the association between Quality of Life and individual perception of health, it was identified that 20% of the students had negative self-perception, being the highest prevalence found due to problems related to sleep and lack of physical activity practices. Thus, in general terms, the students report not being satisfied with their quality of life, especially the undergraduates in the health area, who despite having greater clarification on the adoption of healthy habits, seem not to put into practice the knowledge acquired (Baraldi *et al.*, 2015). The literature states (Castro *et al.*, 2017) that the practice of physical activity among undergraduates is declining with the progress of semesters, indicating that with the increasing demand for academic activities, the number of students who report physical inactivity and consequently problems increases of health. Research using Whoqol bref identified in general terms that the Environment domain, which covers the facets linked to the presence of financial resources, physical environment and transportation, had the lowest average,

conjecturing that the low score in this domain is related. financial difficulties and precarious public transport that students face. The highest average was found in the Social Relations domain, indicating that in academic experience, despite difficulties, friendships, and social support facilitates the confrontation of obstacles (Gama, 2016; Moura, 2018). The publications highlight the interest in understanding the factors that affect the quality of life of nursing students. Thus, the category emerges in publications that focus mostly on the intensified academic overload during supervised practical classes, and that such learning circumstances are exhausting and reducing the perspective of quality of life, being susceptible to general health problems. such as stress, poor sleep quality, pain and depression (Pereira; Pinho; Cortes, 2016). Although nursing emerges in publications, other categories are also relevant, including physical education (Claumann *et al.*, 2017; Castro *et al.*, 2017).

Mental Health Contributions to University Students:

Regarding the mental health assessment instruments found in the publications, the Lipp Adult Stress Symptom Inventory (Lameu; Salazar; Souza, 2016), Perceived Stress Scale (Mota *et al.*, 2016; Preto *et al.*, 2018), Beck Anxiety and Depression Inventory (Padovani *et al.*, 2014; Camargo; Sousa; Oliveira, 2014) and Stress Assessment Scale in Nursing Students (Hirsch *et al.*, 2018). Stress is one of the recurring problems that affect and sick college students. Thus, stress is defined as a set of reactions of the organism, capable of disturbing the internal balance, constituting a physical and emotional reaction to any situation that presents a challenge (Lameu; Salazar; Souza, 2016). Thus, the literature exposes the impacts on social context and daily life caused by stress, characterized mostly by depressive and anxious symptoms, which negatively affect mental health (Beiter *et al.*, 2015). The productions emphasize that the female audience has the highest percentages of mental illness, a fact that is reinforced by the scientific productions that prove in women the prevalence of anxiety (Lantyer *et al.*, 2016), stress (Tassini *et al.*, 2017) and depression (Padovani *et al.*, 2014). In view of this, it is identified that regardless of the degree graduated, women had lower scores on the variables, functional capacity; pain; general state of health; social aspects; emotional and mental health (Lantyer *et al.*, 2016). The undergraduate area is also the object of study, thus it is identified that health students are more vulnerable to mental problems when compared to other graduations, constituting a group with special attention, because these professionals will be responsible for the health care of the population (Gama, 2016). Thus, the prevalence of disorders in health students (56.3%) was identified, while in the areas of basic, exact and technological sciences presented low prevalence (4.7%) (Bolsoni-Silva, Guerra, 2014).

Despite the institutional differences of each higher education center, it is identifiable that, regardless of the Brazilian state in which the student is located, there are worrying levels of general mental health problems. With regard to stress symptoms, the female audience emerges as the major predictors of severe symptoms, consequently also the worst indicators of Quality of Life (Lameu; Salazar; Souza, 2016). Among the various studies, the presence of stress in academics dealing with human suffering, such as nursing, stands out. Thus, such students have been the focus of several analyzes aimed at identifying the main stressors in the daily teaching routine (Hirsch *et al.*, 2018; Ximenes Neto *et al.*, 2018). The scientific production related to nursing students shows that

since their entry into higher education, until their completion, they have their mental health affected, especially due to an increasing degree of difficulty related to situations involving death, lived insecurities. in theoretical-practical activities and entering the labor market, which may determine existential crises (Esperidião *et al.*, 2013). During college several factors are associated with the development of psychological stress, such as loss of pre-existing social support; frustration with academic challenges, teacher behavior, demand to be successful and competitiveness. In general, cognitive difficulties, feelings of sadness, hopelessness, low esteem, emotional lability, mood changes, depression, anxiety, irritability, apathy, tics, relationship problems and anxiety disorders are also present (Beiter *et al.*, 2015).

Thus, the university population presents a significant portion of students with stress in the resistance phase, with a predominance of psychological symptoms when compared to physical and mixed symptoms. Among the most frequent physical symptoms are tiredness, tiredness, difficulty concentrating and sleep disorders sono (Padovani *et al.*, 2014; Santana *et al.*, 2018; Mota *et al.*, 2016; Lameu; Salazar; Souza, 2016). The low quality of sleep was another aspect present in the publications, indicating that students have wide difficulties in reconciling their academic activities and maintaining a pace and quality appropriate to their needs. In general terms, most articles reflect on the need for adequate sleep patterns, as strategies for maintaining Mental Health(Fonseca *et al.*, 2015; Felden *et al.*, 2015; Tassini *et al.*, 2017; Castro *et al.*, 2017; Andrade *et al.*, 2016). Undergraduates are susceptible to develop sleep deprivation, since, besides facing a great curricular load in search of a good professional qualification, they complement the course with extracurricular activities. When there is a change in the sleep cycle, the studies negatively affect mood, causing stress (Bampi *et al.*, 2013; Martini *et al.*, 2012) and as students progress in undergraduate periods, students tend to have less sleep (Castro *et al.*, 2017). Another relevant factor to Mental Health is related to the presence and family life. Family support consists of a ndicator of protection against mental illness as well, can moderate the effect of stress and other mental health problems. The type of housing was also the object of analysis, with a higher prevalence of stress found in students living in private residences, such as student republics, and lower prevalence among those living with their families (Wang *et al.*, 2014; Souza; Baptista & Baptista, 2015).

By demanding new demands from students, the university can intensify aversive social interactions with stressors, which in turn can aggravate existing problems or increase the likelihood of them occurring. In terms of behavior, he concludes that public speaking and dealing with criticism are the largest deficits in the social repertoires of undergraduates, influencing the onset of anxiety and depressive disorders. Thus, scientific evidence shows that depressive signs indicate a serious problem (Camargo; Sousa; Oliveira, 2014; Bolsoni-Silva; Guerra, 2014). Finally, the literature emphasizes the university's role in providing a space for socialization in the academic environment, enabling students to seek an improvement in social life, as well as emphasizing the need for the use of different therapeutic techniques that help them psychologically and pedagogically, with emphasis prevention and mental health problems (Padovani *et al.*, 2014; Lantyer *et al.*, 2016).

Conclusion

Several studies have shown that circumstances that do not promote the quality of life of undergraduate courses can trigger intense health problems, including the increased risk of developing mental disorders. It is concluded that it is necessary to invest in strategies that enable the promotion of the health of the academic during their education so that, in their professional life, they have a greater balance. This review identified how mental health and quality of life have been worked on in the publications, identifying factors that compromise mental health and, in turn, encouraging actions that promote well-being in the university environment, given the growing number of studies that indicate be the mental illness of this audience. Thus, the need to implement emotional support projects is emphasized, aiming to offer support in order to prevent and reduce situations that compromise health. There was a significant amount of publications on this subject, indicating that this is a relevant and necessary theme. However, it is important to highlight that, although the studies indicate several manifestations associated with mental suffering, there is a shortage of offers of actions and services of psychotherapeutic care to students. Therefore, it would be appropriate for educational institutions to put in place a psychological support program aimed at academics, in order to act also in their psychological formation. It is hoped that the results found in this study may expand the possibilities for improvement in the organization of undergraduate courses, with the aim of making the academic environment less stressful. It is important to implement strategies that support the student, since the presence of stress can compromise their learning, performance, influencing their quality of life. Thus, it is indicated that further research can be performed, reducing possible limitations regarding databases.

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