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THE SUBJECTIVE WELL- BEING OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SÃO PAULO AT THE INTERSECTION OF RACE-COLOR, SEX, AND INCOME IN TIMES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: To understand the limits and possibilities of academic success of black students at the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, the present study sought to identify the levels of Subjective Well-Being (SWB) of students and assess their relations with sociodemographic variables of race-color, sex, and income, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We applied an online survey composed of the Subjective Well-being Scale (SWBS) and questions concerning aspects of academic experience to a sample of university students ($n = 634$; 65,0% female; $Mage = 23.85$; $SD = 6.78$). We performed statistical analyzes in order to verify the main trends and differences between the different groups of the sample, which included descriptive tests of the dataset, regression, analysis of variance (ANOVA), t-test and correlations. The average SWB of USP students was significantly low ($M = 2.26$; $SD = 2.05$), heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the study suggests racism, sexism and classism exert a significant influence among them, insofar as blacks have significantly lower BES rates compared to non-blacks (0.049^*); women in relation to men (0.001^*); and those with lower incomes ($<0.001^*$), to the more affluent. In the intersectional analysis, it is observed that black women report the lowest level of SWB ($M = 1.76$; $SD = 1.25$). In general, the students consider that the pandemic context significantly influenced their responses to the SWBS, with an even more significant impact among women ($<0.001^*$), which allows us to infer that the restrictive measures aggravated sexism in their homes. Affirmative action policies, therefore, must go beyond the entrance of historically marginalized populations in higher education, it must also promote retention and academic success in association with the well-being and mental health of these students.

Keywords: Subjective Well-Being; Health service for students; University; Discrimination; COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, the world witnessed the outbreak of the new coronavirus (Sars-CoV-2), the etiological agent of the COVID-19 disease. Its speed and epidemiological intensity led the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare COVID-19 to be a pandemic, on March 11, 2020.

To deal with the pandemic, most countries have used strategies to reduce the circulation of people by adopting restrictive measures of isolation, physical distancing, and quarantine. In Brazil, despite controversies in the actions of the Federal Government, several Brazilian states and municipalities followed the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and of the WHO, with the enactment of decrees that made these measures feasible (CIMINI ET AL., 2020; OLIVEIRA & PIRES, 2021).

Such policies imposed the closure of restaurants, nightclubs, and shopping malls, in addition to the ban on concerts and cultural events at public and private educational institutions, which implied the restriction of mobility, social interaction and other social activities. These measures evidently brought not only economic but also mental health consequences, resulting in an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression, abusive use of alcohol and other drugs, symptoms of acute stress disorder, such as insomnia, low concentration, and reduced work performance, among other factors (BROOKS ET AL., 2020; REYNOLDS ET AL., 2008).

It is noteworthy that mental health is more than just the absence of psychopathological illnesses. It is a state of general well-being in which a person can express their abilities,

face the stressors of everyday life, work productively and contribute to society (WHO, 2001). It is a state of physical, psychological, and social well-being, related to cultural and social differences and quality of life.

Higher education activities were also significantly affected by the pandemic due to the suspension of face-to-face activities and the consequent emergency adaptation to remote activities. This scenario made us question the influence of the pandemic on university students, since the transition to higher education is already challenging (DINIS, 2013), marking an important phase in life, as it compiles feelings and positive affections, such as accomplishments, decisions, projects and expectations, and negative ones, such as concerns, indecisions, fears, and sadness.

Assuming, therefore, that the context of the pandemic intensifies such complexity of feelings and emotions, the present study sought to investigate the Subjective Well-Being (BES) of university students at USP in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and assess its relations with race-color, sex, and income.

THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF WELL-BEING

In the last decades, the field of positive psychology has produced a considerable number of studies on well-being, focusing on the so-called positive health factors with a focus on the promotion and protection of quality of life and individual well-being (MACHADO & BANDEIRA, 2012; MANSO, 2014; SCORSOLINI-COMIN & SANTOS, 2012; SILVA & HELENO, 2012). Unlike ignoring the challenges and difficulties experienced by individuals, positive psychology questions the tradition of psychological science based on a biomedical model that focuses mostly on what is

considered dysfunctional (GRAZIANO, 2005).

“Well-being” is a multifaceted construct/variable, and its investigation presupposes at least two perspectives. One that supports the concept of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) and the other, that of Subjective Well-Being (SWB). The first, which is in the PWB, has a eudaimonic philosophical basis, and refers to happiness as a result of the search for meaning in life as a whole, in its development and self-fulfillment. The other perspective, which supports the concept of SWB, is based on hedonistic logic, and advocates the greater presence of pleasure and positive emotions at the expense of negative ones such as the determination for happiness. This, added to the assessment of general life satisfaction, based on a person’s own experience, culminates in the concept that is considered by many authors as a “subjective assessment of quality of life” (COSTA & PEREIRA, 2007; GIACOMONI, 2004; SCORSOLINI-COMIN & SANTOS, 2010). The subjective element is fundamental in this assessment, which will also be influenced by life circumstances; the evaluations of each individual can be quite different, insofar as the sociocultural context is directly related to beliefs and expectations about the world, about oneself, and about life in general.

SWB measurement tools are diverse, but there are few measures adapted and validated to the Brazilian population. In this sense, Albuquerque & Tróccoli (2004) developed a scale to measure well-being that encompasses three main dimensions: “positive affect”, “negative affect” and “satisfaction with life”. The scale was validated in Brazil through a study that included 795 people (74% male and 26% female), the analysis did not control for race-color or income. Their scale allows evaluating the general score of the SWB, and its dimensions separately. Therefore, the SWB

scale has the potential to offer indications, clues, and possible paths for investigating the well-being of university students, as well as to point out its limitations.

Several studies argue that it is almost impossible to exhaust the justification for the well-being indices of a sample in a single cause. The explanatory models for SWB can be grouped into approaches known as “top-down” and “bottom-up”. The first conceives that inherent individual and personality characteristics are the main predictors of SWB, while the latter considers it as derived from objective and external circumstances of life, focusing, therefore, on sociodemographic factors (BRIEF ET AL., 1993; COSTA & PEREIRA, 2007; GIACOMONI, 2004; SANTOS, 2012; SCORSOLINI-COMIN, 2012; WOYCIEKOSKI, STENERT & HUTZ, 2012).

Diener et al. (1999) emphasize that the different explanations of the determinants of SWB are complementary, and there is no point in looking for a single reason and cause for happiness, since this results from a complex interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The bidirectional causal model precisely proposes an integration between the two theories, since both objective life circumstances and the global dimensions of personality indirectly affect SWB (BRIEF ET AL., 1993; COSTA & PEREIRA, 2007; WOYCIEKOSKI, STENERT & HUTZ, 2012).

THE MENTAL HEALTH OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

There are a few studies that point to the prevalence of quality of life and mental health of university students according to contextual and sociodemographic aspects, many considering variation by sex and few from the perspective of race, color, or income. Understanding the well-being of students is essential to create strategies to

provide quality of life at the University, to gain insight into characteristics that relate to students’ academic success, achievement, and satisfaction with life.

Carlesso (2020), through a free literature review, searched the scientific literature for the repercussions of the challenges of academic life and the manifestation of psychological problems in university students. The author observed that several studies suggest that students, especially those in medical school, are highly susceptible to depression. The academic admission phase at the beginning of the course is when the greatest predisposition to common minor disorders occurs. The studies conclude that suffering may be related to academic activities, such as the overload of new experiences and responsibilities of the transition from adolescence to adulthood, with emphasis on the distance from family, conflicts and concerns related to decision-making that will impact on their future.

Padovani et al. (2014) exposed the vulnerability indicators associated with SWB of university students from a database derived from the mental health assessment of 3,587 university students from Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Brazil. They underlined the high incidence of symptoms indicative of stress, *burnout*, anxiety, and depression in the population, indicating the female population as the most vulnerable. They also highlight that aspirations and high expectations for the professional and personal future are usually one of the results of the high prevalence of suffering among students, resulting in considerable implications in their learning and training process. Despite describing the variation by sex, this study does not do the same for race-color or income.

In an integrated review based on empirical studies, Graner and Cerqueira (2019) identified risks and protective factors for

psychological distress in university students. After analyzing thirty-seven studies, the authors identified that female, older, and low-income individuals reported the highest levels of suffering. These sociodemographic profiles were also observed in the study by Dyrbye, Thomas and Shanafelt (2006), a systematic review of articles on depression, anxiety, and *burnout* among American and Canadian medical students.

In their review, Graner and Cerqueira (2019) reported only one study that relates university suffering with experiences of racial, age, class, and sexual orientation discrimination. Bastos, Barros, Celeste, Paradies and Faerstein (2014) point out that, in their study, 23% of the students reported having suffered discrimination, which was more frequent among women, quota holders, people with low income, and blacks. Based on the development of a psychometric instrument that assesses discrimination experiences, the authors observed that such experiences were significantly associated with mental disorders, with discriminated students being 14 times more likely to have diagnosed psychological distress.

Graner and Cerqueira (2019) also noted that almost half of the studies relate other aspects of students' health that can accentuate or alleviate suffering, such as smoking and the use of psychoactive stimulants as a strategy to deal with stress, which can cause harm depending on the intensity and frequency of use. In addition, they identified other risk factors such as not practicing physical activities, unbalanced diet, poor sleep quality, daily stress or specific tensions, factors that are more frequently observed in students in the last semesters.

When studying the domains of the quality of life of medical students by the *World Health Organization Quality of life Group* (Whoqol-bref), Chazan, Campos, and

Portugal (2015) identified their relations with sociodemographic variables, health, university entry pathway, and year of graduation. In the study, out of the 394 students, 43% were quota students. The authors showed that the lowest quality of life scores was for women, those with chronic morbidity, quota students, class C students, and those in the third and sixth year of the course.

Although the above discussed literature does not specifically apply the concept of SWB, nor the Subjective Well-being Scale (SWBS), their results corroborate the multicausality of the students' well-being. There are correlations of aspects of mental health conditions and quality of life of university students with sociodemographic factors, such as gender, race-color, age, income, as well as university entry pathway, whether by quotas (reservation of seats) or by wide competition.

Regarding the SWBS, no studies were found with university students in Brazil that consider the race-color or income variable in their analyses. The absence of this data highlights the exploratory importance of the present study analytical approach, especially after the establishment of affirmative policies to reserve seats in public universities, considering the evidence that blacks and quota students have found a hostile environment at the university (MODESTO ET AL., 2017; MUÑOZ, OLIVEIRA & SANTOS, 2019).

The affirmative policy, known as University Quotas, guided by Law 12,711, of August 29, 2012, fostered the access of low-income and self-declared black, brown and indigenous students to public higher education institutions. At USP, adherence to the aforementioned regulations took place from 2018 onwards. Once admission was guaranteed by reservation of seats, the focus of the debate became on their experience on *campi*, often with the purpose of identifying

forms of exclusion, which, although more subtle and veiled, are no less perverse.

In a country constituted and mediated by racism (SANTOS ET AL., 2012), the race-color category must be included in analyses of university well-being and quality of life, especially in the current context of democratization of access to HEI. It should be noted that racism structures a hierarchical social system of power and social positions that intersect with other social markers of difference (GUIMARÃES, 1995), in which the markers of inequality are imposed by discriminations arising from racism, sexism, and classism, all socio-culturally and historically coined.

The present study specifically seeks to identify the levels of SWB of USP students and assess their relations with the sociodemographic variables of race-color, sex, and income, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Guided by a broader objective that is to analyze the limits and possibilities for the well-being of black students at USP, we investigated, among other aspects of the academic experience, episodes of racial-ethnic prejudice and discrimination in the academic environment, commuting patterns and travel time to the university.

In line with the ethical-political horizon of justice and social equity, we use the analytical tool of intersectionality, used to investigate the structural inseparability of racism with capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy; as well as to analyze the intersections that usually place black and poor women in situations of greater vulnerability (AKOTIRENE, 2019). Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the reflection and future adoption of actions that can positively influence academic success and the right to the University.

METHOD

The present study is an exploratory, empirical, quantitative, non-experimental, and transversal investigation. Based on the concept of SWB, we applied the SWBS adapted and validated to the Brazilian context according to Albuquerque and Tróccoli (2004), to investigate the level of subjective well-being of university students, and whether it varies across sociodemographic variables of race-color, sex, and income, as well as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their well-being.

PROCEDURE AND MEASURES

The questionnaire consisted of two sections of closed questions in multiple-choice format. a happy person". The items were presented in the form of a five-point Likert scale (01 = never, 05 = always). At the end of the section, a nine-point Likert-type question was also inserted (01 = never, 09 = always) concerning the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' previous answers on SWB.

Section 01 - Subjective Well-being (SWB) - It included 62 items covering three factors: positive affects, negative affects, and satisfaction with life. Factor I (positive affect) was composed of 21 items, such as happy, kind, and pleasant. Factor II (negative affect) for 26 items, such as impatient, sad, and alarmed. Finally, factor III (satisfaction with life) was composed of 15 items, for example, the statement "I consider myself a happy person". The items were presented in the form of a five-point Likert scale (01 = never, 05 = always). At the end of the block, a nine-point Likert-type question was also inserted (01 = never, 09 = always) concerning the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' previous answers on SWB.

Section 02 - Sociodemographic Profile and Academic Experience - It included questions on age, biological sex, sexual orientation,

gender identity, race-color, family income, disability, diagnosis of mental disorder, place of residence, transportation and travel time to university, study program, experiences of prejudice and discrimination at USP.

Data collection was carried out between June 02 and September 02, 2020, through an online questionnaire, with an explanatory invitation, hosted on the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire was electronically distributed by the directory of students and undergraduate and graduate departments at USP, as well as via Facebook and WhatsApp.

The study, as well as its collection instruments and informed consent forms (ICF), were submitted and approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings of the Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo (IPUSP), receiving the Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Assessment (CAAE): 25498319.9.0000.5561.

PARTICIPANTS

The sample consisted of 634 participants, 88.8% (n=563) were undergraduate and 11.2% (n=71) were graduate students. Among graduate students, 5.5% (n=35) were enrolled in master's programs, 5% (n=32) in doctorate, 0.5% (n=3) in post-doctorate, and 0.2% (n=1) in *lato sensu*. Slightly more than half were in Humanities (51.6%; n=327), followed by Exact Sciences and Earth or Agrarian Sciences (30.6%; n=194) and Health or Biological Sciences (9.1%; n=58).

As shown in *Table 01*, the sample consists of individuals between 18 and 62 years old, with the majority, 73.6% (n=467), between 18 and 24 years old. This portion of students is predominantly white, female and almost entirely cisgender, without disabilities and in the family income range of up to six (06) minimum monthly salary (R\$ 6,270.00), 67.4% (n=427). Note that 31.7% (n=201) are black, which corresponds to the sum of blacks

and browns, and 68.3% (n=433) are non-blacks, including whites, yellows (Asians), and indigenous people.

More than 40% of students reported some clinical diagnosis of mental disorder. 33.1% (n=210) reported anxiety; 24.6% (n=156) depression; 5.2% (n=33) eating disorder; 4.6% (n=29) disorder related to trauma and stressors; and 16.8% (n=107) other disorders in smaller proportions. It is also noteworthy that most respondents live in the West Zone of the city of São Paulo and report public transport as the most common means of transportation to the university; in addition to having a commute time from home to university of up to 1h30 (74%; n=469).

		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Age</i>	18 to 19	125	19.7
	20 to 24	342	53.9
	25 to 29	85	13.4
	30 to 39	59	9.3
	40 and above	23	3.6
<i>Sex</i>	Female	412	65
	Male	217	34.2
	Other	5	0.8
<i>Gender</i>	Cisgender	611	96.4
	Non-binary	16	2.5
	Transgender	4	0.6
	Other	3	0.5
<i>Race-color</i>	White	338	53.3
	Pardo/Brown	118	18.6
	Yellow	90	14.2
	Black	83	13.1
	Indigenous	5	0.8
<i>Income</i>	Up to 1 salary	100	15.8
	1 to 3 salaries	199	31.4
	3 to 6 salaries	128	20.2
	6 salaries or more	207	32.6
<i>Mental disorder</i>	No	356	56.2
	Yes	278	43.8

<i>Residence territory</i>	North Zone	53	8.4
	East Zone	80	12.6
	City center	48	7.6
	West Zone	228	36
	South Zone	102	16.1
	Outside the city of SP	123	19.4
<i>Transport</i>	Walk	72	11.4
	Public (bus, train, subway)	440	69.4
	Own vehicle	78	12.3
	Bicycles, rollerblades, etc.	16	2.5
	Carpool	14	2.2
	Taxi, Uber	6	0.9
	Special shuttle bus	8	1.3
<i>Commuting time</i>	Up to 30 minutes	168	26.5
	Between 30 minutes and 1h	156	24.6
	Between 1h and 1h30	145	22.9
	Between 1h30 and 2h	114	18
	Between 2h and 2h30	39	6.2
	More than 2h30	12	1.9
<i>Total</i>		<i>634</i>	<i>100</i>

Note. Research data source.

Table 01. Frequency and distribution of general data of the sample.

TREATMENT AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA

The statistical analysis of the data consisted of descriptive analysis techniques, such as central tendency and dispersion, in addition to tests of mean comparisons using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and simple linear regression. Data were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 28. The results were evaluated at a 95% confidence interval, with a significance level of 5% ($p < 0.05$).

We performed exploratory factor analysis to verify the structure of the intercorrelation matrix and its respective components, whose

existence could be observed both by the scree-plot and by the variance observed from the sum of each factor. The three components together represent a variance of 50.77%, higher than that found in the initial study (44%). The KMO and Bartlett test was high (0.97), indicating the sample's suitability for the application of factor analysis. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.81, which shows good internal consistency of the analysis instrument.

The commonalities of each item on the scale were also verified, as well as their distribution among the three components found in the factor analysis. We eliminated the item with a rate lower than 0.45, according to the criterion of the original article (item 16), as well as those that saturated in more than one component or in a different factor in relation to what they should have originally composed (items 3, 7, 15, 39 and 47).

After excluding items, the score for each factor was calculated from the average of the sub-items of each component, and the final calculation of the SWB index was performed using the following formula (Santos, 2012): AP (positive affect) + SV (satisfaction with life) - AN (negative affect), with SWB therefore varying from -3 to 9 (given that each dimension varies from 1 to 5).

As the sample is almost entirely cisgender (96.4%), we grouped sex and gender variables, and we removed non-binary individuals ($n=5$) from the statistical analyzes. Such a low percentage could bias the significance analysis of the gender variable. In addition, we grouped individuals by their race-color, in blacks and non-blacks, to give more robustness to the statistical relevance of the sample and to establish relationships between the variables with higher levels of significance.

RESULTS

As shown in *Table 02*, the overall SWB index of the sample is notably low ($M=2.26$), with the factor “negative affect” higher than the “positive affect” and “satisfaction with life” indices. In addition, SWB is significantly unequal in the three sociodemographic sections of the study, by race-color, sex, and income.

Concerning the race-color variable, black students have the lowest rate compared to non-black students, with the greatest difference being found in the “satisfaction with life” factor by race-color ($p=0.003^*$). Concerning sex, women have the lowest measures of well-being compared to men, a difference that is accentuated by the factors “negative affect” ($p<0.001$) and “positive affect” ($p=0.003^*$). When analyzing these indices at the intersection between race-color and sex, as illustrated in *Figure 01*, black women have the lowest SWB index compared to the other groups: SWB also shows a significant difference when the indexes are

compared by income bracket based on the minimum monthly salary of R\$1,045.00 (one thousand and forty-five reais per month). The index decreases as the income range decreases. There are significant differences in all factors: negative affect ($p=0.012^*$), positive affect ($p=0.012^*$), and satisfaction with life ($p<0.001^*$).

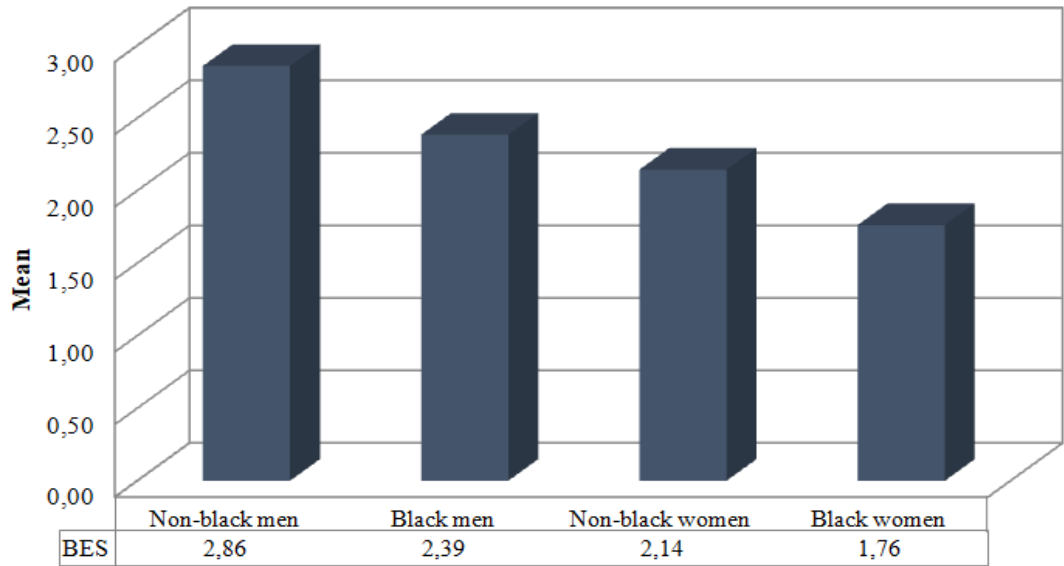
The intersection between race-color and income shows that non-black students with the lowest per capita income have the lowest levels of well-being, and black students with the highest incomes, the highest. It is worth noting that such results may be due to the sampling distribution of these groups, such as the fact that 33 black students are concentrated in the highest income bracket, compared with 174 non-black students. This *Figure 01* also illustrates the results found according to the intersection of race-color and income, which, also in this research, are overdetermined ($p<0.001^*$). In other words, blacks tend to be the poorest and non-blacks the richest.

	SWB		P	Negative affect	Positive affect	Satisf. life
	M (SD)			M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
<i>Total</i>	2.26 (2.05)			3.35 (0.83)	2.46 (0.79)	3.15 (0.85)
<i>SWB by race-color^a</i>						
<i>Black</i>	2.02 (2.10)		0.049*	3.36 (0.84)	2.38 (0.76)	3.00 (0.88)
<i>Non-black</i>	2.36 (2.02)			3.34 (0.82)	2.49 (0.81)	3.21 (0.83)
<i>SWB by sex^b</i>						
<i>Female</i>	2.03 (2.13)		0.001*	3.47 (0.83)	2.39 (0.81)	3.11 (0.90)
<i>Male</i>	2.68 (1.85)			3.11 (0.79)	2.59 (0.75)	3.21 (0.75)
<i>SWB by income bracket</i>						
<i>Up to 1 salary</i>	1.71 (2.04)		<0.001*	3.44 (0.85)	2.29 (0.8)	2.86 (0.81)
<i>1 to 3 salaries</i>	1.98 (2.02)			3.43 (0.81)	2.38 (0.86)	3.02 (0.86)
<i>3 to 6 salaries</i>	2.32 (2.04)			3.41 (0.83)	2.53 (0.77)	3.20 (0.85)
<i>6 salaries or more</i>	2.74 (2.00)			3.35 (0.83)	2.46 (0.79)	3.15 (0.85)

^aWithout data from indigenous students ($n=5$) for the analysis of race-color. ^bWithout non-binary/others student data ($n=5$) for analysis of sex. Note. Research data source.

Table 02. SWB indices and their factors by race-color, sex, and income.

SWB



SWB

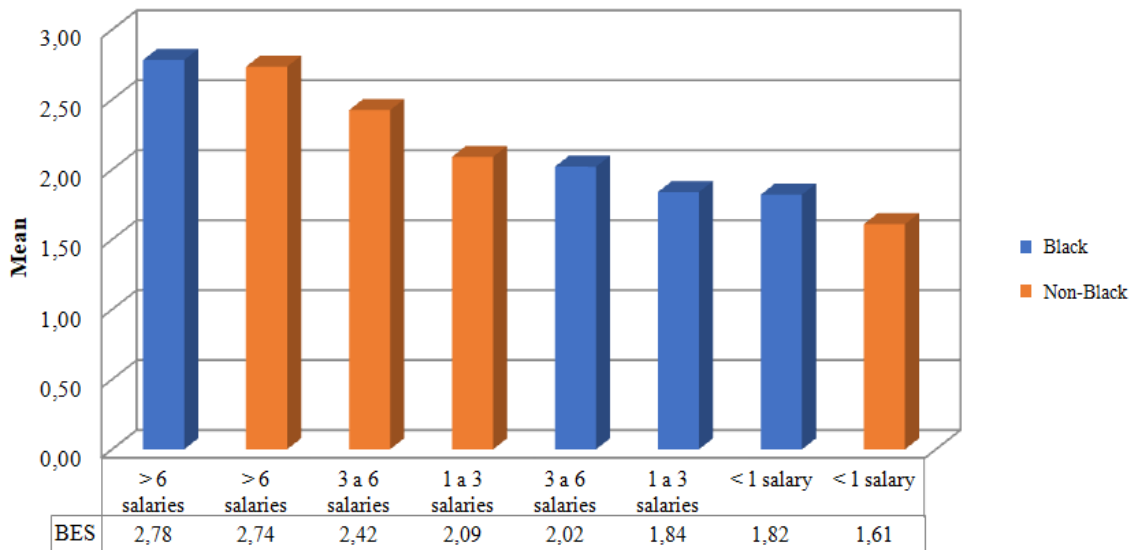


Fig. 01 Students SWB indices, according to the intersectionality of race-color and sex and of race-color and income USP-2020.

In addition to SWB indices, we also verified students' own assessment of the influence of the pandemic context on their responses regarding well-being. On a Likert scale from 1 to 9, we found an expressively high overall average of perceived influence for the sample ($M = 7.20$), as shown in *Table 03*. When comparing the averages between the sociodemographic variables, we found that the difference was statistically significant for sex, but not for race-color or for income.

	<i>P</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
<i>General</i>		7.20 (2.00)
<i>Race-color</i>		
<i>Black</i>	0.460*	7.11 (2.06)
<i>Non-black</i>		7.24 (1.97)
<i>Sex</i>		
<i>Female</i>	<0.001*	7.40 (1.91)
<i>Male</i>		6.80 (2.13)
<i>Income bracket</i>		
<i>Up to 1 salary</i>	0.667*	7.06 (2.12)
<i>1 to 3 salaries</i>		7.26 (2.03)
<i>3 to 6 salaries</i>		7.33 (1.98)
<i>6 salaries or more</i>		7.12 (1.93)

Note. Research data source.

Table 03. Average students' assessment of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on their well-being.

We performed simple linear regression to assess the moderation of the impact of the pandemic on the variation of students' SWB indices. For this purpose, the formula $\text{lm}(\text{SWB} \sim \text{COVID})$ was applied, obtaining the equation of the fitted line given by $E(Y) = 3.6704952 - 0.1967135 \times \text{COVID-19}$. The *Figure 02* shows that the SWB parameter associated with the COVID variable (pandemic influence on well-being) was assumed by the value -0.1967135 , representing a decrease in the SWB axis as there is an increase in the COVID-19 axis.

This means that as the perception of the pandemic's influence on their well-being increases, individuals have their SWB decreased by an average of -0.1967135 units. Therefore, students with lower SWB scores are the ones who most consider their responses to be influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to specific data related to the SWBS and the influence of the pandemic on students' responses, we investigated some other aspects of students' academic experiences and socioeconomic context. Next, we discuss relevant findings regarding comparative data on situations of racism at the university, as well as the territories of residence, type of transportation, and commuting time to university.

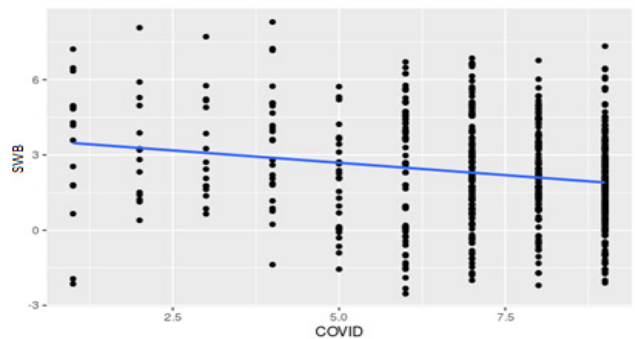


Fig. 02 Adjusted line graph that assesses the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' SWB responses.

As shown in *Table 04*, students responded on a Likert scale from 01 to 05 about having experienced, observed, or heard about situations concerning people's skin color, ethnic and racial differences, or problems involving racism at USP. Students consider that the most recurrent situations refer to those reported by third parties, followed by situations in which they witnessed it happening with other people and, finally, situations in which they were directly involved.

			<i>Black</i>			<i>Non-black</i>			<i>Total</i>	
		P	M (SD)			M (SD)			M (SD)	
<i>Situations of racism</i>	<i>Directly involved</i>	<0.001*	1.94 (1.28)			1.38 (0.84)			1.56 (1.03)	
	<i>Witnessed</i>	0.002*	2.26 (1.35)			1.92 (1.21)			2.03 (1.26)	
	<i>Reported by third</i>	0.403*	3.18 (1.44)			3.08 (1.39)			3.11 (1.41)	
		P	<i>Black</i>			<i>Non-black</i>			<i>Total</i>	
			N	%	R	N	%	R	N	%
<i>Residence territory of São Paulo city</i>	<i>North Zone</i>		24	45.3	7.2	29	54.7	-7.2	53	100
	<i>East Zone</i>		33	41.3	7.6	47	58.8	-7.6	80	100
	<i>City center</i>	0.025*	9	18.7	-6.2	39	81.3	6.2	48	100
	<i>West Zone</i>		68	29.8	-4.3	160	70.2	4.3	228	100
	<i>South Zone</i>		28	27.5	-4.3	74	72.5	4.3	102	100
	<i>Outside</i>		39	31.7	0.0	84	68.3	0.0	123	100
<i>Transport</i>	<i>Walk</i>		23	31.9	0.2	49	68.1	-0.2	72	100
	<i>Public</i>	<0.001*	159	36.1	19.5	281	63.9	-19.5	440	100
	<i>Own vehicle</i>		14	15.2	-15.2	78	84.8	15.2	92	100
	<i>Others</i>		5	16.7	-4.5	25	83.3	4.5	30	100
<i>Commut. time</i>	<i>Over de 1h 30</i>	<0.001*	79	47.9	26.7	86	52.1	-26.7	165	100
	<i>Below 1h 30</i>		122	26.0	-26.7	347	74.0	26.7	469	100

Note. Research data source.

Table 04. Profiles of academic experiences of racism and sociodemographic context of black and non-black students.

Blacks show a significantly higher direct implication in situations of racism compared to non-blacks. Black students had the highest rate of direct involvement ($M = 2.52$; $SD = 1.42$), followed by yellow students ($M = 1.77$; $SD = 1.14$), browns ($M = 1.53$; $SD = 1.00$) and whites ($M = 1.26$; $SD = 0.68$). In situations of witnessed racism instances, blacks demonstrate a significantly greater social perception compared to non-blacks. As for situations of racism reported by third parties, there was no significant difference.

The Table 04 also illustrates that Black students are more likely to live in the East and North Zones, to use public transportation more often, and, perhaps as a result, to have a longer commute to the University (over 1h30). On the other hand, non-black students are more likely to reside in the central region of the city, moving mostly by private transport (own vehicle or a carpool) and with shorter commuting intervals (below 1h30).

DISCUSSION

The panorama on student well-being in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic offers us relevant data on the quality of life of USP students, besides bringing evidence on how social markers of the difference also hierarchize students' experiences at the University. Black students present significantly lower well-being rates compared to non-blacks; women, to men; and those with lower income, to those with higher income. As for the context of the pandemic, the women evaluated that it influenced their answers considerably.

The analysis of the general data shows that the SWB index of USP students is significantly lower than the value found in the study by Santos (2012), who investigated the relationship between SWB and Personal Project Analysis (PPA) of 206 university

students from a private institution in the state of Minas Gerais. In their results, the BES value found was $M = 4.69$ ($SD=1.72$).

The low level of students' well-being is in line with the heavily influence of COVID-19 pandemic, as well the high proportion of clinical diagnoses of mental disorders, with 43% of the sample responding positively to the prevalence of anxiety and depression. The high average in "negative affect" directly influenced this overall score, which also may relate to the academic requirements, demands, and expectations, often constituting an aversive environment for many.

Complex cognitive and emotional resources are required to cope with higher education demands. Time and material resources are also required to cope with such demands, not only academic, but also personal, social, and professional. The low level of well-being and the high diagnosis of mental disorders corroborate the findings of the literature reviews by Carlesse (2020) and Padovani and collaborators (2014), whose research reveals university students' susceptibility to psychological suffering, such as depression, anxiety, stress, and burnout disorders, because of the academic, social and psychological challenges related to expectations arising within this context. The pandemic has the potential to intensify the aforementioned challenges, which is evidenced by the fact that those with the lowest BES scores were also those who perceived its greatest impact.

The lower measures of BES among women, particularly for black women, are also in line with the scientific literature (GRANER & CERQUEIRA, 2019; PADOVANI ET AL, 2014). Although research shows that female students have lower levels of quality of life and well-being in a context outside of the pandemic, one can assume that the restrictive measures and the resulting situation of

accumulation and overload of academic and domestic activities further impacted the well-being of USP students, aggravating the latent sexism in their homes. This assumption becomes more concrete when we observe differences by gender by the factors of the SWB, because significant differences occur in the most transitory dimensions (“negative affects” and “positive affects”), showing how much the women’s SWB was impacted by the momentary context. That is, these more transitory factors theoretically can be understood as those most influenced by the context of the COVID pandemic.

As for race-color, the lower SWB index for blacks results from the differential found in the “Satisfaction with life” dimension. It is worth mentioning that among the SWB factors, “Satisfaction with life” is related to a non-transitory perspective and can be understood as a result of the evaluation that encompasses several life domains and is also related to the past and future, so that it ponders life itself in a non-momentary sense. Diener, Suh and Oishi (1997) consider work, family, leisure, social group, and the sense of self as the main domains of satisfaction.

Because it is a dimension that investigates feelings of well-being in the medium and long term, it allows us to infer about the effects of racism experienced both inside and outside the university. It is not about punctual experiences located in time-space, but rather about a life crossed by daily experiences as a target of racism which is both structural and systemic in Brazilian society, and which will inevitably impact the well-being of these students and their evaluation of life.

The hostile academic environment contributes to the lower levels of well-being of black students compared to non-black students. Being more involved directly or indirectly in situations of racism at university means that in addition to being

daily targets of racism, they have more awareness and sensitivity to socially identify these phenomena with other members of their group. Major and O’Brian (2005) relate “automatic vigilance” to experiences of prejudice and discrimination, as a resource for assessing threat of rejection or hostility based on previous experiences of devaluation that can amplify vigilance for subsequent similar events, thus increasing one’s own awareness and sensitivity, but also anxiety, worry, and prior fear of being targeted again.

The permanent state of vigilance and alertness against the threat of being a target of stereotype, prejudice or discrimination interferes directly in the academic performance and quality of life of students (MAJOR & O’BRIAN, 2005; SILVA & PEREIRA, 2009), which shows us how situations of racism affect not only symbolically, but also objectively disadvantaged social groups, with physical and psychological repercussions. It is worth noting that everyday racism, present also at the university, generates serious damage, which is in line with the scientific literature on the pathogenic and neuro-physiological effects of discrimination that points to a range of health and well-being conditions. For example, diagnoses of cardiovascular hypertension, impacts on the immune system, gastrointestinal disorders, diabetes, inflammatory diseases, respiratory diseases, cancerous conditions, eating, sleep, mental, and psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenic, depressive, and anxiety symptoms, acute stress disorder (ASD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal ideation, smoking and abuse of alcohol and other substances (BASTOS & FAERSTEIN, 2012; FARO, 2010; LOUMA, NOBLES, DRAKE, HAVES, O’HAIR, FLETCHER & KOHLENBERG, 2013; MATA & PELISOLI, 2016; MELO, 2014; PASCOE & SMART-RICHMAN 2009).

Still, since the “Satisfaction with life” is the least transitory factor of the SWB, it is also the least influenced by the momentary context of the pandemic. From this perspective, curiously, we observe that black students evaluate that the pandemic had less influence in their answers regarding the SWB when compared to non-blacks. Therefore, we question whether the context of restrictive measures that forced black students away from the hostile academic environment of racism situations, as well as from the exhausting commute to USP, mitigated the uneasiness of these students, a consequence, for example, of more hours of sleep and rest or even enough time to better fulfill their academic demands. This question is also asked when we observe the data from the evaluation about the influence of the pandemic in the well-being under the cutout of the income bracket, because it is verified that the students from families with up to 01 minimum monthly salary consider that the pandemic influenced less in their answers when compared to those from higher brackets.

Although there was no significant difference in the evaluation of the influence of the pandemic on the answers about well-being between income brackets, we do observe differences when comparing the SWB indices under the cutout of this sociodemographic variable, with the wealthiest having the highest indices and the most impoverished the lowest. This finding corroborates the study of Gouveia, Freire, Araújo, Santos and Gouveia (2014), which highlights the importance of material resources to promote life satisfaction, and this correlation is higher in contexts of scarcity, such as in developing countries (DIENER & DIENER, 1995; DIENER, SANDVIK, SEIDLITZ, & DIENER, 1993).

The survey results also evidenced an overdetermination of race-color and income ($p < 0.001^*$), which is consonant with the

Brazilian context. IBGE (2019) indicators about per capita household income prove discrepancies between black and white families. The 2018 data point to a much more favorable situation for whites, with 16.4% of them among the 10% with the highest incomes in the country, while only 5.0% of blacks have the same income. The opposite happens among the poorest 10%, those with the lowest incomes. This class includes 13.5% of the total number of black people, compared to 5.5% of the total number of white people. In general, black Brazilians have an average household income per capita of R\$ 934, compared to an average income of R\$ 1,846 for whites.

Such a scenario explains the overlap between racism and classism among USP students, where black students are also the poorest. Besides discrimination in the realm of racism, there is class exclusion for these students, who often live in adverse structural conditions related to the distance and commuting time between their homes and the university.

It is not surprising, therefore, that black students are much more involved in situations of racism at USP. This happens because the centers of production of science, knowledge and erudition are intrinsically linked to power and racial authority (KILOMBA, 2020), not a neutral place, but one where white privilege still reigns concomitantly with the silencing of black voices at such places.

Epistemological racism reinforce such structure of marked places, in which references mostly of whiteness, Eurocentrism and cisheteropatriarchy, in addition to whole curriculums built by (and for) certain groups forces black students into a space of violence instead of a space of knowledge and wisdom. This space is governed by power mechanisms that “maintain hierarchical positions and preserve white supremacy” (KILOMBA, 2020, P. 53), so it is increasingly urgent that we

deconstruct and rethink the epistemological bases of Brazilian universities.

To this end, it is necessary to expand and qualify policies of permanence and student assistance at USP with the monitoring and evaluation of the well-being and quality of life of historically marginalized groups, to the extent that the normality of social manifestations, in Brazil and in the university, is racist, sexist and classicist. This requires that we explicitly assume values of egalitarianism and social justice for the implementation and effectiveness of institutional and pedagogical policies that propose, besides the development of competencies, the well-being of students associated with their academic success, achievement and satisfaction. If nothing is done to address social inequalities within the educational context, “every institution will become a transmission belt of racist privilege and violence” (ALMEIDA, 2019, P. 48), reproducing the oppressive structures of society.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study answered its main objective, which was to identify the levels of well-being of USP students according to the variables of race-color, gender, and income of USP students in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The expressively low levels of well-being, due to the high level of “negative affect”, added to the high rate of diagnoses of mental disorders, raise an alert about the conditions in which USP students find themselves, especially in a context of mental health problems resulting from the pandemic. Thus, we indicate the need for future studies that focus on aspects associated with academic life.

Still, it is noticeable how racism, sexism, and classism have a significant influence on students’ well-being, to the extent that blacks

have significantly lower rates compared to non-blacks, women in relation to men, and those with lower incomes compared to the better-off; with, in the intersections, black women having the lowest BES rates.

Although the study took place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this does not hinder the interpretation of the differences found between the groups; no significant differences were found regarding the influence of the pandemic on the answers to the questionnaire between blacks and non-blacks, nor between the income brackets, with the average for blacks being slightly lower than for non-blacks, as well as those with up to 01 minimum monthly salary lower than those with higher incomes. On the other hand, it is emphasized that the pandemic had a significant impact on the well-being of women, and it can be inferred that the restrictive measures aggravated patriarchy and sexism in their homes.

Considering that university experiences reproduce structural racism which is characteristic of Brazilian society, we can even hypothesize if differences associated with racism would not be higher within university students, since experiences between blacks and non-blacks, poor and rich, differ in and outside the university context, for instance: place of residence, means of transportation, form of university admission, distribution of resources and opportunities within USP, international exchanges, in addition to the experiences of daily racism and other discriminations.

In this sense, public affirmative action policies that go beyond admittance are necessary, as they should also promote the permanence and quality of life of black students in the university. We recommend the longitudinal replication of research on the well-being of university students to perform a diagnosis in a non-pandemic

context and evaluate the effectiveness of these policies in public higher education. We hope that these findings will serve for the adoption of measures that guarantee the right to the University and the good living of students, assisting the development of more specialized policies, technologies, and actions to confront racism in its intersections and its respective psychosocial effects.

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