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A adaptação de estudantes que chegaram à educação superior em Minas Gerais durante o ensino remoto 1

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Adaptation of students who started higher education during remote teaching in Minas Gerais[1]

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Abstract

This article presents a study performed in early 2022 with 186 students who started higher education at a federal university and in a private college – both in the countryside of Minas Gerais – during the remote teaching period, that is, 2020 and 2021. The research was carried out remotely by emailing a form to all participants and having an online discussion with two of them. The questionnaire consisted of questions about the students' profile, their experiences during remote teaching, as well as of the reduced version of the Academic Experience Questionnaire – QVA-r, which aims to investigate the students' experiences and adaptation to higher education. The data showed that students' interpersonal relationships were affected by remote teaching. As for the personal dimension, measured by the QVA-R and related to mental health and wellbeing, it was severely impaired, which can be an effect of social distancing caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, it was surprising to observe how students and the educational institutions themselves developed ways of becoming close - not only in class but also extra-classroom - by using information and communication technologies to have relationships, even from a distance. The results also show that students considered that their learning had been negatively affected by remote teaching, and that, despite it being easy and convenient, they were eager for better learning with the return of face-to-face classes.

Keywords

Higher education – Freshman Year – QVA-r – Education – Pandemic.

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Introduction

The first year at an Institution of Superior Education (*IES*) is a peculiar moment in students' lives, as it represents a transition which requires a complex and multifactorial adaptation (ARAÚJO *et al.*, 2016; GUERREIRO-CASANOVA; POLYDORO, 2011; YAZEDJIAN; TOEWS; NAVARRO, 2009). Besides, emergency remote teaching represented such steep change for teachers and students (MAIA; DIAS, 2020; SILVA *et al.*, 2020; VALENTE *et al.*, 2020). In Rosa's work (2020) about expectations students had on their first year under quarantine limitations, it was identified that even in pandemic times, there was no loss of interest in studying or decrease in the importance given to the degree, since social interactions were limited during isolation time. In Neves, Assis, and Sabino's review (2021) about the first year of remote teaching in Brazil, the authors identified some impairment in professor-student interactions. Osti, Pontes, and Almeida (2021) identified that pandemic impacted studies, decreasing the capacity for engaging in studying, as well as impairing physical and mental health, elevating levels of daily stress, and creating frequent negative emotions.

In this change context, this paper presents a study which aimed to investigate how students in their first year, adapted to higher education and to emergency remote teaching. To answer to the research question, we have requested the undergraduate coordinators of a public university and of a private *IES* in the countryside of Minas Gerais[4] to send and invitation by email to the students who had entered university between 2020 and 2021[5]. The research form was attached to the invitation, which students were supposed to send back up to April, 2022, just before the classes returned on-site at the public university, and just after the classes had returned at the private *IES*. In the form there were, besides the consent term to take part on the research, questions about the students' profile, and remote teaching; the Academic Experience Questionnaire, in its reduced version – QVA-r, developed by Almeida, Soares and Ferreira (2002); and an invitation to join a conversation circle[6].

186 students participated in the survey, 155 (83.3%) of which went to the public Federal University in its 3 campi in different cities, and 31(16.7%) went to the private *IES*. Although in the form 71 students were said to be available to join the conversation circle, none of them confirmed their presence in the morning and afternoon shifts, and only two participants came to the circle in the evening. The survey was held in a remote way, and the form was applied online. The conversation circle was held over video calls with the two students at the Federal University[7].

4- The main location of the two institutions is in the same city in the countryside of Minas Gerais state. However, the public university keeps two other campi in the state, of which students also took part on the survey.

5- Some of the students were no longer starting university since they were in the second year of studies. Yet, their experience entering *IES* had been held during remote teaching time. In 2020, students had had 1 week of on-site classes only, before pandemic.

6- The survey was approved in the Committee of Ethics in Research, under the number 5,317,899 and, along with the form, was the "free and clarified consent term" whose filling out was mandatory for participating in the survey. Another consent term was elaborated for the conversation circle since they were recorded. Filling out that term was also a condition for students' participation in the survey.

7- Both students had started University during remote teaching time in 2020, they did not know each other, and they were not known by the researchers. The conversation circle was based on a 15-question guide, which was displayed on the chat and then had its questions asked by the two researchers that intermediated the conversation. Under the students' consent, the conversation was recorded and afterwards transcribed to be analyzed.

After a short introduction of the profile of the students participating in the survey, we presented the study results, based on the five dimensions approached by the QVA-r, understood by the perspective of a statistical and descriptive analysis of the complementary questions and by the perspective of the content expressed in the conversation circle. Besides, the data was discussed from the literature on academic experiences.

Profile of the students participating in the survey

Most of the students that took part in the survey are quite young, since 75 of them (42.3%) are between 19 and 20 years old. 112 students (60.2%) claimed to identify themselves as female, 71 (39.01%) as male and 1 person (0.53%) claimed to not identify themselves with any gender. As for the color/ethnicity, 102 people (54.8%) consider themselves to be white, 23 (12.4%) to be black, 58 (31.2%) claimed to be mixed ethnicity, and 3 people (1,6%) selected another color/ethnicity. The options yellow (Asian origin), and indigenous were not selected.

Regarding their entrance in undergraduation, 162 (87.1%) students were experiencing academy for the first time, and 24 (12.9%) had already experienced university before. The prevailing courses of the students from the public university who were participating in the survey were: 21 students from Biological Sciences course, 14 from Architecture course, and 11 from Agronomy course. Other courses that were also present, but in smaller number, were: Computer Science, Accounting Sciences, Social Sciences, Dance, Law, Field Education, Physical Education, Nurse, Environmental and Agricultural Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Electrical Engineering, History, Languages, Chemistry, Mathematics, Medicine, Veterinary, Pedagogy, Trilingual Executive Secretariat, Administration, Agribusiness, and Environmental Management. At the private *IES*, the students that participated in the survey were part of the following undergraduation courses: 10 students in Human Nutrition course, 8 students in Psychology course, and 6 students of Physical Therapy course, besides Odontology, Accounting Sciences, Law, Pharmacy, and Veterinary. Concerning their study shift, 146 people (78.5%) go to university in daytime courses – morning and/or afternoon, and 40 people (21.5%) take evening classes. Such data reinforces the diversity of students that took part in our survey. We believe that in the first year of university, most courses taken are basic and theoretical, therefore students face similar challenges to adapt to the university. On the other hand, we know that each course has its own particularities, and it is possible that some of them were more vulnerable to fail their student's adaptation, leading to higher dropout taxes, for instance. However, the significantly divergent number of students in each course, has made it hard for us to analyze their adaptation in different courses, therefore the analysis in general terms instead of a more detailed analysis that would consider each situation, such as number of black students, employed students, nighttime students, or even specific areas. We then considered the general adaptation of a group of students who entered higher education during remote teaching time.

Hence, we may realize that the participants were rather diversified and that to most of them, that was the first moment experiencing higher education. They are also quite

young, most are female and white, studying daytime, that being most likely the main activity developed by these youngsters who left High School and started University.

How was the experience of changing education institutions and adapting to this new context? Did they know the *IES* where they studied? Did they know the city where the *IES* was located? What was their opinion about remote teaching? Having briefly explored this context in the students' lives, we now move on to the discussion about how well they knew the *IES* they attended, how they understood remote teaching, and what their expectations to on-site classes were.

Perceptions of remote classes students regarding the *IES*, remote teaching and returning to on-site classes

During our survey, we found that, besides neighboring cities to the IES, some students also lived in other states, such as *São Paulo, Espírito Santo, Mato Grosso, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Goiás, Ceará* and the Federal District. These students had entered University, yet they still lived in their hometowns with their families. Therefore, it was possible that they would not even know the city and the institution where they were enrolled.

However, the data showed that most of the students (78%) did know the city where the institution was located and the *campus* where they studied, while 22 (11.8%) did not even know the city where the institution was, and 19 (10.2%) claimed to know the city, but not the *campus*. Although that is a small group, there were indeed students that had not left home, and did not know the city or the *IES* facilities. Such experiences are part of the background of all freshmen, and even if they do not move to another city or from their parents' home, they still need to join a new education institution and its specificities. That does not mean that the students did not have to adapt, but that many experiences such as living with different people, feed with their classmates or housemates in the restaurants and cafeterias at the institution, going to the library and other interaction areas, could not have been experimented by these students.

On the other hand, although at first most of the participants had said they knew the *IES* location, we could realize on the conversation circle that such knowledge could be very superficial, since the two girls who participated in the circle knew the city and the campus, but one of them had only been to the campus quickly by car, and the other one had visited the place years before, and she did not know, for instance, where her course Department was. We can affirm that, as on-site classes returned, these students would go over a second moment of adaptation, of face-to-face interaction with classmates and professors they met remotely, of guiding themselves over the physical facilities at the *IES* and getting to know what their resources are, and some of them having to move cities and live with other people, which would require some autonomy capacity, higher than when they studied while living with their families.

Moreover, it is not enough to know the institution to familiarize with the services it offers. One of the participants has said: "I believe that the sensation of really belonging to university, you know, of being part of it, comes when I am there physically, when there is an exchange between, I don't know, the physical structure and the people who are in there" (Languages student[8]).

8- In order to keep participants secrecy, we address them only by their undergraduation course.

Since the survey took place in the beginning of 2022, and one of the institutions had already returned to their on-site activities, we asked if any of the students had returned to classroom teaching and 136 (73.1%) of them answered no, 34 (18.3%) had some on-site classes and 16 (8.6%) had fully returned to face-to-face study. At the Public University, some few laboratory classes were happening on-site, and all the others were online. Because of that, most participants had not yet started classroom teaching at the higher education institution they studied. As for how returning on-site was, 68% of the students who had already experienced classroom, claimed that it was much better than remote teaching, 16% claimed it was a little better than remote teaching, 10% could not notice any difference between the two formats, 8% said it was worse than remote teaching and no one affirmed it to be much worse than remote classes. Therefore, if we add the two first answers, the result is that for 84% of students, classroom teaching was better.

In order to go deeper into the perception students had regarding remote and on-site teaching, we asked whether they would like to continue having remote classes, even under conditions that would create a safe environment to on-site return, and 161 (86.6%) students answered no, while 25 (13.4%) answered yes. In this case, we asked them to explain why they would like to study remotely, and six of the students claimed they worked, and so remote teaching would ease their studies, among other answers related to time flexibility, money and time saving, fear over the pandemic, and convenience and comfort, besides personal and health issues.

Regarding learning aspects, some answers stated that remote classes made it possible to revise content more peacefully, and that some courses, especially the theoretical ones, do not lose quality when taught remotely. In the conversation circle, the participants presented some positive points to remote teaching, as the lack of necessity to move around, to move cities, and the possibility to remain close to their families, besides the practicality of online teaching:

> [...] the real advantage existed only on this practicality of having the class at the reach of a click, and only with a message you can solve some issue you had to deal with, with someone in a group; just a click and you can create a task group, there is this matter with practicality and flexibility, but apart from that, the classroom reaches 10 to 0. (Languages student).

This student specifically, lived in a neighbor city to the IES. She worked during the day, and showed some concerns regarding fatigue and the dangers of travelling every night when classroom teaching was back, claiming that remote teaching was more comfortable. However, she also alleged that, if she lived in the city where she studied, she would prefer to go to on-site classes.

One of the questions was whether the students believed that remote teaching had brought any losses to the learning process, and 163 (87.6%) claimed yes, and 23 (12.4%) said no. In the conversation circle, the two students were solid about the losses in remote teaching. In spite of the advantages, practicalities, and good teaching methodologies cited in the conversation circle, they believed that the classroom would be better. One of them said that remote teaching had been and unplanned and emergency solution to deal with

the pandemic situation, which had affected students as well as professors, but that it was not the ideal context for the teaching-learning process.

One of the students in the conversation circle claimed to suffer from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and she explained that such condition really hampered focusing during remote classes, and both claimed that in spite of the distractions, they engaged more in the synchronous classes and avoided missing them so they would not need to watch the class recording afterwards. The students discussed about the difference between being in synchronous classes, with student-professor interaction, and watching the recordings. Though they could rewind the recording and listen to it again, they sometimes forgot to watch it. Both claimed to be more engaged in the synchronous classes. One participant commented to be going to another institution, in which all classes were recorded, and she did not know any of her classmates or had any contact with professors, unless via recorded classes, which offered her much more difficulty to engage the learning process.

To finish the discussion specifically about classroom teaching, we searched about whether or not students intended on changing courses or *IES* when on-site teaching returned. Our hypothesis was that, for some students, remote teaching would have been some sort of test, and they did not plan on moving to another city or state to enter the *IES* they enrolled, expecting to meet an opportunity to change the course or institution. However, our results did not confirm such predictions. Regarding the participants' future plans, after returning to classroom teaching, 180 (96.8%) answered that they intended on continuing the same course and the same institution, 2 (1.1%) intended to change to another course but to remain in the same institution, and 3 participants (1.6%) intended to continue the same course, but in another teaching institution. No one claimed to plan on changing both course and institution, and 1 person (0.5%) claimed to plan on quitting studies.

That is, for these participants, remote teaching had not been an experiment moment, looking towards new choices. In fact, most students intended on remaining in the same course and *IES*, moving cities or commuting, to those who lived in a city other than where the *IES* was located. In the conversation circle, one of the students was looking forward to moving and experiencing university life, though she claimed to never have been away from her family and would only move if she could take some of her cats to the new city, while the other feared commuting every day to go to the *IES*.

The academic experience of the participants analyzed through the QVA-r

Besides the questions about the students' profiles and remote teaching, we also used the reduced Academic Experience Questionnaire[9] - QVA-r, which was created by Portuguese researchers (ALMEIDA; SOARES; FERREIRA, 2002), aiming to investigate how much students are adapted to higher education[10]. The questions are organized in Likert

9- In 1999, the same researchers had created the "Academic Experience Questionnaire" aiming to analyze the students' adaptation to higher education, with 170 items. Afterwards, they developed the reduced version of the same tool, with 60 questions only.

10- The QVA full version as well as the reduced one were adapted and had validation of the scale to Brazil (GRANADO *et al.*, 2005). Such scales are already known and have been applied to a vast number of research, including in Brazil (TEIXEIRA; CASTRO; PICCOLO, 2007; IGUE; BARIANI; MILANESI, 2008; SOUZA, L; LOURENÇO; SANTOS, 2016; ANJOS; AGUILAR-DA-SILVA, 2017; SOUZA; DOMINGUES, 2019).

scale, and they have the following options: 1- It has nothing to do with me, totally disagree, never happens; 2- It has little to do with me, very much disagree, rarely happens; 3- It has something to do me, sometimes happens others no; 4- Very much to do with me, very much agree, happens frequently, and 5- Everything to do with me, totally agree, it happens. The QVA-r organizes the students' adaptation to higher education into 5 dimensions: study, career, personal, interpersonal, institutional.

The study dimension involves studying habits, time management, learning resources usage and preparation for exams; regarding career, there are issues related to emotions towards the course, and post-graduation perspective. The personal dimension concerns the perception about physical and emotional well-being, optimism, self-confidence, and we considered for this study that it is directly connected to the students' mental health. Regarding the interpersonal dimension, we analyzed whether there is interaction with classmates and what is its quality, besides making friends. Finally, related to the institutional aspect, the questions involve what students know about the institution, what they think of it, and how they evaluate it.

The general QVA-r data points to better perception of academic experience for students who started their undergraduation courses during Covid-19 pandemic in the dimensions regarding career (average 4.01); institutional (average3.76), and study (average 3.49). The students' evaluation decreases precisely in the interpersonal (average 3.46) and personal (average 2.21) dimensions, showing that the interpersonal dimension, which is indeed about social relations among students, was damaged during remote teaching (Table 1). Besides online classes having damaged student-classmate and student-professor interactions, this moment was marked by encouragement to social isolation, which might have intensified this data even more. The personal dimension, we must highlight, was proved to be much more damaged, indicating that the students' mental health was one of the most affected elements among the participants in the survey, as we may notice in the table below.

Table 1- Descriptive Statistics of answers to the QVA-r

Dimension	N	Average	Standard deviation
Personal	14	2.21889	.250505
Interpersonal	12	3.22625	.656280
Career	12	4.01344	.551133
Study	9	3.46953	.492618
Institutional	8	3.76075	1.064536

Source: Our own elaboration with the survey data.

For greater data breakdown, we will present each dimension separately, in Charts where we represented the answers "very much to do with me" (4) and "everything to do with me" (5). Because of the large volume of data obtained in the survey, it was necessary to prioritize the analysis of the data that was more relevant to the goals and hypothesis of the survey, in line with the literature review.

The career dimension average had the highest evaluation, 4.01344 and draws our attention that such dimension was evaluated even more positively among the students at the private *IES* that took part in the survey, with a 4.239247 average. In this dimension, we highlighted items 2: "I believe that I may achieve my values in the profession I have chosen", with 88.7%; and 5: "Looking back, I can identify the reasons that led me to choose this course" with 88.1% of answers 4 and 5, indicating that these are two of the elements the students show highest scores when talking about the career dimension in their academic experience.

Chart 1- Frequency and Percentage of answers 4 and 5 in the career dimension

Questions	F	%
2. I believe that I may achieve my values in the profession I have chosen	165	88.7
5. Looking back, I can identify the reasons that led me to choose this course.	164	88.1
7. I have chosen well the course I attend.	159	85.5
21. I believe that my undergraduation course will enable me to achieve professional satisfaction.	156	83.9
8. I have good qualities for the professional area I have chosen.	153	82.2
49. My personal preferences were imperative for my course choice.	150	80.6
32. I have chosen the course that seems to me to be more in agreement with my skills and capacity.	140	75.3
14. I feel involved with my course.	129	69.3
55. Even if I could, I would not change courses.	126	67.7
19. My academic path corresponds to my vocational expectations.	110	59.1
51. I study the course I have always dreamed of.	108	58.1
46. I find it difficult to make decisions.	86	46.3

Source: Our own elaboration with the survey data.

Still regarding career, we may observe in Chart 1 that 59.1% consider that their academic path corresponds to their vocational expectations (Item 19) and 58.1% affirmed to be in the course they have always dreamed of (Item 51). These items evoke the course-choice process, suggesting that 60% of the participants in the survey understand that their university path corresponds to their vocational expectations and that they are in the course they have always dreamed of. In addition, there is the fact that personal preferences of 80.6% of participants were decisive when choosing their course (Item 49).

These answers are quite surprising, for since January 2010, when there was implementation of the System of Unified Selection – SISU, students can choose more than one course option, and they are not always selected to their most desired course. Yet, the

data shows that most participants managed to go to the course they were most interested in, when they entered higher education. Maybe that is why they are not thinking about changing courses or *IES*, as we previously noted.

The data obtained in the survey is compatible to that presented by Rodrigues *et al*. (2019), when they show that "regarding career: 61% affirm to have chosen their course based on their skills and capacities; and for 66% the personal preferences were imperative in this choice" (RODRIGUES *et al*. 2019, p. 6). Such results signal that "most of the students have made a careful professional decision, based on their interests, values, and on the skills they believe they have and/or that they may develop" (RODRIGUES *et al*., 2019, p. 6). This data supports the idea that the choosing process, prior to the pandemic, did not get influenced by it.

We may observe that a substantial part of the participants in the survey have trouble making decisions and managing their time, which might be related to the frequent usage of technologies that compete for the students' attention, such as social media, and/or the competition for other stimuli in their own home, as the students' reported:

> When we are at home, for instance, there was already a moment when I was watching a class and the neighbor called me for something, sometimes there is music on in the neighborhood also, or I needed to order food, or I was watching a class while eating something. I believe we end up falling for more distractions when we aren't there in the classroom. (Languages student).

> Sometimes I look at the cellphone and I get scrolling down Twitter, Instagram. I do the activities for another course, and this is also obvious, that I can't pay attention when I have other distractions beside me, and that was a big problem that I had to face during remote teaching. (Architecture student).

In the study dimension (Chart 2), only 26.9% of the students consider managing their time well (Item 10). However, 81.8% marked to have capacity to study (Item 48), highlighting good concept of self-efficacy (MARTINS; SANTOS, 2019). Guerreiro-Casanova and Polydoro (2011) affirm that: "Self-efficacy in higher education is understood as a student's belief in their capacity to organize and execute courses of actions required to produce certain accomplishments that refer to the aspects understood by the academic tasks as relevant to higher education", and the authors highlight that the entrance in higher education may increase self-efficacy, since the student

> [...] may have taken advantage on the success provided by entering higher education and, therefore, have presented an overestimated judgement on the belief of efficacy in higher education, created based on an idea built by expectation, and not by lived experience. (GUERREIRO-CASANOVA; POLYDORO, 2011, p. 51).

On the other hand, the participants in this survey had already concluded at least one year of higher education and, yet, their self-efficacy remained high.

In the survey led by Guerreiro-Casanova and Polydoro (2011), the participants see themselves as less capable of planning, organizing, and developing actions after experiencing

academic tasks. In the case of the survey presented in this work, it is possible to observe that the numbers in the study dimension are lower than in the career dimension, especially regarding the students' difficulty to manage their time, which makes the activities late.

Chart 2- Frequency and Percentage of answers 4 and 5 in the study dimension

Questions	F	%
48. I am capable of studying.	152	81.8
52. I am punctual in classes.	145	78
44. I try to systematize/organize the information given in classes.	112	60.2
36. I can stablish priorities concerning my own time management.	87	46.8
39. I take good notes in class.	86	46.2
28. I make a daily plan of what I have to do.	74	39.8
42. I can be efficient in my preparation for exams.	72	38.7
30. I can have my university tasks always on time.	70	37.6
10. I manage my time well.	50	26.9

Source: Our own elaboration with the survey data.

In general, the study dimension presents a 3.46953 average evaluation among students (Chart 2), which corroborates the data presented by Joiciliane Souza and Sérgio Domingues (2019), who found a 3.58 average in the study dimension, in a survey involving 225 undergraduation students of the second year of study, in 2018, a period prior to the pandemic, and of on-site classes. Thus, we may consider that most likely, emergency remote teaching did not affect undergraduates' studying habits deeply.

The institutional dimension had a 3.76075 average evaluation, with 1.064536 standard deviation, which is way above the other items, pointing at higher divergence among the students' evaluations (Chart 3, below). It must be stressed that 92% of the students do like the institution they attend (Item 12), and only 7% of them point out that the institution they go to does not awake their interest (Item 41).

Chart 3- Frequency and Percentage of answers 4 and 5 in the institutional dimension

Questions	**F**	**%**
12. I like the university/college I attend.	171	92
53. The facilities in the university/college where I study are good.	166	89,3
16. I wish to conclude my undergraduation course in the institution I attend at the moment.	163	87,7
45. I like the city Where my university/college is.	141	75,8
43. The library at the university I study is complete.	131	70,5
3. I would not change university/college even if I could.	117	62,9
15. I know well the services provided by my university/college.	61	32,8
41. The institution I go to does not awake my interest.	13	7

Source: Our own elaboration with the survey data.

On the whole, there is a lack of knowledge on the services offered by the institutions, since only 32.8% of the students claim to know well such services (Item 15), as we may observe on Chart 3. This number is lower than the one found by Milagres (2022), who in her survey with QVA-r found, on the same item, a 46.2% percentual of students who properly knew the services provided by the institutions. This difference may signal an effect of the emergency remote teaching and the lack of accessing the campus during Covid-19 pandemic. Despite that, it is surprising that even distant from their IES, so many students considered to know the services provided by the institutions, what may show some effort also by the IES to present their facilities and provide students with them, in an online way. In the conversation circle, the participants commented about WhatsApp groups with the classmates, in which seniors would have meetings to welcome new course members, inclusive, one student was able to join an online games championship of the University Athletic Association:

> [...] there was a selection there, which I managed to join, and we played. It was even broadcasted to the people who did not use to watch it, and it was really nice, and it was among all Athletic Associations. [...] it was such a nice experience, and I can barely wait to live that also on-site. [...]. But the contact with championships was really just online, and nothing physical. (Architecture student).

The interpersonal dimension was the one that presented the second lowest average, 3.22625 (Chart 4, below), different from what was found by Joicilaine Souza and Sérgio Domingues (2019) in which the identified average was 3.82. This data indicates the effects of social isolation resulting from Covid-19 pandemic in the interactions among the students.

Chart 4- Frequency and Percentage of answers 4 and 5 in the interpersonal dimension

Questions	F	%
29. I have good friendship relationships with colleagues of both sexes.	132	71
33. I am seen as a nice and friendly person.	130	69.9
22. I believe I have good friends at the university.	112	60.3
24. I have developed satisfying friendships with my classmates.	103	55.4
18. My classmates have been important for my personal growth.	102	54.8
35. I try to live with my classmates besides the class times.	100	53.7
38. My friendship relationships are more and more stable, lasting, and independent.	87	46.8
31. When I meet new classmates, I have no difficulties starting a conversation.	78	42
37. I take action to invite my friends to hang out.	78	41.9
26. I have difficulties finding a classmate that would help me in a personal matter.	65	35
54. I cannot make friends with my classmates.	21	11.3

Source: Our own elaboration with the survey data.

Among the students who took part in the survey, 35% consider having difficulties finding a classmate that would help them in a personal matter (Item 26). This particularity was cited in the conversation circle by one of the participants, when she commented that it is more difficult to trust people in the emergency remote teaching context: "But this thing about you knowing the personality and the character of the person is just really face-to-face, because it is hard for you to deduce everything the person has to offer only by the cellphone or computer screen, isn't it?" (Architecture student).

If to more than a third of the students who took part in the survey, it is hard to find a classmate that would help them in some private issue, only 11.3% of them signed that they cannot make friends with their colleagues (Item 54). Moreover, 69.9% of the students consider to be seen by the people as friendly and nice (Item 33) and 71% claimed to have good friendship relationships with colleagues of both sexes (Item 29). It is not very clear however, that the students would have answered considering only their relationships in higher education. It is possible that they would take under consideration friendships outside the IES, and before remote teaching. In spite of that, it is very likely that the interpersonal dimension may have been directly affected by remote teaching. Such difference can be illustrated by the speech of a student in the conversation circle:

> I do not feel close to professors. [...] We ended up not even knowing everyone's face [...], we do not know who is who, exactly. I am on the third term of college, and I see that I am not close to my classmates as I was, for instance, in the first term of Psychology, when I knew who everyone was, I knew minimally where they lived, these other things. Undoubtedly that is a really negative point of remote teaching, this lack of contact with people. Even for us to think about networking, in the long or medium term, I believe that is a huge loss, right, that we do not know the people for real. (Languages student).

The difficulties in the interpersonal dimension at the beginning of the university cycle may negatively interfere in the future continuity of studies, once, as Araújo *et al.* (2016) point out, the academic success and involvement are allied to the construction of positive relations with pairs and professors, in the university context.

The nearness of classmates and professors seems to be an exception in remote teaching, but it does exist, as observed in the conversation circle in general. It is possible that, in classes with smaller number of students, such proximity is easier, as observed in the following speech: "My class was very small, there were 10 people and we bonded very strongly, we and the professor, not we among ourselves, but all of us with the professor, because she really supported a lot of people, she is very understanding." (Architecture student). In fact, it did surprise us how the young, despite studying in a social distancing context, managed to stablish relationships with their classmates, since 60.3% of the participants claimed to have good friends at the university, to live with their classmates out of the classroom (53.7%), and that the colleagues helped their personal growth (54.8%). Considering that these students had most, if not all of their higher education remotely, it is rather surprising that they have bonded well with their companions in their journey on their IES.

Fior and Martins (2020) studied some factors of teaching that favor students' transition into higher education during Covid-19 pandemic. Some strategies may make a difference, such as contact stablished by the teaching staff with the students, in synchronous context as well as asynchronous, and the attention provided by professors to clear doubts. To the authors, such attitudes are fundamental for the students to remain in university since they help them overcoming any academic challenges. Some institutional actions were also cited in the conversation circle as resources to minimize such distancing, as sports events, and freshmen welcoming, besides the highlighted role of social media, which have enabled some proximity among students in extra class moments.

The personal dimension, presented on Chart 5, is the one that presented the lowest average: 2.21889, indicating that it is the dimension related to academic experiences in which the students participating in the survey present highest vulnerability. The average in the personal dimension in the survey developed by Joicilaine Souza and Sérgio Domingues (2019), was of 3.83, while the results by Anjos and Aguilar-da-Silva (2017), who evaluated some medicine course students, scored 3.3 for students in the first grade and 3.7 for students in the third grade. In our survey, the average was even lower, which may point out that there was worsening in this dimension during pandemic.

Almost 70% of the university students claimed to be feeling anxious (Item 50), while 51.6% out of them complained about mood swings (Item 4), and 35.5% felt down or sad (Item 9).

Chart 5- Frequency and Percentage of answers 4 and 5 in the personal dimension

Questions	F	%
50. I have been feeling anxious.	129	69.3
20. I feel tired and sleepy during the day.	111	59.7
25. I have moments of distress.	110	59.2
4. I usually have mood swings.	96	51.6
13. There are moments when I feel like I am losing control.	88	47.4
27. I cannot focus on a task for a long time.	87	46.8
34. I think about many things that make me sad.	82	44.1
11. I have felt disoriented and confused lately.	78	41.9
17. I have become more pessimistic over the last times.	73	39.2
9. I feel sad or down.	66	35.5
6. In studies, I cannot keep up with my classmates' pace.	60	32.3
23. I feel in shape and on good work pace.	51	27.4
40. I feel physically impaired.	45	24.2
47. I feel disappointed on my course.	25	13.5

Source: Our own elaboration with the survey data.

Besides anxiety, sadness, and mood swings, it is highlighted that 39.9% of the students who answered the questionnaire have felt more pessimistic over the last times (Item 17), and 59.2% reported to have moments of distress (Item 25), which may be

correlated to Covid-19 pandemic. Only 27.4% of the participants total feel in shape and on good work pace (Item 23).

On the Chart below are the data obtained in this survey compared to those obtained from three other surveys on academic experiences.

Chart 6- Comparative Analysis of Brazilian research on academic experiences

Dimensions	Survey Average	Milagres (2022) Average	Souza, J and Domingues (2019) Average	Igue, Bariani and Milanesi (2008) Average*
Personal	2.21889	2.23	3.83	3.26/3.33
Interpersonal	3.22625	3.24	3.82	3.98/3.94
Career	4.01344	3.66	3.58	4.25/4.18
Study	3.46953	3.44	4.11	3.47/3.65
Institutional	3.76075	3.90	3.93	3.64/3.39

*The data refers to entrants, as compared to graduates.

Source: Our own elaboration.

We may realize that there is some similarity between the results of our survey and those obtained by Milagres (2022), in a survey also developed under remote teaching rules. On the other hand, the data obtained by Joicilaine Souza and Sérgio Domingues (2019), and Igue, Bariani and Milanesi (2008) shows higher average scores in the personal and interpersonal dimensions in surveys developed with students before the pandemic, with classroom teaching.

The dimensions that were better evaluated by the students who started their undergraduation course during Covid-19 pandemic were: career (4.01 average); institutional (3.76 average), showing that they present good perception of academic experiences to the participants. In contrast, the evaluation of the participants fell on the interpersonal dimension (3.46 average), and especially on the personal one (2.21 average), what suggests that the social relations among scholars was damaged during remote teaching, as well as their mental health in general. As for the academic experiences concerning the study dimension (3.49 average), there were no substantial changes related to the pandemic and to the emergency remote teaching.

Apart from the QVA-r data, other information collected confirms such results: 80.6% of the participants in this survey are in the course they chose as first option, and 96.8% of them intend to continue in the same course and at the same teaching institution, probably what has caused students to affirm that, as on-site classes returned, they did not intend on changing courses or IES. On the contrary, they would be looking forward to experiencing that moment, which they considered would be of better learning than the previous one.

Final Considerations

The adaptation in the first year of higher education may be decisive in students' academic lives, and experiencing this process during pandemic times has demanded the

creation of a bond with the IES, the classmates, and professors, without any physical proximity relation. The students evidenced that they could see loss not only in the interpersonal experiences common to the beginning at university, but also, they considered that the learning process was damaged, and despite the comfort of attending remote classes from home, they were looking forward to returning to the classroom format.

Although remote teaching seems to not have deeply affected student-IES bonds since most wished to remain in the institution they attended, the connections among students themselves, and among them and their professors, may have been very important so that they could stablish the sense of belonging to the IES, even over physical distance. Despite the students not having met their classmates and professors face to face during remote teaching, feeling that they had been damaged in the relations that were stablished in this period, it was surprising to see the alternatives developed to make this contact possible, through WhatsApp groups, promoting contact with some colleagues with whom they were closer out of class time, to develop academic tasks or for social interaction. In addition, the involvement in extra class activities, such as the online game championship, might have decreased the effects of social distancing and helped meet and get closer to their classmates and institution as a whole. Yet, we could see that such efforts did not seem to have been enough to make them feel well, since the personal dimension was the one in which students presented the most vulnerability, so it could be affected by the quality of the stablished relations.

Finally, there are some aspects that appeared in the survey that deserve further study. Specific learning issues, as cases of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, for instance, may have harmed even more the students during remote teaching. Another data that appeared during the conversation circle, had no possibility of further development, and deserves more research concerns the difference between synchronous classes, asynchronous classes, and yet asynchronous classes given by the professor designated to that course himself/herself, or a single class given by an unknown professor. Some teaching experiences or institutional actions may benefit the learning process and the academic experiences of students, such as modifying the number of students in classrooms, stimulating the quality of stablished relationships, and other actions that promote bonds between freshmen and their course, their classmates, and the institution they are part of.

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