

REFLECTION OF LONELINESS IN THE ACADEMIC LIFE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Ana Clara Lima Moreira¹

Yohana Gabriele Silva Andrade²

Henrique Andrade Barbosa³

Sâmmyla Myllene Durães Leite⁴

Lamonielly Gomes Versiani⁵

Dinariam Gonçalves Silva⁶

Jhulie Silva Borges⁷

Sueli Antunes Aquino Cardoso Gonçalves⁸

Walter Luiz de Moura⁹

Matheus Siega Nepomuceno¹⁰

Rhaissa Gonçalves Souto¹¹

Leniane Soares da Silva¹²

Larissa Gabriela Pereira Leão¹³

Wilson Ruas da Rocha Junior¹⁴

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- 1 Faculty of Health and Humanities Ibituruna
 - 2 Faculty of Health and Humanities Ibituruna
 - 3 Faculty of Health and Humanities Ibituruna
 - 4 Faculty of Health and Humanities Ibituruna
 - 5 University Center of Northern Minas Gerais.
 - 6 University Center of Northern Minas Gerais.
 - 7 Prominas College.
 - 8 Santo Agostinho College
 - 9 Montes Claros State University
 - 10 Integrated Colleges of Northern Paraná
 - 11 Faculty of Health and Humanities Ibituruna
 - 12 Montes Claros State University
 - 13 Faculty of Health and Humanities Ibituruna
 - 14 Montes Claros State University



Flávia Mayra dos Santos¹⁵

Simone Guimarães Teixeira Souto¹⁶

Laudileyde Rocha Mota¹⁷

Abstract: Introduction: Loneliness transcends the mere absence of social interaction, manifesting itself even in contexts of coexistence, especially when the relationships established lack depth or satisfaction in the university environment, this reality becomes particularly evident. Objective: to identify the levels of loneliness among university students. Materials and methods: This is a descriptive study, with a quantitative approach, aimed at the objective analysis of the collected data. The information was collected through a questionnaire, generating numerical data. The study was conducted at the FASI/FUNORTE university center. The target audience was students of the courses offered by these institutions, totaling 3,780. Of this total, 265 were randomly selected academics. The FASI and FUNORTE faculties authorized the collection of data through the signing of the TCI and the participants were informed about the goals and guarantees of confidentiality, giving their consent through the TCLE. Conclusion: It was possible to affirm that the objective was fully achieved in view of the data obtained during the research and proven by the number of 99.6% of university students who feel alone, an alarming and worrying number.

Keywords: Loneliness. Mental health. College students.

INTRODUCTION

Loneliness transcends the mere absence of social interaction, characterizing itself as a condition of isolation even in contexts of coexistence, especially when the established relationships

15 University Center of Northern Minas Gerais.

16 Montes Claros State University

17 Santo Agostinho College



lack depth or satisfaction. In the university environment, this reality becomes particularly pronounced. evident (BARROSO; SOUSA; ROSENDO, 2023).

Entering university represents a significant milestone in the pursuit of autonomy. However, this phase is often accompanied by intense emotional pressure, insecurity, and fluctuations in self-esteem.a(VIEIRA, 2024). The accumulation of fatigue throughout the academic journey can generate frustrations regarding personal and professional plans, leading to isolation and compromising academic performance. This condition fosters the emergence of feelings of loneliness, negative thoughts, mood swings, and exhaustion.(MACEDO, 2023).

Studies indicate that mental health problems directly impact the learning process, as each disorder has its own characteristics, affecting each student's learning in numerous ways. (VISTA, 2024).Furthermore, there is evidence that such disorders can negatively affect family relationships, hindering the building of affective bonds at a crucial time in academic life (LEITE et al., 2024).

Due to their vulnerability, university students are more prone to facing psychological problems, which in the long term can lead to unhappy adults who are emotionally distant and have difficulty maintaining meaningful relationships. Over time, this detachment extends to fundamental aspects of well-being, such as family life, friendships, and even spirituality (SILVA et al., 2021).

Although often associated with negative aspects, solitude can also have a positive side. It offers the opportunity to cultivate autonomy, allowing the individual to make decisions based on their own values and needs, according to what they consider most appropriate for themselves at the moment (KUETE, 2024).

Lately, loneliness has been increasing significantly and negatively impacting student life. (BARROSO; SOUSA; ROSENDO, 2023).Therefore, it is necessary to create intervention strategies to identify levels of loneliness among university students, a topic frequently neglected by higher education institutions despite its growing relevance in the contemporary academic context. This often invisible phenomenon directly impacts students' mental health and performance, contributing to academic journeys marked by emotional conflicts, adaptation difficulties, and exhaustion. This study



seeks to contribute to the scientific literature on the subject, giving visibility to a silenced reality, and aimed to identify levels of loneliness among university students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a descriptive study with a quantitative approach, focused on the objective analysis of the collected data. The study was conducted at the FASI university center. FUNORTE The target audience was the academics enrolled in courses offered by these institutions, totaling 3,780. Of this total, 265 were randomly selected academics, with the inclusion criteria being: university students who were willing to participate in the research and were duly enrolled in the faculty. The exclusion criteria were: first-semester students who do not yet have adequate experience to evaluate and answer the questionnaire. The FASI and FUNORTE colleges authorized the data collection through the signing of the Informed Consent Form (ICF), and the participants were informed about the goals and guarantees of confidentiality, giving their consent through the Informed Consent Form (ICF).

For data collection, a form created on the Google Forms platform was used, which contained two main instruments: a sociodemographic questionnaire, The study aimed to characterize the participants' profile, and the UCLA Loneliness Questionnaire, created by Daniel W. Russell, was used to assess levels of loneliness among university students. The data obtained were subsequently organized and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 software, allowing for descriptive and inferential analyses according to the study's objectives. The investigation followed the guidelines of Resolution No. 466/2012 of the National Health Council (CNS). The research project was submitted to the Ethics Committee and approved with opinion number 7,397,949 of February 20, 2025.



RESULTS

The study involved 265 academics from the following courses: architecture and urban planning, biomedicine, law, physical education, nursing, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, pharmacy, speech therapy, veterinary medicine, medicine, nutrition, dentistry, and psychology.

Table 1. Sociodemographic profile of the academics participating in the study (n = 265).

Variables	n	%
Age range		
18 to 25 years old	200	75,5
26 or more	65	24,5
Sex/gender		
Feminine	216	81,5
Masculine	48	18,1
Other	1	0,4
Marital status		
Without a partner	226	85,3
With partner	39	14,7
Income		
Up to 1 minimum wage	184	69,4
More than one minimum wage	81	30,6
Course periods		
Initials (2nd, 3rd and 4th)	87	32,8
Intermediate (5th to 8th grade)	98	37,0
Finals (9th to 12th)	80	30,2
It works?		
Try	139	52,5
No	93	35,1
Possibly	33	12,5
Do you have a religion?		
No	23	8,7
Try	242	91,3
Total	265	100



Source: Research data, 2025.

Based on the data collected during the research, it is clear that the majority of respondents are between 18 and 25 years old (75.5%), a result that represents the young profiles of academics. It is also possible to observe the predominance of women (81.5%) in answering the questionnaire; this data shows the national propensity for women in higher education, as pointed out by [reference needed]. A large part (85.3%) of the students interviewed do not have a partner. Regarding salary (69.4%), they have an income of up to one minimum wage. As for the stage of their studies, the largest number of respondents are in intermediate stages; it is also observed that (52.2%) have jobs. This information reveals the fact that many students have to balance studies and work, which can directly impact their mental health and [other factors].consequentlyaffect their academic performance, as discussed in a study from a federal university in the northern interior.8And about (91.3%) of the students cling to some kind of Faith in search of refuge.

Table 2. Presence of loneliness among university students participating in the study (n = 265).

Loneliness	Frequency	Percentage
Absent	1	0,4
Present	264	99,6
Total	265	100,0

Source: Research data, 2025.

This result of (99.6%) indicates a high incidence of loneliness among the research participants.



Table 3. Presence of loneliness according to sociodemographic characteristics.

Variables	Loneliness		P Value
	Absent	Present	
Age range			0,568
18 to 25 years old	1	199	
26 or more	0	65	
Sex/gender			0,892
Feminine	1	215	
Masculine	0	40	
Other	0	1	
Marital status			0,677
Without a partner	1	225	
With partner	0	39	
Income			0,506
Up to 1 minimum wage	1	183	
More than one minimum wage	0	81	
Course periods			0,313
Initials	0	87	
Intermediaries	0	98	
Finals	1	79	
It works?			0,634
Try	1	138	
No	0	93	
Possibly	0	33	
Do you have a religion?			0,757
Try	1	241	
No	0	23	
Total	265		

Source: research data, 2025

The research indicated an extremely high prevalence of loneliness among university students, with 99.6% reporting feelings of loneliness, a number far higher than that of other Brazilian studies.



DISCUSSION

The data from this study reveal a worrying reality: 99.6% of participating university students report feeling lonely. These factors reinforce the widespread presence of loneliness in academic life, showing that this reality is often neglected by these institutions. This figure surpasses the results of research such as that conducted in 2020. (OLIVEIRA; BARROSO, 2020), who detected considerable levels of loneliness in approximately 76.5% of university students. However, many students who experience this feeling reveal several negative effects.

For example, a study with 268 university students from Minas Gerais found that 60.82% had minimal levels of loneliness, while the rest presented mild to intense levels, and another with 574 students revealed that 53% experience loneliness, showing that a significant portion of the sample faced higher levels of loneliness. This point reinforces the study conducted in 2023 (LEITE et al., 2024), which found a high rate of loneliness among approximately 46.7% of university students. This number only increases over time, and this loneliness can develop into other mental health disorders among these students.

The predominance of women in this research is not so surprising since, according to IBGE data from 2019 (PNS, 2019), women tend to seek more...he could in matters related to mental health. This justifies the greater participation of women in responding to the survey; however, the absence of a statistically significant connection between sex/gender and loneliness suggests that this feeling is not restricted to a specific group, but is a shared experience within the university context.

Similarly, factors such as age, marital status, income level, course duration, employment, and religious beliefs do not show significant associations with the presence of loneliness. These results suggest that this feeling should be seen as a complex phenomenon that goes far beyond this. in addition which social and economic aspects. This is also associated with the emotional state and experiences that academics deal with on a daily basis.



CONCLUSION

The study's main objective was to identify levels of loneliness among university students, and it was possible to affirm that the objective was fully achieved based on the data obtained during the research, confirmed by the alarming and worrying number of 99.6% of university students who feel lonely.

These data confirm the urgent need for interventions from the educational institutions themselves, requiring attention and actions aimed at improving emotional well-being and creating more inclusive academic environments. Universities should consider initiatives that encourage socialization, provide psychological support, and address socioeconomic aspects that can contribute to reducing loneliness among university students.

We conclude from these results that women are more susceptible to loneliness because they frequently play caregiver roles, thus increasing their emotional burden and propensity for isolation, especially in contexts of greater pressure, such as academic or social settings. They are socially encouraged to express emotions, including vulnerabilities, while men tend to repress these feelings due to norms of masculinity.

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