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Quality Of Life and Academic Performance In Higher Education: A Scoping Review

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Summary:

The aim of this study was to review the literature exploring the axes of "quality of life and academic performance" through a scoping review of the last 20 years. This is a Scoping Review study, according to the review method proposed by the Joanna Briggs Institute, and a systematic search was carried out in the databases Periódicos da Capes, Education Resources Information Center - Eric, Scientific Electronic Library On-line - Scielo, SCOPUS, Web of Science, Periódicos Eletrônicos em Psicologia (PePSIC), American Psychological Association (APA PsycInfo), using the descriptors "Qualidade de vida" "desempenho acadêmico" and "ensino superior" defined on the basis of the Descritores em Ciências da Saúde (DeCS) and Thesaurus (Eric). A total of 269 articles on the subject were found, of which 16 formed part of the study. Most of them were quantitative (87.5%) and were carried out on the American continent (50%). Among the concepts that permeate quality of life and academic performance are life satisfaction, psychological and physical health, and academic self-efficacy. It is concluded that more longitudinal and qualitative studies should be carried out on the subject, as well as the development of quality of life programs for academics, reducing school dropout and improving students' academic performance.

Keywords: Quality of life; Academic performance; Higher education; Psychology; Health; Education.

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I. Introduction

The great expansion of higher education and universities in Brazil has been accompanied by major challenges linked to the permanence and completion of students in undergraduate courses, since entering the academic world may require students to abandon their reality and family context, and that in a way these changes may require the student to make greater efforts and adaptations (CANAL; FIGUEIREDO, 2021; NIEROTKA, SALATA, E MARTINS, 2023).

The demands of new realities in university students' lives can influence their quality of life, and this habituation can cause damage to students, with academic failure being the most worrying (JOLY; PRATES, 2011; FIOR; MERCURI; SILVA, 2013). The number of absences, socioeconomic status, age, gender and parents' education are also related to aspects of the student's academic performance (ARAÚJO et al., 2013; RAMIREZ, 2014; NOGUEIRA; TSUNODA, 2015).

The concept of quality of life is multidimensional, encompassing aspects of the individual's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, living conditions and social relationships (RUIDIAZ-GÓMEZ; CACANTE-CABALLERO, 2021). Cruz and collaborators (2020) also add that quality of life is related to gender, income, period, student financing and ethnicity.

When it comes to quality of life at university, little attention has been paid to students' psychological abilities (THO, 2023). Among the psychological aspects that are important and possibly related to quality of life is academic performance, which is linked to factors related to the individual themselves and the environment in which they live, for example, affective-emotional factors (Nedel et al., 2020, SANTOS, 2013; GASPAROTTO, 2018). Cruz and colleagues (2020) point out that possible stress in academic life comes from

factors related to the environment, i.e. the university context. To mitigate this stress, dimensions such as good interpersonal relationships, positive feelings, spirituality, self-esteem, appearance and concentration are shown to be positive factors for academic performance (DA SILVA CRUZ et al., 2020).

Tho (2023) when studying psychological capital (PsyCap) in 806 business students recognized that students' PsyCap is "a psychological resource characterized by the positivity of an individual's self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience" (Luthans et al., 2015), and that these aspects can have a positive effect on the quality of university life, and with this, they suggest the contribution of universities to complement performance standards, with efforts to improve the quality of university life. As a result, it is possible to see that investigating the influence of quality of life on the academic performance of university students could be minimizing the negative impacts experienced by students (RODRIGUES; RIOS NETO; PINTO, 2011).

Duarte and Santos (2022) carried out a study with 105 physics students, centered around four axes: 1) school trajectory; 2) choice of course; 3) student experiences in higher education and 4) perceptions of retention; the findings suggested the development of an institutional pedagogical project, aimed at the first year of university, as this could contribute to increasing the academic success of these students and students from other degrees.

In light of the above, there is a need to broaden the discussion on ways to improve the well-being of academics, whether through regular activities that promote mood, as well as improving the occupational, student or domestic environment (DA SILVA CRUZ et al., 2020), as well as strategies that seek to strengthen academic self- concept (SARRIERA et al., 2015). Given that participation in extracurricular activities, network of friends, guidance received from the teaching staff, satisfaction with the chosen career, performance in subjects and socioeconomic situation are the predictors of whether students stay or drop out of universities (CANAL; FIGUEIREDO, 2021).

In addition, broadening the discussion on reducing school dropout combined with perspectives on the quality of academic life and academic performance can help managers, teachers and professionals working in educational support centers to improve student performance, providing the implementation of actions based on the needs evidenced (MARTINS; SANTOS, 2018). Proposing various strategies, for example, routine assessments of students and the methodology used by teachers, to enable the development of indicators of the needs of the academic body, proposing the creation of strategies to promote quality of life, reflecting on personal, student and occupational well- being (Cruz et al., 2020), focused on physical and mental health and emphasizing the importance of social relationships (Silva et al., 2021).

A study of 285 psychology students in Great Britain came to the conclusion that universities need to provide more support to students, due to the stress presented by adaptive changes when entering university, as depressed students would have better academic results if they had supportive institutional relationships (Spence et al., 2022).

Tindle et al. (2022) identified that psychosocial factors can affect a student's adaptation to university, but added that there is a need for a more systematic approach in order to define and provide a more robust theoretical framework, encouraging the emergence of new research that explores the possible impact of these psychosocial variables on quality of life, and also emphasized that these variables in academic populations are little studied.

Based on the above, there is a need for more research in this area of study, since there are few results showing the relationship between quality of life and academic performance in higher education students, especially in Brazil. It is also necessary to broaden the vision of teachers and educational managers to see this problem, with the aim of implementing actions that help university students to successfully complete their academic training, and thus offer the job market trained professionals who are satisfied with their chosen profession.

Therefore, the following question arises: "What does the current literature indicate about the quality of life and academic performance of higher education students?"

To answer this question, this study aimed to review the literature exploring the axes of "quality of life and academic performance" through a scoping review of the last 20 years.

II. Material And Methods

This is a Scoping Review study, according to the review method proposed by the Joanna Briggs Institute (AROMATARIS; MUNN, 2020). This method makes it possible to identify the types of evidence available in a given field or to identify the main characteristics or factors related to a concept. A systematized search was carried out based on research dealing with the variables quality of life and academic performance in the student population, relating characteristics such as public and private universities, areas and departments, age and gender, as well as the methodologies used in the studies.

The aim was to observe a possible scientific gap in the combination of these variables in the studies. To construct the research question, the population, concept and context (pcc) strategy was used for a scoping

review. The following were defined: p - studies on quality of life and academic performance; C - Student population; C - Areas of study: Public and Private Universities/ or specific training area.

Based on these definitions, the following guiding questions were established: 1) What articles have been published on self-perceived quality of life and academic performance in higher education students in the last 20 years?

2) What methodologies, objectives and instruments were observed in these articles? 3) What areas of publication and fields of application of quality of life and academic performance in higher education were investigated in these articles?

This systematized search used the Rayyan QCRI program, developed by the Qatar Computing Research Institute, which is specifically geared towards peer review and aims to support the researcher in the systematized search. This method makes it possible to identify the types of evidence available in a given field, the main characteristics and factors related to a concept.

To systematize the search for materials, seven indexed databases were chosen, commonly used in reviews and research carried out in the field of psychology and education: Periódicos da Capes, Education Resources Information Center - Eric, Scientific Electronic Library On-line - Scielo, SCOPUS, Web of Science, Periódicos Eletrônicos em Psicologia (PePSIC), American Psychological Association (APA PsycInfo).

Descriptors in English, Portuguese and Spanish were used for each parameter. The search terms followed the standards defined on the basis of the Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS) and Thesaurus (Eric) . To increase the sensitivity and specificity of the search, the Boolean operators AND (delimiter) and OR (additive) were used.

The descriptors and their combination used in the search strategies are shown in Table 1.

Chart 1- Queer scoping review on quality of life and academic performance in higher education

Combination	Queer
1	("Quality of Life" OR "Calidad de Vida" OR "Qualidade de vida") AND ("Academic Performance" OR "Desempeño académico") AND ("Higher Education" OR "Enseñanza superior")

Source: The authors.

In addition to the "Queer" search, filters were applied: Open access articles, English/ Portuguese/ Spanish language and peer-reviewed.

The inclusion criteria were: time frame from January 2003 to October 2023, full text in English, Spanish or Portuguese, involving as participants, or as subjects of interest, higher education students from public or private universities and texts containing the keywords.

Exclusion criteria were: studies carried out outside the timeframe set for the search of scientific literature, other languages that did not match those set out in the inclusion criteria, texts not related to the topics covered in the paper (quality of life and academic performance).

The selection was carried out by two researchers, in three stages, first examining titles and abstracts, in the second stage we eliminated duplicate titles, abstracts that did not match the pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria, proceeding to read the full text to gather data and extract the results.

The main information from the articles was exported to a Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet. After reading all the articles that were found in full, only those that fit the study's theme and were peer-reviewed were kept, resulting in a final set of 16 articles for this study. Figure 1 shows the flowchart of the review process.

III. Results

Of the articles included in this review, 25% were carried out in Brazilian universities, 12.5% in the United States of America, and 6.25% for each of the following countries: Canada, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, Colombia, Qatar, Tehran and the Netherlands. In terms of continent, 50% of the studies were carried out on the American continent, 25% on the Asian continent and 25% on the European continent. Most of the articles used a quantitative methodology, 87.5% of the total (13 cross-sectional and one longitudinal), only 1 article was a review and another was qualitative. Information on authorship, type of study, sample, instruments used and the main topics discussed in the articles related to quality of life and academic performance in higher education is shown in Table 2.

Table 2- Summary of the articles included in this scoping review

No., Author, year, country.	Sample	Type of study, place of application	Instruments	Main related topics
1- Souza e Murgu, 2023, Brazil	29 publications	Integrative review, No location.	Prisma, systematized search, 4 databases	Academic adaptation, physical and mental health, dropout in higher education.
2- Obispo- Salazar et al., 2022, Colombia.	47 students, 19 women and 28 men.	Qualitative, Public University of Magdalena.	Focus Group	University programs for academic well-being, economic and psychosocial factors.
3- Azzi et al., 2022, Brazil	703 academics, 503 women and 200 men.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, 5 geographical areas of Brazilian territory.	WHOQOL-BREF and BS (BCSQ-12-SS)	Psychological disorders (depression/anxiety), Burnout, work and study.
4- March- Amengual et al, 2022, Spain.	506 academics, 178 men and 328 women	Quantitative, cross-sectional, public and private universities.	Brief Symptom Inventory, Global Severity Index Value, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBISS) and semester grade point averages	Burnout, psychological distress, depression.
5- Su et al., 2021, USA.	751 students, 380 women and 370 men.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, public, private and community universities.	Cumulative Stress Scale and WHOQOL-BREF	Stress, acculturation.
6- Barros, Menezes and Lins, 2019, Brazil	197 academics, 69 men and 128 women.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, Private University.	Veras-q questionnaire	Stress, sleep deprivation, academic pressure, overwork, exposure to suffering and death.
7- Van Der Heijden et al, 2018, Netherlands.	1378 academics, 979 women and 399 men.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, All Dutch Universities.	CSRQ, Chronic Sleep Reduction Questionnaire; LASSI, Learning and Study Strategies Inventory; PSQI, Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index; SBS, Sleep Beliefs Scale.	Chronic reduction in sleep, concentration on studies.
8- Al-Attayah and Mahasneh, 2018, Qatar.	70 academics, 31 men and 39 women.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, Qatar University.	Academic adaptation tool for university students, Quality of life questionnaire.	Academic adaptation, academic adjustment.
9- Antaramiam, 2017, USA	357 academics, 193 women and 164 men	Quantitative, cross-sectional, Mid- Atlantic Christian University	Life Satisfaction Scale; Involvement Questionnaire; Self- Efficacy Scale; Perceived Stress Scale; Achievement Goal Questionnaire; Average scores.	Satisfaction with life, academic self-efficacy, performance orientation, academic satisfaction.
10- Mirzazadeh et al, 2016, Tehran.	174 academics, 77 men and 97 women.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, Tehran University of Medical Sciences.	WHOQOL-BREF; Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT); Average scores.	Internet addiction, domains of quality of life.
11- Pedro, Leitão e Alves, 2016, Portugal.	719 academics, 482 women and 237 men.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, public universities in Portugal.	Questionnaire with closed and structured questions, using a 7-point Likert scale. (created by the authors)	University recommendation, university quality of life programs.
12- Denovan and Macaskill, 2016, United Kingdom.	192 academics, 33 men and 159 women	Quantitative, longitudinal, UK universities.	The Life Orientation Test; The Hope Trait Scale; The Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS); The 15-item Resilience Scale; The College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI); The Inventory of Recent Life Experiences of College Students; The Satisfaction with Life Scale (ESWLS); The Positive and Negative Affect	Life orientation, self- control and self- efficacy, academic alienation, life satisfaction.

			Schedule; Academic Performance	
13- Shareef et al, 2015, Saudi Arabia.	335 academics, 187 men and 148 women	Quantitative, cross-sectional, Private University.	WHOQOL-BREF	Quality of life and academic performance.
14- Tempski et al., 2015, Brazil	1350 students, 715 women and 635 men.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, Public University.	Wagnild and Young Resilience Scale (RS-14); Dundee Ready Educational Environment Measure (DREEM); WHOQOL-BREF; Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (IDATE).	Educational environment, depression, anxiety and resilience.
15- Gültekin and Dereboy, 2011, Turkey.	710 academics, 332 men and 368 women.	Quantitative, cross-sectional, Adnan Menderes University	Sociodemographic, Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale, Whoquol-bref, Instrument to assess identity confusion	Anxiety, identity formation, quality of life.
16- Chow, 2010, Canada.	501 academics, 147 men and 248 women.	Quantitative, Cross-sectional, University of Regina.	Questionnaire developed by the researcher.	Satisfaction with health, psychological well-being, educational aspirations, self-image, satisfaction with life.

Source: The authors, 2023.

It can be seen that the literature and debate on academic performance and its relationship with quality of life is recent. 50% (n=8) of the literature found in this review was published in the last 5 years. Another important factor is that 64.7% (n=11) of the studies address psychological aspects of academics, such as Burnout Syndrome, depression, anxiety, stress or self-efficacy and use specific instruments for each topic or even questionnaires constructed for the study (by the authors). These and other findings will be discussed below.

IV. Discussion

This discussion begins by answering the guiding questions. It can be seen that concern about the issue of quality of life in relation to academic performance is recent: half of the articles included in this review are from the last 5 years, and 87.5% of the studies are from the last 10 years. The recent concern about the academic performance and quality of life of higher education students may be linked to the large number of school dropouts in recent years (NIEROTKA, SALATA, E MARTINS, 2023).

Souza and Murgo (2023) report in their integrative review that academic adaptation is a predictor of academic performance, physical and mental health and student dropout. In this sense, the academic adaptation of students in higher education is of paramount importance for them to be able to graduate, because as Nierotka, Salata and Martins (2023) point out, the expansion of higher education, the increase in the volume of enrolments, and the access of people with social inequalities and from public schools is remarkable, however, universities have not prepared themselves to adapt the academic at the beginning of graduation, which for the study of Al-Attiyah and Mahasneh (2018) is called academic adjustment, and without this, the abandonment of the course is more recurrent. Su et al. (2021) point out that another preponderant factor for staying at university is acculturation, as many students leave their place of origin and their customs to spend their academic time away from their parents and their local culture.

One of the possibilities for academic adjustment or adaptation is the development of programs within the university for this purpose (AL-ATTIYAH and MAHASNEH, 2018, PEDRO, LEITÃO and ALVES, 2016). In the study by Obispo-Salazar et al. (2022) in Colombia, they indicate that university well-being programs can have positive implications for academic performance, as the benefits are to the extent that the programs help to reduce economic problems and strengthen psychosocial factors.

When dealing with psychosocial issues, there is a notable concern in studies about psychological aspects, mainly related to academic quality of life (MIRZAZADEH et al., 2016). AZZI et al. (2022) point out in their study that the frequency of self-reported psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety is higher in academics with a low perception of quality of life, in addition to higher Burnout scores. Contrary to this finding, March-Amengual et al. (2022) point out that academic performance is not affected in relation to psychological distress or burnout, in the Spanish sample analyzed, however, it corroborates in saying that there is a greater risk of depression in health academics. Anxiety can have negative effects on academic performance and quality of life (GÜLTEKIN and DEREBOY, 2011).

Shareef et al. (2015) point out that the high academic performance of Saudi students was positively correlated with physical health, psychological health, social relationships and the environment, indicating that positive self-perception of quality of life can play an important role in academic performance at higher education level. The Canadian study by Chow (2010) shows that age and satisfaction with physical health can be a predictor of academic performance, pointing out that the older the student, the more committed they are to their higher education, as well as having positive indices of psychological well-being and satisfaction with life.

In addition to the variables already listed in the studies mentioned above, studies such as Tempiski et al. (2015) and Barros, Menezes and Lins (2019) with medical students point out that academic performance and quality of life can be predicted by sleep, academic pressure, overwork, exposure to death and resilience. One factor mentioned that can negatively impact academic quality of life is internet addiction, as the comparison of addicted and non-addicted medical students carried out by Mirzazadeh et al. (2016) at a university in Tehran, pointed out that students had a worse academic performance compared to non-addicted students.

Another aspect that has been shown to impact the quality of life of academics, and which directly affects academic performance, is reduced sleep (VAN DER HEIJDEN et al., 2018). Sleep is associated with the ability to concentrate and sleep deprivation can directly affect academic performance and quality of life (Barros, Menezes and Lins (2019) VAN DER HEIJDEN et al., 2018).

Recent research has shown a positive relationship between quality of life and academic performance and academic self-efficacy (DENOVAN and MACASKILL, 2016). In the North American study by Antaramiam (2017), life satisfaction was related to academic performance, including greater student engagement, better academic self-efficacy, as more satisfied students obtained higher grade point averages than their less satisfied peers.

In this scoping review, it was possible to identify that the main areas of study linked to the topic of quality of life and academic performance in higher education are psychology, education and health. Among the objectives highlighted in the studies included here is the search for a relationship between psychological variables and the subject. In order to meet the proposed objectives, these studies used various instruments, such as the WHOQOL-BREF to assess the perception of quality of life (AZZI et al., 2022; SU et al., 2021; MIRZAZADEH et al, 2016; SHAREEF et al., 2015; TEMPSKI et al., 2015; GÜLTEKIN and DEREBOY, 2011), as well as assessing life satisfaction through scales, as in the studies by Antaramiam (2017) and Denovan and Macaskill, (2016).

Various instruments were used to assess the psychological variables, given the breadth of the subject. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBISS) was used to measure burnout in the study by March-Amengual et al. (2022). Anxiety and stress were also measured by instruments such as the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale, the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (IDATE), the Perceived Stress Scale and the Cumulative Stress Scale (GÜLTEKIN and DEREBOY, 2011; TEMPSKI et al., 2015; ANTARAMIAM, 2017; SU et al., 2021).

Average grades were used to assess academic performance (MIRZAZADEH et al., 2016; MARCH-AMENGUAL et al., 2022; ANTARAMIAM, 2017; DENOVAN and MACASKILL, 2016). Another variable investigated was academic self-efficacy, and the scale for this variable was used in the studies by Antaramiam (2017) and Denovan and Macaskill (2016).

Therefore, this scoping review points to some academic gaps, such as little qualitative production and few longitudinal studies. As already mentioned in the text, one of the possible solutions for reducing dropout in higher education is the development of academic quality of life programs, which in a way can help improve academic performance, reflecting in the possibility of reducing dropout from the undergraduate course. We also identified the scope of these aspects in terms of the physical and mental health of academics, as well as the tendency for studies on academic self-concept related to the topic, given that there is little discussion in the literature related to quality of life and academic performance.

This review has limitations. The first is the possibility of excluding important studies due to the time frame (before 2003). Another limitation is the possibility that this review did not include any databases that might contain more studies on the subject. However, the present study shows strength in highlighting the literature over the last 20 years, and that in a way the interest in quality of life and academic performance is recent and still little elucidated in the literature.

V. Final Considerations

The aim of this study was to review the literature exploring the axes of "quality of life and academic performance" by means of a scoping review of the last 20 years. It can be seen that the literature on the subject is recent, and that it still needs qualitative exploration and longitudinal studies. Among the concepts that permeate the topic are psychological aspects, such as the mental health of academics, and also the trend towards studies on academic self-efficacy linked to the themes of quality of life and academic performance. The areas with the greatest interest in the subject are health, psychology and education. Among the findings, it was

observed that mental health, aspects of coexistence such as acculturation and life satisfaction can influence the academic performance and perceived quality of life of higher education students. In addition, studies point to the need for universities to develop programs to assist and improve these aspects for students. Finally, further research is suggested, as well as more extensive and objective reviews on the relationship between the themes.

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