ABSTRACT
Objective: To understand and describe the characteristics of the phenomenon of harassment and mobbing in universities by collecting and analyzing academic studies written in Portuguese. Methodology: A search was carried out for articles in the following databases: Science Direct, SciELO, Web of Science, Dial Net, Psycinfo, Pepsico and Google Scholar. The descriptors bullying and universities were used and selected, resulting in the submission of 20 articles. Results and discussion: There was a predominance of empirical-descriptive studies, whose population was mainly teachers and, in second place, administrative technicians. Most of the subjects were women. It was also found that the participants generally had experience of harassment, either as victims or as witnesses. Most of the subjects of these studies work in federal public educational institutions. Most of the studies analyzed focus on the purposeful deterioration of working conditions, along with the attack on dignity. The respondents do not seem to be concerned about the affective relational aspect or the damage to the organization. Conclusions: Harassment has been noticed more frequently in public universities, and measures are needed to remedy this situation, as they are very important institutions for the whole community, not only in terms of scientific knowledge, but also in terms of promoting ethics and justice. Ideals such as the promotion of knowledge must prevail. Situations of violence cannot be trivialized and naturalized. It is of the utmost importance that the phenomenon is treated seriously by the State.

Keywords: harassment, mobbing, universities.

Palavras-chave: assédio moral, mobbing, universidades.

1 INTRODUCTION

The topic “mobbing” has been increasingly evoked in the academic field, but it came to the fore with Brodsky (1976), an American psychiatrist, in his book *The Harassed Worker*, the result of a pioneering study with people who reported mistreatment in the workplace. The subject was given new impetus by Leymann, a Swedish family therapist and researcher, in the early 1980s. He was the forerunner of empirical studies on the subject, obtaining original and worrying results published in his book *Mobbing: psychological violence at work*. His research influenced the Scandinavian region and Germany with the aim of raising awareness among workers, unions, managers, health professionals and legal practitioners of the need to combat and prevent mobbing (Nunes et al., 2022). Later, with Zapf and Einarsen (2005), popular interest in the subject grew.

Authors worldwide who are very important for the study of the subject are Leymann (1990, 1996) and Hirigoyen (2006), the latter responsible for popularizing the subject in Brazil, and who published her first book in 1998, *Le
harcèlement moral: la violence perverse au quotidien. Hirigoyen’s works have been translated into numerous languages, which has enabled the topic to be disseminated and debated.

Leading Brazilian authors are Margarida Barreto, Roberto Heloani and Maria Ester de Freitas. The forerunner of the subject in Brazil was Dr. Margarida Barreto, due to the defense of her thesis and its subsequent publication as a book, as reported by Nunes et al. (2022). In 2002, Maria Ester de Freitas published a seminal article in Revista de Administração de Empresas (RAE), published by Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV). Later, the psychologist and lawyer Roberto Heloani joined the researchers in a partnership that culminated in the production of a book in 2008 (Freitas et al., 2008). All of them provide information on the definitions, characteristics, consequences and other aspects of harassment.

The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century marked the beginning of studies into harassment. There are many names for harassment depending on the geographical region: Acoso Moral, Acoso Psicológico, Psicoterrorismo (Spanish); Mobbing, Bullying and Harrassment (English), Harcèlement Moral (French), Molestie Psicologiche (Italian), Coacção Moral (Portugal), Ijime (Japan), Assédio Psicológico or Assédio Moral (Brazil). They all have the same meaning (Paixão et al., 2014; Raminelli, 2022). The word Mobbing comes from ethology and refers to a collective attack directed at a target considered dangerous, like a predator (Guimarães & Rimolli, 2006).

In the literature and in everyday life, there is a trivialization of violence at work and of the understanding of what harassment is, with conceptual imprecision (Nunes et al., 2022), often confused with moral damage or an isolated episode of aggression. According to Warshaw (1998), any aggression or abuse can cause intentional or incidental physical or psychological harm, although not all violence can be considered harassment.
2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 HARASSMENT OF THE SCHOOL SECTOR

The educational sector is one of the most affected by harassment, along with the medical sector, because they are fields in which there is not much objectivity in the definition of tasks and in which it is always possible to blame someone for any failure (Hirigoyen, 2002). In the public sector, the most affected areas would be health, social and education (Nunes, 2020). If the public sector follows the others in which harassment occurs, civil servants become a population at risk of harassment, like professionals at public universities (Rodrigues & Freitas, 2014).

According to Martins (2019), data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in a survey on school violence with more than 100,000 teachers, shows that Brazil is the leader in the ranking, since 12.5% of Brazilian teachers said they had already been victims of verbal violence or intimidation from students, for example.

According to Rodrigues and Freitas (2014), the first studies on school violence began to be carried out in the USA in the 50s and the proportion of this violence has increased over the decades, going from being only descending violence (punishments and corporal punishment by teachers against students) to being practiced by students against students, or by students against teachers and even by students against the property. It is not uncommon to hear of students attacking teachers, including physically, breaking a code of civility; this generates the need to study more and better this phenomenon.

According to Paixão et al. (2014), harassment in schools began to be studied by Olweus (1978) and North American authors. In this context, it can exist in the top-down, vertical and horizontal ways. Top-down harassment, teacher against student, seems to be the most common, but it is not the only form.

2.2 HARASSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

It may seem strange to many that universities are a place where harassment occurs frequently, as they are an environment in which good professionals are expected to be formed, where these phenomena are studied
and in which ethics and professionalism are expected to take precedence (Raminelli, 2022). However, universities are one of the places most affected by harassment (Hirigoyen, 2006, 2002), even though they should strive for ethical practices as a model in their educational functions and for their social responsibility. The study by Nunes and Tolfo (2011) found that 47% of the subjects in the survey said that harassment was a common practice at university. Lazzarotto et al. (2000), in a study at Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná, found that 40% of teachers had already suffered harassment.

Souza and Barros (2015) consider that harassment in the public sector is generally linked to power struggles (both vertical and horizontal, involving people or groups). Abuses of power in the public sector are frequent according to Hirigoyen (2000). Nunes et al. (2021) add that the abuse of power and the refusal to accept differences are the main causes of harassment in universities, both for teachers and administrative staff, which is exacerbated by the precariousness of resources, making competitiveness more intense.

With regard to higher education, Rodrigues and Freitas (2014) associate school violence with terms such as “scrapping, commodification, deconstruction, precarization and entrepreneurialization, among others” (p. 286), as well as with market vices in the larger society. This takes on an even more perverse form in private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), due to their corporate nature, which is not to say that harassment does not occur in public HEIs. It just highlights the contradiction between the educational discourse and the business logic of profit-driven institutions. In this case, the important thing is the results of the students’ assessments in order to maintain and increase the number of clients, i.e., their image, but not so much their academic mastery. The goals are set, and it doesn’t matter how they are achieved. Teachers at private HEIs, driven by the desire to keep their jobs, would subject themselves to abusive and embarrassing situations of violence, embedded in hyper-competitiveness.

The commodification of teaching makes the teacher a discredited and worthless element in the HEI – the one who sustains the institution (Santos, 2019; Martins, 2019). This opens the door to upward harassment from students towards teachers (in addition to other types of harassment).
This position of the student calls into question the common wisdom that they are always the weaker or less-sufficient party in the teacher-student relationship. Nowadays, it is the students who seek “knowledge” in any digital place (cell phone, iPad, computer, etc.), not always from the most appropriate sources, and the teacher becomes the holder of a minority of knowledge. However, the violence suffered by teachers from their students is a subject that is little talked about.

In the private sector, harassment is more noticeable and tends to last less because of the lack of stability, which leads to dismissal from the institution.

In public universities, however, harassment can be even more pernicious, since it can last for many years due to stability, which ends up protecting the aggressor. The harassed person desperately tries to get a transfer to another sector but ends up simply coming to terms with the situation and its consequences, or resigns (Fonseca et al., 2021). In the case of remaining at work for subsistence, the damage will be greater because of the duration and, according to Nunes (2020), it is difficult for someone to give up their job, even if they are suffering.

Harassment occurs in universities because they are institutions with an obsolete, rigid and bureaucratic organizational structure, with many positions of power, but few people who hold them using them to outdo the others. In addition, there can also be a system of patronage, generating relationships of advantage for some, while others are potential targets for harassment. All of this is often combined with impunity and submission as a condition for adaptation (Nunes & Tolfo, 2020; Buendía, 2003).

Especially in postgraduate courses, Nunes and Torga (2020) and Nunes (2020) comment that teachers and students can be exposed to work-related illness due to the demands of generating knowledge, producing scientific articles, administrative and management tasks, among other aspects that are compounded by a logic of productivity and deadlines for completing activities. According to Nunes (2020), professors are subject to a series of fundamental demands for their survival in the program itself, such as more activities, various deadlines, demands, number of publications within certain periods, among others.
In postgraduate studies, these elements, already ingrained in the culture of universities, are accentuated and harassment can become even more frequent than in other sectors of the organization. This is also due to the increasing degradation of working conditions combined with the high demands for productivity and competitiveness. According to Nunes (2020), the “publish or perish” culture prevails (very similar to that of capitalism, which turns education into a commodity or a factory), in other words, the most important thing in postgraduate studies is to score points by publishing in high frequency in journals that are well evaluated by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES – Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior), as well as producing books and book chapters that are equally well evaluated, which generates an aggressive mentality and a lot of competition, favoring the practice of harassment.

According to Raminelli (2022), downward teacher-student harassment occurs when the teacher disregards the student’s work, displays superior behavior, disrespects timetables, acts unethically (e.g., failure to maintain confidentiality), is unfair in the classroom, treats students differently, applies excessive disciplinary measures, demonstrates bad manners, bad behavior and gossip and intrigue (the latter can be practiced by any actors within the university).

As for upward harassment, students complain about absences (even when they are unjustified); about grades; about the date of examinations (which they want to set); about the date of submitting assignments; they often want to decide what will be covered in the examinations; they demand re-evaluations of test and assignment grades; they spread rumors, slander, criticize the teacher and demand unjustified administrative proceedings. Therefore, they act like an organized group with no weaknesses, with good leadership, which, according to Martins (2019), “decides to detonate whoever it is”, even if it’s a teacher with 20 years of professional experience and an unblemished reputation. These situations are experienced daily in public and private universities; in private universities, the result is dismissal; in public universities, endless administrative proceedings with no guarantee of an end to the harassment to which they are subjected.
2.3 LEGISLATION

Since harassment occurs within an institution, it is a problem for the organization, and the organization is co-responsible, either for its practice, or for its exemption in combating and preventing hostile behaviors and strategies (Nunes & Tolfo, 2013; Nunes, 2022). However, what we see is the neglect of institutions and managers, or the cover-up and adoption of equally hostile practices in agreement with the sector in which they originate (Nunes et al., 2019).

As Paixão et al. (2014) point out, harassment is an unlawful act in both the civil and labor spheres, in the category of moral damages, subjecting the aggressor to liability for compensation for the damage. It is not necessary to prove the existence of a disease associated with the harassment, but the mere violation of the right to personality.

France was the first country to legislate on harassment, followed by Sweden, Norway, Finland, Australia, Argentina and Belgium, which have all drawn up specific legislation on the subject. The legal sphere compensates for property damage, moral damage, economic damage with medical expenses, the termination of the employment contract and the attack on the honor, good reputation and self-esteem of the harassed (Ferreira & Zille, 2021).

There is still no Brazilian legislation to protect public employees from harassment. Now, there is Bill of Law (BL) No. 4.742/2001, authored by federal deputy Marcos de Jesus (from Partido Liberal/Pernambuco State), which aims to criminalize harassment at work. There are some sparse laws adopted by states and city councils, among which the first was issued in the city of Iracemópolis (São Paulo State). Law No. 1.163, of April 24, 2000 (Raminelli, 2022), is aimed at municipal civil servants who are subject to penalties in the event of harassment.

Institutional leaders should be more aware of and treat harassment with greater attention so that such practices do not become more trivialized and naturalized. According to Nunes et al. (2019), for this to happen, it would be necessary to prevent and combat this type of violence by monitoring the practice of institutional codes of ethics, the training of managers and other managers, striving for respect and appreciation of others. Lessa (2020) emphasizes the collective nature of tackling harassment, since dealing with it individually would
be fruitless and would lead to a burden of suffering and danger for the individual who brought the case.

It is a fact that since the dawn of labor history, workers have been in a fragile position and, in many cases, in undignified and inhumane situations (Souza & Barros, 2015). In fact, harassment has been taking place since slavery, although its discussion is relatively new, as are reparation actions. The International Labor Organization – ILO – (2019) recommends the adoption of Convention 190, which affirms the intolerance to abuse, especially against women, demanding preventive measures from the condemned institutions, clearly indicating the obligations and duties of the victims and employers, the protection of complainants and the risk assessment of the workspace to which they are subjected when exposed to psychological violence. The convention also establishes minimum conditions at work, pointing out situations of disrespect, which served to mitigate situations of abuse in the “Declaration on Fundamental Rights at Work”.

Prevention is the recommended strategy. However, Rodrigues and Freitas (2014) state that for prevention and fight policies to be effective, it is necessary to change the organizational culture that leads to hypercompetitiveness. In turn, Martins (2019) recommends legal mediation (Mediation Law No. 13.140/15; Law No. 13.105/15, the new Code of Civil Procedure) as a way of resolving disputes as an alternative to administrative proceedings, especially as an educational measure in relation to upward harassment.

Harassment occurs in many environments, including universities, and is encouraged by institutions through their organizational culture. This makes it necessary to know the characteristics of the phenomenon to better develop intervention strategies to reduce or eliminate its occurrence.

3 METHODOLOGY

To carry out this study, public articles were collected from journals in Portuguese. The following databases were consulted: Science Direct, SciELO, Web of Science Dial Net, Psycinfo, Pepsic and the Google Scholar search engine.
In these databases, the descriptors “Harassment” AND universities and “Moral Harassment and Universities” were entered, with a search cut-off for the period 2014 to 2023.

Based on these descriptors, the following results were obtained: Google Scholar 14,700 studies, of which 18 were selected (it should be noted that this platform only shows the first 1,000 results); Science Direct, 12 studies, but none were selected; SciELO no results were selected; Web of Science 3 results that had already appeared in other databases; Web of Science Dial Net 8 studies, of which 2 were selected.

Searches that did not return any results: Psycinfo: Moral harassment AND universities without date filter; Pepsic: harassment AND universities without date filter.

The articles had their abstracts read and were included or not, based on certain criteria. Inclusion criteria: research published as an article on harassment in universities between 2014 and 2023. Exclusion criteria: articles outside the stipulated date range, with incorrect definitions of harassment (duration, intensity, frequency, without citing reference authors), on harassment at work outside universities, studies on moral damage, articles in foreign languages, theses, dissertations, books and book chapters, Courseworks, articles published in event proceedings.

The studies selected are shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nº of article</th>
<th>Full reference</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autor(es)</td>
<td>Ano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Santos, C.C. Miranda dos.</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Rigotti, A., &amp; Perseguino, S. A.</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Nunes, T. S., Tolfo, S. da R., &amp; Pellegrini, P. G.</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Source: The authors.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As for the frequency of articles, a peak in publications was observed in 2020, with five articles, followed by 2019, with four publications. In the years 2014, 2021 and 2022, there were three articles published in each period.

Regarding the journals in which these studies were published, there were 17 journals with a single occurrence (one publication), three of which had two publications each: Revista Formadores, RECAPE and Revista de Direito do Trabalho, Processo do Trabalho e Direito da Seguridade Social.

In the selected sample, there were a total of 31 authors, most of whom were co-authors, especially Nunes, T. S., who published eight out of the 20 articles, Tolfo, S. R, who was an author in four of the 20 articles and Cantera, L.M., who participated in two of the 20 articles. The others had only one participation.

From the 20 studies analyzed, 17 of them (85%) – T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T16, T18, T19, T20 – were empirical descriptive studies. Out of the empirical-descriptive studies, 11 (64.7%) – (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T16, T18, T19, T20) – were surveys of opinions or conceptions, five (29.4%) – T6, T9, T11, T12, T13 – were case studies and one (5.88%) – T10 – was mixed (documentary and descriptive). Three (15%) studies – T14, T15, T17 – did not fall into any of these categories.

The other types of non-empirical study found were: two essays (T14, T15) and an experience report (T17) derived from an extension project. The others are all empirical-descriptive, as highlighted in the previous paragraph.
Of the empirical-descriptive studies, 14 (82.35%) – T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T12, T16, T18, T19, T20 – used questionnaires of the most varied types (open, closed, semi-structured, etc.) as materials and instruments, as well as tools specific to the field: the Leymann Inventory of Psychology Terror (LIPT), from 1990, adapted (T9 – 5.88%) and the tool developed and updated by Einarsen et al. (2009), named Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) (T20 – 5.88%). Of the 17 empirical-descriptive studies, 10 of them (58.82%) used interviews (T1, T2, T3, T6, T8, T9, T12, T16, T18, T19), either alone or in addition to questionnaires, with a smaller number of participants. Three studies (17.64% – T10, T11, T13) used documents as an empirical source, analyzing labor processes. It is important to note that the same study could use more than one instrument for data collection, which is also true for the data analysis instruments.

Among the studies that mention data analysis tools, the most common is Bardin’s content analysis to examine the interviews, a perspective adopted in 10 (58.82%) of the 17 studies (T2, T3, T5, T8, T10, T12, T16, T18, T19, T20). Three (17.64%) – T1, T9, T10 – used software to assist with the analysis: T1 and T9 used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and T10 used Nvivo. Other tools were the Collective Subject Discourse (CSD), Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, exploratory factor analysis and Multiple Linear Regression (MLR). Three of the 17 (17.64%) articles – T4, T6, T17 – carried out documentary analysis, one with categories previously defined and another with mixed analysis (SPSS or questionnaire and quantitative approach with descriptive techniques and frequency distribution), T20 (5.88%). In three (15%) of the 20 (T14, T15, T17) the category does not apply.

Of the four papers that analyze documents, three (75%) – T10, T11, T13 – evaluate labor court cases and one (25%) – T14 – various documents (books, case law, interviews, news, articles found on social networks and media), which is typical of essays. In 16 (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T12, T15, T16, T17, T18, T19, T20), the category does not apply.

Fifteen (88.23%) of the 17 empirical-descriptive studies – T1, T2, T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T10, T11, 12, T13, T16, T18, T19, T20 – focus on teachers; in second place, seven of the studies (41.17%), focus on technical-administrative staff (T1,
T3, T7, T12, T16, T18, T19); followed by those focused on students, with 35.29% and only one study on outsourced workers (T19).

The studies that report the gender as male represent 64.7% of the empirical studies (T1, T2, T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T9, T16, T18, T20), and those that report the gender as female represent 70.58% (T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T11, T16, T19, T20). It can be observed that the share of men taking part in the surveys is always lower than that of women. Women are the absolute majority in all the surveys carried out, with different percentages. According to Souza and Barros (2015), some groups are more subject to harassment because of their differences, such as gender, age (older people), homosexuals and blacks.

The educational level of the participants was postgraduate in 29.41% of the papers, 25% of them (T3, T8, T16, T18, T20) did not mention the degree and 23.52% had a doctorate (T1, T2, T6, T12). This can be explained by the large number of teachers participating in the studies analyzed. They are undergraduates in 17.64% of the papers, from a range of courses (T5, T9, T19), in one paper (5.88%) they hold a specialization degree (T7), in another, the participant is studying for a master’s degree (T2) and in the last one they have completed a master’s degree (T4).

The age of the participants is in the range of 26 to 35 years (41.17% – T2, T3, T5, T8, T7, T16, T18) and 36 to 46 years (35.29% – T1, T4, T7, T6, T12, T20), in that order.

Most of the studies (76.47%) did not mention the ethnicity of the participants (T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T8, T9, T10, T11, T13, T16, T18, T19). Of the four who mention it, 75% are white and 5.88% brown. Most of the studies (52.94%) do not report the marital status of the participants (T1, T2, T6, T7, T12, T18). In the case of the studies that did provide this information, 35.29% were married or in a stable union and 11.76% were single.

With regard to working arrangements, in 11.76% of the cases (T16, T12), the majority of the participants have exclusive dedication and, in others, 11.76% are postgraduate teachers (T2, T8). In addition, 11.76% work 40 hours (T1 and T3). There are 5.88% of cases in three categories: other (T4), graduate student (T2), and undergraduate student (T5) working as an intern in a public
organization. Among those papers that mention the participants’ monthly income, 11.76% earn between 10 and 14 minimum wages (T1, T12) and 5.88% are scholarship students (T8).

Most of the studies (35.29%) did not mention how long the participants had been working at the institution (T5, T6, T10, T11, T13, T19). Of the 17 empirical studies, 29.41% have been working for between 1 and 5 years (T2, T3, T8, T16, T18), and 23.52% for over 25 years (T1, T7, T12, T20), two opposite ends, and 5.88% between 20 and 25 years (T7).

The workplaces of the participants in the research were, for (47.05%), at teaching/education centers (T1, T2, T5, T7, T12, T18, T19, T20) and 5.88% in postgraduate centers (T8). In 35.29% of the papers (T3, T4, T6, T11, T13, T16) it was not mentioned at all.

In the case of the papers involving postgraduate students (8 papers), the time taken to complete the course was between 2.5 and 3 years in 37.5% of the 8 cases, and between 1.5 and 2 years in 12.5% (one case).

About considering themselves victims of harassment, 52.94% believe they are victims of harassment, 5.88% do not believe they are but have witnessed it, whilst a further 5.88% consider the environment to be conducive to the commission of harassment. It is therefore possible to say that the majority (64.70%) have experienced harassment. According to Nunes and Tolfo (2013), 47% of those surveyed said that harassment was a common practice at university. Lazzarotto et al. (2006), on the other hand, reported that 40% of teachers had already suffered harassment.

A large proportion of the 8 (42.1%) out of the 19 studies in which this data applies refer to public universities, being federal educational institutions in 6 of the 8 mentioned (T3, T6, T7, T16, T17, T19), or 31.57%, except for T8 and T18 as federal. Private universities appear in three studies (15.78%) – T10, T11, T13 -; two articles (10.52%) refer to both types (T4, T14) and one study is located outside the university, in an internship environment (T5). According to Nunes, Tolfo and Pelegrini (2021), harassment as a form of management has become a strategic organizational practice, regardless of the organizational environment we are talking about, although it is very common in the education sector (Hirigoyen,
2002), in the public sector (Nunes, 2020) where public university employees are located (Rodrigues & Freitas, 2014). Harassment in the public sphere is generally linked to power struggles (Souza & Barros, 2015) and, for Nunes, Tolfo and Pelegrini (2021), to the abuse of power and the refusal of differences (for teachers and technical-administrative staff).

As for the context within the university in which harassment occurs, 10 (52%) of the studies in which the data applies occur in the classroom (T4, T13), two (10.58%) mention postgraduate studies (T8, T20) and one (5%) the administrative environment (T13). On the other hand, 68.42% of the studies don't mention the specific context (T1, T2, T3, T6, T7, T9, T10, T11, T12, T16, T17, T18, T19), just saying that it's at the university.

As for the content, the work was initially divided, with some adaptations, according to Hirigoyen’s (2006) suggestion, regarding the types of harassment. With respect to the purposeful deterioration of working conditions (excessive workload, tasks below the level of competence, excessive monitoring, deprivation of access to work tools, inducement to error, unfounded accusations, unfounded warnings, manipulation of data, pressure to adopt illegal conduct, moral pressure, etc.), of the 15 jobs in which this category applies, 60% have participants who point to the worsening of working conditions (T1, T2, T4, T6, T7, T10, T15, T16, T20). The same percentage (60%) is found for the attack on dignity category (rumors and hearsay spread, gossip, humiliation and mockery in relation to work, offensive comments and insults about their attitudes and behavior at work, excessive teasing and sarcasm, disqualification, lies, persecution, defamation, abuse, embarrassment, etc.) (T1, T2, T4, T5, T6, T7, T16, T19, T20). Verbal, physical or sexual violence (target of aggression or gratuitous anger, threats in various ways, target of intimidating behavior such as finger pointing and invasion of personal space, being harassed because of political and ideological positions, being harassed because of differences such as religion and origin/ethnicity, blackmail, threats, disrespect, irony, coercion, etc.) is mentioned in 53.33% of the papers (T1, T2, T4, T6, T7, T10, T16, T19). Isolation and refusal to communicate (ignoring their presence, absence of dialogue, opinions and points of view ignored, hostile reaction to their approach, hostile conduct, refusal to
communicate, humiliation, boycott of ideas, etc.) were found in 46.66% of the studies. 25% of the studies did not apply (T3, T8, T12, T14, T17) and 6.66% did not mention it (T18). It should be noted that, in this question (and others), it is possible for a study to fall into more than one category.

The most cited forms of harassment in the survey respondents’ reports are, therefore, the deliberate deterioration of working conditions and attacks on dignity, with 60% of mentions each.

Harassment of teachers by students (42.85% or 3 out of 7) includes the following practices: embarrassment of the teacher, pressure to gain an advantage, lack of respect on the part of the student, recurrent defamatory conduct, obstacles to the purpose of teaching, threats to moral and physical integrity, coercive action based on the client-supplier relationship. In most cases, the topic does not apply (65%) and 14.28% of the papers do not mention it. For Martins (2019), Brazil leads the ranking in research on school violence (OECD data), with 12.5% claiming to have suffered violence. Rodrigues and Freitas (2014) note that this type of violence has increased over the decades.

In private universities, the harassment of students against professors takes place through the commodification of teaching, as the student client cannot be contradicted (Santos, 2019; Martins, 2019). In public universities, Martins (2019) gives a number of examples of upward harassment (students wanting attendance when they are absent, requesting a re-evaluation of grades on assignments in which they did poorly, deciding on the date of exams and assignments, launching rumors, defaming, requesting unjustified administrative proceedings, acting as an organized group with no legal standing in order to destroy anyone, even a professor with a 20-year career and an unblemished reputation, etc.)

The content of the papers also included the option “other”, all of which only occurred once but are worth mentioning: influence of harassment on dismissal requests was positive (T7 – 5%); postgraduate environment conducive to the incidence of harassment (due to impunity, group issues-dominant group, demands and pressures, productivism, competitiveness/vanity) (T8 – 5%); student-on-student violence (hazing) (T9 – 5%); pressure to reduce working
hours coupled with the threat of job loss (T11 – 5%); witnessed harassment being practiced against another person (T12 – 5%); institutional actions to combat harassment via the ombudsman’s office and others (T17 – 5%); they see themselves as victims of harassment because of their position (whether political, ideological or in relation to work), the victim’s physical or behavioral characteristics and their competence or productivity at work (T18 – 5%); students consider a large amount of reading to be harassment (T20 – 5%); pressure not to work with another teacher (students) (T20 – 5%); pressure not to assert their rights (students) (T20 – 5%).

As for the type of harassment by superiors (downward harassment), the number of cases was 47.05% (T1, T8, T10, T11, T13, T18, T19, T4). On the other hand, 35.29% of the works reported horizontal harassment from colleagues at the same hierarchical level (T1, T6, T8, T9, T10, T20), both among teachers and students. According to Hirigoyen (2006), this type of harassment is more common when there is a dispute over the same position or envy, as it is the most mentioned. In the third place (23.52%) there is harassment from students against teachers (T4, T10, T13, T14), and from teachers against students (17.64%) (T2, T10, T20). Harassment from people outside the institution was also mentioned in two cases (11.76%) (T1 and T10). In 11.76% of the papers, nothing was mentioned (T5, T7, T12, T16).

Of the 16 articles that mentioned commenting on or reporting the violence suffered, 50% of the victims went to someone to vent and 25% did not go (T1, T4, T10, T11, T13, T14, T18, T19). Of those who commented or reported it, they did so with colleagues (T1, T18 – 12.50%), with complaints to the union (T10 – 6.25%) and resorted to the courts with formal proceedings outside the university (T10, T11, T13 – 18.75%). Three studies did not mention anything about this (T4, T7, T8, T20 – 18.75%).

As for the consequences for the victim, in the psychological/psychiatric effects category, the respondents in the 14 studies that mentioned it referred to damage to mental health (T1, T2, T5, T9, T11, T15, T16 – 50%), demotivation (T1, T2, T5 – 21.42%), depression (T1, T2, T11 -21.42%), discouragement (T1, T2 -10%), irritation/rage (T1, T2 -14, 28%), frustration (T1, T2 -14.28%), crying
(T2, T9 -14.28%), anxiety (T2, T5 -14.28%), humiliation, shame, fear (T15 -7.14%), feelings of inferiority (T2 – 7.14%), incapacity, incompetence (T2 -7.14%), stress (T1 – 7.14%), isolation (T1 – 7.14%), sleep disturbances (T1 – 7.14%), low self-esteem (T1 – 7.14%) and sadness (T1 – 7.14%). Nothing was mentioned by 50% of the papers (T4, T6, T10, T12, T13, T19, T20).

It can be seen that, among those surveyed and even in the literature, the most commonly cited type of consequence is the psychological/psychiatric type, but we can’t forget the deleterious effects on physical health, the work itself, the company and psychosocial aspects (Nunes & Torga, 2020; Nunes, 2022; Rodrigues & Freitas, 2014; Raminelli, 2022). It should also not be ignored that in the private/public binomial, there is the aggravating factor of “stability” for universities or public institutions; therefore, the longer the victim remains at work for subsistence, the greater the damage will be due to the longer duration of the harassment.

With regard to the consequences and physical effects on the victim, of the 14 works in which the category applies, a small proportion of respondents mentioned physical health (T1, T2, T15 – 21.42%), weight gain (T1, T2 –14.28%), headaches (T1 – 7.14%), muscle pain (T1 – 7.14%), chest pain (T1 – 7.14%), hair loss (7.14% – 7.14%) (T2), trembling (T2 – 7.14%) and others (T15 – 7.14%). It can be seen that physical symptoms are mentioned less than those related to the psychological/psychiatric category.

The affective relational aspect was mentioned in only one study (T2), with the following effects: estrangement/loss of friends, marital crises, strain on work relationships, withdrawal from social life, estrangement from family, family crises.

As for the consequences and effects for the victim in the study/work category, in four studies (28.57%), the participants mentioned the will to give up post-graduation (student) (T2 – 7.14%), the drop in productivity (T9 – 7.14%), disillusionment with the academic/post-graduation environment (T2 – 7.14%), others cited other reasons (T15 – 7.14%). Most of the studies (78.57%) made no mention of this aspect.

Regarding the consequences and effects in the category “for the organization”, it was not mentioned by the participants in the studies analyzed,
except for one study which referred to a request for removal (T7 – 7.14%). It is known that there are countless other losses for the organization in addition to what was mentioned, such as: absenteeism, premature retirement, increased costs due to absences, weakened adherence to the organizational project, possible reduction in brand value, negative exposure of the organization, reduced productivity and performance, staff turnover, conflictual climate and interpersonal relationship problems.

As for the university’s actions in relation to harassment, a large share (8 – 47.05%) are in the category “other” (they don’t believe the institution will take any action in an internship environment (T5, 5.88%). The others were: it’s part of the company’s policy (T10 and T11 – 11.76%); the university sided with the students and fired the teacher in a mercantilist view of teaching in which the student client is always right (T13 – 5.88%); defends the legal mediator and not administrative processes (T14 – 5.88%); booklets, but considers them insufficient (T15 – 5.88%); ombudsman actions to fight harassment, report of an extension project using active methodologies (T17 – 5.88%); points to the need for greater supervision, debates on the subject, educational talks involving teachers, students, civil servants and outsourced workers and strengthening the ombudsman’s office (T19 – 5.88%); is unaware of the existence of policies or practices to prevent and combat harassment (T1, T12 – 11.76%); the position of some HEIs is sometimes clear and sometimes is not (T3 – 5.88%). Of the 17 papers, six do not mention the issue (T2, T6, T7, T8, T9, T20 – 35.29%).

According to Nunes and Tolfo (2013) and Nunes (2022), when this happens within an organization, harassment becomes a problem for the organization, which is jointly responsible for its practice or for being exempt from combating it and preventing hostile behavior and strategies. Most of the time, what we see is disregard (Nunes, Tolfo & Cantera, 2019). Martins (2019) recommends legal mediation as a way of resolving problems, Raminelli (2022) mentions the creation of commissions to prevent and combat harassment (creation of booklets and support groups), and Rigotti and Persequino (2019) refer to the creation of ombudspersons.
The authors of the articles in question consider that they have achieved the proposed objectives. The results can be categorized as follows:

- Occurrence of harassment: six (T5, T6, T9, T12, T19, T20) of the 20 papers analyzed the occurrence of harassment with results pointing positively that it happened;
- Characteristics: six (T1, T5, T6, T7, T9, T20) of the 20 studies analyzed the characteristics of harassment, finding aspects that were both similar and different and complementary to each other;
- Consequences: three (T1, T2, T5) of the 20 studies analyzed the consequences of psychological harassment and found that it can affect mental health as well as physical health, the affective relational and work/study aspects. These studies focused on postgraduate studies;
- Causes: two (T10, T18) of the 20 studies analyzed the causes of harassment, including internal (personal) and external (institutional, social) causes.

About the causes pointed out, some of them are in line with the literature. Fonseca et al. (2021), Nunes, Tolfo and Pelegrini (2021) and Hyrygoyen (2006), for example, highlight individual singularities/differences, difficulties in living with other people's differences and the refusal to accept differences (gender, age, origin, sexuality and even political/ideological positioning) as causes.

Two (T13, T15) of the 20 papers do not clearly explain their results. The others mention these aspects: prevention and combating – one paper (T3) investigates the prevention and combating of harassment, which is not carried out frequently, but when it is, it is not carried out effectively; key ideas about harassment: one paper (T4) investigates key ideas about harassment in the discourse of respondents; correlation with requests for removal – one paper (T7) investigates the correlation of harassment with requests for removal; organizational culture of postgraduate courses – one paper (T8) investigates characteristics of organizational culture in postgraduate courses, another one (T11) is a case study of a lawsuit that points out the difficulty the victim (a university professor) has in proving harassment; student versus teacher – one paper (T14) studies ascending harassment, carried out by students against
teachers, but with the same elements as any other; definition of harassment – one paper (T16) investigated how participants define harassment, demonstrating limited knowledge on the subject. Although the definition of harassment is not consensual (Freitas & Rodrigues, 2014), the concepts presented do not contain many of the elements present in the literature, being confused with episodes of common moral damage; combating and preventing it through ombudsmen – one study (T17) had results related to combating and preventing harassment through institutional ombudsmen.

As for the conclusions of the studies, most of the articles focus on preventing and combating harassment.

Nine papers do not clearly state their conclusions; from those that do it, they can be categorized as follows: prevention and combating: eight papers (T1, T2, T3, T6, T7, T8, T15, 18) conclude that there is a need for effective prevention and combating of harassment in HEIs; mediation as prevention and fighting – T14 concludes that “the HEIs are failing by not trying to resolve the conflict using widely publicized means of solution such as mediation, which would certainly bring prevention and peaceful solution” (Martins, 2019, p. 1); prevention and fighting in postgraduate courses – T20 believes that harassment has been recurrent in postgraduate courses, “which naturalizes certain hostile behaviors, as if they were part of the student’s training". The importance of debates on harassment in the academic and scientific context is emphasized, in order to contribute to changes in beliefs and practices” (Nunes, 2020, p. 212). 212); reflection on the topic – one work (T4) concludes that there is a need for reflection on the topic, which is relevant to contributing to the development of “greater awareness and reflection on destructive behaviors that are no longer acceptable in the evolutionary stage of modern society and, above all, that still happen in a social group in which it is primarily proposed to train socially responsible and morally upright citizens” (Paixão et al., 2014, p. 415), 2014, p. 415); organizational culture in postgraduate education – for T8, discussing cultural aspects that favor “harassment makes it possible, based on them, to contribute to the development of actions and policies to mitigate its incidence, prevent and fight it. As well as debating and publicizing a subject that is considered taboo in
many organizational spaces.” (Nunes, 2022, p. 52), not to mention the academic-scientific contribution. For Nunes (2022), the world of academia is not very different from that of factories, with political patronage, group favoritism relationships, privileges, impunity, discourse-practice inconsistencies, etc. T5, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, 16, 17, 19 do not explicitly state their conclusions.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to understand and describe the characteristics of the phenomenon of harassment in universities by collecting and analyzing scientific articles published in Portuguese.

The main results are that, over the last 10 years, there has been a concentration of papers, especially in 2019 and 2020, and a dispersion in the number of authors and journals publishing them, with a slight concentration on Nunes, T.S. and Tolfo, S. R. Empirical-descriptive papers were predominant. There was a dispersion in the materials and instruments used by the studies to collect data. The most common tool used in data analysis was content analysis. With regard to the studies that evaluated documents, they focused on legal and labor proceedings.

Most of the empirical-descriptive studies have teachers as their population and, in second place, administrative technicians. According to the literature, women predominate among the participants. In most of the studies, the subjects’ education level is postgraduate, and their age is between 26 and 35. Most of the studies do not provide information on ethnicity, marital status, working regime, monthly income or how long the participants have been working at the institution. The places where they work are generally teaching/education centers.

The average time taken by students to complete postgraduate studies is between 2.5 and 3 years. Most participants have experienced harassment, either as a victim or witness. Most of the institutions where the work is carried out are public, especially federal educational institutions.

Regarding the subject matter of the studies, most of them focus on the deliberate deterioration of working conditions, along with attacks on dignity. And lastly, there is verbal, physical or sexual violence.
Harassment by students is mentioned in most of the papers. A large proportion of the papers mention downward harassment (superiors against subordinates), followed by horizontal harassment, both among teachers and students (from colleagues at the same hierarchical level). Half of the victims sought someone to talk to.

For half of the participants in the surveys, the consequences and effects of harassment were damages to mental health and for a small part, damages to physical health. The respondents don’t seem to be concerned about the affective relational part or the damage to the organization. As for the actions taken by the university in relation to harassment, there was no concentration of responses.

The authors declared that the objectives of the studies had been achieved. As for the results, six of the 20 studies focused on the occurrence of harassment as existing, and another six analyzed the characteristics of harassment as having both, similar and different aspects, but which are complementary to each other. Finally, three of the studies examined the consequences of harassment and two others, the causes.

As for the conclusions of the studies, eight of them defend the need to prevent and effectively fight harassment in HEIs; the other conclusions are scattered.

In the context of universities, it is essential that there is a fight against bullying within the academic community, with actions to prevent and confront violations of human rights, ensuring that they are respected and guaranteeing a healthy environment for the development of knowledge.

Acting to prevent prejudiced and discriminatory practices is a fight that cannot stop. Furthermore, it is through the creation of public policies that Brazilian law demonstrates its interest in mitigating abusive practices in social relations. It is of the utmost importance that the phenomenon is treated seriously by the state. For the aggressors, stricter laws are needed in order to curb such practices which, although very serious, do not denote the state’s commitment to extirpating them.

The university, much more than a house of knowledge, should be a safe and healthy haven for all individuals, where citizenship and respect for fundamental rights and human dignity are built. Harassment exists in this context,
and it is the duty of the state and the institutions themselves to create mechanisms to effectively fight it and eradicate it.

As a suggestion for future works, it would be important to learn about and describe the characteristics of the phenomenon in articles written in languages other than Portuguese.
REFERENCES


