

## Poverty, University Permanence and Student Support: a psychosocial analysis

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**Abstract:** This article seeks to understand the psychosocial implications of poverty for the permanence of university students regarding student welfare policies. With a qualitative approach, it investigated eight poor students from various courses at two public Brazilian universities. For the material dimension, we emphasize the lack of resources for subsistence, distant housing or displacement from the place of origin, need to work, and lack of access to books and equipment. In these aspects, assistance is indispensable, although insufficient for those who demand it. In the subjective dimension, social integration in the academic world emerges, with emphasis on the socioeconomic factor as a marker of boundaries between groups. The pedagogical aspects reveal the gap in basic education and mastery of the foreign language, lack of time and study setting. It can be concluded that the complexity of the issues presented requires an intersectoral restructuring of universities.

**Keywords:** student assistance, higher education, university students, poverty.

The massification of access of poor students to federal universities after the implementation of Law 12.711/2012, on top of the policy of social and racial quotas (Brazil, 2012), shows challenges emerging from new demands from this public, thus evoking the need to reflect on mechanisms capable of promoting sustainable university permanence, decreasing the number of dropouts and interruptions amongst newly-admitted students. These issues are also raised in state universities, especially those which implemented affirmative policies after the Quota Law.

Thus, support policies have been increasingly incorporating students from to families with low average monthly per capita income. Data from the *Fórum Nacional de Pró-Reitores e Assuntos Comunitários e Estudantis* (National Forum of Associate Deans and Community and Student Affairs, 2016) indicate that undergraduate students admitted in 2009 or earlier have higher income than those admitted in subsequent years. In addition, those who were admitted into university after 2013 have lower average per capita monthly household income than those who were admitted up to 2013. Therefore, poor students are increasingly present as a result of the growing implementation of the processes of democratization of Higher Education.

For Costa (2015), Student Support Policies (SSP) are aimed at ensuring conditions and mechanisms for the permanence and successful completion of studies. According to Kowalski (2012), SSPs in Brazil are rolled out in three stages. The first phase goes

from the creation of the first universities until the redemocratization period, at the end of the military dictatorship. The second stage begins at that moment, when social problems exacerbated the difficulty of accessing and staying in higher education. The third phase begins in 2007, with the implementation of the *Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais* (Reuni – Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities), and extends into the present day. Kowalski (2012) also highlights that, in that same year, the *Plano Nacional de Assistência Estudantil – PNAES* (National Student Support Plan, Brazil, 2007) was introduced and consolidated this policy through Normative Ordinance 39 of the Ministry of Education (MOE). The goal was to assist poor undergraduate students enrolled at federal institutions of higher education, with priority given to students from public schools or students with a per capita household income of up to one and a half minimum wage (MW)

In this article, poverty is investigated in a multidimensional perspective (Sen, 2000), which opposes the one-dimensional perspective whose line of analysis considers only one aspect – monetary or income. The phenomenon of poverty is understood in multiple dimensions, as opposed to only lack of money, by taking into account inequality of opportunities, possibilities and capacities, which includes access to education, healthcare, leisure, culture, housing, among others. Among these aspects, subjective issues are also investigated since, according to Ximenes, Cidade,

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Nepomuceno and Leite (2014), life in the context of poverty produces its own subjective aspects by imprinting subjective marks on the ways of feeling, understanding and facing the challenges that this condition imposes.

In addition, it should be noted that university permanence has differences and peculiarities for students belonging to low-income families. Santos (2009) describes permanence as a process with a single direction and two ways. "One direction" means staying until the end in order to obtain a higher education degree. It is common to all students, whether or not they come from poor families. And the two ways create an individual scope for a student, because this scope will transform his life and the group scope, of a social nature, for his families and social group. It can potentially lead to social ascension for those who live in a context of poverty. Poor young people are challenged from several angles, educational and monetary. For Cavalcante (2014), permanence compels students to acquire cultural, social, economic and informatio capital (Bourdieu, 2007) in order to build strategies that will help them to appropriate academic life. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to understand the psychosocial implications of poverty for the permanence of university students from the perspective of student support policies.

## Methodological path

The methodological approach used was qualitative in nature, as it involves analyzing meanings, motives, beliefs, values and attitudes configured in the complexity of social contexts, considering the relevance of the determinations and transformations given by the subjects in these processes. Therefore, this perspective made it possible to achieve the objectives of the study by allowing the analysis of the singularities of the permanence of the participants, in their dialectical relationship with academic and social determinants.

## Research context and participants

In this paper, eight students from two universities were surveyed: Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC), Fortaleza *Campuses*, where the quota system for admission (Brazil, 2012) has been in force since 2013, and Universidade Regional do Cariri (Urca), a state university located in the Cariri region, in the countryside of the State of Ceará, where the quota system was introduced more recently, with the admission of the first granted students in 2018. In Urca quota policy, half of the places are reserved for students from public schools, which has been called social quotas, of which 68% are allocated to race quotas, which comprises self-declared black, brown and indigenous people, while 32% are allocated to social quotas, regardless

of self-declared ethnicity. As for the other half of the places, only 30% are allocated to broad competition, which differs from the federal Quota Law (Brazil, 2012); 15% are directed to racial quotas; 5% are reserved for people with disabilities.

In the case of UFC, the Dean's Office for Student Affairs (Prae) consolidates student support policies for undergraduate students, backed by PNAES, and undertakes the following permanence actions: undergraduate research grants, daycare aid, emergency aid program, housing and university residence aid programs, sports incentive program, pedagogical and/or psychological student support program, medical/dental assistance and university restaurant program. Student support policies at Urca are paid for with the university's own funds or with funds from partner institutions, for instance the main partner, the State Fund for Fighting Poverty (Fecop), which has financed not only the assistance grants, but also undergraduate research and extension grants, among others. At Urca, the student support policy is operated through the Dean's Office for Student Affairs (Proae), which undertakes actions to support student permanence with the goal of reducing dropout and late graduation rates. It runs programs such as: university restaurant, university residence, student support grants and extracurricular internship grants, expense allowance for participation in events, Interdisciplinary Center for Psycho-pedagogical Support, the latter currently in implementation phase.

Because quota students at Urca had not entered at the time when data were collected, the criteria used for selecting participants were different at the two universities. At UFC, participants met the following criteria: being currently enrolled in the undergraduate courses at the *campuses* located in Fortaleza, being a quota student and being older than 18 years. At Urca, the criteria for participation were reporting family income (up to two MS) and / or having entered university from a public school and / or being currently, or having been, a grantee in Proae programs. One of these three criteria could indicate that the student was poor. The other criteria were being enrolled in the undergraduate courses at Urca *campuses* and being over 18 years old. All participants signed the Free Informed Consent Form (EULA).

Eight participants were chosen from undergraduate courses, one subject from each high-demand course. Historically occupied by the elite, these degrees reproduce the elitist character of codes and behaviors, which intensifies the psychosocial implications of poverty. The pedagogy degree at Urca was included because it was the most sought-after licensure degree, therefore it is an important representative of this university, which offers mostly of licensure degrees. Thus, the courses were chosen by their cut-off score on the National High School

Exam and the Unified Selection System (Enem/Sisu) at UFC, and by the high competition in the entrance exam at Urca, in order to achieve representativeness and diversity among the academic departments of each university.

Finally, this was a non-probability sample, for convenience, because it did not have statistical rigor in the choosing and quantification of participants. The research was publicized on social media and in academic spaces, through which participants volunteered. In some courses, there was an active search for referral to potential participants whose

profile was difficult to find, such as UFC quota medical students.

The total sample was composed of eight students, equally distributed in each university, four students admitted into UFC with quotas and four admitted into Urca through the entrance exam (table 1). Generally, the respondents, whether or not they were students in the quota system, can be regarded as young people from poverty backgrounds in high-demand courses. Most of them have grants from several programs, most of them have completed more than half of their degree and come from different areas of academia.

Table 1. Summary of information about participants

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Degree – University</i>	<i>Semestre</i>	<i>Form of Entry</i>	<i>Work and / or Scholarship</i>
Carol (NURS.Urca)	F	20	White	Nursing Urca	5th semester	Entrance Exam of Urca	Student Support Grantee
Cícera (PED.Urca)	F	31	Black	Pedagogy Urca	2nd semester	Entrance Exam of Urca	Student-worker
João (ENG. UFC)	M	19	White	Computer Engineering UFC	4th semester	Social quotas (Public School and Family Income)	Laboratory Volunteer
Laura (LAW. Urca)	F	21	Black	Law Urca	8th semester	Urca Entrance Exam	Undergraduate Research Grantee
Pedro (ADM.UFC)	M	22	White	Administration UFC	6th semester	Social quotas (Public School)	Extension Grantee
Vitória (PSI.UFC)	F	21	Black	Psychology UFC	8th semester	Social quotas (Public School and Family Income) Racial quotas	Research grantee
Francisco (ENG. Urca)	M	18	Brown	Production engineering Urca	4th semester	Entrance Exam of Urca	Student Support Grantee
Maria (MED.UFC)	F	23	White	Medicine UFC	7th semester	Social quotas (Public School and Family Income)	No grants, emergency aid

Source: survey data.

Note: participants' names are fictitious.

### *Instrument for construction of information*

Interviewing was the instrument used due to its potential to achieve the goal by allowing an understanding of the students' life trajectory at the intersection with the impact of institutional policies for their permanence. The interview script included the following guiding points: university / degree; permanence strategies; social support; interpersonal

relationships; prejudice and discrimination; shame and humiliation; quota system; meritocracy; challenges to permanence; and coping strategies.

### *Data analysis*

Content analysis was used (Bardin, 2009) as a technique of information analysis, as it is constituted in the subject producing the discourse situated in a social space.

The Atlas software.ti 5.2 was used to aid in the coding of information. The research macrocategories analyzed and discussed were: material dimension and subjective dimension (sociocultural and pedagogical aspects) of permanence. It should be noted that the research project complied with the principles and guidelines of Resolution 510 of April 7, 2016, and was approved by the competent Ethics Committee.

## Results and discussion

The discussions regarding the analyzed results are organized in relation to the main categories of the research. Therefore, they will be addressed in the material and subjective dimensions of permanence.

### *Material dimension of permanence: the financial struggle compromises education*

For Santos (2009), the material dimension of permanence is related to conditions of subsistence, which are affected by lack of money, which entails difficulty to pay for meals, transportation expenses, learning materials, participation in courses and academic events. These issues are pointed out as obstacles by the respondents:

*And the money issue is a little tight, right? . . . But my family always helps me, but so, it's all very tight, you can never do something more, just the strictly necessary.* (Victory, PSI.UFC)

Vitória (PSI.UFC) regards the financial issue as an obstacle for her permanence, which impacts on the economic situation of the family, which supports her. Carol (NUR.Urca) also views the socioeconomic issue as the main obstacle:

*Mainly to begin with, financial, right . . . but the mostly socio-economic issue, as I was saying, has improved a lot with the grant! . . . I feel more comfortable knowing that I am getting support, that I can afford books, get photocopies, feed myself better... I even have some money to buy some medicine, if I need it, especially because I am in another town, away from my parents.* (Carol, ENF.Urca)

The Urca student needs basic supplies such as housing, medicine and food. Lessa (2017) acknowledges that students who migrate from their homes to attend university need support to pay for their costs. The Student Support Grants are the primary mechanism of survival for students.

*For me to get by, buying this kind of things, books, admission to events which I like to go to, I need a grant, I will need. . . . And if I could afford to buy the*

*technical books, it would be better for me. The college does have books, but often they are not enough, there are never enough, right . . . and some books for my course are often in English, and since they are not translated, they are not Brazilian, so they are quite expensive.* (João, ENG. UFC)

*The financial issue is the main factor, first because the Urca library is very bad! Books are overdue! The law changes everyday, legislations and doctrines change every day, and the books are very expensive and the library does not have them, so it starts there! Another problem is the logistics issue. I have night classes and I have no transport, I go to classes and come back on foot, sometimes I have transport, sometimes I don't. Every day I have to leave early, I miss a lot of classes, class hours, to come home early to feel safer.* (Laura, LAW.Urca)

Similarly to John (ENG.UFC), for Laura (DRT. Urca) the lack of access to books is a hindering factor of studies, because the library does not have updated books. This UFC student, despite having access to books, struggles to take them home. Furthermore, lack of financial resources creates difficulties related to learning issues that were also verified by Cavalcante (2014): lack of access and / or money to buy books, involvement in academic activities that generate costs, attendance in events.

To overcome some of these difficulties, students may apply for aid provided by the Student Support Programs (SSP). An estimate by the National Forum of Associate Deans and Community and Student Affairs (2016) shows that the number of students who meet the criteria of these policies exceeds 76% of the total number of graduates in the Northeast and North regions. This number implies a great challenge for Student Support (SS).

*I think the grant has helped me a lot, mainly because my mother, for example, cannot afford to send me money every month. So since I got the grant, she no longer supports me in any way, because she makes less money herself than what I get with the grant.* (Carol, NUR.Urca)

Urca students attest the importance of these policies for their permanence: “Yes, I have a student support grant at university, it helps. Especially the grant, right?” (Francisco, ENG. Urca). Displaced from their homes, for Francisco (ENG. Urca) and Carol (ENG. Urca), their grants are the basis of material support since their families cannot give them the support they need. The mother’s income, lower than the grant, suggests that for family living standards, the support has an important financial impact. According to Marinho (2017), the necessity and relevance of these policies

are acknowledged, especially the permanence of low-income students. However, some students criticize the focalized nature and the lack of support to cover the various needs of students.

*The challenges, I think, are more related to issues concerning the university support. Because, the university offers aid and etc., but they make a lot of demands to people who really need aid. But in the end, every quota student who comes from public school – I mean real public schools, neighborhood schools and all – it is very difficult. We are all on the same boat, right? Everyone needs it. (Pedro, ADM. UFC).*

*Yes, I applied for an SSP undergraduate research grant, but at the time I could not get it . . . Housing aid is for students who come from far and live nearby, but in my case I am not living here, so I am not eligible for this aid. For those who live far away, there is no aid. (João, ENG. UFC)*

Pedro (ADM.UFC) feels that he needs support, but he is not eligible for any aid due to income criteria. Similarly, João (ENG.UFC) needs housing support, but he is not eligible to apply for the Housing Program. In this sense, Marinho (2017) asserts that assistance policies at UFC are increasingly focalized, which fails to meet the various demands of poor students.

It should be noted that material and financial difficulties, as well as the difficulty to access aids, are further intensified in courses that require full-time dedication, with a full-time workload. In addition, healthcare courses, among others, require purchasing expensive equipment. The medical degree illustrates these two aspects:

*We need to buy stethoscopes, tensiometers, if you can afford it, you buy better quality ones, right? You buy better materials, it makes a difference. . . . the UFC permanence support no longer offers it. So they give us emergency aid. But the emergency aid is on and off, you get it one month and the next month you don't, it takes too long to come. (Maria, MED.UFC)*

The quality of the material has a direct impact on learning, because the better the equipment, the better it works. Also regarding UFC, emergency aid is granted to some students who are not eligible for support grants because they do not have twelve hours availability due to being enrolled in full-time courses. Maria (MED. UFC), an example of this situation, criticizes the instability of this aid. Vitória (PSI.UFC) also criticizes the amount of the support “*Because the grants are not enough for our needs, they are not enough to cover our costs*”. For Leite (2012), the perception of

this policy as social support should be problematized with regard to whether or not they suit the needs of newly-admitted students. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect the amount of the grant in the two contexts studied. The cost of living in the Fortaleza is higher than the Cariri region. Therefore, the grant amount in the capital city tends to have a lower perception of sufficiency.

However, in the context of SSP at Urca, for many students, the student support grant, as is the case of Carol (ENF.Urca) and Francisco (Eng. Urca), has been the main source of funding. Yet, although the Extracurricular Internship Grant Program seeks to connect learning to assistance, the interviewed grantees point out differences in the relationship between scholarship and education:

*Well, it's an extracurricular internship grant, so I am a grantee in the institute . . . and we get paid, we work part-time. . . . Because I have classes in the morning, and some subjects are in the afternoon, I can reconcile (the schedule) because my internship is in the evening. Also, some teachers, the institute coordinator, when we are in exams period, they take it easy on us so that we can study. . . . So, we have a lot of free time to study and it's also a way of... it's better for us to study there, because there are computers, internet, the place is also air-conditioned, so, in a way, it's actually good. (Francisco, Eng.)*

*I'm a grantee, so I do an internship at night, I have classes in the morning and afternoon, and in a way, I work at night . . . it is an extracurricular activity. In my case, I stay in the library in the evening, checking out books and such. . . . it really is very tiring! It requires dedication. (Carol, NUR.Urca)*

For Francisco (Eng. Urca), the grant is related to the formative aspects. However, for Carol (ENF. Urca), the grant is perceived as work, unrelated to her academic activities, which creates a challenge in how she organizes her study schedule. Therefore, it reflects on the need pointed out by Leite (2012) to combine grant-related activities with the student's education. In addition, Urca students also point to criticism regarding the Student Support Policy for not covering students' diverse needs:

*The University of Cariri provides student aid for... daycare aid, but it has no, . . . and the reality of mothers of Urca is basically that, dropping out, interrupting, delaying, a huge difficulty to stay in the academic path, right! And other types of assistance also, housing assistance, there are people who come from other towns, from farms, from rural areas, from settlements, from quilombos, and they have no way of staying for both financial*

*and logistical reasons, so both the issue of quotas and the issue of permanence support are crucial!* (Laura, LAW.Urca)

*Today, if you ask at a university, whether regional, which Urca is, or federal, which UFC is, they give grants, those grants are only for those who really dedicate themselves to studying.* (Cicera, PED.Urca)

According to the students, support policies do not include issues such as assistance to student mothers, the specific needs of quilombolas and the challenges of working students – the latter are pointed out by Almeida (2007) and Zago (2006). Thus, it is perceived that Urca's support policies are selective and focalized. Duarte Júnior (2013) points this out as one of the characteristics of northeastern state universities. Furthermore, housing implies challenges also at UFC:

*The main problem for me is that I live far. At first, it was even frustrating, spending four hours a day in transport to be able to study. . . . And these are only the four you can count, I can't estimate, quantify how much it affects me, as I already get tired at home, the main thing that I see that affects me. . . . For example, if my family had more financial means, like some others, some people do, and I could live near the university, in an apartment, if I could afford that, it would be much easier.* (João, ENG. UFC)

*And besides, I live very far away. I live, like, on the city limit of Fortaleza, . . . , so in classes that are too early, like, practice class too early, I can't get there on time, and practice class influences on grades as well. Sometimes this affected me. . . . The biggest difficulty is living far away, she [mother] cannot afford a place nearby.* (Maria, MED.UFC)

One notices different situations in which the implications of living far away, or being displaced from one's hometown, impact on permanence, depending on the reality experienced at each university. In the case of UFC, there are students who live in the city outskirts, such as Maria (MED.UFC), or in the metropolitan area, such as João (ENG.UFC). These students do not meet the criteria for UFC housing assistance policies due to the focalized nature and insufficient resources, as pointed out by Marinho (2017).

In the case of Urca, there are students displaced from other towns, as is the experience of Carol (NUR. Urca). There are also students coming from rural areas, such as Francisco (ENG.Urca), or even from settlements and quilombos, as pointed out by Laura (LAW.Urca), and not all Urca *campuses* have student residences. According to Duarte Júnior (2013), there is a tendency of northeastern state universities to concentrate these devices on central *campuses*, at the headquarters of the universities.

Due to the focalized, selective policies and insufficient resources to meet the demands of universities (Duarte Júnior, 2013; Marinho, 2017), to ensure academic survival, students from poor families have to resort to a number of other mechanisms.

*And yes, I have a grant [undergraduate research], Urca, and the grant is what pays for my costs, so, I can pay for photocopies at university, pay for transport fare, that sort of thing.* (Laura, DRT.Urca)

*Yeah, I had a grant [extension], and this grant really helped me.* (Pedro, ADM.UFC)

*Now I have a research grant, but I had an undergraduate research grant in the past, and I also had an extension grant.* (Vitória, PSI.UFC)

One of the main strategies indicated by the interviewees is to be involved with other paid scholarships whilst proceeding with their degree. This mechanism suggests that engaging in other formative spaces, such as laboratories, research groups and projects with a paid scholarship aids financial survival, while adding to the student's cultural capital, which is not always possible through support grants, as Leite ponders (2012).

Still, there is another profile of students who are not grantees, such as unpaid students and working students: "I just wanted to study, I wanted a job where I could work less so I could dedicate more, but today, my needs does not allow it, my performance in my course is not bad, it is good, not great as I wanted" (Cicera, PED.Urca). Working students need to be paid to stay at university, as they often have to support themselves and their family members. The dilemmas of the working student (Zago, 2006) and the part-time student (Almeida, 2007) are shown by their challenge in getting a quality education.

*Some professors also helped us financially at the beginning. Since we are from the same town, almost everyone from the same school, they helped us with a sum every month to support us. . . . as I came later, and everyone, it's always like that, when an... the seniors help the newer ones, the freshmen, so to speak, in money matters.* (Francisco, ENG.Urca)

In Francisco's experience (ENG.Urca), while he did not yet have a grant, he was able to count on the support of friends and the community, given that his family had insufficient funds. The rural community not only encouraged, but also supported him and other young people to enter higher education. These students live in the town with the financial support of high school teachers until they can support themselves with student aids. Finally, for students who do not receive

any kind of assistance, or any type of grant, and who do not work, solidarity networks can be a source of support. About this Silva et al. (2016) point out that sources of family and community support, among others, are crucial for coping with the adversities imposed by poverty, especially when there is no support from the university.

### *Subjective dimension of University permanence: fitting in to belong*

It is thought that the effective inclusion and democratization of higher education must go beyond access to include the issue of permanence, also with regard to its subjective dimension. Dialectically linked to the material dimension, it was analyzed separately for didactic purposes. The perspective of subjective dimension of permanence involves several and complementary aspects, such as: the feeling of belonging, involvement, inclusion and identification with the academic environment (Santos, 2009); need for a curricular reform, investment in teacher training, learning support; promotion of a diverse and plural culture with attention to ethnic-racial and accessibility issues.

Considering the psychosocial, cultural and pedagogical aspects of the permanence of poor student is to understand poverty from a multidimensional perspective (Sen, 2000). Thus, two main and complementary elements of the symbolic dimension of permanence stand out (Cavalcante 2014; Santos, 2009), which will be considered as a subjective dimension: the sociocultural aspect and the learning aspect. The sociocultural factor is crucial to the affirmation of social and ethnic identity, which reveals the role of prejudices and discriminatory attitudes that undermine the feeling of belonging. The learning aspect is crossed by the challenges related to academic performance, considering that curricula and pedagogical practices may be far from the educational reality of poor students. In the socio-cultural aspect, young people present relevant questions:

*It was a little difficult, because it was a shock, since we came from the countryside to the city. So, at first we had this shock, and we also had a shock with the difference from high school to higher education, the way they teach, this sort of thing. And, also, ... because we attended public schools, there were things we did not learn in high school and elementary school, so we had some difficulty with that. (Francisco, Eng.)*

For Francisco (ENG.Urca), integration into the academic environment was impacted by changes: town, education level and ways of life from rural to urban. Due to the complexity of the factors related to

the permanence and diversity of skills to be developed, as elucidated by Pinto, Faria, Pinto and Taveira (2016), adaptive challenges are imposed more severely for poor young people.

*But interacting with my colleagues turned out to be very complicated because of this. I joined other groups, of other people who came from a similar background to mine, and this made it easier for me to interact my colleagues, because they were people who I had subjects in common with, they were people who understood me when I talked about quotas and such, and this is another part of the classroom, right? And it was a part with nice people and all, good people, but I did not fit in with them. (Pedro, UFC Adm.)*

In Pedro's experience (ADM.UFC), who also comes from a rural area, entering university was impactful due to the cultural asymmetries between the colleagues in an elite course. In order to fit in, he joined other groups whose reality close to his own, and tried to affiliate, to belong, sources of identification in colleagues from similar social backgrounds. However, it should be remembered that there is a two-way feeling of strangeness between the realities of quota students and non-quota students:

*Sometimes, it is not an intentional thing, but the other colleagues, who are not quota students, have no idea of the reality of quota students, and when quota students share their experiences in the classroom, the others, the other classmates are, like, amazed, as if that reality was so far from theirs. (Vitória, PSY.UFC)*

This situation was perceived by Victoria (PSI.UFC), who emphasizes the strangeness caused by the experiences of quota students on non-quota students. This strangeness caused tensions and tensions create borders, territorial boundaries. However, according to Cavalcante (2014), in this game of forces between fields with different cultural codes, the groups holding the rules try to ensure the perpetuation of their norms and requirements necessary for the accreditation of the university being. In this way, due to the asymmetries between the groups, territories are demarcated between quota students and non-quota students, rich and poor, in the experience of the young people at UFC:

*Generally, people who live in the same part of town, in neighboring districts, feel closer to one another, right? Just like students who come from a certain private school, they already hang out together, go out more together and so on. You see, quota students, they usually do things together, they go to the cafeteria together, or they always share things, they split the price of something. (Vitória, PSY.UFC)*

One can clearly see the markers of quota students: they live in neighborhoods close to the university, they have lunch at the university cafeteria, according to Vitória's perception (PSY.UFC). However, there are other elements: "In my class, I notice that there are students who went to private schools who only associate with others who also did" (John, ENG. UFC). In João's perception (ENG.UFC), what divides students is the school they came from and the resulting good or bad performance. "There is a kind of class division, usually the better-off ones stick together... it's difficult to make friends like that, with the better-off ones if you are not one of them. It is usually well divided, like, you notice it" (Maria, MED.UFC). Specifically in Maria's class (MED.UFC), there are other boundaries, so the dividing factor is not being a quota student or not, because many quota students from federal schools have satisfactory financial resources, therefore the marker is one's financial status.

*There are many people from different classes of society in my class and, in a certain way, that changes the circle of interaction. For example, when there are parties, there are parties with 50% of the course, parties with 70% of the course, those kinds of things. Usually, I am not invited and, because of these friendships beyond the university walls, inside I also feel, in a way, excluded. (Laura, LAW.Urca)*

It can also be noted that, even where there is not a quota policy, exclusion from social circles due to financial issues also leads to exclusion in academic relations, according to Laura's experience (LAW.Urca). Zago reflects on these issues (2006) and says that being a low-income student imposes several limits on academic life, such as: participation in events inside and outside the university, collective assignments, parties organized by the class, training meetings, cultural spaces etc.

Regarding the learning aspect of the subjective dimension of permanence, the problem of education deficit, pointed out by Bertolini, Amaral and Almeida (2019), stands out as an important psychosocial implication of poverty for the students interviewed. About this issue: "Yes, it was pretty hard, because my whole life, I always went to public schools, so the teaching was really very superficial" (Pedro, UFC Adm.).

Given the complexity and importance of academic performance and the markers of difference (Nogueira, 2015) that it symbolizes for the permanence of poor students, participants were asked about their perception regarding how satisfied with their performance they were. As a result, intrapersonal factors, such as studying at home, gain prominence in João's experience (ENG.UFC):

*I can absorb more when I am studying at home alone. Are there any tutoring sessions? Yes, and study*

*groups too, but what gets in the way is that my schedule is not so flexible here at the university. For example, I cannot stay for long because I live far, so I have to calculate how many hours I can spend. (João, ENG. UFC)*

We can thus assume the importance of content learned or not learned in high school to obtain a good perception of income, especially because the education system is still guided by individual learning and evaluation.

**Researcher:** *Was there a subject that was harder for you?*

**Respondent:** *There was Calculus I, a very difficult subject because it required a lot of elementary and high school content that we had not learned, or sometimes I could not remember, and it had a very big impact on us, and only a very small percentage of the class managed to pass.*

**Researcher:** *How many passed? How many students does your class have?*

**Respondent:** [Pause] 40.

**Researcher:** *Out of 40 students, how many passed?*

**Respondent:** *Out of 40, two passed. (Francisco, Eng.)*

For Silva, Mainier and Passos (2006), performance difficulties due to deficiencies in school curriculum become evident in some courses, such as Engineering degrees, illustrated in Francisco's account. (Eng.Urca). Students from public school are more impacted.

*And often not even home is favorable, my neighborhood is very noisy, there is always music playing, especially on weekends, which is when I have more time, and that disturbs me very often. . . . A lot of things in my course are in English, and it is a lot of content, videos on the internet, everything is in English, so that makes things difficult. (João, ENG. UFC)*

Other challenges for low-income students are added to their educational deficit, such as the need for an adequate study environment and the need to know foreign languages, especially English, another important requisite of academic culture that the public school curriculum fails to provide. The issues reported elicit reflections on the relevance of institutional support for students with income difficulties: "there was also tutoring, which helped a lot" (Francisco, ENG.Urca). Tutoring, among other learning devices such as study groups and participating in projects, research groups and laboratories, can be



important institutional mechanisms for overcoming academic performance difficulties.

## Final considerations

Among the main psychosocial implications of poverty for the material dimension of permanence, we highlight the following: lack of resources for subsistence, living away from the university or displacement from one's origin, the need to reconcile work and study, lack of access to books and quality learning equipment. Therefore, support policies are regarded as crucial for the democratization of higher education, material dimension of permanence and quality in studies. However, attention must be paid to the focalized and insufficient nature of these policies, given the great demand of students, which is worse in state policies as they are not consolidated.

The main sociocultural aspects of the subjective dimension of permanence are related to social integration in the academic setting, determined by the quality of relations inside the university, which leads students to feel that they belong and are integrated or not in the academic environment. However, socioeconomic inequalities, the feeling of strangeness, the quota student stereotype, among other exclusionary mechanisms, lead

to a division between quota students and non-quota students, rich and poor students. Thus, these asymmetries spell out the division of groups based on the following markers: quotas, the school attended previously, socioeconomic status and academic performance. As for the implications related to the learning aspect of the subjective dimension of permanence, the following were considered: education deficiency, deficiency in foreign language mastery, lack of time to study (work, maternity or university grant), lack of an adequate study environment and lack of money to buy books and equipment.

The main contribution of this paper is to elucidate the challenges of permanence in the concrete psychosocial experience of students by considering the specificities of life in the context of poverty, which affirms the relevance of this topic for the knowledge of psychology in its interface with education. As for the methodology, by allowing poor students to speak, this paper made it possible to analyze how support policies approach or distance themselves from those who need them, which reflects the social commitment of research. Its limitations concern the non-inclusion of the topic in private universities, post-graduate programs and distance learning, given the peculiarities of these realities, which suggests the need for future research.

## Pobreza, permanência de universitários e assistência estudantil: uma análise psicossocial

**Resumo:** Este artigo busca compreender as implicações psicossociais da pobreza para a permanência de universitários a partir das políticas de assistência estudantil. Com abordagem de natureza qualitativa, investigou oito estudantes pobres de diversos cursos em duas universidades públicas brasileiras. Para a dimensão material, destacam-se: falta de recursos para a subsistência, moradia distante ou deslocamento do local de origem, necessidade de trabalhar, falta de acesso a livros e equipamentos. Nesses aspectos, há imprescindibilidade da assistência, embora insuficiência para os que demandam. Na dimensão subjetiva, emerge a integração social no meio acadêmico, com destaque para o fator socioeconômica como marcador de fronteiras entre grupos. Os aspectos pedagógicos perpassam a defasagem na educação básica e domínio da língua estrangeira, falta de tempo e ambiente para estudo. Conclui-se que a complexidade das questões apresentadas requer uma reestruturação intersetorial das universidades.

**Palavras-chave:** assistência estudantil, ensino superior, universitários, pobreza.

## Pauvreté, permanence universitaire et aide aux étudiants : une analyse psychosociale

**Résumé :** Cet article vise à comprendre les implications psychosociales de la pauvreté pour la permanence des étudiants universitaires pas rapport aux politiques d'aide sociale aux étudiants. Avec une approche qualitative, on a interviewé huit étudiants pauvres de différents cours dans deux universités publiques brésiliennes. Pour la dimension matérielle, nous soulignons : le manque de ressources pour la subsistance, logement éloigné ou déplacement du lieu d'origine, le besoin de travailler, le manque d'accès aux livres et aux équipements. Sur ces aspects, l'assistance est indispensable, bien qu'insuffisante pour ceux qui la demandent. Dans la dimension subjective, c'est l'intégration sociale dans l'environnement universitaire qui ressort, en mettant l'accent sur le facteur socio-économique comme marqueur des frontières entre les groupes. Les aspects pédagogiques concerne l'écart entre l'éducation de base et la maîtrise de la langue étrangère, le manque de temps et d'environnement pour les études. On conclut que la complexité des questions présentées nécessite une restructuration intersectorielle des universités.

**Mots-clés :** aide aux étudiants, enseignement supérieur, étudiants universitaires, pauvreté.

## La pobreza, la permanencia en la universidad y la asistencia a los estudiantes: un análisis psicosocial

**Resumen:** Este artículo busca entender las implicaciones psicosociales de la pobreza para la permanencia de los estudiantes universitarios a partir de las políticas de bienestar estudiantil. Con un enfoque cualitativo, se investigó a ocho estudiantes pobres de varios cursos en dos universidades públicas brasileñas. En cuanto a la dimensión material, destacamos: la falta de recursos para la subsistencia, la vivienda lejana o el desplazamiento del lugar de origen, la necesidad de trabajar, y la falta de acceso a libros y equipos. En estos aspectos, la asistencia es indispensable, aunque insuficiente para quienes la solicitan. En la dimensión subjetiva, surge la integración social en el entorno académico, con énfasis en el factor socioeconómico como marcador de fronteras. Los aspectos pedagógicos van a la zaga en cuanto a la educación básica y el dominio del idioma extranjero, la falta de tiempo y de ambiente para el estudio. Se llega a la conclusión de que la complejidad de las cuestiones presentadas requiere una reestructuración intersectorial de las universidades.

**Palabras clave:** asistencia al estudiante, educación superior, universitarios, pobreza.

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