


"WALKING AGAINST THE WIND": EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to evaluate the experiences of racial discrimination among university students, using their age groups as a parameter. This is an exploratory, descriptive, and cross-sectional study, with a sample of 751 participants. The students were mostly female, 52.5%; with a mean age of 22.8 years; being of predominantly brown race, 58.5%; with the predominant marital status of singles, with 88.7%; the family income of one to two salaries, representing 36.9%. Those aged between 18 and 19 years were the ones who most accepted unfair treatment about racial discrimination as something that is part of life (32.1%) and members of the age group between 22 and 23 years old were the ones who most tried to do something about this unfair treatment (79.8%). Those in the age group over 30 years reported that they had experienced discrimination because of race, ethnicity, or color (50%) and those who were most concerned in the last year about experiences of unfair treatment because of race or skin color corresponded to 66.7%, with the age group that most filed police complaints because of racial discrimination being 18 or 19 years old (2.4%). In this way, racial discrimination is a phenomenon that affects university students, so it needs to be more debated.

Keywords: Racism. Universities. Students. Racial discrimination.

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, debates on racial issues have been growing more and more, being a subject of extreme need and importance to be discussed. Thus, it is essential to know how to differentiate the terms about this theme. According to Silvio Almeida, in the book entitled "Structural Racism", published in 2019, there are differences in terms such as racism, prejudice, and discrimination (Almeida, 2019).

Thus, based on the book, the meanings of racism, prejudice, and discrimination are different, with racism being a structured system of discrimination that races the basis, which is revealed by conscious or unconscious actions that result in advantages or disadvantages for people, depending on the racial group to which they belong. Racial prejudice, on the other hand, refers to a judgment based on stereotypes about people associated with a specific racial group, which may or may not generate discriminatory behavior, such as stating that all blacks are lazy or Arabs are terrorists (Almeida, 2019).

Finally, the concept of racial discrimination, which is when people are treated unequally, based on racial identification, receiving different and often unfair treatment (Almeida, 2019). Racial discrimination is one of the most nefarious forms of human rights violations and a sad reality in many societies around the world. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, from subtle prejudices to explicit manifestations of hatred and violence.

Racial discrimination can occur in any environment, whether at home, in the community, at work, at school, or even at university. The first universities in Brazil emerged at the time of Colonial Brazil, being led by the religious, the Jesuits, who offered courses in philosophy and theology, which were subordinated to the interests and direction of the metropolis. In this context, with slavery, black people's access to education and, consequently, to higher education was precarious, if not non-existent (Valério *et al.*, 2021).

In the mid-2000s, Brazil adopted the affirmative action policy, which was initially developed in the United States in the 1960s. This policy aims to reduce and mitigate social and economic disparities between white and black people, the effectiveness of this policy for black people was strengthened with the enactment of the Quota Law, number 12.711/2012, sanctioned on August 29, 2012 (Valério *et al.*, 2021).

Although the aforementioned law represents an important step towards improving the access of the black population to higher education, there is still much to be done to achieve true racial equality in Brazil. This is partly due to the late implementation of compensatory policies (Valério *et al.*, 2021). Thus, today, there is still inequality about

blacks being able to access higher education, and when they do, the permanence rates are low, as they suffer so much from discrimination that they end up dropping out of university (Valério *et al.*, 2021).

Entering university can often be a phase that causes certain feelings, such as fear, worry, nervousness, and anxiety, as it is something new and different. In addition to this concern created when starting academic life, the student has other social and economic issues that can be stressors, associated with this, the issue of inequality and racial discrimination are other additional sources of suffering, which can compromise the mental health of these university students, in this way, it is valid to say that black students in universities are considered a vulnerable group, about mental health and well-being (Venâncio, 2023).

Thus, the objective of this study is to analyze the experiences of racial discrimination experienced by university students, considering the particularities of different age groups and how these influence the responses and perceptions in the face of unfair treatment.

METHODOLOGY

The article deals with an excerpt from the larger study entitled "Racial Discrimination and Mental Health in Universities", which has an exploratory, descriptive, and cross-sectional character, with a quantitative approach. So, cross-sectional studies analyze a population at a given moment in time, widely used in epidemiological research, as they observe a population at a specific point in time, collecting data on variables of interest to understand associations or patterns in a given community or group. When dealing with the health area, they provide data on the incidence of a certain disease or risk factors at a given time (Polit; Beck, 2019).

The survey was conducted from September 23, 2023, to December 16, 2023. First, data collection took place virtually, with the dissemination of the survey on social networks, such as *WhatsApp*, in the students' class groups, as well as on *Instagram*, disseminating the survey on Instagram of the Mental Health and Care Group (GESAM), a research group at the Vale do Acaraú State University (UVA), responsible for organizing the survey.

The survey, still in the virtual collection, had access to the *emails* of students from the Vale do Acaraú State University (UVA) and the Federal University of Ceará (UFC), with the sending of the *link* to the survey form, in addition to the fact that UVA and UFC also helped with the dissemination of the survey by the academic systems. The form was

created by *Google Forms* and was composed of the following items: sociodemographic information and the Scale of Experiences of Discrimination.

Only from November 28, 2023, to December 16, 2023, face-to-face data collection began with students from five Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ceará: Vale do Acaraú State University (UVA), Federal University of Ceará (UFC), Luciano Feijão College (FLF), 5 de Julho College (F5) and Educare College (FIED).

The Scale of Experiences of Discrimination is an instrument that aims to assess and measure discriminatory experiences related to ethnicity, race, or skin color. It was developed by Krieger in 1990 and used in the *Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults* (CARDIA) study. In 2005, it changed the questions and is the one that is still used in studies today. The instrument is divided into five categories: response to unfair treatment; discrimination; worry; global issues; and complaints lodged (Fattore *et al.*, 2016)

The statistical analysis was constructed with the application of the Chi-square test, applied to some dimensions of the Discrimination Experience Scale, such as Response to unfair treatment; Experience of racial discrimination; Concerns, and Filing of complaints, relating these to the age group of the students.

In this way, the study was able to gather a sample of 751 students who completed the questionnaire over a three-month interval. The time of the interviews ranged from 15 to 20 minutes, encompassing both the presentation of the purposes of the research and the reading and understanding of the Informed Consent Form.

This research followed the norms of Resolution No. 466, of December 12, 2012, of the National Health Council (CNS), which states that research carried out with human beings must consider the point of view of both the individual and the communities, principles of bioethics, such as autonomy, do no harm, do good, justice, and equality, among others, to guarantee the rights and responsibilities of those involved in the research, in addition to the fact that it is mandatory to clarify for all participants how the research will be carried out (Brazil, 2013).

In this context, this research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Vale do Acaraú State University (UVA), according to opinion No. 6,279,258.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Presentation of sociodemographic data of university students.

Variables		N	%
1 Gender	Female	394	52,5
	Male	350	46,6
	Non-binary	4	,5
	I prefer not to identify myself	3	,4
2 Age M=22.8 SD=5.02 Min=18 Max=64 (2 missing points)	18 or 19	165	22,0
	20 or 21	188	25,1
	22 or 23	183	24,4
	24 or 25	94	12,6
	26 to 30	71	9,5
	More than 30	48	6,4
3 Race	Brown	439	58,5
	Black	93	12,4
	White	209	27,8
	Yellow	10	1,3
4 Civilian situation	Single	666	88,7
	Married	48	6,4
	Stable union	35	4,7
	Widower	2	,3
6 Family income	less than a minimum wage	168	22,4
	half to a minimum wage	146	19,4
	from 1 to 2 minimum wages	277	36,9
	from 2 to 5 minimum wages	120	16,0
	more than 5 minimum wages	40	5,3
7 What is your religion?	Catholic	446	59,4
	Evangelical	88	11,7
	Spiritist	10	1,3
	Umbanda	10	1,3
	Candomblé	1	,1
	Atheist	37	4,9
	I have no religion	135	18,0
	Other Religions	24	3,2
	Total	751	100,0

Table 1 shows the sociodemographic data of the university students who participated in the research. Thus, the majority of the students who participated were female, representing a total of 52.5% (394), based on age group, she was classified into six groups: 18–19 years, 20–21 years, 22–23 years, 24–25 years, 26–30 years, and over 30 years. This categorization was adopted to allow a detailed analysis of the possible differences between age groups about experiences of racial discrimination. This classification was based on the sample distribution and the age criteria frequently used in studies on university populations.

The table also describes that more than half of the students, 58.5% (439), identified themselves as brown and only 12.4% (93) as black. And the result is about the marital status of the students and 88.7% (666) of the university students were single. Regarding family income, the predominant was one to two minimum wages, equivalent to 36.9% (277) of the students, given that 22.4% (168) of the students had an income of less than one minimum wage. Finally, the table shows that 59.4% (446) of the students were of the Catholic religion and that 18% (135) had no religion.

This occurs due to the simple historical fact of racism rooted in society, in which the participation of blacks and browns has always happened in a slower and later way. Until before 2012, people entered university by performing in the entrance exams, and, considering that there has always been inequality in Brazil, including in the field of education, that is, the more financial conditions a family had, the better the education of their children would be, facilitating entry into college, regardless of whether it was public or private (Mendes Junior; Waltenberg, 2022).

But, over the years, the increase in blacks and browns in universities was noticeable, after the creation of Law No. 12,711/2012, known as the Quota Law, which aims to reduce the levels of inequality in the academic sphere, reserving the number of places in the entrance exam for black and brown people. Despite the creation of this law and affirmative action, as much as the participation of blacks and browns has increased, the discrepancy between white students in the university for blacks and browns is still notorious (Mendes Junior; Waltenberg, 2022).

Regarding the age group, there is a study developed by Oliveira *et al.* (2024), in which he presented similar results for a survey with university students, most of the students were between 18 and 21 years old with 47.1%, 25.1% were in the age group of 20 to 21 years. In addition, 24.4% of respondents were between 22 and 23 years old, 12.6% were between 24 and 25 years old; 9.5% were in the 26 to 30 age group; and 6.4% were over 30 years old.

Also in this same study, it was evidenced that this distribution of different ages in the sample indicates a variety of experiences and points of view that can shape perceptions and experiences related to racial discrimination and its connection with mental health in the academic context Oliveira *et al.* (2024).

Table 2: Presentation of responses to unfair treatment among university students.

Responding to unfair treatment	18 or 19 (N=165)		20 or 21 (N=188)		22 or 23 (N=183)		24 or 25 (N=94)		26 to 30 (N=71)		More than 30 (N=48)		x ²	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I) If you feel that you are being treated unfairly, you will usually:													14,499	* 0,013
a) Accept this as a fact of life	53	32,1	55	29,3	37	20,2	20	21,3	11	15,5	8	16,7		
b) Try to do something about it	112	67,9	133	70,7	146	79,8	74	78,7	60	84,5	40	83,3		
II) If you are being treated unfairly, you generally:													5,562	0,351
a) Talk to other people about it	121	73,3	139	73,9	151	82,5	74	78,7	55	77,5	37	77,1		
b) Keep it to yourself	44	26,7	49	26,1	32	17,5	20	21,3	16	22,5	11	22,9		

* p<0.05

** p<0.01

p<0.001

Table 2 presents the analysis of the response to unfair treatment among university students, based on the application of the Chi-square test. The data are divided into age groups: 18 or 19, 20 or 21, 22 or 23, 24 or 25, 26 to 30, and more than 30, and, for each group, the answers to questions I and II were recorded.

Question I, which addresses how the student reacts when he feels that he is being treated unfairly, if he accepts it as a fact of life or if he tries to do something about it, shows that most of the students who accepted unfair treatment as a fact of life were those who were between 20 and 21 years old, representing 29.3% (55). The age group that most tried to do something against this unfair treatment was between 26 and 30 years old, representing 84.5% (60). However, there are significant differences between the age groups, as indicated by the X² (Chi-square) value of 14.499 and a p-value of 0.013.

Question II is related to how the student shares when he feels he is being treated unfairly, whether he talks to other people about it, or whether he keeps it to himself. The age group that most presented the answer to talk about unfair treatment of other people was 22 or 23 years old, representing 82.5% (151). And for the answer that the student keeps this to himself, the most predominant age group was 26.7% (44). Again, there are significant variations between the age groups, with X² of 5.562 and a p-value of 0.351.

It is worth noting that the asterisks indicate levels of statistical significance (*<0.05), suggesting that, for question I, the differences between the groups were statistically significant, while for question II, the differences were not so statistically pronounced. This analysis allows us to understand how different age groups of university students react and share experiences in the face of situations of unfair treatment.

A 2012 study, produced by Schulz and Wienke, evidenced the reality of injustice faced by blacks in Brazil, covering both socioeconomic and cultural issues, and it is pertinent to examine the policies proposed, to overcome or reduce this situation, which is known as Affirmative Action, perhaps, nowadays, the best-known practice is the Quota Law (Schulz; Wienke, 2012).

Another more recent study by Baumgarten *et al.* (2019), with 15 university students, enrolled in nine different undergraduate courses, of both sexes and aged between 20 and 42 years, showed that both from the perspective of those who suffered discrimination and those who witnessed these events, the experiences of discrimination permeated the daily lives of the interviewees in various aspects and situations.

The university students identified the presence of discrimination and its consequences as unfair and harmful actions for the lives of those who suffer from it, generating negative emotions both for those who directly experienced these experiences and for those who witnessed them (Baumgarten *et al.*, 2019).

Another survey carried out with 27 black university students, in 2023, by Ancillotti e Silva, which addresses how the racism suffered and unfair treatment at the university can impact the work career of black people, shows data that make it possible to understand that the expressions of racism observed by black university students, as much as they have been subtle in manifestation, impacts are evident and highly harmful to the academic growth and professional future of these students (Ancillotti; Silva, 2023).

In another field research conducted in 2021, by Valério *et al.* (2021), with black undergraduate students at a public university in Alagoas, it was found that all students experienced or witnessed some form of prejudice or discrimination within the university, in addition to facing sexism and classism. This situation reaffirms the mechanisms that perpetuate the university as a white, racist, and elitist environment. Thus, Afro-descendant students are required to make considerable efforts to break with the social invisibility imposed on them.

Also in this context, a study carried out by Oliveira *et al.* (2022) addresses a continuous pattern of racism, persistent in Brazil, which directly feeds the generation and continuity of discrimination against the black population. This racism operates mainly to discourage and silence these people, creating an environment of silencing for those who denounce racist acts, thus facilitating the perpetuation of these discriminatory actions.

In this way, this highlights that as much as students understand and recognize unfair treatment and know that this is a criminal act, they will not talk about how 20 and 21-year-old students, accept this unfair treatment, as something that is part of life. But, still based on the study by Oliveira *et al.* (2022), despite the attempts at silencing and marginalization faced by the black population in Brazil, since colonial times, there have been demonstrations, denunciations, and resistance against the oppression they faced, as evidenced by the quilombos.

Currently, the black Brazilian community, especially young people, is building other forms of resistance, in addition to the demand for more and better public policies of affirmative action, through artistic expression, cultural movements, and other initiatives, to strengthen the community in the face of a society permeated by racism (Valério *et al.*, 2021).

A study by Strohmeier *et al.* (2024), which involved 1,251 employees, found that more than 50% of the individuals who responded to the question about the actions they took after experiencing situations of discrimination at work, stated that they had not taken any action. The main justifications for this inaction were the lack of trust in the company's conflict resolution processes, the fear of reprisals by the people involved, and the concern about possible retaliation from other colleagues (Strohmeier *et al.*, 2024).

Table 3: Presentation of the experience of racial discrimination by age group in university students.

Discrimination	18 or 19 (N=165)		20 or 21 (N=188)		22 or 23 (N=183)		24 or 25 (N=94)		26 to 30 (N=71)		More than 30 (N=48)		x25	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
... suffered the experience of discrimination, ... Because of your race, ethnicity, or color?													23,621	*** 0,000
No	118	71,5	151	80,3	120	65,6	59	62,8	45	63,4	24	50,0		
Yes	47	28,5	37	19,7	63	34,4	35	37,2	26	36,6	24	50,0		
a) At school													20,456	** 0,001
Low exposure	112	67,9	151	80,3	119	65,0	57	60,6	44	62,0	27	56,3		
High exposure	53	32,1	37	19,7	64	35,0	37	39,4	27	38,0	21	43,8		
b) When looking for a job													40,947	*** 0,000
Low exposure	151	91,5	179	95,2	163	89,1	84	89,4	52	73,2	34	70,8		
High exposure	14	8,5	9	4,8	20	10,9	10	10,6	19	26,8	14	29,2		
c) At work													38,571	*** 0,000
Low exposure	152	92,1	175	93,1	163	89,1	81	86,2	61	85,9	30	62,5		
High exposure	13	7,9	13	6,9	20	10,9	13	13,8	10	14,1	18	37,5		

d) When buying a house													19,003	** 0,002
Low exposure	164	99,4	186	98,9	180	98,4	89	94,7	66	93,0	44	91,7		
High exposure	1	0,6	2	1,1	3	1,6	5	5,3	5	7,0	4	8,3		
e) Seeking medical care													18,565	** 0,002
Low exposure	159	96,4	182	96,8	165	90,2	85	90,4	61	85,9	41	85,4		
High exposure	6	3,6	6	3,2	18	9,8	9	9,6	10	14,1	7	14,6		
f) Requesting service in a store or restaurant													29,457	*** 0,000
Low exposure	144	87,3	166	88,3	147	80,3	71	75,5	46	64,8	33	68,8		
High exposure	21	12,7	22	11,7	36	19,7	23	24,5	25	35,2	15	31,3		
g) When applying for credit or bank loan													9,826	0,080
Low exposure	161	97,6	187	99,5	173	94,5	90	95,7	67	94,4	45	93,8		
High exposure	4	2,4	1	0,5	10	5,5	4	4,3	4	5,6	3	6,3		
h) On the street or in a public establishment													29,277	*** 0,000
Low exposure	133	80,6	165	87,8	130	71,0	69	73,4	44	62,0	32	66,7		
High exposure	32	19,4	23	12,2	53	29,0	25	26,6	27	38,0	16	33,3		
i) By the Police or in the Forum													25,735	*** 0,000
Low exposure	157	95,2	180	95,7	172	94,0	82	87,2	57	80,3	41	85,4		
High exposure	8	4,8	8	4,3	11	6,0	12	12,8	14	19,7	7	14,6		

* p<0.05

** p<0.01

p<0.001

Table 3 presents the experiences of racial discrimination in different situations, also based on the Chi-square test. For each situation of discrimination: at school, when looking for a job, at work, when buying a house, seeking medical care, requesting work in a store or restaurant, when applying for credit or bank loans, on the street or in a public establishment, and by the police or in the courtroom, the proportions of students who reported having suffered discrimination were recorded, divided between those with low exposure and high exposure to discrimination.

First, before the situations, there was a question about whether the student had suffered any experience of discrimination because of race, ethnicity, or color, and the age group that answered yes the most was over 30 years old, representing 50% (24). When considering the questions of the situations, in the school environment, the age group that presented the highest exposure to discrimination was over 30 years old, with 43.8% (21), and the one that presented the lowest exposure was the 20 or 21 age group, with 80.3 (151).

In the situation of looking for a job, the age with the highest exposure to discrimination was over 30 years old, with 29.2% (14), and the age with the lowest exposure was 20 or 21 years old, with 95.2% (179). In the work environment, the one with the highest exposure was the one over 30 years old, with 37.5% (18), and the one with the

lowest exposure was the 20 or 21-year-old, with 93.1% (175). In the situation of buying a house, those who presented the most high exposure were students aged 30 or over, with 8.3% (4), and those who presented the most low exposure were those aged 18 or 19, with 99.4% (164).

When seeking medical care, the university students who had the highest rates of exposure to discrimination were those over 30 years of age, with 14.6% (7), and those who showed the lowest exposure were those aged 20 or 21 years, with 96.8% (182). When requesting service in a store or restaurant, those who showed high exposure were those aged 26 to 30 years, with 35.2% (25), and those with low exposure were those aged 20 or 21, with 88.3% (166). When applying for credit or bank loans, those with high exposure were those over 30 years old, with 6.3% (3), and those with low exposure were those over 30 years old, with 97.6% (161).

On the street or in a public establishment, those who showed high exposure were between 26 and 30 years old, with 38% (27), and those with low exposure were between 20 and 21 years old, with 87.8% (165). And, in the last situation, by the police or forum, those with high exposure were those aged 26 to 30 years, with 19.7% (14), and those with low exposure were those aged 20 or 21 years, with 95.7% (180).

The results highlighted significant differences between age groups about the experience of discrimination in various situations. For example, for all the situations listed, except when applying for credit or bank loans, there was a statistically significant association between exposure to discrimination and the age group of the students, as indicated by the values of X^2 and the respective p-values.

Overall, the data suggest that younger students tend to report a higher incidence of discrimination, compared to older ones, especially in situations such as looking for a job, at work, and when requesting services in shops or restaurants. This analysis provides important insights into how racial discrimination affects different groups of college students and highlights the need for policies and interventions to address this problem.

Still in the study carried out by Baumgarten *et al.* (2019), with 15 university students, it was also revealed that students who faced situations of discrimination pointed out that the reasons behind them were often linked to physical appearance and skin color.

In addition, in the reports of witnesses to these experiences, discrimination was noted mainly about skin color and issues related to sexuality. These experiences were not attributed to a single cause of discrimination. On the contrary, the various reasons were

mentioned together, highlighting the complexity of this phenomenon and the possibility of victims experiencing multiple forms of discrimination simultaneously (Baumgarten *et al.*, 2019).

Regarding the environment in which the discriminatory experiences occurred, the students mainly identified the school as the most frequent scenario. These reports go back to past events, during the period of basic school education of students, covering elementary and high school. However, in more recent experiences, a variety of places and contexts in which discrimination occurred was observed, including the university, the family environment, public spaces, such as streets, buses, and traffic, commercial establishments, parties, and in the workplace, corroborating findings from the specialized literature (Baumgarten *et al.*, 2019).

Another survey, carried out in 2017 by Lemos, with students who entered the university through the Quota Law, shows that racial quota students have experience of greater racial discrimination within the institution. And the study shows how much these experiences of discrimination negatively impact the lives of these students, causing many to even give up the course (Lemos, 2017).

In a study developed by Bastos *et al.* (2010), with students from universities in Rio de Janeiro, to understand the experiences of discrimination faced by young university students and to evaluate how this can be used to develop a Brazilian scale of discrimination, shows how complex it is to analyze and interpret the experiences of racial discrimination lived by university students, so there was no agreement on the feasibility of classifying the various experiences of discrimination on a scale of intensity.

The impact of discriminatory situations experienced by students directly influences the permanence of this student in the university, as many of these students already have difficulty in permanence due to financial factors, and when they suffer racism, this further increases university dropout rates.

A study carried out by Ribeiro and Mendes (2023) shows that studies that investigate racism in the symbolic dimension and seek to highlight the limitations of existing policies, represent a crucial first step in the formulation of permanence policies that meet the needs of the black community, historically marginalized in the university context. Although there is now greater inclusion of black people in higher education institutions, a change in the approach to student permanence is essential, to prevent these students from

giving up attending university, due to structural racism and the lack of acceptance in academic environments (Ribeiro; Mendes, 2023).

Thus, according to Fanon (2019), racism is equated with a persistent social wound in which its elimination requires a constant search for its subdivisions in all social spheres. In this way, this not only affects the personal life of each individual, but also shapes interpersonal relationships and the organization of society as a whole (Fanon, 2019).

Table 4: Presentation of responses to racial discrimination by age group about the presentation of concern among university students.

Worry	18 or 19 (N=165)		20 or 21 (N=188)		22 or 23 (N=183)		24 or 25 (N=94)		26 to 30 (N=71)		More than 30 (N=48)		x ²	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
a) When you were a child or teenager (under 18 years old), did you worry about people in your racial group being treated unfairly because of their race or skin color?													12,370	* 0,030
Low exposure	63	38,2	83	44,1	68	37,2	22	23,4	27	38,0	15	31,3		
High exposure	102	61,8	105	55,9	115	62,8	72	76,6	44	62,0	33	68,8		
b) In the last year, have you been concerned about people in your racial group being treated unfairly because of race or skin color?													3,344	0,647
Low exposure	52	31,5	66	35,1	53	29,0	25	26,6	19	26,8	14	29,2		
High exposure	113	68,5	122	64,9	130	71,0	69	73,4	52	73,2	34	70,8		
c) In the last year, have you worried about experiences of unfair treatment because of your race or skin color?													8,104	0,151
Low exposure	77	46,7	97	51,6	75	41,0	38	40,4	32	45,1	16	33,3		
High exposure	88	53,3	91	48,4	108	59,0	56	59,6	39	54,9	32	66,7		

* p<0.05

** p<0.01

p<0.001

Table 4 shows the results on the response to racial discrimination by age group about the students' concern, also with the application of the Chi-square test. The table presents three questions, namely: a) when you were a child or adolescent minor (under 18 years old), did you worry about people in your racial group for being treated unfairly because of race or skin color, b) in the last year, did you worry about people in your racial group for being treated unfairly because of race or skin color?, and c) in the last year, have

you been concerned about experiences of unfair treatment because of your race or skin color?, and for each question, there were two answers: high exposure and low exposure.

For the first question, it was possible to verify that the result of the age group that presented the highest exposure to concern for people in the racial group who were being treated unfairly was in the group over 30 years old, with 68.8% (34), and the group that presented the most low exposure was the 20 or 21 year old, with 55.9% (105). In the second question, the age group that showed the highest exposure to concern in the last year about whether the racial group was treated unfairly was 24 or 25 years old, with 73.4% (69), and the one with the most low exposure was the 20 or 21 year old, with 35.1% (66). In the last question, the age group that presented the highest exposure to concern in the last year with experiences of unfair treatment because of race or skin color was over 30 years old, with 66.7% (32), and the one with the most low exposure was the 20 or 21 year old, with 51.6% (97).

In academic environments, awareness of discrimination has the potential to impair student motivation, impact academic performance, increase the chances of dropping out, affect self-esteem, decrease life satisfaction, intensify anxiety, and promote aggressive behavior. Also based on the same study conducted by Baumgarten *et al.* (2019), with 15 university students, the students identified the presence of discrimination as a phenomenon linked to attitudes that highlighted differences about others, based on specific characteristics (physical, behavioral, or socially attributed), perceiving these attitudes as harmful, capable of causing offense, harm, and social marginalization for those who are the target of them.

This shows that the levels of concern about racial discrimination have been increasing consequently, so that the subject has been increasingly addressed and shown as a crime. Nevertheless, the results of this study show that more and more students between the ages of 18 and 26 are concerned with racial issues. Thus, according to the passing of the years and generations, the differences in age group and levels of discrimination are notorious.

In a study prepared by Martins *et al.* (2018), the intellectuals interviewed expressed a unanimous discourse about the change in progress, although they recognize that there is still much to be done to ensure the representativeness of all social minorities in the university. Segregation persists, but there is a notable effort, especially on the part of black

professionals, to highlight changes in the university environment, and it can be seen that this concern with racial issues goes beyond students (Martins *et al.*, 2018).

In an integrative review produced by Oliveira *et al.* (2021), it was found that young people of African descent are often deprived of their rights, subjugated, inadequately represented, and devalued in the social structure of Brazil. This suggests that this situation has negative consequences on the mental, emotional, and physical health of these young people, resulting in a state of persistent stress, with multiple detrimental effects (Oliveira *et al.*, 2021).

In another study using the same Racial Discrimination Experience Scale with university students, they highlighted the urgent need to address concerns related to unequal treatment and racial discrimination, regardless of people's gender, age or race. It was evident that the black population constantly faces situations of racial discrimination in various contexts, experiences that are also shared with other groups in society (Oliveira *et al.*, 2024).

Table 5: Presentation of responses to racial discrimination by age group about the filing of police complaints among university students.

COMPLAINT LODGED	18 or 19 (N=165)		20 or 21 (N=188)		22 or 23 (N=183)		24 or 25 (N=94)		26 to 30 (N=71)		More than 30 (N=48)		x25	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Have you ever filed a complaint about racial discrimination?													3,926	0,560
No	161	97,6	185	98,4	182	99,5	94	100,	70	98,6	47	97,9		
Yes	4	2,4	3	1,6	1	0,5	0	0,0	1	1,4	1	2,1		

Table 5 reveals the results regarding the response to racial discrimination by age group about the filing of police complaints among university students. The table was constructed by a question: Had the student ever filed a complaint about racial discrimination, and the answers were "yes" and "no."

The age group that presented the most "yes" answers to the question was over 30 years old, with 2.1% (1), and the one that presented the most "no" answers was the age group of 24 or 25 years, with 100% (94) of the students.

Since the enactment of Law 7.716 of 1989, which defined racial crime in Brazil, one aspect has deserved the attention of both black activists and lawyers and researchers: most complaints of discrimination could be framed as crimes of injury or defamation. The significant volume of cases of racial insult was so significant that, in 1997, under pressure

from activists, legislators amended the Brazilian Penal Code (Law n. 9.459), so that racial insult was punished with the same rigor as crimes of a racial nature (Guimarães, 2000).

Because there is still a lot of prejudice on the part of the police, the number of complaints made by students is extremely low, regardless of age, because many of the students are afraid, feel coerced and ashamed and do not seek to file a police complaint (Guimarães, 2004). In this way, these data articulate with data from Table 2, in which many of the university students who are treated unfairly about race or color end up accepting this treatment as part of life.

Thus, the relationship between the judicial system and the police with black people is quite complicated, as the prejudice on the part of police officers towards the black population is notorious, making it increasingly difficult for students who suffer the crime of racism, discrimination and/or racial injury not to file a police complaint and, thus, not to report the cases of this crime and not punish the perpetrators.

In this context, another study shows the discrepancy in treatment about violence against white and black people. Thus, the study focused on the analysis of data for the years 2020 and 2021. In 2020, 44,118 victims of intentional violent deaths were recorded, of which 6,416 were the result of police intervention. Within this group, the Military Police was responsible for 72.7% of the deaths. Notably, about 80% of the victims were black/race, a number that exceeds the proportion of the black population in the country, which corresponds to 56.3% of the total (Garcia, 2022).

Thus, considering racism as one of the main causes of death and violence in our nation, everyday data show how racist practices negatively affect society (Garcia, 2022). Therefore, it is highlighted that the fear of filing a complaint with the police results in lower levels of mental, physical and social health. This intensifies when various stressful events are perceived in individual or social contexts, such as verbal or behavioral insults, intentional or unintentional (Sousa *et al.*, 2022).

For Brasil et al (2024), fighting racism requires a collective and educational approach that goes beyond commemorative events. The inclusion of varied and interdisciplinary pedagogical strategies in the curriculum is essential to ensure inclusive and anti-racist education. For this, educators must dedicate themselves to continuous training, allowing them to recognize and respect cultural diversity, in addition to developing pedagogical practices that value ancestry and plurality.

In this way, this study contributes to better understand that even with all the progress in the quota system and the insertion of blacks in Higher Education Institutions, the rates of

discrimination are high and little seen, causing research in this context to be increasingly carried out, analyzed and disseminated by the entire population. In addition, the application of the Racial Discrimination Experience Scale contributes to a more efficient and effective result on this theme.

As limitations of the study, the difficulty of adherence by university students is mentioned, when the survey took place through dissemination on social networks and emails, the responses were few, so the emails were resent several times, as many students reported being fed up with receiving survey emails at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the fact that students responded through academic systems, as many did not see that they received a message in the academic system.

Another constraint was the scarcity of research dedicated to the analysis of racial discrimination faced by young black people in most Brazilian states, along with the limited amount of studies available on the subject in databases. The low number of publications is a cause for concern, as scientific knowledge plays a crucial role in understanding and analyzing the complexity of this phenomenon, as well as empowering the public to promote equality and dignity.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the results of this study highlight the different perspectives on racial discrimination suffered by university students of different ages, reflecting varied coping patterns and perceptions of unfair treatment. Younger students, aged 18 or 19, are more likely to accept unfair treatment as part of life, while students over 30 are more likely to experience discrimination. In addition, it was observed that reactions to racial discrimination are influenced by age and personal understanding of the phenomenon.

Although Law 12,711 of 2012 expanded access to higher education for black and brown students, the challenges associated with staying in college, including the impact of racism and social inequality, remain evident. These factors continue to hurt the academic trajectories and mental health of this population, reinforcing the need for public policies aimed at inclusion and welcoming.

Black students to this day suffer from racial inequality, and this is a factor in university dropout, so more studies like this must be carried out to show the reality of this population in HEIs, whether public or private, and that even with all the progress and

debates on this topic, racial discrimination with university students is still very present and needs a lot of struggle for it to be eradicated one day.

In this context, the debates and the fight against racism must be expanded in all sectors of the community. Regardless of the color of one's skin, one cannot refrain from discussing something so fundamental just because it does not affect us directly, because one is not in the position of those who suffer racial violence. More white people must engage in advocating for anti-racist causes and combating racism. After all, society reflects the actions of its individuals, and individual actions have the power to influence entire groups and communities. Racial literacy is one of the viable ways to mitigate racism that is still veiled in Brazil.

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