

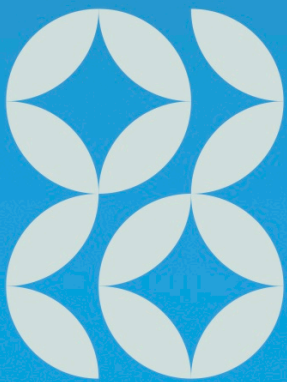
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among Nursing students at the
Bacabal Campus – MA

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ABSTRACT

The mental health of Nursing students has become a matter of growing concern, especially in light of clear signs of psychological distress in everyday academic life. Heavy course loads, social pressures, unemployment, low salaries and the ongoing devaluation of the profession contribute to rising rates of anxiety and depression among these students. Moreover, the lack of emotional and institutional support further aggravates this scenario, calling for urgent measures by educational institutions, such as the implementation of extension projects, the creation of academic leagues and the provision of activities aimed at well-being. This article aims to analyze the main factors that influence the high rates of mental distress among Nursing students. It is an exploratory literature review, carried out in May 2025. The results indicate that, particularly in the first years of the undergraduate program, students show high levels of mental distress, related to academic overload, the transition to university life, social isolation and the

absence of psychological support. It is concluded that the promotion of mental health should be an institutional priority, with effective strategies for welcoming students and providing them with comprehensive care.

Keywords: Mental health. Nursing students. Anxiety. Depression. Higher Education.

1 INTRODUCTION

The mental health of university students has emerged as a prominent topic in contemporary discussions on higher education, especially in health-related programs such as Nursing. These programs demand from students not only high academic performance but also intense emotional involvement, which may trigger or worsen conditions of psychological distress.

During their Nursing education, students are subjected to an exhausting routine of theoretical classes, internships, practical assignments and constant assessments, in addition to early contact with situations of pain, suffering and death. Such factors make these students more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, chronic stress and other mental disorders (OLIVEIRA et al., 2021).

In addition, socioeconomic challenges stand out, such as the difficulty of entering the job market, the low recognition of the profession and financial instability, which contribute to a scenario of emotional vulnerability. In this context, it becomes urgent to reflect on the causes and consequences of these students' mental illness, proposing strategies that support their continued enrollment at the university with quality and health.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study is an exploratory literature review, qualitative in nature, carried out in May 2025. The SciELO, LILACS and Google Scholar databases were consulted, using the descriptors: "mental health", "Nursing students", "anxiety", "depression" and "higher education".

Scientific articles published between 2019 and 2025, in Portuguese, that directly addressed aspects related to the mental health of Nursing students were included. The extracted data were analyzed in light of the specialized literature, seeking to identify the main factors associated with psychological distress in the academic context.

3 DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Academic pressure and adaptation to university

The transition from secondary school to higher education represents a significant rupture in students' lives. Many young people face, for the first time, the need for self-management, financial and emotional responsibilities, as well as the demand for high academic performance.

In the Nursing program, this reality is even more intense, given the practical, technical and emotional nature of the training. Adapting to this new routine can cause feelings of frustration, insecurity and discouragement, especially when the student lacks family or institutional support (PEREIRA et al., 2022).

3.2 Anxiety and depression as a response to the academic environment

Recent studies indicate that Nursing students show significantly higher rates of anxiety and depression compared with other fields of knowledge. The first semesters tend to be the most critical, as this is when students face a reality different from their initial expectations, in addition to insecurities about their professional future (SILVA; COSTA, 2023).

Such symptoms directly affect academic performance, motivation to study and students' quality of life. In more severe cases, they may culminate in dropping out of the program or in psychological illness requiring medical intervention.

3.3 Lack of emotional and institutional support

The absence of effective mental health policies within universities represents one of the main weaknesses faced by students. Lack of access to psychologists, the absence of support programs and unawareness of available support services are some of the factors that contribute to the persistence of distress (ALMEIDA et al., 2020).

Qualified listening, psycho-pedagogical follow-up and the creation of safe spaces for dialogue are fundamental practices for preventing mental disorders from worsening.

3.4 Intervention proposals and promotion of well-being

Various strategies can be adopted by institutions to strengthen their students' mental health. Extension projects focused on self-care, therapeutic workshops, discussion circles, the promotion of integrative and complementary practices, as well as the creation of thematic academic leagues, have proven effective in building more welcoming academic environments (MOURA; FERREIRA, 2021).

Encouraging active listening by professors and program coordinators is also essential for the early identification of signs of psychological distress and for referring students to the appropriate services.

4 CONCLUSION

The mental health of Nursing students at the Bacabal-MA Campus proves to be weakened by multiple factors, such as academic overload, social distancing, uncertainty about their professional future and the absence of institutional support. Everyday life in the program demands emotional and physical preparation, as well as an environment that offers support and a sense of welcome.

It is essential that universities adopt permanent policies to promote mental health, offering accessible psychological support and preventive strategies. Fostering a more empathetic and supportive university environment contributes not only to academic success but also to training professionals who are healthier and better prepared for the challenges of the profession.

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