

**ACTUATION OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMPINA GRANDE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**ATUAÇÃO DE PSICÓLOGOS DA UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE CAMPINA  
GRANDE DURANTE A PANDEMIA DO COVID-19**

**ACTUACION DE PSICOLOGOS EN LA UNIVERSIDAD FEDERAL DE CAMPINA  
GRANDE DURANTE LA PANDEMIA COVID-19**

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**ABSTRACT:** This work aims to report the experience of a group of psychologists who work in Student Assistance at the Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG) in the context of social isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The reported experiences were developed between March and August 2020 by UFCG psychologists in the cities of Patos, Pombal, Sousa and Sumé. The actions are divided into three lines of work: research and evaluation with the university community during the period of social isolation, offering remote psychological assistance through Digital Information and Communication Technologies (TDICs) and developing and implementing psychosocial actions. The reported experiences contribute to psychological theory and practice in the educational context, reinforcing that the school psychologist can act in crisis situations rescuing the complexity on which life and university education are built.

**KEYWORDS:** Psychologist practice. School psychology. Pandemic. Covid-19.

**RESUMO:** Este estudo tem o objetivo de relatar a experiência de um grupo de psicólogos que atuam na Assistência Estudantil da Universidade Federal de Campina Grande (UFCG) no contexto de isolamento social em virtude da pandemia do Covid-19. As experiências relatadas foram desenvolvidas entre os meses de março e agosto de 2020 pelos psicólogos da UFCG nas cidades de Patos, Pombal, Sousa e Sumé. As ações estão divididas em três linhas de trabalho: pesquisa e avaliação junto à comunidade universitária no período de isolamento

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*social, oferta de assistência psicológica remota através das Tecnologias Digitais da Informação e da Comunicação (TDICs) e elaboração e implementação de ações de cunho psicossocial. As experiências relatadas contribuem com a teoria e a prática psicológica no contexto educacional, reforçando que o psicólogo escolar pode atuar nas situações de crise resgatando a complexidade sobre a qual se constrói a vida e a formação universitária.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Prática do psicólogo. Psicologia escolar. Pandemia. Covid-19.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este trabajo tiene como objetivo relatar la experiencia de un grupo de psicólogos que laboran en Asistencia Estudiantil en la Universidad Federal de Campina Grande (UFCG) en el contexto de aislamiento social por la pandemia Covid-19. Las experiencias reportadas fueron desarrolladas entre marzo y agosto de 2020 por psicólogos de UFCG en las ciudades de Patos, Pombal, Sousa y Sumé. Las acciones se dividen en tres líneas de trabajo: investigación y evaluación con la comunidad universitaria durante el período de aislamiento social, ofreciendo asistencia psicológica remota a través de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación Digitales (TDIC) y desarrollando e implementando acciones psicossociales. Las experiencias relatadas contribuyen a la teoría y práctica psicológica en el contexto educativo, reforzando que el psicólogo escolar puede actuar en situaciones de crisis rescatando la complejidad sobre la que se construye la vida y la formación universitaria.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Práctica del psicólogo. Psicología escolar. Pandemia. Covid-19.*

## **Introduction**

With the spread of Covid-19 in different regions of the world, measures of social isolation came to be considered as the most appropriate strategies to deal with the pandemic. In this context, in addition to the implications for physical health, there is also a growing concern about the short and long-term impacts on the mental health of the population. (BARROS-DELBEN *et al.*, 2020; SCHMIDT *et al.*, 2020; VIANA, 2020).

With the arrival of coronavirus cases in Brazil, one of the first measures adopted was the suspension of face-to-face educational activities, both in schools and universities, to reduce the spread of contamination and the number of deaths. To this end, the Ministry of Education (MEC) published Ordinance No. 343/2020, providing for the replacement of face-to-face classes with classes in digital media while the pandemic situation lasts (BRASIL, 2020).

Therefore, a challenge arises for professionals working in the educational context: the change in the offer of the teaching-learning process and other administrative activities, moving from the face-to-face to the remote work and virtual teaching modalities. In this

scenario, several professional categories needed to adopt a series of strategies that would allow to perpetuate the job offer even in times of isolation, as is the case with psychologists.

In this sense, the objective of this work is to report the experience of a group of psychologists who work in Student Assistance at the Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG) in the context of social isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Methodologically, the study is of a qualitative nature, built from a descriptive account of the experiences of the psychologists of that institution. The experiences presented were carried out on four campuses of the institution and include the following actions: research and evaluation with the university community during the period of social isolation, remote psychological assistance through Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs) and the elaboration and implementation of actions psychosocial.

The actions developed were initiated from the suspension of academic and administrative activities in person and the beginning of social isolation by the academic community. The experiences presented in this study contribute to psychological theory and practice in the educational context, reinforcing the importance of the psychologist's role, especially in crisis situations, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **The psychologist's performance in higher education in times of pandemic by Covid-19**

For a long time, the issues explored by Psychology in higher education remained centered on the student, on his transition and adjustment processes, on the one hand, and academic experiences, involvement in the study and academic success, on the other. Despite the various transformations that have taken place in the educational scenario, many psychologists still work with a focus on the student and his processes of transition, adaptation and adjustment to higher education, academic scores and performance, maintaining an individualizing and fractional perspective of the vast intersubjective process of teaching and learning in the university context (GUERREIRO, 2019; PORTO, 2017; BISINOTO; MARINHO-ARAÚJO; ALMEIDA, 2011; MARINHO-ARAÚJO, 2009).

Even so, some interventions that are based on an expanded perspective of acting in School Psychology have been reported across the country, stimulated by the understanding that education is crossed by several reforms, which include the school organization, the curriculum, the democratization of educational access, articulation with public policies of other segments, constant professional qualification and, in addition to others, the expansion of access to higher education.

With regard to expanding access to higher education, the discussion of the role of Psychology is essential, especially after the emergence of the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES), in 2010, which marked a new job for the psychologist in public policies educational opportunities for higher education and recognized the important role that the psychologist plays in the process of insertion and permanence of the student in the university institution.

The PNAES aims to democratize the conditions for young people to stay in federal public higher education, to minimize the effects of social and regional inequalities on the permanence and completion of higher education, to reduce retention and dropout rates, and to contribute to the promotion of social inclusion through education, with actions in ten areas: student housing, food, transportation, health care, digital inclusion, culture, sports, daycare for the children of students, educational support, and access, participation and learning for students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high skills and giftedness (BRASIL, 2010).

In a pandemic context, strengthening the PNAES is one of the strategies for maintaining the link between the student and the university, with the psychologist being one of the actors that maintain this relationship. It should be noted that, even with the suspension of academic and administrative activities in person, student demands have not disappeared; on the contrary, the crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic accentuated some problems already experienced by university students (SALVADOR; GONÇALVES; BASTOS, 2020), requiring institutional responses to mitigate potential impacts.

In this sense, based on the statement by Bisinoto, Marinho-Araújo and Almeida (2011), who point out that the professional profile of the school psychologist called to work in higher education requires commitment to theoretical-critical choices that guide him to a contextualized performance effectively linked to the democratization of the university, it was necessary for psychologists working within the scope of the PNAES to revisit their practices and adopt strategies in response to the current pandemic scenario that affects, among others, educational institutions.

Faced with the complexity and unprecedented nature of the pandemic, which requires curricular, structural and didactic adaptations, the Regional Psychology Council of Alagoas (CRP-15, 2020) points out that School and Educational Psychology is part of the mediation and discussion process to propose and guide paths and cause unrest in an effort to dialogue with the school community, so that professionals find guidance and support for their ethical performance committed to equity, social justice and the inclusion of all subjects. In addition,

in view of the diversity of scenarios and the absence of a generic model of practice, it is necessary for the psychologist to be attentive to the context in which he is inserted, based on the ethical aspects of the profession for a critical practice and that does not legitimate inequalities of any nature, but committed to the ideals of education for all.

The guidelines for the psychologist's performance in times of pandemic are added to other discussions about the practice of this professional in the educational context. In the current scenario, in particular, there has been a constant stimulation to the development of psychological care programs in the different contexts of professional activity, aiming to help people deal with the different situations that occur throughout the pandemic, mainly emphasizing the importance of understanding adjustment psychological face of the adversities inherent to the pandemic (FARO *et al.*, 2020).

In this sense, several public universities have developed their programs or protocols to meet the mental health demands of their respective academic communities, as is the case of UFCG, the locus of the experiences presented throughout this work. The Dean of Community Affairs (PRAC) of UFCG, responsible for implementing the PNAES, launched the Work Plan for Coping with the Covid-19 Pandemic (2020), in which several coping actions are foreseen, distributed along five thematic axes, among them, the “physical and mental health” axis. Among the activities included in the said axis, are foreseen: the maintenance of the services offered through the Psychology Center (NUPSI) of PRAC during the suspension of classroom academic activities; the acquisition of equipment to support actions through DICT; and the expansion of services provided by NUPSI.

In view of the guidelines contained in the Plan presented to the academic community, it was up to the team of psychologists working in Student Assistance to develop a specific work plan for NUPSI during the suspension period of on-site academic activities. Therefore, considering the multicampi structure of UFCG, it was necessary to consider the reality of each campus, making institutional diversity to be considered, in addition to the multiple realities of students and their families.

In addition to the pandemic scenario, it is important to consider that, as Bisinoto, Marinho-Araújo and Almeida (2011) and Bisinoto and Marinho-Araújo (2015) point out, the main challenge of the psychologist inserted in the educational context is the performance of an action based on coherently articulated foundations, objectives and activities, with the objective of consolidating a practice effectively involved with equal opportunities, valuing people's potential and promoting human development in its diversity.

In the case of psychologists in teleworking, the pandemic imposed the use of professional creativity for the elaboration of activities that, until then, were mostly developed in person, or the emergence of new practices hitherto not performed by this professional. Peretta, Oliveira and Lima (2019) consider that the psychologist can contribute in minimizing the various anguish and suffering in the academic environment, in such a way that it is now necessary to consider that the new university environment is at home.

Some legal and technical guidance documents were prepared to instruct the performance of this professional in the context of a pandemic: the Federal Council of Psychology (CFP, Portuguese initials) published Resolution No. 04/2020, which allows the provision of psychological services, through DICT, to people and groups in situations of urgency, emergency and disaster, seeking to minimize the psychological implications before Covid-19; the CFP also published the “Primer of Good Practices for Psychological Assessment in Pandemic Contexts” (CFP, 2020a); CRP-15 prepared the booklet “School Psychology in Times of Sanitary Crisis - COVID-19 Pandemic” (CRP-15, 2020); and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) offered the course “Mental Health and Psychosocial Care in the COVID-19 Pandemic” (FIOCRUZ, 2020).

It is in this perspective that the UFCG psychologists carried out this experience report to share the practices in school psychology that started to be carried out in a work context different from the typical face-to-face work and in view of the numerous demands inherent to the pandemic scenario.

## Methodology

The present study is of a qualitative nature, built from a descriptive account of the experiences of the psychologists of that institution. As Daltro and Faria (2019) point out, the experience report values the descriptive, interpretive and comprehensive explanation of phenomena in a historical context. In this study, the experiences are crossed, in addition to other factors, by the suspension of classroom activities in favor of social isolation to face the Covid-19 pandemic.

The use of the experience report in qualitative research is important because it contributes to the construction of knowledge in two ways (NÓBREGA; AZEVEDO; SOUZA, 2016) when, in atypical situations such as the pandemic, it allows to understand individual experiences and build new knowledge that, in return, will base interventions in the face of particular experiences.



The experience report contained in this work is the result of the work of psychologists who implement the PNAES at UFCG. As it has a multicamp structure, UFCG is currently divided into seven campuses located in seven municipalities in the state of Paraíba. Within the scope of PRAC's NUPSI, eight psychologists work, divided as follows: two psychologists on the Campina Grande campus, one in Cajazeiras, one in Cuité, one in Patos, one in Pombal, one in Sousa and one in Sumé. The actions presented in this work are the result of the experiences of psychologists located in the last four campuses mentioned.

The psychologists who report this experience belong to the permanent staff of the institution and are characterized by the following data: three female and one male; age varying between 28 and 31 years; professional experience varying between 5 and 10 years; and length of experience at the institution, varying between 3 and 4 years.

The planning of NUPSI's activities to deal with the pandemic was carried out respecting the specificities of each campus, considering the multiplicity of characteristics that mark the university, its academic community, its courses and the geographical, social and cultural territory in which they are located.

The experiments carried out include the following actions: 1) research and evaluation with the university community during the period of social isolation; 2) remote psychological assistance through DICTs and 3) elaboration and implementation of psychosocial actions.

Regarding research and evaluation, two surveys were carried out to identify the socio-emotional responses of the academic community to social isolation and to base decision-making in the institution. As for psychological assistance, the actions carried out include remote individual psychological assistance, groups of virtual psychological reception (biweekly) and other psychoeducational activities (especially through social media). In relation to psychosocial projects, two were carried out: one aimed at guarding the furniture of students who had to return to their cities of origin, serving 26 students, and the other in implementation, which aims at psychosocial care for public health workers who work on the front lines in fighting the pandemic.

The development of the actions began in March 2020, when the suspension of academic and administrative activities in person within the institution was decreed and lasted in the following months, until the writing of this work, which took place in August 2020. The actions will continue throughout the period of social isolation and suspension of face-to-face activities.

## Research and evaluation with the academic community

In order to assess the academic community's responses to social isolation and to base decision-making on the experiences presented, the team of psychologists has carried out, to date, two surveys with the university community.

Since the school psychologist's own identity undergoes constant reformulations, it is understood that, in an unprecedented scenario such as that of the pandemic, the practice of this professional is shaped in the face of the new demands that arise in this context. Therefore, it is essential to carry out research with the target audience in order to know the issues that demarcate individual and collective experience in this scenario.

As Costa, Colugnati and Ronzani (2015) point out, evaluation in the context of mental health is relevant to decision making, as it produces information with greater validity. In the educational context, it would be no different, since research work has been one of the main pillars of the school psychologist (CRP-15, 2020; GEBRIM, 2014; SOUZA, 2009). However, this is not the traditional diagnostic process that many psychologists still reproduce in the educational context, which has long been deconstructed by great authors, such as Patto (2003) and Souza (2009; 2017), but, above all, the understanding of subjective processes and intersubjective relations of the academic community in the isolation scenario.

The first survey took place with all members of the academic community, including students and professionals (teachers, administrative technicians and outsourced workers) from the other campuses - this action was carried out by the entire team of psychologists at UFCG. The psychologists prepared a structured virtual questionnaire, containing 14 closed and 7 open questions, with the objective of understanding how social isolation operated on the mental health of the academic community from their private and collective experiences during this period. The questionnaire was sent by e-mail to all subjects mentioned and published in the institution's media; 1,423 members of the academic community participated in this first survey.

Through questionnaires, participants were able to express their experiences during isolation on the following themes: food, home life, physical exercise, planning and routine, emotional experiences and mental health strategies, adopted during social isolation. At the end of the questionnaire, if the participant was interested, he could identify himself and leave his e-mail address for the psychologist of the respective campus to establish a direct communication about the points presented.



The strategy of the first questionnaire had a significant effect, both for the decision making by the team of psychologists in the formulation of the activities to be carried out throughout the isolation and to provide direct professional assistance to the participants who expressed interest at the end of the questionnaire.

The second survey was carried out three months after the first, now with a special focus on students benefiting from the Student Assistance programs managed by PRAC. A total of 1,835 students participated in this survey. The questionnaire sought to revisit some items covered in the first survey, especially those related to emotional development throughout isolation. It was noted that both in the first and second questionnaires two demands stood out among students: conflicts in the home environment and the difficulty in establishing a routine. In this research, however, a new element stood out among the subjects consulted: the uncertainties regarding the academic situation, since there was still no definite decision regarding the resumption of academic activities - a problem that had a guidance with the adoption of the Extraordinary Academic Regime (EAR).

In this item, it is worth noting that the institution's psychologists also contributed to the discussions about the adoption of the EAR, which was regulated in the institution through Resolution Consuni/UFCG no. 06/2020 and aims to offer remote teaching and learning activities during the isolation period Social. The adoption of the EAR implied the adoption of strategies to assist students with Specific Educational Needs (SEN), which also allowed the institution's psychologists to dialogue and act with the perspective of contributing to the teaching and learning process of students with SEN in context remote activity.

The restrictions imposed by the pandemic gave life to the institutional challenge of offering academic and administrative activities through DICT. According to Rabello and Tavares (2016), DICT transformed space-time and social relationships through the virtual environment, providing challenges and possibilities from the social, economic and educational point of view; in this respect, TDIC radically modify learning environments and contexts, causing formal education spaces - such as the university - to be rethought and reframed.

The complexity involving DICTs demanded that workers and students began to problematize the issues involved in this work model, such as universal access to the necessary equipment for the EAR and readjustment of routines, experiences that psychologists also participated with the academic community.

Therefore, when recognizing the complexity of the educational process, it is essential that school psychologists are attentive to the various activities that cross the educational

scenario and the decisions that must be made about it, making the research activity reveal itself as a useful tool to the professional work of psychologists and other different educational actors (MARTINEZ, 2010).

## **Psychological assistance through Digital Information and Communication Technologies**

### **Remote psychological care**

Psychological care through DICT has been regulated since 2018 (CFP, 2018), however, in the current context of social isolation, in which the demand for psychological services has increased significantly (VIANA, 2020), many professionals have started to adopt this practice in their work process, in order to mitigate the emotional impacts in the face of isolation (CFP, 2020b).

Thus, with the suspension of face-to-face activities, virtual assistance was adopted within the scope of the UFCG, for which psychologists registered on “e-Psi” (CFP website for the national registration of psychologists for the provision of psychological services by through TDICs) and made the service widely known to the academic community. Among the tools used by psychologists are e-mail, text messaging applications and video calls.

Remote psychological care was adopted to provide professional listening and individualized support from the perspective of prevention and promotion of mental health to students. The different forms of assistance were adopted in order to contemplate as many realities as possible, given the variation in the target audience and their means of access. Care is provided in a brief and focal perspective, and urgent and serious cases are referred to face-to-face care in the Health Network.

The use of DICT is challenging for professionals, since they did not use them in this proportion before the pandemic. For UFCG psychologists, there are strengths and weaknesses in the use of such tools. Among the advantages, the following stand out: the continuity of assistance to the student (especially since the majority returned to their home cities); flexibility with regard to the hours of those who seek and who offer the service in the current scenario; and in the case of text messages and e-mail, they are less vulnerable to fluctuations in internet connection and can generate a greater sense of privacy for the student who does not need to verbalize subjects that they may deem sensitive to the place where he is.

On the other hand, there are still limitations in the adoption of this type of care, as, as Donnamaria and Terzis (2011) claim, it is characterized by the total absence of corporeality in the relationship, becoming, many times, automatic and hindering the formation of the bond;

there is a risk of invasion of privacy, given the use of the internet to operate some of these means; there are students who may be left unattended due to not having access to DICT; and, as far as remote work is concerned, psychologists may present difficulties in organizing the confidential environment in their homes and the lack of availability of equipment on the part of the institution (which, in turn, was also not equipped with equipment to face this moment).

What is revealed with the current situation is that the use of DICT by psychologists has increased over the past few years and there are still few studies on the subject, which requires the expansion of scientific knowledge on the subject, notably in online care services in the pandemic context (VIANA, 2020).

### **Virtual psychological care group**

From the surveys carried out by psychologists with members of the academic community, the need to create spaces for listening was identified, especially for students. In view of the particularity of the demands brought by the scenario of social isolation and the similarity between many experiences, it was thought in offering collective online actions, in which the participants could express their affections and emotions and share their daily experiences in this new scenario.

In this context, with the objective of providing psychological welcome to this audience and promoting a virtual listening space, *Conexões* Group was created, referring both to the digital means used to publicize and carry out the activity and to the act of connecting people and experiences. The group is open to all UFCG students and happens every two weeks, initially having free themes and, later, themes suggested by students, related to their current demands.

For its operationalization, the Google Meet platform is used, chosen for its acceptance and accessibility to the group. In the meetings, there is a collaborative work between the psychologists, from the dissemination of the activity to the performance of the activity evaluation at the end of each meeting. Thus, one of the main characteristics of the group is the integration between people from different backgrounds, as students from different courses and cities/states can participate, as well as psychologists who work in different locations.

The group is open, so there are always new members. The activity starts with the presentation of the proposal and with the establishment of some group rules, such as therapeutic secrecy, in order to build a space in which participants feel open and safe to talk about their affections and feelings. Subsequently, there is a brief presentation of the

psychologists who mediate the action and the participants, which has been possible due to the number of people present in the room, which has varied between ten and fifteen participants.

At the first meeting, the participants talked about their experiences during isolation, their anxieties, difficulties, feelings and strategies used to adapt and redesign themselves during the pandemic. In general, group participants reported difficulties related to the new routine. The lack of motivation and the inability to continue with the planned actions were the main difficulties reported, in addition to the uncertainty for not knowing about the continuity and return of previous activities.

There is also great anguish over the realization that many plans have been postponed or broken. Many felt compelled to continue a productivity routine, but they realized how costly and exhausting it was, since the atypical moment required a different understanding of the situation. Anxiety due to financial problems and the impossibility of returning to university because of this was also mentioned. From this, some participants presented the strategies they used to deal with these demands, such as trying to establish a new routine, looking for activities that could be motivating and maintaining contact with close people, even virtually.

The difficulty of planning and maintaining a routine and the constant feeling of self-recovery and anxiety were themes chosen to be worked on in the following groups. It was noticed, from the students' reports, a constant feeling of guilt or failure for not being able to carry out the planned activities, for not continuing their studies and readings and for not being able to make this time productive.

However, during the course of the group, some of these reports were reframed from the sharing of positive experiences during isolation, such as the perception that the frantic routine prior to the pandemic was causing physical and psychological wear, due to the involvement in many activities, allowing - use isolation to slow down and take advantage of activities that you haven't done in a long time, such as reading, exercising or learning new skills.

Still within the scope of group work, a conversation was also held with students about the EAR, in order to understand the expectations and desires that permeated this proposal, considering that the realization of academic activities online is a new experience for everyone involved. The main feeling expressed by the students was fear and anxiety regarding the new model, mainly the doubt about the quality of teaching and learning and the ability to follow the content. The exchange moment allowed the collective definition of strategies that could facilitate the adaptation to the new model and the reduction of anxiety related to the theme.

It is understood that group interventions have been a space for deconstruction and reconstruction of affections and perceptions, as, as stated by Peretta, Oliveira and Lima (2019), conversation circles constitute a dialogical space of welcome, exchange of experiences, reflection and reframing.

Although the virtual conversation circles are this space of powers, they impose some challenges, such as the little initial integration between the members of the group and the inhibition of some participants, who end up opting to talk in writing (through chat), which it can make it difficult to form bonds and build mutual trust, in addition to making it difficult to understand non-verbal communication (although the act of staying in the chat can be a sign of this behavior) and the analysis of body language. As pointed out by Donnamaria and Terzis (2011), in an analysis of the realization of therapeutic groups via the internet, virtual groups end up imposing restrictions on gestures, looks and other bodily attitudes that can have repercussions on speech differences.

Another challenge is the fragility of the network connections, which can fail at any time, causing psychologists or other participants to have difficulties communicating or even having to leave the group at certain times. This break can reduce the potential of interventions and the effects that a group activity can achieve. Another challenge that is present in this context is the ethical issue, especially with regard to the confidentiality of information, as it is known how easy it is for the internet to circulate information, which can interfere with the participants' feeling of security and trust (DONNAMARIA; TERZIS, 2011).

However, despite being configured as a new challenge, the virtual host groups have proved to be an excellent work tool, capable of providing integration and strengthening the performance of psychology in a context of social isolation.

### **Psychoeducational activities**

Another form of intervention that emerged in the context of the pandemic was psychoeducational actions, carried out through interaction with the academic community through social media, especially through Instagram, addressing various themes inherent to mental health and university experience in the context of social isolation.

From these activities, topics were addressed on physical and emotional health care, prevention of contamination by the virus, interpersonal relationships, difficulties in planning and adapting to the routine, management of emotions and feelings, emotional intelligence, solidarity, among other themes inherent to Psychology. In addition, we sought to disseminate

events and important reports to the academic community, as a way of strengthening communication between it and the institution itself in this context.

This integration through social networks already existed before the pandemic, however, it was strengthened at that time, especially since “staying connected” is one of the most common activities among students during isolation.

Another strategy adopted for psychoeducation actions was the use of lives, through which some of the psychologists worked on themes inherent to the context of mental health and social isolation. The lives dealt with the following themes: “mental health care in coping with the pandemic”, “how to deal with anxiety during the pandemic”, “interpersonal relationships and coexistence”, “how is your self-esteem?”, “Stress and handling emotions”, “relationship with food” and “how to face fears and maintain motivation in times of pandemic”.

## **Implementation of psychosocial actions**

### **Student furniture reception project**

Socioeconomic aspects are one of the faces of the current scenario of impacts generated by the pandemic, affecting the ways of life of many Brazilian families. Factors such as the increase in unemployment, informal work, and poverty among some social groups (SANTOS *et al.*, 2020; SILVA; SILVA, 2020) point to the necessary adoption of strategies that minimize the negative consequences of the pandemic.

In this sense, some projects are being implemented by the UFCG in order to strengthen its social function with the community and minimize the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. Among them, the project to welcome the furniture of students from one of the campuses that make up the institution stands out.

The project aimed to guard the furniture of students who live in other cities in Paraíba and other states, and who, due to the suspension of face-to-face activities, had to return to their original cities, having to keep the properties leased with their belongings. Considering the uncertainty about the return of face-to-face activities, many students kept their rent and other costs inherent to housing even without using it. In addition, some students were getting rid of their furniture (either donating or selling at low prices) in order to be able to disconnect from the rental contract.

In this sense, the project was planned and implemented on the referred campus, having the team psychologist as the Student Assistance professional responsible for the articulation



between students and their families and the other partners of the project: campus management, heritage and infrastructure sectors, and the teaching and student representations. The psychologist played an important role in the project when carrying out the work of surveying the demand, orienting the interested parties, monitoring the actions and final evaluation of the project with the students and other partners. The project had a total of 14 students served directly and 12 indirectly, since they decided to stay in their rented properties due to a significant reduction in the rent after the project was started.

This action illustrates how the role of the psychologist at the university is multifaceted, allowing the improvement of interventions with managers, teachers, students and family members, and that mental health care can also materialize in actions atypical for the role of the psychologist, since many students and their families expressed satisfaction in being served by the project.

### **Caring for those who care**

One of the psychologists that is part of this report is also contributing to the implementation of a UFCG extension project with the community, called “Caring for those who care: emergency care for frontline workers in the fight against Covid-19”.

The project aims to serve workers in the public health care network in the backlands of Paraíba, especially those on the front lines in direct and indirect care for users suspected and/or contaminated by Covid-19. Through the project, psychological and social care is made possible by psychologists and volunteer social workers, in the model of punctual listening and welcoming through DICT, to health professionals in the cities of Sousa, Patos, Cajazeiras and Pombal (in all these cities there are a UFCG campus).

### **Theoretical and practical implications**

As stated by Peretta, Oliveira and Lima (2019), the university has been open to Psychology in recent years, which is a space full of challenges. In this context, the creation of dialogical and cooperative spaces is encouraged, in which students can experience the challenges, potentialities, contradictions and affections linked to the different dimensions of academic life, also promoting sociability and coexistence.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, school psychologists are faced with the need to redesign their practices, to promote actions that makes sense to the actors involved in the

educational process, but, above all, to cope with a situation of multifaceted crisis. It is believed that it is essential that psychologists seek contributions and possibilities of action from other sources, such as Health and Emergency Psychology, which traditionally deal with mental health in crisis situations.

Institutions needed - and still need - to (re) think about job possibilities that transcend their typical performance in the workplace, building meaning about a practice that, momentarily, encompasses the demands of those who needed support - above all, the psychosocial. In universities, the suspension of academic and administrative activities in person has completely and abruptly changed the routine of the various actors involved, especially students and teachers.

With this, the work carried out by the psychologists of UFCG in the scope of Student Assistance during the pandemic, built gradually and in a collaborative way (intra and interdisciplinary), sought to look at the different demands that arose with the new scenario and offer the necessary support to members of academic community. Professionals were required to create strategies to reach these subjects, now no longer physically present, but in different locations and realities.

Once again, as stated by Bisinoto, Marinho-Araújo and Almeida (2011), School Psychology requires a practice capable of promoting the development of institutions, their agents and students, contributing to the effective democratization of academic success in the face of sociocultural contrasts of students who are now entering universities, especially at a time when social inequalities were accentuated due to the economic crisis generated by the pandemic.

## Final considerations

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted in many ways the lives of people around the world who have largely lived in social isolation in an attempt to contain the spread of contamination by the virus. In Brazil, social isolation generated changes in the work process of several institutions, such as universities, which suspended their face-to-face activities and started to experience a new process: remote work during isolation.

Among the workers who adapted their practices, psychologists stand out, who were demanded in greater degree due to the psychological impacts inherent to the moment (BARROS-DELBEN *et al.*, 2020; CFP, 2020c; SCHMIDT *et al.*, 2020; VIANA, 2020). In

this sense, the objective of this work was to report the experience of a group of psychologists from UFCG in the context of social isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The experiences of psychologists in this work were focused on research and evaluation, remote psychological assistance through DICT and the development and implementation of psychosocial actions.

The work developed by the UFCG student assistance psychologists in this scenario is based on the defense of the continuous observation of the changes that occur in the university scenario, in addition to the necessary sensitivity to understand how phenomena occurring outside the institution walls impact the university daily life and the lives of the subjects involved. In a pandemic context, it is up to professionals to drink from other sources of psychological knowledge, providing opportunities for interventions that value the potential of individuals in coping with the moment experienced. In addition to the above, there is the defense made by Souza (2017) about the commitment of Psychology to the social reality and the challenges posed socially for school education, more precisely, now, about the “new practices” of the teaching-learning process in isolation times.

Although this work is limited to the report of the experience of a single university institution, it contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of the psychologist's work in the context of a pandemic, especially in the strategies necessary for the perpetuation of professional practice in the face of the various challenges imposed. For future work, it is suggested that other psychologists also report their professional experiences in their respective workspaces, also that reports are produced that intersect the various fields of knowledge and psychological practice, with a view to understanding how Psychology, as a science and profession, has contributed to coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although this work is structured on practices that are typically seen as immediate responses to the demands emanating from the academic community, it is believed that the discussions raised contribute to psychological theory and practice in the educational context, especially by reinforcing that the psychologist may face crisis situations acting and, above all, rescuing the complexity on which life and university education are built.

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