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Racial Discrimination, Sense of Belonging and its impact in the
Mental Health of Black College Students in Brazil

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Master in Psychology of Intercultural Relations

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CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

Department of Social and Organizational Psychology

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Abstract

Racism is consolidated in Brazil as a form of social hierarchy, which gives access, or exclusion, to privileges, as happens in access to education. In the 1990s, the lack of access to the educational system was three times higher among Blacks than among other racialized groups. In this same period, Brazil began to implement affirmative action measures, such as quota laws, so that Black students could have access to higher education. The present study investigated the experiences of Black college students in Brazil, focusing on understanding the impact of racial discrimination on the sense of belonging and mental health. Ten Black college students were interviewed, and the results showed that they continue to face racial discrimination, both explicit and implicit. This discrimination can impact their sense of belonging and mental health in a variety of ways, including financial difficulties, lack of representation, and academic pressure. The results of this study highlight the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in academic environments. Policies and initiatives that aim to increase the representation of Black students and raise awareness of racial discrimination are necessary to create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all students.

Keywords: racism; quotas; university; mental health; sense of belonging.

Resumo

O racismo se consolida no Brasil como uma forma de hierarquia social, que dá acesso, ou exclusão, a privilégios, como acontece no acesso à educação. Na década de 1990 a falta de acesso ao sistema educacional era três vezes maior entre os negros do que entre outros grupos racializados. Neste mesmo período, o Brasil iniciou a implementação de ações afirmativas, como a lei de cotas, para que alunos negros pudessem ter acesso ao ensino superior. O presente estudo investigou as experiências de estudantes universitários negros no Brasil, com o objetivo de entender o impacto da discriminação racial no sentimento de pertencimento à Universidade e sua saúde mental. Foram entrevistados 10 estudantes universitários negros e os resultados mostraram que os mesmos continuam a enfrentar discriminação racial, tanto explícita quanto implícita. Essa discriminação pode impactar seu senso de pertencimento e saúde mental de várias maneiras, incluindo dificuldades financeiras, falta de representatividade e pressão acadêmica. Os resultados deste estudo destacam a importância de promover a diversidade e a inclusão em ambientes acadêmicos. Políticas e iniciativas que visam aumentar a representação de estudantes negros e promover a conscientização sobre a discriminação racial são necessárias para criar um ambiente mais equitativo e inclusivo para todos os alunos.

Palavras-chave: racismo; cotas; universidade; saúde mental; senso de pertencimento.

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Racial Discrimination, Sense of Belonging and its impact in the Mental Health of Black College Students in Brazil

Introduction

Discussions about Brazilian history and current context cannot ignore or overlook racial prejudice, which permeates all local social relations. Racism is entrenched in Brazil as a form of social hierarchy, which grants access, or exclusion, to privileges, as well as preferential treatment in accessing public and private spaces based on a selection based on phenotypic characteristics (Nogueira, 2017). Brazil carries the burden of approximately 300 years of slavery, and a process of abolition of slavery was carried out in an exclusionary way, leaving former slaves with no opportunity or possibility for social integration, with their rights restricted since then (Silva, 2017).

The Black population in Brazil represented 55.8% of the total population in 2018 (IBGE, 2019). Even though Black individuals are not a numerical minority in the country, they still suffer from various forms of social injustice and racial prejudice, which are constructed and maintained as part of a system of exclusion with significant historical foundations.

Structural racism is a historical and political process, as it perpetuates a power of domination by the White population over the Black population, and directly influences the way in which the entire society is organized in its relations and productions (Carvalho, 2021 citing Almeida, 2019). Positive actions such as public policy of quotas have been needed, and only in the 21st century did Brazil start to develop a normative and political process of social reparation for the Black population through such necessary affirmative actions (Silva, 2017).

Affirmative actions can be understood as policies that intend to decrease socioeconomic injustices caused by historical discrimination within groups of oppressed people. This happens so the members of those minimized groups can have competitive advantages that they did not have access to their whole life, in a way to reverse injustice and promote equity (Nogueira, 2017 citing Costa, 2002).

Through this intervention in education with Black Brazilian, the university quotas begin to recognize needs and rights from minimized groups, constituting imperatives of justice and ethics

(Nogueira, 2017), that are needed in Brazil to repair injustices made in the last occidental country to abolish slavery.

Even if now universities have more Black Students than a few years ago, this same environment can still be seen as hostile and discriminatory, since most of the students and faculty are still white, and this itself sends a message of not belonging for the Black Population (Sue, 2010).

Because of it, even with public policies as the quota one, discrimination and racism in Brazil are still a daily reality that affects the mental and physical health of Black People. According to Sue (2010), the experience of discrimination, being through the more aggressive and blatant expression, or through microaggressions, can be related to high levels of psychological distress, such as depression, low life satisfaction, lower self-esteem, anxiety, helplessness, and the feeling they don't belong (Silva, 2017).

Therefore, this thesis presents a comprehensive examination of the intricate relationship between racial discrimination, quota policy in Brazil, sense of belonging, and mental health. Chapter 1 offers a theoretical background encompassing racial discrimination, quota policy, sense of belonging, and mental health concepts. The study explores various forms of racial discrimination and the impact of quota policy on marginalized racial and ethnic groups. It investigates the influence of sense of belonging on mental health outcomes and delves into the complex interplay between these factors. Chapter 2 details the research methods, objectives, participant selection, materials, procedure, and analyses, leading to Chapter 3's presentation of the study's findings. Chapter 4 engages in a comprehensive discussion of the results, considering their implications and contributions to existing theories. The thesis concludes in Chapter 5 with a concise summary, limitations, future research suggestions, and a call to action for promoting social inclusion and mental well-being amid racial challenges. Ultimately, this research endeavors to advance our understanding about the impact of racial discrimination and sense of belonging in the mental health of Black University students in Brazil and contribute to public policies and interventions aiming to foster a more inclusive and equitable society.

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical Background

1.1 Racial Discrimination

Dovidio (2004) defines racism as a form of prejudice that involve the belief that one's own race is superior to another race. It can also be defined as a system of social and institutional practices that disadvantage non-White people. Racism can manifest in a variety of ways, including discrimination, segregation, and violence.

Not by chance, this is an example of the negative sequelae of the USA and European colonization of non-Western nations, and the oppression of races and cultures that persist to this day (Hill, 2022). The colonization process, made not only by the USA, but by now considered "first world" countries, has an historical and race-based trauma and oppression impact in the colonizing countries, such as Brazil (Hill, 2022). Those impacts exist until the present moment and include unequal access to high-quality education, exposure to poverty, and health disparities between diverse racial populations (Hill, 2022).

Considering Allport's (1954) prejudice theory explained by Dovidio et al. (2005), Black people in Brazil are discriminated against according to their physical traits, which are seen and categorized as inferior and marked by discriminatory treatment that generates serious consequences, such as lower quality of life, lower human development rates, less access to basic services and goods, as well as less access to quality education and positions in the labor market (Nogueira, 2017).

In the 1990s, Brazil reached the level where the proportion of citizens who had no access to school at all was three times greater among Black people than among White people (Turgeon et al., 2014). In this same period, the implementation of affirmative actions in Brazilian Universities begins, gradually and slowly, and in 2012 the Quota Law (Law n° 12711/2012) was approved (Silva, 2017). Affirmative policies like these one, quotas for Black people to have the opportunity to enter public and private universities, can help combat social inequality caused by racism in Brazil.

According to the 2018 IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) statistical study, Brazil had a significant improvement in the educational field about the entering of Black people in universities (Carvalho, 2021). Public policies as a way of combating structural racism

are, therefore, showing its efficiency in terms of access to superior education. Even if now Brazil started a process of having more representative of Black people in university spaces this doesn't mean the problem of racism or racial prejudice is solved. The action of racism is just the beginning; it is also necessary to take care of the mental and physical health of those who are impacted by discriminatory actions.

Dovidio (et al. 2005) explained that prejudice and discrimination happen to maintain the social advantage of the majority group, according to the author, when members of the minority group seek a social ascension for new roles, this one can become a target of prejudice. In the case of racial quotas, prejudice can involve white people having resentment of unfair advantages given to Black people, this contextualizes structural racism, which can also involve a) the denial of discrimination, b) criticism of Blacks' work ethic, c) resentment of Blacks' demands (Eagly, et. Al., 2005).

Over time, the form of expression of racism is adjusted, as society moves towards criminalization and punishment for racist actions and expressions, but this does not mean that it ceases to exist. The belief in the fact that physical and biological traits, as well as cultural, moral and aesthetic characteristics, determine what an individual should or should not have access to, which characterizes racism (Silva, 2017 citing Munga, 2000).

The modern and more veiled form of racism prevents, as well as more aggressive forms, the access of the less favored and decriminalized sections of the population, to places, institutions, opportunities, privileges, and power (Lima, 2004), ensuring the maintenance of a homogeneous society, without flexibility, diversity, and pluralism. In reviewing the contemporary literature, we can find the term "microaggressions", that can be explained as the everyday exchanges that send negative, and more subtle, messages to people who are in the minority's groups (Sue, 2010), such as the Black Population.

1.2 Affirmative actions in Brazil

The fight against racism, its expressions, and consequences of inequality, can be fought against through public policies of affirmative action that work as historical reparation for the wronged groups, creating greater opportunities for social equality, as well as greater coexistence of majority and minimized groups for that the structural, institutional, and symbolic foundations

can be deconstructed (Nogueira, 2017), such as the necessary affirmative action's that Brazil begins to develop as a normative and political process of social reparation in the 21st century (Silva, 2017).

Those affirmative actions can be seen as a form of guarantee basic rights for the Black population that were taken off from them because of racism process. To explain what its human rights, for the UN concept they are built by laws, political principles, national and international instruments that refers about reasonable demands, such as personal security, fair working conditions, right to a living that ensures health and well-being, right to the access of education, among others (Messer, 1993).

The fight to include, as also a form of social reparations, the Black population into the educational system is one way to reindicate equality in the educational access by social movements who were searching for the recognition of social discriminated minorities who were put in unfair conditions due to Brazilian history, such as the Black population and colonialism, and to support interactional agreements to protect and promote human rights like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination from 1965 (Jesus, 2021).

The guarantee of education as a basic human right was added as a "second generation" of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Messer, 1993), but was in The World Conference in Durban, in the 1990, that was pointed to the necessity to create programs, public policies, and legislations about the social development to guarantee human rights, as the access of education, to discriminated minorities (Jesus, 2021).

In the same period of the World Conference in Dubai, Brazil reached the level where the proportion of citizens who had no access to school at all was three times greater among Black people than among White people (Turgeon et al., 2014). This example of structural racism shows how racism in Brazil is an historical and political process, as it perpetuates a power of domination by the White population over the Black population, and directly impacts the way in which the entire society is organized in its relations and productions (Carvalho, 2021 citing Almeida, 2019).

In the 2000s, the agenda about access in the superior educational system, better opportunities and affirmative actions and policies were on focus, since in the World Conference in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. Brazil committed to the agenda by adopting new measures to

combat racism and the lack of equal educational opportunities to the Black populations - despite strong opposition from conservative Brazilian groups that were against it (Jesus, 2021).

Even if the quotas are needed in Brazil to repair injustices made in the last occidental country to abolish slavery, they are also a discussed subject in Brazil, and are a cause of social discord (Almeida, 2022) based in a system of beliefs in which the majority group feels threatened by the minority group, believing that the minority group will actually take away privileges and opportunities from the majority group.

A lot of arguments are created to make an opposition to the quota program, among them people state that this process would promote a racialization in Brazil, and that this is not a democratic process since does not promote formal and skills equity in order to enter higher education institutions, since a preference would be established for a certain part of the population (Almeida, 2022 citing Pinto do Góes, 2007).

Studies confirm that symbolic racism is associated with beliefs that the Black population is pushing the boundaries in the struggle for equal rights (Lima & Vala, 2004), and can be marked by phrases such as: “If blacks would only try harder, they could be as well off as whites,” and “Blacks are getting too demanding for equal rights.” (Eagly, et. Al., 2005). Those kinds of lines are understood by the speaker as non-racist statements, formed by rooted beliefs that privileges and opportunities are being given to the minorized group instead of promoting equality.

This modern and more veiled form of racism prevents, as well as more aggressive forms, the access of the less favored and decriminalized sections of the population, to places, institutions, opportunities, privileges, and power (Lima, 2004), ensuring the maintenance of a homogeneous society, without flexibility, diversity, and pluralism. This shows us that the discriminatory process is a living organism with capacity to change, because the actors of discriminatory acts find through social norms ways to justify their expressions of hatred (Silva, 2017 citing Santos, 2013), which it happens in the discourse of white people towards the quota policy in Brazil.

White people in Brazil can perceive a threat from affirmative action's such as the quota policy in Brazil, because in their view the Black population is receiving a special treatment, that is denning White people hard work and the value of “race-neutral” (Turgeon, 2022 citing Sears, Henry, & Klosterman, 2000).

This opens the door to a mistaken discourse in which affirmative actions and quota policies would be capable of creating a kind of reverse racism, a racism that not only does not exist since racist attitudes always occur from a historically privileged group towards a historically marginalized one, but also minimizes and attempts to erase the daily discrimination that Black people experience every day in Brazilian society (Possenti, 2016).

During the discussion and approval of the quota system, the media in Brazil, predominantly composed of White intellectuals, were responsible for disseminating an attack on quota policies, criticizing and creating a variety of arguments to support this stance when they could have provided various data and arguments to support the movement, reminding of the history of slavery of the black population in Brazil and shedding light on the necessity of affirmative action's due to continuous social and racial inequality, which is also reflected in Brazilian universities (Possenti, 2016).

Although the opposition, the university quotas begin to recognize needs and rights from minimized groups, constituting imperatives of justice and ethics (Nogueira, 2017), and the educational system assures vacancies to students from minority groups, establishing that Black students must have access to a number of vacancies that are least equal to the proportion of the individuals in the population where the educational institution is located (Almeida, 2022).

However, the challenges faced by marginalized students, particularly Black students, extend beyond university admission. They encounter economic hardships, lack of tailored support programs (Almeida, 2022), difficulty to finish the course, long distances between their houses and campus, precarious public transportations, exhaustion (Martin, et al., 2004), lack of peer identification, loneliness, and mental health consequences (Hill, 2022).

The fact is that the exclusion of the Black population begins even before birth, and policies to include them in higher education can help minimize these historical social inequalities (Haas, 2012). Therefore, the creation of safe spaces that address their needs becomes crucial to fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment (Almeida, 2022, citing Ong, Smith & KO, 2018; Silva, 2016).

1.3 Sense of Belonging

Studies have shown that when Black students are in a college environment with over two-thirds White students, their sense of belonging can be affected. The message they receive is a consequence of discrimination, implying that the space they occupy is not meant for them (Hussain & Jones, 2021). This creates a gap in the sense of belonging for these students.

Sense of belonging can be understood as the psychological sense of connection to a place and its community (Hussain & Jones, 2021, citing Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Maestas, Vaquera, & Zehr, 2007). It plays an important role in the well-being of minority populations (Hussain & Jones, 2021, citing Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Walton & Cohen, 2011).

The connection to a place and its community can be further explored through how students perceive social support on campus, as well as how they feel cared about, respected, accepted, valued, and important to the group (Stayhorn, 2022, citing Stayhorn, 2012). These positive perceptions can lead to better subjective reports of well-being and mental health in general (Stayhorn, 2022).

Sense of belonging is a basic human need. Studies have shown that higher education students who report a positive sense of belonging also have more engagement with college subjects and greater college satisfaction. These positive results are even stronger when analyzing minority students, who also show academic improvements and better health outcomes when they feel like they belong to the college environment (Hill, 2022, citing Gonzalez et al., 2014; Umana-Taylor & Hill, 2020).

Therefore, sense of belonging is especially important for minoritized identities, as it can act as a prevention for feelings of anxiety, stereotyping, vulnerability, alienation, isolation, or rejection (Stayhorn, 2022, citing Bui, 2002; Stayhoen, 2019). Previous studies have also amplified the importance of sense of belonging in minoritized groups, pointing out that the feeling is also critically important for finding value in life (Stayhorn, 2022, citing Guo & Cheng, 2016; Lambert et al., 2013).

Several studies have focused on understanding the factors that affect the sense of belonging of college ethnic minority students (Ingram, 2012, citing Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, Lee & Davis, 2000; Walton & Cohen, 2007). The findings support that sense of belonging is a basic human need and is particularly important for Black students, since their presence on college campuses has not been the historical norm (Ingram, 2012).

For Black students, the sense of belonging can be challenging. Since most college students are predominantly White, Black students can feel marginalized, isolated, and question their identity and right to be there (Ingram, 2012, citing Maestas, Vaquera, and Zehr, 2007 and Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Not surprisingly, a survey study found that White students reported a higher sense of belonging than any other ethnic groups (Ingram, 2012). Their feelings toward their peers may be less linked to their sense of belonging than those of Black students because they may not wonder as much if they should belong or not, as they are part of the college-going and historical mainstream (Ingram, 2012).

Even though researchers have shown the importance of sense of belonging for Black college students, its connection to mental health, and the necessity of these results to create interventions to improve the lives of people in general, it is also clear that we still need more information about it. This is especially true when focusing on its impact on the lives of minoritized groups, in order to raise awareness and create interventions that promote equity and more supportive environments for minorities.

1.4 Mental Health Among Racial Minorities

According to WHO (2017), Brazil has the highest prevalence of individuals with anxiety in the world, and it ranks 15th in depression. The situation in Brazil can be explained by several risk factors that heavily impact the Brazilian population, such as poverty, socioeconomic inequity, racial inequity, unemployment, and insecurity (Chisholm et al., 2019).

In addition to the mental health situation in Brazil, discriminatory practices in university environments can further exacerbate the feeling that historically segregated environments are not spaces for the Black population (Sue, 2010). The absence and lack of identification with peers in these environments are also forms of microaggression and can negatively impact mental health as well (Sue, 2010). Such experiences affect not only students' adjustments to college but also their well-being, psychosocial identity, and feelings of isolation (McClain et al., 2016).

Even though Brazil has a complex and distinct context for researching racial discrimination due to the legacy of slavery and the various forms of racism that manifest, data

from different Brazilian sociocultural contexts reveals that skin color is associated with racial discrimination, which is in turn associated with mental illness (Bastos et al., 2014).

Not surprisingly, one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of mental health and also the most affected by suicide in Brazil is young Black people. A document from the Brazilian Ministry of Health shows that between 2012 and 2016, the suicide rate among Black people rose from 53.3% to 55.4% (Silva & Oliveira, 2021).

The impact of racial discrimination is gaining strength around the world, and studies have pointed to a connection between it and compromised mental health, leading to negative effects such as race-based traumatic stress injury (Damasceno & Zanello, 2018, citing Carter, 2007).

Worldwide, the link between racial discrimination and mental health suggests that victims often develop issues like anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress (Silva, 2017). A study conducted in the Netherlands divided 4,800 individuals into two groups: one that experienced racial discrimination and one that did not. The researchers found that people in the racially discriminated group were twice as likely to develop mental health problems within the next 3 years (Silva, 2017, citing Waelde & Lynn, 2010).

It's also crucial to remember that having mental health is not the opposite of having mental health issues. Mental health is a state of well-being where individuals can understand their own abilities, cope with stress, be productive, and contribute to their community (Fusar-Poli et al., 2020). Therefore, it's important to understand people's perceptions of their own mental health (Keyes, 2005). While self-reporting can be helpful, it can exclude perceptions of anxiety or depression symptoms. Analyzing people's productivity and overall well-being compared to those with diagnosed mental illnesses is also important (Keyes, 2005).

A 2018 meta-analysis conducted by Damasceno and Zanello found the literature review on the impact of racism on the mental health of the Black population in Brazil to be unsatisfactory. This highlights the importance of further research in this area to contribute to the discussion. Additionally, one of the few studies analyzed in their meta-analysis by Damasceno & Zanello (2018) stated that most of the Black population in Brazil lives with mental health suffering due to precarious living conditions and limited access to basic human rights like education and healthcare (Damasceno & Zanello, 2018, citing Silva, 2005).

Based on the literature, racial discrimination is a present problem in Brazilian society and has a negative impact on the mental health of its victims. While the subject is important, more

research is needed to contribute to the theme. This study, therefore, demonstrates its relevance by intending to contribute to the theme through respect for the daily experiences of Black college students in Brazil, focusing on their own perspectives and histories as constructed through their narratives (Filho, 2021).

Black college students have the unique voice to speak about the specific situations they live in within a particular historical context, one shaped by social and political markers. This knowledge and perspective belong to them and to the bodies that occupy a specific space in society. Black college students, therefore, have their own experiences of being in the university environment, and these experiences may differ from others (Filho, 2021; Cokley et al., 2017).

1.5 Present Study

It's important to understand Brazil's racial history, as the literature review reveals that the Black population there faces daily barriers and difficulties stemming from historical processes of racism rooted in slavery and its gradual abolition (Silva, 2017).

Quota policies were created to repair historical damage by supporting non-White individuals' access to higher education environments. However, these environments are still predominantly White and can therefore still be sources of discriminatory processes (Sue, 2010).

The discrimination experienced upon entering these predominantly White spaces, which for so long haven't been seen as equitable and diverse, can condition Black students' sense of belonging and affect their mental health (Sue, 2010). This is why the severity of historical racial discrimination in Brazil and the findings about the effects of lifelong exposure to racism make this research an important area of study.

Studies have shown that exposure to racism can lead to adverse mental health reactions, such as depression, anxiety, inattention, diminished self-esteem, and shame (Mizock et al., 2011). A growing body of North American research has also shown that mental health outcomes, especially stress, are directly associated with discriminatory experiences (Bastos et al., 2014).

Research points out that vulnerable populations like Black college students in Brazil suffer from "Minority Stress" due to daily microaggressions (Fleury & Abdo, 2019). However, it's crucial to understand how those students experience and feel these aggressions, and how the stress and impact they cause affect their mental health and lives, even if they don't lead to

diagnosed mental health issues but rather a different perception of their mental health compared to their peers.

Machado (2019) explains that the impact on mental health can cause signs of anxiety, depression, fatigue, insomnia, exhaustion, and dissatisfaction. It's important to hear the affected population's own perspectives and self-reports about these experiences, feelings, mental illnesses, and mental health perceptions.

Even though this is an important current issue, and research about the mental health of minority populations is becoming a growing field of study, the emphasis has been on the USA (Bastos et al., 2014). Therefore, this present research could be an opportunity for Black college students in Brazil to unburden their stories, narrate their own histories and experiences, so we can analyze them to understand the impact of those experiences on their mental health and sense of belonging.

There are only a few studies focused on understanding the impact of racial discrimination and aggressions on the mental health of racial minority groups in Brazil (Regis, 2021, citing DeSouza et al., 2019; Martins et al., 2020). The few studies available confirm that racial aggressions are a daily issue for Black people in Brazil and can occur in various environments, including educational contexts (Regis, 2021). Participants in those studies also reported negative emotions like anxiety, sadness, and diminished self-esteem, which impact their mental health (Regis, 2021).

The present study aims to address a gap in the literature, as little has been done to analyze the vulnerability of Black college students in Brazil and the connection between mental health issues, belonging, and racial discrimination (Carvalho et al., 2021).

The main objective of the study is to understand the impact of racial discrimination on the sense of belonging and mental health of Black university students in Brazil. As for the specific goals, we aim to:

- (1) Identify, in the narratives of Black college students, whether racial discrimination has a negative impact on their sense of belonging in educational environments.

- (2) Identify, in the narratives of Black college students, whether experiencing racial discrimination affects their mental health.

- (3) Identify what mental health issues Black college students self-report as a consequence of experiencing racial discrimination.

The results of the present research can contribute to the literature about racial discrimination, sense of belonging, and mental health of Black college students in Brazil. Hopefully, the results can also raise awareness about the impact of racial discrimination and sense of belonging on the mental health of Black college students, and thus emphasize that racism must be fought, denounced, and dismantled, and that the perpetrators of aggression must enact social change so we can impact the living conditions of the Black population and create a society that is fairer, more diverse, and with equal opportunities for all.

CHAPTER 2

Method

2.1 Participants

Individuals were invited to participate in the research and selected based on the research objectives and criteria. An online study invitation (Appendix C) was sent to students in Brazil, allowing them to share it with anyone they wanted. This way, individuals could voluntarily express their interest in participating in the research.

Participants had to be Brazilian students enrolled in a college degree program in their first year of study and self-identify as Black.

The study invitation was sent to 80 college students in Brazil, and the researcher asked them to forward it to other colleagues. A total of 100 college students expressed interest in participating in the research. Of these, 51 identified as White and 43 identified as Black.

Among the 43 Brazilian college students who identified as Black, only 10 responded to the researcher's email inviting them to the interview and actually participated in the interview. None of the 10 interviewees had entered the university environment using the Quota Law.

Of the 10 interviewees, 3 were men and 2 were women. Regarding geographic distribution, 7 university students were from the city of São Paulo, one from the city of Rio de Janeiro, one from Brasília, and one from Goiânia. This means that 80% of those interviewed were from the Southeast region, while 20% were from the Center-West region. There were no representatives from any other regions.

In terms of the age range of the participants, the research did not ask questions or seek to identify this data, thus not containing information about it in the results.

2.2 Procedure

With the main objective of this research being to understand the impact of racial discrimination and sense of belonging on the mental health of Black university students in Brazil, the qualitative method was chosen. Qualitative research allows for studying people in their own environments and tries to understand or interpret the meaning they give to their own experiences (Driessenack et al., 2017).

Black college students in Brazil were able to provide rich descriptions of their own experiences in college environments, through their own narratives. These narratives were individually analyzed, and their significance will be interpreted (Driessenack et al., 2017). The Narrative Production Method offers a unique tool for comprehending and analyzing the impact of racial discrimination on mental health and sense of belonging within the university environment, as seen through the interlocutor's own experiences and racial belonging (Muylaert et al., 2014).

The researcher studied the experiences of Black college students by asking them to talk about them. The collected narratives will be analyzed in conjunction with the previously researched literature review. The narrative interview is a non-structured qualitative tool that aims to encourage interviewees to talk about their experiences with racial discrimination and sense of belonging in the context of mental health.

According to Jovchelovich and Bauer (2002), the narrative interview should follow a structure, with each phase having its own rules that need to be respected to guarantee the quality of the interview.

Table 1

Main phases of a narrative interview

Phases of the Narrative	Rules to the interview
Interview	
Preparation	Field exploration
	Formulating questions
Initiation	Formulating initial topic for narration
	Using visual aids
Central narration	No interruptions
	Only non-verbal encouragement to continue the story. Wait for the coda

Questioning	Only “What happened then?”
	No opinion and attitude questions
	No arguing on contradictions
	No why questions
Conclusive talk	Immanent questions
	Stop recording.
	Why-questions allowed.
Memory protocol immediately after interview	

Note: Adapted from Jovchelovich and Bauer, 2002.

The first step in the execution of the research is to invite people to participate in the research to create a sample where those who meet into the objectives and criteria of the research will be invited to participate in the interview step.

The participants must be Brazilian students, enrolled in a college degree program from the 1st year of study beyond, and self-identify as Black, so those questions were asked in an Online Study Invitation (Appendix C), that was sent to college students in Brazil and where they had asked them to ask more people to participate if they're interested. In this first step, the Online Study Invitation also had a question that is not excluding but was important to compose the sample more completely, the interested in participating answered if they enter higher education by the Quotas Program or not.

After the random selection based in the objectives and criteria of the study, those selected were invited to participate in the next step of the research that is the interview step. When they signalized their interest, the researcher scheduled a time to do the interview, with at least one hour and a half of timesheet. The interviews were carried in Portuguese and were translated by the responsible for the research in the analyses process.

As soon the interview starts, the researcher started recording, and before starting the interview itself, the interviewer read a document that contains the informed consent (Appendix A), explaining the study goals, who are the researchers, that the collaboration and participation is completely volunteer, and that the participation can be interrupted at any time, without need to explain or justify the reason.

In addition to those information's, the researcher explained that the participation in the interview was extremely valued to increase and collaborate with information in the area of research, that were no risks or adverse effects associated with the participation, and that all the information and data collect are confidential.

To guarantee security and minimize any risk during the interviews, the researcher guaranteed the secrecy of the interview, which will be confidential and used only for scientific purposes; Conduct the interview in a private environment, with a humanized approach, with active and embraced listening; guarantee the anonymity of the participant with the commitment not to publish information about it (or images or audios); clarified that the interview process can be interrupted at any time, without the need for justification and without any prejudice for the participant or the research, and ensure that the individual will be fully respected with their culture, values and beliefs.

Once the participant agreed with the informed consent and accept to participate, the researcher asked them to say so out loud, explaining that everything was going to be recorded, and then the interview moment can start.

The researcher initiated the interview with the initial topic to initiate the narrative and conducted the entire process following the structure, in which each phase has its rules, that need to be respected in order to guarantee the quality of the interview. The interviews did not take more than an hour, and in most of the cases lasted on top 45 minutes.

Once the interviews were finished, the researcher did the debriefing (Appendix B), thanking the participant and the collaboration, and leaving, once again, the e-mail of the researcher in case the participant wants more information about the study in the future.

After this moment, the interviews were transcript to text, using resources available in Word and/or Google Docs, and then started the process of analyses.

2.3 Interview Script

To conduct and analyze the narrative interviews, the present study recorded the audio of the interviews, that were carried between the year of 2023 by video call applications, such as *Google Meet*, *Zoom* and *Teams*. After the moments of the interviews, the same were transcript to text, using resources available in Word and/or Google Docs, so they could be analyzed.

To do the interviews no material was needed, such as questionnaires, cards, response sheet or other. The researcher used a trigger question to start the interview, others general questions to help the participants to generate speech production, and others more guiding questions for the end of the interview, to achieve the objectives of the study it is not yet presented in the narratives.

Table 2

Questions to the narrative interview

Phases of the Narrative	Questions to the interview
Interview	
Initiation	Could you tell me about how you got here, in this university and course, and about your interests and your journey so I can know more about you and how you got here?
Central narration	Only non-verbal encouragement to continue the story

- How is it to be a student in this university?
- How is your relationship with your teachers?
- How is your relationship with other students?
- Can you identify if there is any particularity in your experience in the university when compared to other students? If yes, what is different in your case?
- What are the challenges you encountered so far in the university?
- Do you feel, or ever felt, connected to the university environment?
- Do you feel, or ever felt, connected to the other students from your university?
- Follow-up questioning How do you think your university experience impacts your feelings about the university?
- Would you recommend the institution you study in for a close friend?
- Why?
- How do you feel outside of the academic environment? Is it any different from inside the academic environment? Why?
- How do you see your university from the ethnical/racial point of view?
- What is your perception about the university environment from the ethnical/racial point of view?
- What is your perception about the relationship between students from the ethnical/racial point of view

Conclusive talk

Debriefing

The analyses process did not need other materials as well and were done by using Microsoft Office tools, such as Word and Excel.

Once the interviews are concluded, this study were conduct an analyzed through a process of transcription and content analysis (Jovchelovich and Bauer, 2002).

CHAPTER 3

Results

3.1 Data Analysis Strategy

The content analysis allows the researcher to identify, analyze and describe the findings and themes present in the collected data, making it possible to identify the themes present in the different narratives, and how they associate with each other, based on a coding (Gomes, 2022).

The first step, transcription, is where the researcher identifies the main elements of the interview, as well as the marks of finalization and begging of new topics along the storytelling. During the transcription, the researcher can create a first impression about the narrative (Jovchelovich and Bauer, 2002).

All interviews were transcripts by resources available in Word and/or Google Docs. Every transcript was read multiple times so the information given by the participants can be analyze properly, without losing any relevant information.

The second step, content analysis, it is when the researcher created a code framework from the text, the main idea it is to reduce the text, presenting in columns the text (or main paragraph), then its reduction containing synthetic phrases and at last key words (Jovchelovich and Bauer, 2002).

To perform the second step, the qualitative content analysis was performed using the MAXQDA software, in which the researcher will try to understand a pattern of responses in the interviews obtained. MAXQDA is a software that allows you to organize, evaluate and interpret collected data, with the coding process being done by the user himself, who can create and organize categories as he wishes, making the analysis personalized according to the theme of the research (Nodari et al., 2014).

In order to identify the relevant themes for this research in the participants' responses, the following analysis phases were done: 1. Familiarization with the data through the reading of the interview materials, 2. Data coding, 3. Search for themes, where the codes were grouped thinking of possible subthemes, 4. Review of the themes, to ensure that the subthemes are related to the codes and the data itself, and 5. Definition and naming of the themes (Gomes, 2022, citing Braun e Clarke, 2006).

Once the interviews were finalized, the data was imported into MAXQDA, software used to perform the categorization of the themes. Within the software with readings and analyses of the collected material, the categorization is created.

After these steps of analyses are done, the researcher should find connection between the results and literature review, in order to elucidate what are the findings, what do they mean, what are their implications, the limitations and conclusion. The translation from Portuguese to English will be done after those three steps, and all the results are presented in English.

The following Figure 1.1 represents the presence of the main themes into the narratives collected for each interviewed. This analysis allows a descriptive overall view of how the different narratives presented the same themes and its aim is to support the interpretation of the results.

Having conducted an inductive content analysis of the participants' responses, six (6) comprehensive themes were found: 1. Education Impact, 2. Work Experience, 3. Racial Issues, 4. Sense of Belonging, 5. Mental Health and 6. College Experience.

About the Education Impact, interviewees shared how their basic education prepared them for the rigors of college. They credited their basic education with giving them the foundation they needed to succeed in college, both academically and socially. Interviewees also discussed the importance of basic education in providing access to higher education for all students, regardless of their background.

Within Work Experience, interviewees discussed the challenges and rewards of working while in college. They shared how working while in school helped them develop important skills such as time management, organization, and communication. Interviewees also discussed how their work experience prepared them for their careers after college.

In the Racial Issues topic, interviewees discussed their experiences of racial discrimination in college. They shared their perspectives on racial issues in higher education. Interviewees talked about how racial issues impacted their college experience, both positively and negatively. Interviewees also reflected on how racial issues shaped their views on diversity and inclusion.

About Sense of Belonging, interviewees talked about how they felt, or not, part of the college environment. They discussed the importance of feeling connected to their campus community. Interviewees shared their experiences of finding and building a sense of belonging

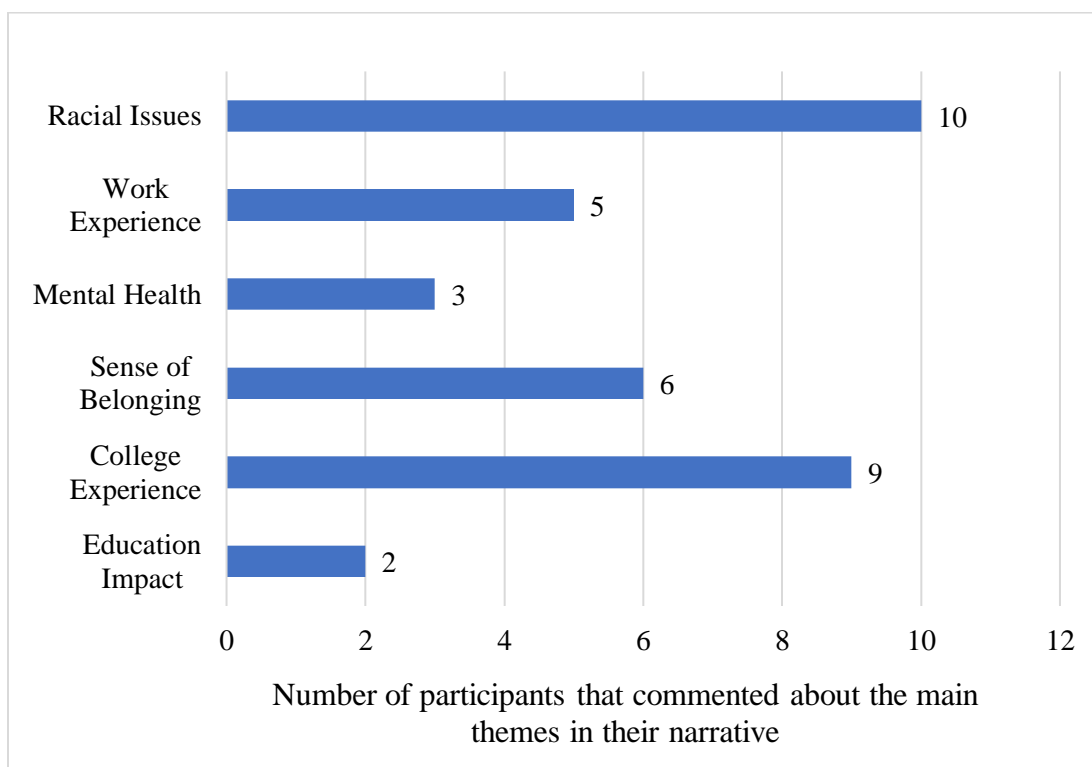
in college. Interviewees also reflected on how their sense of belonging impacted their college experience.

When talking about Mental Health, interviewees discussed their experiences with mental health issues in college. They shared their perspectives on the importance of mental health care in higher education. Interviewees talked about how mental health issues impacted their college experience. Interviewees also reflected on how they coped with mental health challenges in college.

And about College Experience, interviewees shared their overall experiences of attending university. They reflected on the positive and negative aspects of their college experience. Interviewees also discussed how college changed them as individuals.

Figure 1.1

Number of participants that commented about the main themes in their narrative.



Analyzing the interviews individually, in terms of Education Impact, two (2) of the interviewed commented that they can only access college because they had a good education is

high school, and that this was decisive for them to be accepted in the process of getting into a university.

All participant talked about “Racial Issues”, but 9 of the interviewees did not present any perception about ethnic racial issues spontaneously in their narratives. However, when directly questioned, 8 said it is a difficult point to think about, since they do not find Black peers or professors with whom they can identify. One of the interviewed commented that they do not see any important ethnic racial issue to be pointed out within university environments, that they are colorblindness and don’t see different colors in people.

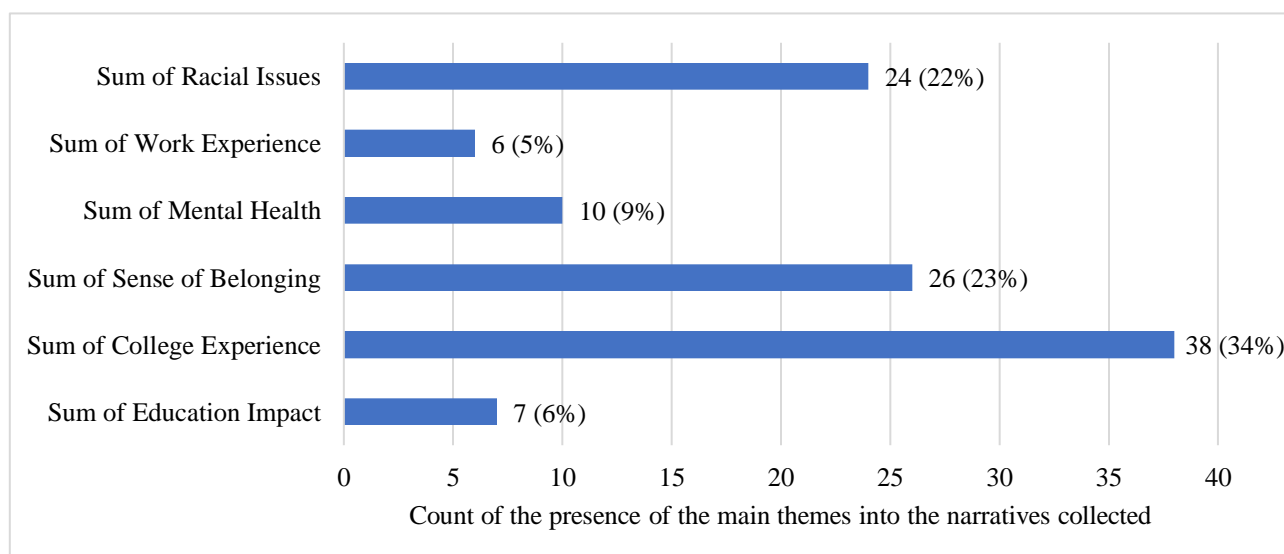
Six (6) of the interviewed affirmed that they feel comfortable and part of the academic environment.

All ten (10) participants commented on their experience as College Students more broadly, narrating their daily journey and events they had been through.

Analyzing the passages from all the interviews, Figure 1.2 shows that the most present theme in all narratives was “College Experience” with 38 mentions, followed by line about “Sense of Belonging”, and them “Racial Issues”, with 26 and 24 mentions respectively. The theme of “Work Experience” was the least motioned, with 7 mentions, followed by “Education Impact” with 7 mentions and “Mental Health” with 10 mentions.

Figure 2

Count of the presence of the main themes into the narratives collected.



3.2 Comprehensive themes

The main objective of this work was to perform a qualitative analysis in order to understand the impact of racial discrimination in the sense of belonging and mental health of Black college students in Brazil.

Specifically, the aim of this study was to investigate and analyze the college experience of Brazilian Black students, to present a historical overview of the racial discrimination and quota process in Brazil and how this has an impact in the Black population and identify, in their narrative, if racial discrimination experiences can impact the feeling of sense of belonging in educational environments and if it affects their mental health.

3.2.1 Work Experience

In terms of “Work Experience” six (6) participants commented about working in parallel to college to be able to afford the costs of their studies. Analyzing the interviews individually, it is perceived that the participants show some financial difficulties as obstacles in their paths in Higher Education, since four (4) of the interviewed postponed their entry into Higher Education, which would occur after completing Elementary School, to a future moment in life where they had the financial conditions to pay for higher courses.

P03: (...) at that time I was already working, and I was supposed to pay for my studies, but at the time it was not possible because I took the entrance exam at the beginning of October, at the end of October I was dismissed from the company, so that dream went down the drain, so I didn't start college.

3.2.2 Education Impact

In addition to the four (4) of the interviewed postponed their entry into Higher Education, four (4) count on scholarships and affirm that their permanence and entry into Higher Education was only made possible due to financing:

P06: (...) I'm a black person, I identify myself as a Black person (...) but there are very few Black people (...) that's true, like that. And the few that are, are scholarship holders. I don't think I knew any black people (...) who weren't on a scholarship.

It is not from today that Brazil presents that it is far from approximating the socioeconomic and educational reality between White people and Black people, presenting indicators that Black people still represent the largest part of the population with low economic status. Since the cost of access Higher Education in Brazil is high, paying for this access can be harder for those with lower economic status, making the necessity of scholarships of financial aid.

This point makes black students already suffer discrimination in their experiences, being discriminated not only for racial facts, but also for the socioeconomic factor (Oliveira & Silva, 2019), that are highlight here both through Work Experience and Education Impact.

3.2.3 Racial Issues

Nine (9) of the interviewees did not present any perception about ethnic racial issues voluntarily in their narratives, but when questioned about seven (7) said it is a difficult point to think about, since they do not find Black peers or professors with whom they can identify, pointing that the college environment is, still, predominately White.

P05: (...) it's complicated, because (...) we don't have black teachers like that, we don't have any, despite preaching a lot about it, right? There are few black students too. I consider myself a black person, I think that in my class there is me and one more (...) girl who identify as a Black person. (...) if we were to take it from all the classes, I don't know, if there were 10 black people it would be a lot, you know? I think there are about 7, bursting, so... Despite having the whole issue of "don't do racism, let's be aware", I feel that we miss more action about it, you know. (...) suddenly if there were more quota for Black people, I don't know how it would be, you know? But I miss it."

P07: (...) So, I think it's kind of complicated here, the distribution of students. I'm going to tell my reality, because I'm a Black person (...) there is a very low density of these students, and it is very difficult to insert these students here in college. Behind it, there is this diversity committee and there is also, for example, the Black collective (...) but there

are many inputs, because, first, the environment. For there to be change, people need to want change.

Even though the mechanism of not recognizing racial differences may arise as a way of living better in environments where access of different ethnicities is discrepant, and at the same time a form of veiled racism (Cox, 2022). This non-differentiation, known today as colorblindness, can be one more way of perpetuating whiteness supremacy replicating the discourse made by White people without knowing that it is an unconscious strategy used by White population of maintaining racial privilege while avoiding responsibility for this historical privilege (Cox, 2022).

Colorblindness however is not an exclusive concept for White people, even though it is unconsciously a way of maintaining privilege to them. The population, especially the Brazilian one with the colonizing movements, is historically immersed in a discourse created by the White European, which perpetuates the interest of the dominating people, considered the majority, strengthening interferences in the construction of the black identity and the valorization of belonging and ethnic racial identity (Oliveira & Silva, 2019).

P04: (...) I don't look at this question (diversity) because I see (...) everything, everyone, together and mixed up, I can't divide it, you know?

Even if the narratives had different points of start, some interviewed felt more prepare to enface the non-diverse environment while still in school because had scholarships during their High School experience, while other don't feel any difference of color from their peers in college, six (6) of the interviewed affirmed that they feel comfortable and part of the academic environment.

P06: (...) in fact (...) I feel very much part of the university. (...) The teachers there are very welcoming, they are always willing to help you and be close to the students. I had professors who started to say, oh, I'm on a scholarship, and they say, damn, I didn't know there were scholarship students here, now you've got it, tell us how it is, how it's going. The students too, the students, they really admire you for having a scholarship. (...) My

friends, a good part of the faculty, they are very good friends, very colleagues. So, I feel very welcoming in college, it's an environment that I feel very good about. Part of this is my high school experience, which has already prepared me for that, from the experience of a shock (...) and you realize that, in fact, your race, it was in another kind of... I can't tell, the race you were running, it was one type of treadmill, another type of treadmill.

3.2.4 Sense of Belonging

When the theme of belonging was further explored, seven (7) of the interviews comment on the lack of black peers in terms of other students, noting that the university environments they attend are still mostly white. Further on this point, one (1) interviewed comment that they would like other black colleagues, family members and acquaintances to have the same opportunity they are having to attend higher education. Another important point to emphasize on the racial theme is the narrative present in seven (7) interviews, in which the interviewees comment on the lack of Black professionals in the faculty of universities.

P01: (...)I guess that gets me because I really wanted other black people to have the same opportunity that I have. I wanted them to look at this and feel welcomed in this environment and I know that this is very difficult when we don't have these references.

P01: (...) not wanting to, I think we get a little uncomfortable with that, like: hey, there aren't people similar to me here so, yeah... sometimes I feel that there's a lot of judgment and that's what it might be have, but maybe this is just something I created because there really aren't many people like that, so sometimes it's something that gets me a lot.

Those finding reinforces that racial discrimination in Brazil still occurs in various forms and levels affecting the sense of belonging of Black students inside academic environments and, reflecting still the policies of the slave state, which determined who could have access to education, and who would be apart not only from the educational system, but also from precarious or intellectual job opportunities (Oliveira & Silva, 2019).

One of the interviewed commented that:

P09: (...) an issue that still draws my attention is this lack of Black people in the university who cannot get to higher education, it is very symptomatic that you have more than 50% of the Black population and have few people who get to higher education.

According to Sue (2010), it is almost impossible for humans not to inherit, from the society, racial, gender or sexual orientation prejudices, and such prejudices may exist, consciously or unconsciously, determining in this example that universities are white institutional spaces, limiting the number of Black teachers in this environment (Oliveira & Silva, 2019). The consequences of having an institute or organization that is primarily White can be profound and perpetrated a racially biased worldview, bringing, even if in a subtle form, assumptions, and beliefs for Black people about inferiority and invalidation (Sue, 2010).

P07: (...) So, I've never suffered something in the sense of, like, having a racial thing against us, I've never suffered that, but I'm not going to say that there isn't something veiled in college. (...) People are not going to, like, arrive and, I don't know, discriminate against each other, but maybe they bring too many eyes for, I don't know, being Black or Black people.

3.2.5 Mental Health

In terms of mental health, the finding does not point to what kind of mental health issues Black college students may feel because of the impact of racial discrimination. Despite that, 3 of the participants who reported about mental health issues. Most of them talked about self-criticism, some talked about anxiety, and one brought information about depression and suicide.

One of the interviewed said:

P05: (...) I demand a lot from myself, so... Being well with my colleagues, let's suppose, will consequently make me better in the subjects, and this doing better in the subjects, will satisfy me, make me I feel like I'm like a prepared person, I don't know, as future professional. I think that way, like one thing leads to another like that.

And other interviewees also commented:

P01: (...) I'm very perfectionist and I demand a lot from myself in many aspects, so I feel that if I don't do things and I'm perfect, it's not worth anything and when we're in an environment like that where there are a lot of people White people, I think (...) the pressure we place on ourselves is much greater because we are like: wow, we know that structurally Black people are sometimes seen as more fragile people (...) so I think that we have to unconsciously put ourselves in this place of: wow, we need to be here in the spotlight so people know that I'm not just a weak person or just a Black person.

Sue (2010) explains that racial discrimination, even if present in microaggressions, such as not having peers or representative racial figures in an institute or environment, can bring psychological health consequences for people. Having discrimination experiences can be associated with depression, lower self-esteem, and anxiety (Sue, 2010).

To further explore mental health consequences, Sue (2010) discusses other consequences besides the mental health problems mentioned, such the definition of *alienation* (that occurs as a result of adopting a racial culture that is not one's own, in which the oppressed identify with the culture of the oppressor), *internalized racism*, (a process that involves accepting the oppressor's racial reality, and thus seeing oneself from the oppressor's perspective, causing low self-esteem and a constant search for validation from the majority group - which can develop self-criticism and a feeling that everything must be done perfectly, and thus an emotional overload) and as well as *race-related fatigue* (which occurs due to the need to be constantly vigilant about one's racial/cultural identity, in order to be able to defend oneself against insults and invalidations).

P07: (...) so, for example, today I didn't sleep. Like, I got up early so I could finish a project. Because I wanted to do it the best way possible. So, these are the challenges we face. And of course, this ends up carrying health problems sometimes. So, a few months ago I had to stop at the hospital like three times, like this. And for me it was a little strange because I don't have health problems.

3.2.6 College Experience

Three of the interviewed mentioned that the universities are seeking to take actions and promote inclusive spaces and conversations. This itself it is important and it points out that the change in academic environments is, at least, somehow starting, even though just assuming and recognizing that there are racial and cultural differences in Brazil is not enough for the long journey of combatting the stereotypes and stigmas that have historically marginalized Black people (Iensue, 2021).

P02: (...) I feel that the university is very diverse and creates spaces for us to feel good. There is always talk about groups like Black people, LGBTQIA+ people. There are always discussions, events... I think it's a very prepared environment for that.

The finding in the interviews permitted the study to understand that the increase of Black students in university environment and the fact that they are not feeling excluded from these same environments does not only legitimizes the quota policy, a pioneer of affirmative action that had extreme relevance to correcting inequality and access to opportunities, but also highlights the importance of promoting diversity in Brazilian higher education, increasing the representation of a vulnerable group in environments that were previously exclusive to the White elite.

Even if the Black students are not feeling excluded from the academic college environment, this does not mean their experience is ideal.

P01: (...) maybe if I had more references and more people there, my experience would be more exciting, maybe I would feel more motivated to do more things. But it's not happening right now, I have friends and stuff, but I don't feel like it's a super "Oh my God, that's cool. How good it is to be part of this," I think we need a little more initiative in college.

3.3 Comprehensive themes and construction of narratives

The analysis of the data collected revealed six comprehensive themes that emerged from the narratives of the participants. These themes provide valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of individuals in their college experience. These comprehensive themes provide

a comprehensive view of the experiences, challenges, and emotions faced by black students in higher education.

The narratives constructed from the participants' accounts shed light on the complex interplay between racial discrimination, sense of belonging, and mental health and its construction allowed for a deeper understanding of the impact of racism on their sense of belonging and mental health.

In Table 3, we can analyze the chronological order in which the themes divided into six comprehensive themes appear in the narratives of each interviewee. We can then perceive a certain pattern among the narrative constructions, as when analyzed by points, the first identified themes were "Work Experience" in 3 out of 10 interviews and "College Experience" in 4 out of 10 interviews.

Table 3

Comprehensive themes in chronologic topics in the construction of each narrative

P10	Work Experience	College Experience	Racial issues	College Experience	College Experience
P09	College Experience	College Experience	Racial issues	Racial issues	Racial issues
P08	Racial issues	Racial issues	Racial issues	Racial issues	
P07	Education Impact	Education Impact	College Experience	College Experience	Sense of belonging
					Sense of belonging
					Mental Health
					Work Experience
					Mental Health
					Mental Health
					Mental Health
					College Experience
					Racial issues
					Sense of belonging
					Racial issues
					Sense of belonging
					Racial issues
					Racial issues
					Sense of belonging
					Sense of belonging
					College Experience
					College Experience
P06	Education Impact	Education Impact	Education Impact	Education Impact	Education Impact
	College Experience	College Experience	College Experience	College Experience	College Experience
	Sense of belonging	Sense of belonging	Sense of belonging	Sense of belonging	Sense of belonging
	Work experience				
	Mental health				
	Sense of belonging				
	College Experience				
	Sense of belonging				
	Sense of belonging				
	College Experience				
	Mental health				
	Mental health				
	Mental health				
	Mental health				
	Racial issues				
	Sense of belonging				
	Sense of belonging				
	Racial issues				
	College Experience				
	College Experience				
	Sense of belonging				
P05	College Experience	College Experience	College Experience	Sense of belonging	Work experience
	College Experience	College Experience	College Experience	Sense of belonging	Mental health
	College Experience	College Experience	College Experience	Sense of belonging	Sense of belonging
	Sense of belonging	Sense of belonging	Sense of belonging	Sense of belonging	College Experience
	Work experience				Sense of belonging
	Mental health				Sense of belonging
	Sense of belonging				College Experience
	College Experience				Sense of belonging
	Sense of belonging				Sense of belonging
	College Experience				College Experience
	Mental health				College Experience
	Mental health				Sense of belonging
	Mental health				Sense of belonging
	Mental health				Racial issues
	Racial issues				Sense of belonging
	Sense of belonging				Sense of belonging
	Sense of belonging				Racial issues
	Racial issues				College Experience
	College Experience				College Experience
	Sense of belonging				Sense of belonging

Interviewee	P01	P02	P03	P04
Topic 1	Work experience	College Experience	Work experience	College Experience
Topic 2	College Experience	College Experience	College Experience	College Experience
Topic 3	College Experience	Racial issues	College Experience	Sense of belonging
Topic 4	College Experience		Sense of Belonging	College Experience
Topic 5	College Experience		Work experience	College Experience
Topic 6	College Experience		Racial Issues	College Experience
Topic 7	Racial Issues		Racial Issues	Sense of belonging
Topic 8	Sense of Belonging			Sense of belonging
Topic 9	Racial Issues			College Experience
Topic 10	Sense of Belonging			Sense of belonging
Topic 11	Sense of Belonging			Racial issues
Topic 12	Mental Health			Racial issues
Topic 13	Sense of Belonging			College Experience
Topic 14	Sense of Belonging			Racial issues
Topic 15				Sense of belonging
Topic 16				Sense of belonging
Topic 17				Racial issues
Topic 18				
Topic 19				
Topic 20				College Experience

Furthermore, the theme "Racial Issues" mostly appears (6 times) after "College Experience" or (4 times) after "Sense of Belonging," which may indicate a connection between considering the higher education experience with the identified racial issues and the question of lack of peer identification experienced in the university (Ingram, 2012).

Another interesting point to note is that racial issues mostly appear at the end of the narratives, not at the beginning or middle, being a subject that can be more challenging to access and discuss due to its complexity and the fact that they can be harmful, as the experience of daily microaggressions are subtle, indirect, and often unintentional, but are the expressions of prejudice and discrimination and affect the lives, health and mental health of minimized groups (Sue, 2010).

Regarding "Mental Health," a similar pattern to "Racial Issues" occurs. Two (2) out of the four (4) times this theme appears in the narratives, it is preceded by the theme "Sense of Belonging," illustrating that maybe lack of recognition among peers, teachers, and other Black colleagues may trigger the interviewee to recall mental health-related issues and mention them in their narratives (Ingram, 2012).

The other two (2) times this theme emerged, it was preceded by discussions about "Work Experience" and "College Experience," which are more general themes but still relate to experiences that can evoke memories related to mental health issues, such as daily microaggressions experienced in university environments due to the lack of Black role models and peers (Ingram, 2012), as well as the socioeconomic disparities between White and Black individuals in Brazil (Haas, 2012).

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

4.1 Discussion

The present research aimed to explore Black College students in Brazil perceptions and narratives about their university experiences, to understand if they have suffered from racial discrimination, and if it impacts, they sense of belonging and mental health.

The content analysis of the interviews revealed six comprehensive themes: Education Impact, College Experience, Sense of Belonging, Mental Health, Work Experience, and Racial Issues. In terms of work experience, six (6) participants mentioned working alongside college to support their studies, and three of them had scholarships that enabled their entry into higher education. Regarding the Education Impact, two (2) participants emphasized the importance of good basic education in their ability to access college.

All participants discussed racial issues, but nine did not mention them voluntarily, while one commented that they did not see significant racial issues within university environments. Six participants felt comfortable and integrated into the academic environment. In terms of mental health, three participants voluntarily shared mental health concerns, such as self-criticism, anxiety, depression, and suicide. The presence of these themes varied across the narratives, with College Experience being the most frequently mentioned, followed by Sense of Belonging and Racial Issues.

The findings indicated that racial discrimination, both overt and subtle, continues to impact Black college students' experiences, influencing their sense of belonging and mental health. Some students faced financial difficulties, while others highlighted the lack of Black peers and professors in predominantly White academic environments. Additionally, participants discussed the pressure to perform well academically due to racial stereotypes.

The study pointed out the potential consequences because of racial discrimination, such as depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety, fact that is align with previous research and studies (Sue, 2010; Fleury and Abdo, 2019).

Despite some efforts by universities to promote inclusion, there is still a long way to go in combatting stereotypes and stigmas that have historically marginalized Black individuals in Brazil. The increase in Black students in higher education environments validates the quota

policy's importance in addressing inequality, but it also underscores the need to promote diversity and awareness. The study emphasizes the significance of educating and creating policies that promote a more egalitarian and fair society, providing equal opportunities and representation for the Black population in Brazil.

The main finding of this study points out that racial discrimination continues to impact Black college students in Brazil, influencing their sense of belonging and mental health in diverse ways, such as financial difficulties, lack of Black peers and professors and pressure to perform well.

In terms of financial difficulties, the need to work while studying were common obstacles faced by Black students. Black college students' experiences were influenced by financial constraints, reinforcing the historical socioeconomic disparities faced by this group (IBGE, 2019). This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown how financial barriers can hinder educational access and success for marginalized populations (Oliveira & Silva, 2019).

Regarding the fact that the lack of Black peers and professors in predominantly White academic environments affect Black students' experiences, this lack of representation of Black peers and professors in academic spaces echoes previous research on the underrepresentation of Black individuals in Brazilian universities (Iensue, 2021).

It can also contribute to a lack of belonging and a sense of isolation for Black students (Oliveira & Silva, 2019). The pressure felt by participants to perform well academically in the face of racial stereotypes aligns with studies on stereotype threat and its impact on academic performance and self-esteem (Sue, 2010).

About the pressured Black college students feel to perform well academically due to racial stereotypes, the participants' narratives revealed instances of microaggressions, such as being the only Black student in their class or facing assumptions about their academic abilities based on their race.

These daily encounters with racial slights and stereotypes can lead to chronic stress, impacting psychological well-being and overall academic experiences (Sue, 2010; Oliveira & Silva, 2019). Understanding how microaggressions contribute to minority stress among Black college students can shed light on the complex interplay between individual experiences and broader structural inequalities. Addressing and mitigating these microaggressions in academic

environments is crucial to fostering a more inclusive and supportive space for marginalized students, ultimately contributing to their overall success and well-being.

The voluntary mentions of mental health concerns by some participants highlight the potential psychological consequences of racial discrimination (Sue, 2010). This means that Black college students still suffer from mental health issues that can be explained in the literature because of discrimination process, even if they do not see those discriminations as a reason for the mental questions brought in their narrative.

Additionally, the study's findings align with the concept of minority stress, as Black college students reported experiencing daily microaggressions that may contribute to their sense of belonging and mental health challenges. Microaggressions are subtle, indirect, and often unintentional expressions of prejudice or discrimination that can be directed at marginalized groups (Sue, 2010).

The main findings of this study align with existing literature on racial discrimination and its impact on educational experiences and mental health. The persistent presence of racial discrimination in academic environments, both overt and subtle, corroborates previous research highlighting the need for promoting diversity and inclusivity (Oliveira & Silva, 2019; Cokley, et al., 2017)

It is important to strengthen the recognition of different races and cultural characteristics, not only to build a more inclusive society, but because we cannot ignore the history that still has weight and influence in today's days and that makes a discrimination that still needs actions and attempts of historical reparations.

Even with obstacles and historical racial discrimination, most participants felt comfortable and integrated into the academic environment. This is one unexpected finding and contrasts with the literature's focusing on the negative impact of racial discrimination on students' sense of belonging and mental health (Oliveira & Silva, 2019; Sue, 2010).

This finding suggests that some Black college students in Brazil may have positive experiences in their academic settings, despite the existing racial disparities and discrimination. It may also reinforce the importance of affirmative action policies, such the quota law, as the interviewees are experiencing a university environment that has been impacted by it for 20 years, and the fact that they have a positive college experience may be a consequence of this

implementation, which is gradually trying to make the academic environment more equitable and diverse.

Even if a lot has been done, especially with the quota law, and with the presence of more Black students in academic college environments now more than a few years ago, there is a lot to change to increase the positive experience for Black student, and the Black population, in Brazil.

It is important to take the subject of cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity and awareness seriously, creating spaces to educate and promote these values in Brazil, where more than 50% of population is self-reported as Black people, and this is not reflected in the number of Black university students (IBGE, 2019).

This promotion can be done by developing policies and proposals that make environments more egalitarian and fairer, or by promoting awareness about the history of racism, its impacts, and public policies for a better quality of education and work, starting from basic education in Brazil.

4.2 Limitations and Future Research

The present study has some limitations that should be taken into consideration. The number of interviews represents a limitation, since the sample is too small and could not represent the population of African descends in Brazil.

It is important that future works have a representative sample of the student population, and in a quantitative approach. Another limitation relates to the fact that only the target students are analyzed. That is, it is maybe also important to analyze the response of students from other ethnic groups, in order to compare the answers and make associations and analyze the experience of White students, in order to draw a more precise comparison on whether there is a difference in the treatment and experience of Black students compared to White students, for example.

Considering the major limitation of the sample size we cannot generalize the findings in this research, but its crucial that future studies are done to further attempt to extend the recent findings showing the effects of racial discrimination in the mental health and sense of belonging in Black college students in Brazil.

We hope that future research continues to accept the challenge to continue understand and studying the main topic of this research and then exploring the full potential of this theme

identifying more relevant information on the topic and proposing methods to improve the experience of this population in the academic environments.

Future research might take this step further and test interventions to improve sense of belonging and mental health of Black college students in Brazil and how it affects the research findings.

The fact that the interviewer is White may have influenced or limited the participants' answers in several ways. For example, participants may have been less likely to share their experiences of racial discrimination with a white interviewer. They may also have been more likely to give answers that they thought the interviewer wanted to hear.

Additionally, the fact that parts of the participants' discourses were offered only when a direct question was asked suggests that the interview guide may have been too structured. This may have limited the participants' ability to share their experiences in their own words and on their own terms.

Overall, the limitations of this study suggest that future research on this topic is needed.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The results of this study show that there is still a lot to be done to transform Brazilian universities into environments that promote diversity and equity between White and Black students, transforming their reality in order for the academic environments to promote a healthier and free of discrimination place.

Although the percentage of Black students has been increasing since the implementation of quota programs, the percentage of White students has also been increasing, maintaining a predominantly White environment and subtle racism (Gonçalves & Ambar, 2005).

Unfortunately, this is not just a reality for students. Studies show that in 2006, only 0.4% of faculty in Brazilian universities were Black (Gonçalves & Ambar, 2005, citing Carvalho, 2006).

While it is encouraging to hear that Black students are generally feeling well in the academic environment, their experiences must be positively reinforced in order for them to make up most students in higher education, given that they constitute most of the Brazilian population. Similarly, there is a need for more Black professors and academic staff in order to break with systemic racist thinking, which still maintains White supremacy in academic settings and prevents diversity and identification between students and professors, professors and professors, and professors and students.

Considering these educational inequalities between Whites and Blacks individuals in the Brazilian university system, it is necessary to take concrete actions and have a mature discussion to correct or reduce the historical losses caused to the Black population by the current educational environment. Access to education for the Black population is shown to be deficient not only in higher education, but also in basic education due to the direct effects of colonialism. Therefore, it is still essential to think of reparation measures, mainly in the educational field, to consolidate the inclusion of the Black population in social spheres that were previously recognized only for the White population (Iensue, 2021).

The present study pointed out the potential consequences of racial discrimination, such as depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety, because of it a more equitable and diverse university can provide the necessary structure for the Black population to overcome once and for all the

effects of structural racism, providing not only social and socioeconomic advancement but also breaking the cycle of disadvantages and prejudice suffered by the same (Iensue, 2021).

Changes in the academic environment can highlight the right to educational environments for the Black population, so that they feel part of and entitled to these environments when they walk by a university, and so that their peers also have the opportunity to enter higher education, breaking once again the circle caused by years of structural racism.

White supremacy in academic settings is an exhausting reality that demands psychological and physical energy from those considered to be in minority groups to escape everyday distractions in order to learn and develop themselves (Sue, 2010). In contrast, experiences in plural and diverse environments provide a more complete learning, not only for minority groups, but also for the majority (Iensue, 2021).

Promoting education so the population can be invited to understand, debate, and investigate the blindness created that segregates the population and benefits people by giving advantages to those who have certain economic and social power, and that avoids assuming its moral inconveniences can be positive for all sides in the racial discrimination practices (Silva, 2017, citing Santos, 2013), since it can create a society that is fairer, more diverse, and with equal opportunities for all.

Even if this study is based on a small sample size, and the findings may not be generalizable to all Black college students in Brazil, it provides valuable insights into the experiences of Black college students and the challenges they may face. It also highlights the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in academic environments. Because of it, it's important to continue to study the impact of racial discrimination on Black students in higher education, to develop and test interventions to improve the sense of belonging and mental health of Black college students and to conduct research on the experiences of Black students from other ethnic groups and white students in Brazil, so it's possible to create more equitable and inclusive university environments where all students can thrive.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent

CONSENTIMENTO INFORMADO

O presente estudo surge no âmbito de um projeto de investigação a decorrer no **Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa**.

O estudo tem por objetivo estudar as vivências dos estudantes universitários brasileiros levando em conta o contexto de diversidade social e cultural. A sua participação no estudo, que será muito valorizada, irá contribuir para o avanço do conhecimento neste domínio da ciência, na área da psicologia e diversidade social e cultural.

O pesquisador é o responsável pelo tratamento dos seus dados pessoais, recolhidos e tratados exclusivamente para as finalidades do estudo, tendo como base legal o seu consentimento.

O estudo é realizado por Carla Galante Soares, que tem o endereço eletrónico cgsse@iscte-iul.pt, que é orientada por Ricardo Borges Rodrigues, que tem o endereço eletrónico rfprs@iscte-iul.pt, que poderá contactar caso pretenda esclarecer uma dúvida, partilhar algum comentário ou exercer os seus direitos relativos ao tratamento dos seus dados pessoais. Poderá utilizar os contactos indicados para solicitar o acesso, a retificação, o apagamento ou a limitação do tratamento dos seus dados pessoais.

A participação neste estudo é **confidencial**. Os seus dados pessoais serão sempre tratados por pessoal autorizado vinculado ao dever de sigilo e confidencialidade. O Iscte garante a utilização das técnicas, medidas organizativas e de segurança adequadas para proteger as informações pessoais. É exigido a todos os investigadores que mantenham os dados pessoais confidenciais.

Além de confidencial, a participação no estudo é estritamente **voluntária**: pode escolher livremente participar ou não participar. Se tiver escolhido participar, pode interromper a participação e retirar o consentimento para o tratamento dos seus dados pessoais em qualquer momento, sem ter de prestar qualquer justificação. A retirada de consentimento não afeta a legalidade dos tratamentos anteriormente efetuados com base no consentimento prestado.

O seus dados pessoais coletados, no caso o áudio e seu conteúdo, serão conservados até a conclusão e apresentação do estudo, após esse momento serão destruídos ou anonimizados, garantindo-se o seu anonimato nos resultados do estudo, apenas divulgados para efeitos estatísticos, de ensino, comunicação em encontros ou publicações científicas.

Não existem riscos significativos expectáveis associados à participação no estudo.

O Iscte não divulga ou partilha com terceiros a informação relativa aos seus dados pessoais.

O Iscte tem um Encarregado de Proteção de Dados, contactável através do email dpo@iscte-iul.pt. Caso considere necessário tem ainda o direito de apresentar reclamação à autoridade de controlo competente – Comissão Nacional de Proteção de Dados.

Declaro ter compreendido os objetivos de quanto me foi proposto e explicado pelo/a investigador/a, ter-me sido dada oportunidade de fazer todas as perguntas sobre o presente estudo e para todas elas ter obtido resposta esclarecedora. **Aceito** participar no estudo e consinto que os meus dados pessoais sejam utilizados de acordo com as informações que me foram disponibilizadas.

Sim Não

_____ (local), ____/____/_____ (data)

Nome: _____

Appendix B

Debriefing/Explanation of the Research

DEBRIEFING/EXPLICAÇÃO DA INVESTIGAÇÃO

Muito obrigado por ter participado neste estudo. Conforme adiantado no início da sua participação, o estudo incide sobre Discriminação Racial e seus Impactos em Universitários Negros no Brasil e pretende entender o impacto da discriminação racial no senso de pertencimento e saúde mental de universitários negros no Brasil. Mais especificamente, Apresentar um história geral da discriminação racial e o processo das cotas no Brasil, e como isso afeta a população Negra; Identificar, na narrativa de estudantes universitários Negros, se existe um diálogo entre discriminação racial como gatilho menor sentimento de pertencimento em ambientes educacionais; Identificar, na narrativa de estudantes universitários Negros, se existe diálogo entre discriminação racial como gatilho para autorrelato de questões de saúde mental; Identificar quais questões de saúde mental estudantes universitários Negros autorrelatam como consequência das experiências de discriminação racial.

Reforçamos os dados de contacto que pode utilizar caso deseje colocar uma dúvida, partilhar algum comentário, ou assinalar a sua intenção de receber informação sobre os principais resultados e conclusões do estudo: Carla Galante Soares, cgsse@iscte-iul.pt e Ricardo Borges Rodrigues, rfprs@iscte-iul.pt.

Mais uma vez, obrigado pela sua participação.

Appendix C

Online Study Invitation

Olá!

Como está?

Me chamo Carla, sou formada em Psicologia pela Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie e hoje faço meu mestrado em Psicologia das Relações Interculturais no Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL).

O motivo do meu contato é para convidá-lo(a) a participar do meu estudo de tese, que tem por objetivo estudar as vivências dos estudantes universitários brasileiros levando em conta o contexto de diversidade social e cultural.

A sua participação no estudo, que será muito valorizada, irá contribuir para o avanço do conhecimento neste domínio da ciência - na área da psicologia e diversidade social e cultural.

Sua participação se dará através de uma entrevista, na qual conversaremos um pouco sobre sua trajetória universitária. Caso tenha interesse/disponibilidade em participar peço que preencha esse formulário.

Agradeço a disponibilidade desde já.

Entrarei em contato assim que possível.

Qualquer dúvida, pode me contatar em: cgsse@iscte-iul.pt

Atenciosamente,
Carla Galante

1. Qual seu nome?
2. Qual seu e-mail para contato?
3. Qual seu curso?
4. Qual o nível do seu curso?
 - Bacharelado
 - Licenciatura
 - Mestrado
 - Doutorado
5. Qual sua universidade?
6. Em qual semestre você está?
 - 1º semestre
 - 2º semestre

- 3º semestre
 - 4º semestre
 - 5º semestre
 - 6º semestre
 - 7º semestre
 - 8º semestre
 - 9º semestre
 - 10º semestre
 - Outro
7. Caso tenha marcado outro, descreva:
8. Como você se autodeclara:
- Preto(a)
 - Pardo(a)
 - Branco(a)
 - Amarelo(a)
 - Indígena
 - Prefiro não declarar
 - Não encontrei nessa lista uma opção para minha autodeclaração
9. Você teve sua entrada na universidade através do programa de cotas raciais?
- Sim
 - Não
10. Você teve sua entrada na universidade através do FIES ou PROUNI?
- Sim
 - Não
11. Você teria interesse/disponibilidade em participar de uma conversa de aproximadamente 45 minutos de duração?
12. Caso sim, quais seriam os melhores dias para agendamento?
- 2ª feira
 - 3ª feira
 - 4ª feira
 - 5ª feira
 - 6ª feira
 - Sábado
13. E qual o melhor período para agendamento?
- Manhã
 - Tarde
 - Noite

14. Declaro estar ciente de que o pesquisador é o responsável pelo tratamento dos seus dados pessoais, recolhidos e tratados exclusivamente para as finalidades do estudo, tendo como base legal o seu consentimento.

O estudo é realizado por Carla Galante Soares, que tem o endereço eletrónico cgss@iscte-iul.pt, que é orientada por Ricardo Borges Rodrigues, que tem o endereço eletrónico rfprs@iscte-iul.pt, que poderá contactar caso pretenda esclarecer uma dúvida, partilhar algum comentário ou exercer os seus direitos relativos ao tratamento dos seus dados pessoais.

Poderá utilizar os contatos indicados para solicitar o acesso, a retificação, o apagamento ou a limitação do tratamento dos seus dados pessoais.

A participação neste estudo é confidencial. Os seus dados pessoais serão sempre tratados por pessoal autorizado vinculado ao dever de sigilo e confidencialidade. O Iscte garante a utilização das técnicas, medidas organizativas e de segurança adequadas para proteger as informações pessoais. É exigido a todos os investigadores que mantenham os dados pessoais confidenciais.

Além de confidencial, a participação no estudo é estritamente voluntária: pode escolher livremente participar ou não participar. Se tiver escolhido participar, pode interromper a participação e retirar o consentimento para o tratamento dos seus dados pessoais em qualquer momento, sem ter de prestar qualquer justificação. A retirada de consentimento não afeta a legalidade dos tratamentos anteriormente efetuados com base no consentimento prestado.

Os seus dados pessoais coletados serão conservados até a conclusão e apresentação do estudo, após esse momento serão destruídos ou anonimizados, garantindo-se o seu anonimato nos resultados do estudo, apenas divulgados para efeitos estatísticos, de ensino, comunicação em encontros ou publicações científicas.

Não existem riscos significativos expectáveis associados à participação no estudo.

O Iscte não divulga ou partilha com terceiros a informação relativa aos seus dados pessoais.

- Sim, aceito participar
- Não quero participar