

Anxiety in nursing academics and their future complications

Ansiedade em acadêmicos de enfermagem e suas complicações futuras

Ansiedad en enfermería académica y sus futuras complicaciones

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Conhecer quais elementos favorecem a ocorrência de ansiedade em acadêmicos de enfermagem e suas possíveis complicações. **Método:** Revisão integrativa da literatura nacional e internacional. A coleta foi realizada nas bases de dados indexáveis na Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde, Base de dados da literatura Latino-Americana em Ciência da Saúde, Biblioteca de Enfermagem; Index de Psicologia, Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online e Scientific Eletronic Library Online. Com descritores: Ansiedade, Acadêmicos, Complicações e Enfermagem. **Resultados:** Após a análise dos artigos selecionados, 11 artigos compuseram a amostra. **Conclusão:** A compreensão acerca da ansiedade em acadêmicos de enfermagem é imprescindível para que se torne possível a prevenção de futuras complicações.

Descritores: Enfermagem; Ansiedade; Acadêmicos; Complicações.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To know which elements favor the occurrence of anxiety in nursing students and its possible complications. **Method:** Integrative review of national and international literature. The collection was carried out in the indexable databases in the Virtual Health Library, Database of the Latin American literature in Health Science, Nursing Library; Psychology Index, Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online and Scientific Eletronic Library Online. With descriptors: Anxiety, Academics, Complications and Nursing. **Results:** After analyzing the selected articles, 11 articles made up the sample. **Conclusion:** Understanding anxiety in nursing students is essential for preventing future complications.

Descriptors: Nursing; Anxiety; Academics; Complications.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Conocer qué elementos favorecen la ocurrencia de ansiedad en estudiantes de enfermería y sus posibles complicaciones. **Método:** Revisión integradora de literatura nacional e internacional. La recolección se realizó en las bases de datos indexables de la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud, Base de datos de la literatura latinoamericana en Ciencias de la Salud, Biblioteca de Enfermería; Índice de psicología, Sistema de análisis y recuperación de literatura médica en línea y Biblioteca electrónica científica en línea. Con descriptores: Ansiedad, Acadêmicos, Complicaciones y Enfermería. **Resultados:** Tras analizar los artículos seleccionados, 11 artículos conformaron la muestra. **Conclusión:** Comprender la ansiedad en los estudiantes de enfermería es fundamental para prevenir futuras complicaciones.

Descritores: Enfermería; Ansiedad; Académica; Complicaciones.

Introduction

Anxiety is considered as a natural defense mechanism that human beings have to respond to the unknown in the best possible way. When it reaches disproportionate degrees, it becomes something harmful to health, causing psychological and somatic impairment to the individual.¹

The experience in the academic environment becomes challenging for any student and the search for adaptation, knowledge and social relationship becomes constant. New habits and routines are being shaped over time and the exposure to stress due to change is clear, which ends up generating doubts about the academic capacity and preparation in this new phase. It is worth mentioning that each subject reacts to new discoveries in a different and singular way, in the same way that each emotion and feeling is experienced in different intensities.²⁻³

The stressors generated within the college are related to aspects such as assessments, classes, seminars which leads to the evolution of major problems if they are not controlled. Stress begins to accumulate, compromising quality of life and health, leaving students more exposed to anxiety and more vulnerable to psychiatric disorders.⁴

Epidemiological data highlight how anxiety is present in the university environment. A study conducted at a university in Bahia showed that of the 110 academics interviewed, 62.7% had a level considered to be minimal anxiety, 27.3% had mild anxiety, 6.4% moderate anxiety and 3.6% severe anxiety. A recent study carried out in a public education institution found a prevalence of 30.2% among nursing students, a percentage close to that of the university population, which is 30.6%. Cross-sectional study carried out in the forest area of Minas Gerais points out a prevalence of 37.5% among nursing students.⁵⁻⁷

The importance of studying anxiety in nursing students is justified by its high prevalence. The more approached the subject, the first signs of anxiety can be identified by the subject himself and as access to information grows, knowledge proportionally increases, making the problem less complicated to be solved if identified at the beginning.

It is clear that most students have experienced situations that generate anxiety. In view of this, we raise the following problem: what are the elements that favor the occurrence of anxiety in nursing students and its possible complications? The present study had as general objective to know which elements favor the occurrence of anxiety in nursing students and its possible complications.

Method

This study was based on an integrative review of national and international literature, of a qualitative nature, seeking to understand the subject in question. According to Prodanov and Freitas⁹, the methodological step has the purpose of gathering, understanding and evaluating methods available in scientific studies with extensive information about the research, formulating a knowledge network, allowing the synthesis of results obtained through relevant research.

For instrumentalizing the review, it used the following organization: 1- development of the theme; 2- justification of the research question; 3- choice of descriptors and database; 4- evaluation of selected studies with inclusion and exclusion criteria; 5- analysis of the data found. The theme chosen for this research was: Anxiety in nursing students and their future complications.

For the construction of the research question, the PCC strategy was used, which represents a mnemonic for population, concept and context (Chart 1). Thus, following this structure, the following research question was formulated: what are the elements that favor the occurrence of anxiety in nursing students and its possible complications?

Chart 1- Application of PCC strategy.2020.

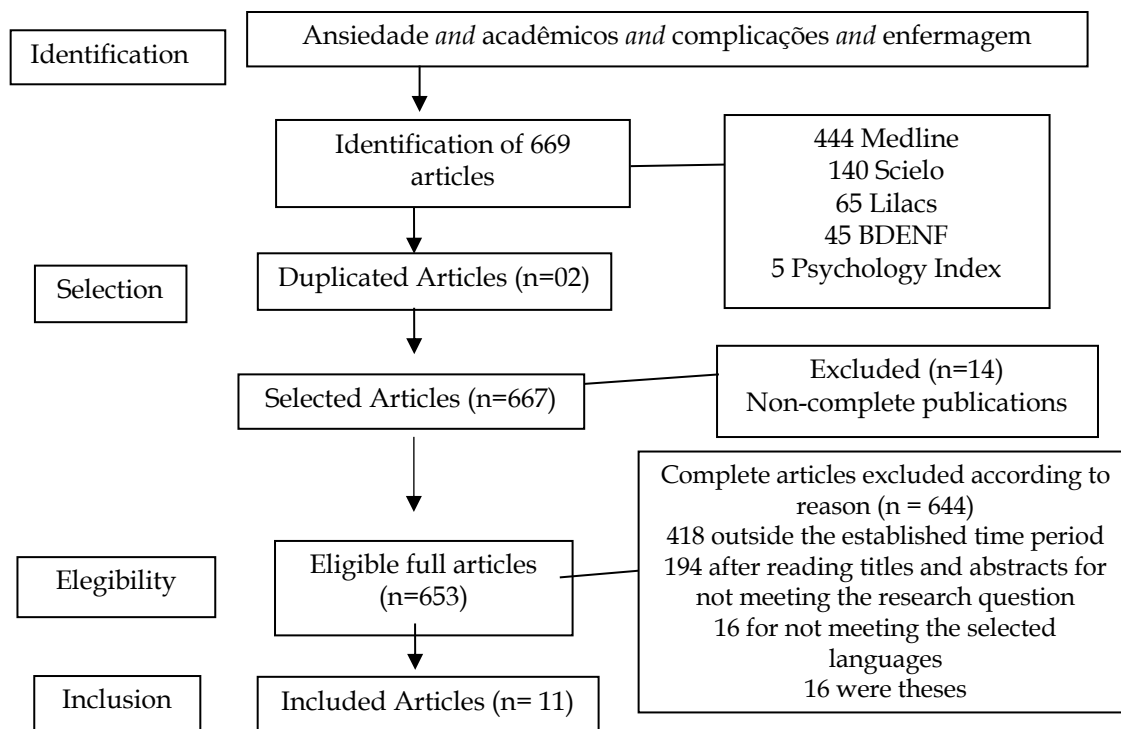
Strategy	Definition	Application
P	Population	Nursing students
C	Concept	Anxiety
C	Context	University Environment

The publication period for this study was established between the years 2013 to 2019. The Health Sciences Descriptors (DECS) used were: “Ansiedade”, “Acadêmicos”, “Complicações” e “Enfermagem”, being combined by the operator boolean “and” between the expressions, in order to locate and systematize the interest records. To search and select articles, the following databases were consulted: VHL (Virtual Health Library); LILACS (Latin American Health Science Literature Database); BDENF (Nursing Library); Psychology Index (Periodicals indexed in Psychology databases); MEDLINE (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online) and SCIELO (Scientific Eletronic Libary Online). The collection took place from August 2020 to September 2020. As it is an article based on studies already carried out, it was not submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP).

The inclusion criteria adopted were: original articles, in Portuguese and English, free of charge, published in the period from 2013 to 2019 and those that understood the proposed theme. The exclusion criteria were: articles written in Spanish, not free of charge, theses, monographs, dissertations, duplicate articles, outside the established years, in addition to studies that did not correspond to the theme.

According to the methodology used, 669 scientific articles were found, 444 in MEDLINE, 140 in SciELO, 65 in the LILACS database, 45 in BDENF, 5 in the Psychology Index. After the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 658 scientific studies were discarded, 418 were excluded because they were not available between the years 2013 to 2019, 194 discarded after reading the title and summary for not meeting the research question, 16 for not being in the languages selected, 14 were unavailable in their entirety, 16 were theses, two were duplicates and the sample of the present review consisted of 11 articles (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Flowchart of the article selection process adapted from Prisma. 2020.



Data analysis started with a fluctuating reading of titles and abstracts for systematization and identification of topics of interest, followed by an exhaustive reading of scientific articles to enable the search for the answer to the research question.

Results

To analyze the article described here about anxiety in nursing students and its future complications, 11 scientific publications were selected, the results were described through the journal, year of publication, authorship and title observed in Chart 2.

Chart 2- List of articles used. 2020.

Journal	Authorship and publication year	Title	Results	Problems / Complications
Revista Eletrônica de Enfermagem	MARCHI, Kátia Colombo et al.,2013	Anxiety and anxiolytic consumption among nursing students at a public university ⁹	Of the 308 students, 16% were using anxiolytics at the time the research was carried out or have used it at some point in their lives; of these, 35% had severe anxiety, according to the application of the Beck Anxiety Inventory.	Of the 308 students evaluated, 34% have mild anxiety, 24% moderate and 12% severe, Inappropriate use of anxiolytics. Mainly reported social phobia and panic syndrome. Relates anxiety to cognitive problems including selective attention, which interferes with the brain to select relevant information through learning situations

Revista Psicopedagogia	DIAS, Emerson Piantino et al., 2014	Expectations of nursing students regarding the first internship in health institutions ¹⁰	They demonstrate that the beginning of the internship is permeated by feelings of fear, insecurity and anxiety of the students.	Students' feelings of fear and anxiety
Revista de Enfermagem	JESUS, Isabel Silva de et al., 2015	Nursing students' experiences with anxiety ¹¹	The analysis of the information gave rise to three categories: context of identification with the course; insecurity about the job market; and context of academic relations and demands.	Feelings such as fear, anguish, impotence, stress and anxiety
Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem	GOYATÁ, Sueli Leiko Takamatsu et al., 2015	Effects of acupuncture in the treatment of anxiety: an integrative review ¹²	The results show positive and statistically significant effects of using acupuncture to treat individuals with anxiety	Anxiety
Revista de Enfermagem	LIMA, Brigitt Vasconcelos de Brito Gomes et al., 2017	Assessment of anxiety and self-esteem in graduates of the undergraduate nursing course ¹³	When assessing the anxiety levels of graduating students, the occurrence of High Anxiety and Low Self-Esteem prevailed.	High levels of anxiety and low levels of self-esteem demonstrate that graduating students require attention, in the sense that such changes influence their learning and cognition
Revista de Enfermagem	FREITAS, Ana Carolina Macedo et al., 2018	Intervening factors in the nursing student's quality of life ¹⁴	The results presented allow us to question how much an unsatisfactory quality of life and well-being interfere with the student's academic results and performance	Sleep deficit and, as a consequence, had difficulty maintaining attention during classes, directly affecting QoL and learning
Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem	FERNANDES, Márcia Astrês et al., 2018	Prevalence of anxious and depressive symptoms in university students from a public institution ¹⁵	Most participants were female, single, born in the state capital and lived with their parents. The prevalence of depression was 30.2% and anxiety, 62.9%. An association was identified between the level of depressive symptoms, work, sex and leisure.	Burnout Syndrome, sleep deficit, difficulty in maintaining attention and maintains that high levels of anxiety negatively influence the learning process, memory, reasoning, concentration and prevents the academic performance required before graduation
Revista Brasileira de Educação Médica	LEÃO, Andrea Mendes et al., 2018	Prevalence and factors associated with depression and anxiety	476 students answered the questionnaires. There was a predominance of females (71.6%), students under 20 years of age (69.3%) and singles	Dissatisfaction with the amount of sleep, insomnia and physical inactivity were aspects strongly associated with the prevalence of depression among students. It highlights generalized anxiety

		among university students in the health field of a large urban center in northeastern Brazil ⁷	(92.0%). The prevalence of depression and anxiety were 28.6% and 36.1%, respectively.	disorder (GAD) and social anxiety disorder (SAD). It will reflect on bigger problems in the future, progress to other types of mental illness and even suicide if there is no necessary interventions.
Revista Online de Pesquisa o cuidado e fundamental	PEREIRA, Fernanda Lourdes Ribeiro et al.,2019	Anxiety manifestations experienced by nursing students ¹⁶	After the transcription and analysis of the conversations, four categories emerged that were discussed separately. Conclusion: It is proposed that the teacher has a motivating posture	Low self-esteem and inferiority, which can trigger various mental disorders, including depressive disorder, whose most drastic and serious consequence is suicide. Implications that interfere with reasoning, attention, understanding and prevent the necessary action for the performance of mental activities, implying their academic performance. Appearing feelings of failure, favoring the appearance of other types of mental disorders, including social anxiety disorder
Revista Brasileira de Saúde Ocupacional	RIBEIRO, Hellany Karolliny Pinho et al.,2019	Anxiety disorder as a cause of leave from work ¹⁷	The final selection consisted of 13 articles, the oldest of which was published in 2006 and the most recent in 2016. The main risk factors for sick leave were conditions and work environment, with a negative impact, both for the health of the patient. worker as for the employer.	High prevalence of anxiety disorders as a cause of absence from work and high demand for sickness benefit costs. Generating a negative impact on your life that imposes limitations on your daily activities, reduces your potential at work and interferes with family and social life.
International Journal of environmental and Public Health	SON, HaeKyoung, SO, Wi-Young, KIN, Myoungsu k, 2019	Effects of aromatherapy combined with music therapy on anxiety, stress and basic nursing skills in nursing students: a randomized clinical trial ¹⁸	Aromatherapy combined with music therapy had a significant effect on test anxiety ($F = 4.29, p = 0.016$), state of anxiety ($F = 4.77, p = 0.011$), stress ($F = 4.62, p = 0.012$) and performance of fundamental nursing skills ($F = 8.04, p = 0.001$) compared with aromatherapy and music therapy separately	It is observed that anxiety, during psychiatric hospitalization, is expressed through psychological and physical components, such as apprehension, fear, anguish, changes in vital signs and psychomotor agitation.

Discussion

Factors that trigger anxiety in nursing students

Pereira and collaborators¹⁶ attributed the period of adaptation or adjustment to the university as the triggering element of anxiety, especially in the first three semesters of the course. With this process, the student deals with family distance, distance from friends, begins to accommodate himself with a physical structure totally different from his school reality, as well as absorbing the new teaching / learning method offered. This adjustment can contribute to high levels of anxiety and opposes the idea that the academic is prepared for these situations.

Satisfaction and the search for identification with the course is another aspect that produces anxiety, so the student begins to develop feelings of frustration, helplessness, unhappiness with his choice and concern about not getting the expected financial return in the face of anxiety. In addition to the devaluation of this profession imposed by society, family, friends and the comparison between the medical course and nursing. These aspects negatively influence the future expectations of your professional development.¹¹

Academic requirements are another motivating element of stress, the overload in the activities developed makes students find it difficult to meet the demands of the course and collaborates as a triggering factor of anxiety to varying degrees. These academic demands are linked to the way he responds to assessments, presentation of works and curricular internships, for example. In view of this, Marchi and collaborators⁹ state that undergraduate nursing students manifest high levels of anxiety due to problems in the quality of teaching and the environment, work, practical field and personal situations.

Still in order to corroborate the evidence cited, Pereira et al.¹⁶ show that theoretical and practical evaluations become a problematic element for the student, the pressure exerted in relation to the grade, content to be charged, approval, ends up generating high levels of anxiety, compromising their student performance and reflecting in the future on the failure of the discipline. Regarding evaluations, Jesus et al.¹¹ mention that this evaluation method is still linked to measure, classify knowledge and student performance. The intense expectation of reaching the goal and demonstrating a good performance cause episode of anxiety.

According to Dias et al.,¹⁰ before the first curricular internship, the academic touches on many feelings and expectations. In the provision of care, the student will incorporate a pre-professional attitude to care for the other, this first contact with reality outside the university constitutes an anxiogenic element. The situations that generate anxiety are related to unpreparedness in face of real situations, not fulfilling what was taught, human suffering and death.

Other expectations regarding the first curricular internship are in the teacher / student, student / patient and student / team relationship. When there is no interpersonal relationship between these points in the practical field, the student ends up developing numerous emotional reactions, which are the anxiety that makes it even more difficult to create bonds. So, this practical process can become difficult affecting your learning process.¹⁰

Interpersonal relationships, especially between teacher / student, are

fundamental during academic activities, as communication becomes important so that the student feels more comfortable in performing the imposed tasks. When teachers' attitudes come to be seen as threatening, students begin to feel neglected and intimidated, thus teaching / learning becomes something negative and difficult. The breaking of this communication link ends up becoming a propitious factor for a lot of anxiety, surrounded by the feeling of contempt on the part of the teachers.¹⁶

An outstanding factor is the Course Conclusion Work (CBT), seen as a great enemy and also pointed out as an agent capable of triggering anxiety in the final stretch of graduation. According to Lima et al.,¹³ these consequences are already expected, considering that the course completion work requires maximum performance from the student, taking him to a level of extreme pressure. Freitas et al.,¹⁴ collaborates that this phase becomes delicate where the academic, in addition to facing the CBT, is also concerned with his professional life.

Lima et al.¹³ also points out that a final stage of graduation, some challenges and expectations about the future end up intensifying and taking on a large proportion in the life of the university student. This is due to the fact that, with the emotional stress experienced during the graduation period, there is an increase in concern about the insertion of the same job market and the constant fear of failure in their future job. Freitas et al.¹⁴ contribute that, at the end of the course, the student becomes even more anxious due to the concern with his exit to work life, so the anxiety begins to arouse fear and insecurity in the face of professional responsibilities.

Insecurity related to the job market stems from expectations that are related to the student's professional future. Aware of what the job market requires, the student begins to charge himself at the university, as a way to be effective in his professional performance. Jesus et al.¹¹ affirm that such charges generate discomfort and anxiety, especially in situations that are still unknown, such as the performance of a new procedure, the probable professional frustration is a factor that generates personal conflicts in the academic life and as a consequence of this element, the emergence of anxiety.

Problems and / or complications resulting from anxiety in the nursing student

It is known that academic development at undergraduate level is necessary for students to improve their knowledge and put it into practice. When anxiety begins to compromise your intellectual abilities, it begins to present problems in face of the activities imposed in its formation. Based on this evidence, Lima et al.,¹³ add that cognitive functions can be impaired by situations that cause anxiety and these influences reach key points in academic resourcefulness, thus the learning, attention and concentration process are reduced. According to Freitas et al.¹⁴, sleep deficit occurs frequently and, as a consequence, the students evaluated in the research also had difficulty maintaining attention during classes, directly affecting learning.

For Fernandes et al.¹⁵ it can cause the Bornout Syndrome, sleep deficit, difficulty in maintaining attention and also maintains that the high levels of anxiety negatively influence the learning process, memory, reasoning,

concentration and prevents the necessary academic performance before the graduation.

Marchi et al.⁹ relates anxiety to cognitive problems, among which, selective attention, which interferes with the brain to select relevant information through learning situations. If this function is compromised, the student decreases his logical reasoning and consequently his individual performance. In conclusion, Fernandes et al.¹⁵ argue that high levels of anxiety negatively influence the process of learning, memory, reasoning, concentration and prevents the academic performance required in the graduation.

When the academic fails to excel due to high anxiety and begins to be dominated by that feeling, cognitive functions are. Thus, Pereira et al.¹⁶ indicate that these implications interfere with reasoning, attention, understanding and prevent the necessary action for the performance of mental activities, implying their academic performance. With this, there are continuous feelings of failure, favoring the appearance of other types of mental disorders, including social anxiety disorder (SAD) and depression.

Mental disorders are common in the university environment, affected by this disorder, the academic begins to present personal and professional problems during the provision of care to the patient. Among the types of anxiety disorder in academia, Leão et al.⁷ highlights generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and SAD. This psychic illness will reflect in future problems, progress to other types of mental illness and even suicide if there are no necessary interventions.

Ribeiro et al.¹⁶ point out that there is a high prevalence of anxiety disorders as a cause of absence from work and the high demand for sickness benefit costs. Generating a negative impact on the life of the person who has anxiety disorder, which imposes limitations on their daily activities, reduces their potential at work and also interferes in family and social life.

Some students do not seek psychological support and consequently self-medicate at home, following guidelines, generally, from someone they know who faced a similar situation and recommended the use of the medication or seeking information on the internet, without medical advice. Marchi et al.⁹ affirm that the same way that the academic starts his treatment on his own, he also interrupts it without consulting a specialist doctor, it is worth mentioning that this interruption must be done gradually to avoid withdrawal symptoms. The use of benzodiazepines without a specialist's evaluation and guidance may generate pharmacological dependence or enhance the effect if there is interaction with other drugs such as alcohol, for example, and especially tolerance to the drug.

Conclusion

The results analyzed point out that adaptation, satisfaction with the course, assessments, job presentation, CBT, curricular internships, insomnia, practical classes, lack of leisure, teacher / student relationship and job market insecurity are the main triggers for development of anxiety. As a result, several complications can arise and harm the student in his academic activities, such as: Decreased cognitive functions, poor performance of activities, appearances of anxiety disorders, depression, risk of suicide, self-medication, Burnout Syndrome, sleep deficit, low self-esteem, feeling of inferiority and failure and being away from work.

In this context, this study adds to the knowledge about anxiety, serving as material for information directed to academics, helping in the recognition of symptoms, triggering factors and their complications, opening the eyes also to the promotion of mental health within university experiences, facilitating prevention, as well as the search for ways to face it in order to reduce the consequences caused by anxiety and other signs and symptoms, especially among nursing students.

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