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Analysis of Academic Experiences in University Students: QVA and QVA-r Systematic Review

Análisis sobre las vivencias académicas en universitarios:
revisión sistemática de QVA y QVA-r

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Summary

A systematic review of the literature was carried out with the aim of analyzing existing research on the academic adjustment of university students, focusing on the application of the QVA and QVA-r instruments. The review covered studies published between 1995 and 2023, consulting databases such as Scopus, Redalyc and SciELO. The methodology followed the PRISMA Protocol and resulted in the selection and analysis of 39 studies. The findings showed a significant concentration of research in Brazil (69.23%), followed by Portugal (15.38%). Most studies were conducted between 2015 and 2018 (30.77%). The number of authors varied, with most involving three authors per publication (33.33%). The review highlighted the relationship between academic expectations and college adjustment, the importance of resilience in challenging contexts, the significant role of extracurricular activities, and the intricate connection between stress and academic adjustment. Despite the wealth of literature reviewed, the lack of evidence in psychometric studies of the QVA and QVA-r was noted, highlighting the need for future research to delve deeper into the validation and application of these instruments in different cultural and linguistic contexts. This study provides a comprehensive overview of existing research on academic adjustment, identifying key themes and areas of opportunity for future research.

Keywords: Academic adjustment; Academic adaptation; Systematic review; Academic experiences; QVA-r.

Resumen

El estudio es una revisión sistemática de la literatura con el objetivo de analizar la investigación existente sobre el ajuste académico de estudiantes universitarios, centrándose en la aplicación de los instrumentos QVA y QVA-r. La revisión abarcó estudios publicados entre los años 1995 y 2023, se consultaron bases de datos como Scopus, Redalyc y SciELO. La metodología siguió el Protocolo PRISMA y resultó en la selección y análisis de 39 estudios. Los hallazgos mostraron una concentración significativa de investigaciones en Brasil (69.23%), seguido de Portugal (15.38%). La mayoría de los estudios se realizaron entre el 2015 y 2018 (30.77%). El número de autores varió, la mayoría involucrando a tres autores por publicación (33.33%). La revisión destacó la relación entre expectativas académicas y ajuste universitario, la importancia de la resiliencia en contextos desafiantes, el papel significativo de las actividades extracurriculares, y la conexión intrincada entre el estrés y el ajuste académico. A pesar de la riqueza de la literatura revisada, se observó una escasez de evidencia en estudios psicométricos del QVA y QVA-r, lo que destaca la necesidad de investigaciones futuras para profundizar en la validación y aplicación de estos instrumentos en diferentes contextos culturales y lingüísticos. Este estudio proporciona una visión integral de la investigación existente sobre el ajuste académico identificando temas clave y áreas de oportunidad para futuras investigaciones.

Palabras claves: Ajuste académico; Adaptación académica; Revisión sistemática; Vivencias académicas; QVA-r.

INTRODUCTION

From an epistemological perspective, theories addressing the leading role of the university student in achieving a healthy adaptation to university life have shed light on the complexity of this phenomenon. In that sense, many theorists have delved into it and provided knowledge of great support to explain the student's adaptation to university life.

Among them, Magolda (1992) stands out, for example, who illustrates the trajectory of an individual from generating absolute knowledge to reaching a final position, introducing the concept of "self-authorship" as a process consisting of three fundamentally and epistemologically intertwined dimensions: personal epistemology (How do I know?), intrapersonal (Who am I?), and interpersonal (What connections do I want to establish?) (Magolda, 2004, 2010). This approach focuses not only on the acquisition of knowledge but also on the development of identity and interpersonal relationships (Beck, 2022; Magolda et al., 2023).

Likewise, Pascarella and Terenzini's (1991, 2005) epistemological model focuses on the effects of university on students and poses six fundamental questions related to the development and impact of higher education on individuals. These questions address issues about the diversity of students' experiences and outcomes in different university contexts (Loes et al., 2019). For their part, Chickering and Reisser (1995) present a model composed of seven developmental vectors that students encounter along their growth journey, highlighting aspects such as maturation of competence, emotional management, development of autonomy, maturation of interpersonal relationships, development of identity, and discovery of a sense of purpose in life (Cool, 2021; Davis, 2019; Levand, 2022). These theoretical vectors provide a comprehensive understanding of the dimensions involved in student adjustment in the university context.

Thus, the study and understanding of the academic experiences of university students has become a topic of growing interest internationally (Andriola & Castro, 2021; Cuadros, 2021; Laurindo et al., 2020; Soares et al., 2021). This, given that the transition from secondary to higher education represents a crucial period in an individual's life, characterized by a series of challenges and adaptations that directly influence student success and retention (Almeida et al., 1999; Domínguez-Lara & Prada-Chapoñan, 2020; Pérez et al., 2020). These challenges comprise the concept of "adjustment" to which Almeida et al. (1999) referred to define the limits of the term "academic experiences."

The theory of Almeida et al. (1999) focuses on the academic experiences of university students. This theory was developed to identify university students' lived experiences and understand how these experiences impact their academic life and performance. The theory is commonly applied through the Academic Experiences Questionnaire (QVA-R), which is a Likert-type survey composed of 60 items intended to capture the dimensions of the academic experiences construct. The items are distributed in five dimensions: Personal Difficulties, Interpersonal Relationships, Study Evaluation, Vocational, and Institutional (Almeida et al., 2002; Soares et al., 2021). The first dimension includes indicators of distress, disorientation, loneliness, physical weakness, pessimism, emotional instability, sadness, and other personal challenges that a student may face. The interpersonal dimension focuses on the students' relationships with their classmates,

teachers, and other people in the academic environment. Likewise, the study evaluation dimension evaluates how students assess their academic performance and learning strategies, while the fourth assess vocationally the student's position towards career development and its difficulties. Finally, the institutional dimension evaluates the students' perceptions of the institution they attend, including its facilities, resources, and general environment (Andriola & Castro, 2021; Soares et al., 2021).

In this context, the Academic Experiences Questionnaire (QVA), developed by Almeida and his research team, has emerged as a valuable tool to evaluate the adaptation and performance of university students. Thus, the QVA was designed with the fundamental purpose of identifying problems of student adaptation and performance by collecting data from a large sample of university students (Almeida et al., 2002). The initial validation of this instrument provided a solid basis for evaluating its reliability and internal validity in a specific context (Almeida et al., 1999, 2002). Subsequently, a reduced version of the QVA, known as QVA-r, was introduced, consisting of sixty items categorized into five key areas: personal, interpersonal, degree program, study, and institutional. The reduced version has also demonstrated adequate psychometric properties, further consolidating the instrument's usefulness in evaluating university students' academic experience and adjustment (Granado et al., 2005).

Internationally, numerous researchers have conducted studies related to the QVA and QVA-r in diverse cultural and academic contexts. These studies have supported these instruments' usefulness in measuring university students' academic experiences and adaptation (Jacobo et al., 2013; Santos & Suehiro, 2007). In addition, adaptations and validations have been made in countries such as Colombia and Mexico, expanding the applicability of these questionnaires in different geographical contexts (Márquez-Rodríguez et al., 2009).

A series of research on the QVA and its reduced version, the QVA-r has also been conducted in the Peru context. These studies have sought to understand the academic experience of Peruvian students and have supported the validity and reliability of these instruments (Alva, 2015; Jaulis, 2021). In addition, the QVA-r has been adapted, standardized and normalized for a sample of 314 university students in Peru, covering both males and females aged 16 and older, confirming the validity and reliability of the instrument (Alva, 2015).

However, there has been a lack of exhaustive analysis of the scientific literature related to this instrument despite the advances in the QVA-r application and validation in different contexts. That analysis would systematically allow for identifying trends in research, highlighting the most relevant contributions, and assessing the consistency and evolution of the psychometric properties of the QVA-r over time. In addition, it would seek to identify possible gaps in the existing literature and areas that require further research attention, thanks to the power of replicability as a practice of scientific research (Centeno-Leyva & Domínguez-Lara, 2020).

Therefore, the central objective of this research was to analyze the review of studies related to QVA and QVA-r to explore the research progress since the creation of the term by Almeida et al. (1999) to the present day in the university context. This analysis will benefit the scientific community interested in the academic experiences of university students and provide valuable information for

educational institutions and professionals committed to improving the student experience and academic success in higher education, with demonstrated evidence-based relevance.

METHOD

Design

The study design is understood as a systematic literature review oriented to extract information from indexed media to answer a common question (Ghufron et al., 2023). This study was directed to searches in the Scopus, Redalyc, and SciELO databases, which were sustained from the search equation: ("academic adjustment" OR "adaptation" OR "experience") AND ("QVA" OR "QVA-r" OR "CVA") AND "university" AND "students".

In the Scopus database, the equation with specific search criteria was embodied in the expression: (("academic adjustment" OR "adaptation" OR "experience") AND ("QVA" OR "QVA-r" OR "CVA") AND "university" AND "students") AND PUBYEAR > 1995 AND PUBYEAR < 2023 AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA, "all")), considering studies in final stage and published from 1995 to 2023 as terms added to the same equation.

In Redalyc, the equation was expressed as: ("academic adjustment" OR "adaptation" OR "experience") AND ("QVA" OR "QVA-r" OR "CVA") AND "university" AND "students". In SciELO, it was: ("academic adjustment" OR "adaptation" OR "experience") AND ("QVA" OR "QVA-r" OR "CVA") AND "university" AND "students", the structure of the equation is the same in the latter two databases. In the latter two databases, no articles older than 20 years were identified, unlike in the first database.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

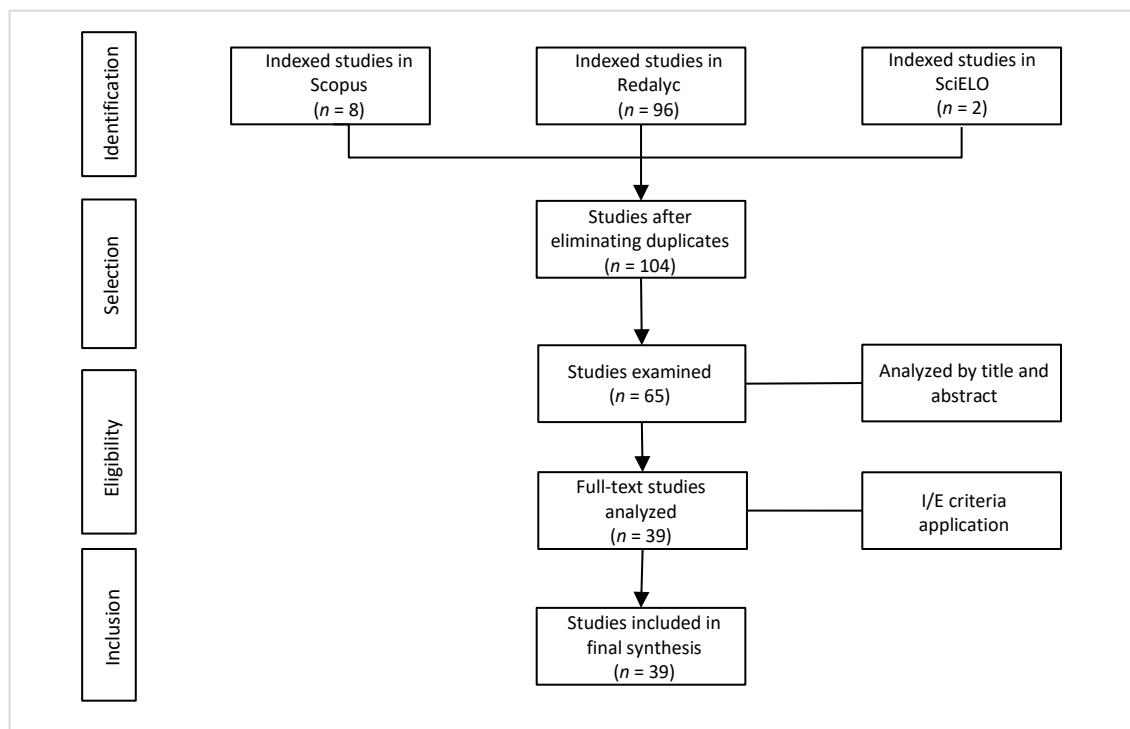
The research focused on studies from 1995 to 2023 including references to the use of the term "academic adjustment" or the relative use of the QVA or QVA-r. This process was carried out by extending the range of studies from January 1995 to September 2023 in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. On this basis, the following were excluded: theses, research reports, dissertations, or other documents that did not meet the inclusion criteria: articles indexed in the databases mentioned and that did not fall within the specified time ranges.

Procedure

The process was carried out following the PRISMA Protocol, which is recommended for making searches for this type of studies (Moher et al., 2016). On this premise, the first exploration of the Scopus database found eight research studies related to the terms of the search equation, while there were 96 in Redalyc, and only 2 in SciELO, for a total of 106.

Based on this, two duplicated studies were eliminated since they had a match in Scopus and Redalyc. In this line, 60 studies were filtered by title since they did not meet the search criteria. Five additional studies were sequentially excluded by review of abstracts, leaving a total of 39 compiled, composed of six from Scopus, 32 from Redalyc, and one from SciELO. The process described is shown in Figure 1 which specifies the number of studies included and excluded throughout the search and review process.

Figure 1.
Selección de estudios para el proceso de revisión



Data analysis

The total number of publications selected for the review process was taken as a starting point from the studies. Based on these numbers, a count was made of the studies in Spanish, English, and Portuguese, as well as the number of authors by study, country, databases, and publication frequencies per year. Finally, those that included other psychological constructs were added to these analyses.

Ethical considerations

The research was carried out following the regulatory principles stipulated by the National Council for Science, Technology and Technological Innovation (Concytec) of Peru and the principles of good practices and responsible conduct in scientific research, guaranteeing the truthfulness and accuracy of the information.

RESULTS

Based on the information base, the 39 studies derived from the synthesis of the full-text review process are presented (Table 1). Studies with different purposes referring to relationships of academic adjustment with other variables and studies focused on the referred analysis of the QVA and QVA-r metric properties were found.

Table 1.
List of final studies

No.	Authors	Study	Main findings
1	Domingues et al. (2023)	Adaptation of students who started higher education during remote teaching in Minas Gerais	Conducted in Brazil, it involved 186 students who had remote training in 2020 and 2021. The epidemic had adverse effects on relationships and mental well-being. Technology was used to maintain connections, although students preferred in-person training.
2	Castillo-Díaz et al. (2022)	Alteraciones de salud mental y adaptación universitaria en estudiantes hondureños: Un análisis de grupos con rendimiento académico diferenciado	The results show a detrimental correlation between mental well-being and the ability of Honduran students to adapt to university life, taking into account their diverse academic achievements. This highlights the influence on their career decisions and study routines.
3	Andriola & Castro (2021)	Adaptation of students to the university environment: a case study in undergraduate courses at the Federal University of Ceará	A comparison was made between various categories of students, including gender, class schedule, employment status, and installment beneficiary status, in terms of their adaptation to the university environment. A total of 832 university students participated in the study. The findings showed significant disparities in adaptability according to factors such as gender, class schedule, employment status, and installment status, covering various dimensions such as personal, academic, and institutional.
4	Soares et al. (2018)	Vivências, habilidades sociais e comportamentos sociais de universitários	This research found that adolescents with maladaptive academic-social behaviors also had deficient social skills, hindering their academic adaptation.
5	Porto & Soares (2017a)	Diferenças entre expectativas e adaptação acadêmica de universitários de diversas áreas do conhecimento	It was found that students majoring in Exact Sciences and Humanities had higher expectations regarding the use of resources. Academic adaptation differed by dimension and discipline of study, depending on individual abilities and the quality of institutional support.
6	Lamas et al. (2014)	Academic experiences and employability of senior college students	No significant disparities were detected between Psychology and Management students. Academic experiences have a direct relationship with employability, especially in terms of interpersonal skills. Encouraging the integration of academic knowledge is crucial to improve employability.

Table 1.
List of final studies (continued)

No.	Authors	Study	Main findings
7	Carvalho et al. (2015)	Adaptação Acadêmica e Coping em Estudantes Universitários	Coping strategies focused on problem-solving and asking others for help were found to be positively correlated with academic adjustment. There is evidence that strategies involving emotions and religious practices/fantasy thinking impact academic adjustment negatively.
8	Sarriera et al. (2012)	Estudo comparativo da integração ao contexto universitário entre estudantes de diferentes instituições	The level of university integration among students from three different institutions was evaluated. The results showed significant variations in three aspects of the QVA-R: Personal, Study, and Institutional. The use of discriminant analysis successfully categorized students into two different groups, demonstrating a significant variation of 76.3%. This highlights the importance of identifying individual and institutional attributes to improve student integration in their respective university environments.
9	Soares et al. (2013)	Intelligence and social competence in university adaptation	Sociodemographic data were collected and a total of 393 university students of various ages and socioeconomic levels, including public and private institutions, participated. The findings showed notable associations between social skills and academic adaptation, but no statistically significant associations between intelligence and academic adaptation were observed.
10	Lima & Aguiar-Da-Silva (2017)	Questionário de Vivências Acadêmicas (QVA-R): avaliação de estudantes de medicina em um curso com currículo inovador	Research on Medicine students with an innovative curriculum showed that the career dimension is of the utmost importance for successful adaptation. Disparities depending on age, gender, and employment status were observed. Females showed greater adaptability to the educational approach, although males showed stronger overall adaptation. The QVA-R was found to be effective in assessing adaptation in this setting.
11	Márquez-Rodríguez et al. (2009)	Cuestionario de Vivencias Académicas en su versión reducida (QVA-r): un análisis psicométrico	The short version of the QVA-R was modified and validated in a sample of 297 Psychology students in Bogotá, obtaining satisfactory psychometric results. The measure was considered reliable for evaluating academic experiences in this specific environment.
12	Angeli et al. (2013)	Integração ao Ensino Superior e Satisfação Acadêmica em Universitários	An evaluation was carried out to analyze the integration and academic satisfaction of 203 Psychology and Odontology students in a private institution. The results indicated that students showed above-average levels in both aspects with variations according to different courses and correlations among dimensions. Integration and satisfaction, although connected, were found to be different but significant concepts in understanding academic life.

Table 1.
List of final studies (continued)

No.	Authors	Study	Main findings
13	Albuquerque & Bueno (2020)	The Effect of Resilience and Cognition on (Im)Migrant Students' Academic Adaptation	Resilience, rather than cognitive skills, was found to have a crucial influence on how (in)migrant university students adapted to different aspects of their academic experiences. The importance of having a well-organized resilience style was emphasized.
14	Ferreira & Angeli (2013)	Relação entre vivência acadêmica e os indicadores de desenvolvimento de carreira em universitários	A total of 208 university students from São Paulo and Minas Gerais participated. Significantly favorable associations between academic experiences and professional growth were found. Specifically, the "career" and "personal" dimensions were shown to be predictive of professional development. In addition, distinctions depending on age and academic level were detected.
15	Souza et al. (2021)	Academic adaptation in university students: Associations with stress and sleep quality	Research conducted with 489 university students showed a positive correlation between better sleep quality, lower sleep-related stress, and improved academic adjustment.
16	Chau & Saravia (2016)	Does stress and university adjustment relate to health in Peru?	Interpersonal ties among university students in Lima, Peru, were shown to correlate with mental health, but perceived stress and study-related stress were related to physical health. The association between academic adjustment and physical health was influenced by perceived stress.
17	Almeida et al. (2012)	Extra-curricular involvement, academic adjustment and achievement in higher education: A study of Portuguese students	This research compared university students and classified them into three categories according to their participation in extracurricular activities. The findings showed that students who did not participate in such activities had better academic adjustment, especially in terms of dedication in class.
18	Chau & Saravia (2014)	Adaptación Universitaria y Su Relación con la Salud Percibida en Una Muestra de Jóvenes de Perú	It was shown that Peruvian students have a positive correlation between their perception of health and their ability to adapt to university life. This correlation was observed in five categories, with the personal component showing the most significant association. The research highlights the importance of adaptability in shaping students' health perspectives.
19	Sousa et al. (2013)	Autoeficácia na formação superior e vivências de universitários cotistas e não cotistas	This research conducted a comparative analysis of self-efficacy and academic experiences between those who receive benefits and those who do not at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil. Beneficiaries showed difficulties in their interpersonal interactions, possibly derived from prejudices and mistrust linked to the beneficiary system in the country.

Table 1.
List of final studies (continued)

No.	Authors	Study	Main findings
20	Abello et al. (2012)	Vivencias e implicación académica en estudiantes universitarios: adaptación y validación de escalas para su evaluación	This research detailed the adaptation and validation process of two measures to evaluate Academic Experiences and Academic Engagement in university students. A total of 261 students from the Universidad de Concepción in Chile participated in the study. The questionnaires administered to the students showed satisfactory levels of internal consistency and adequate correlations among their different dimensions. These findings provide preliminary evidence to support the validation of the questionnaires.
21	Fogaça et al. (2016)	Academic experience of Psychology students: Differences between beginners and graduating	The academic experience of 262 Psychology students at a university was evaluated. Statistically significant variations were observed in many aspects depending on the year and length of study (morning or afternoon).
22	Aparecida et al. (2008)	Vivência acadêmica e expectativas de universitários ingressantes e concluintes	This research examined the academic experiences of university students and identified notable variations in the institutional aspect depending on the year of study. In addition, fifth-year students showed notable disparities in interpersonal and general aspects compared to their initial expectations at the start of university.
23	Coralina & Jorge (2010)	Integração ao Ensino Superior em um curso de Pedagogia	The incorporation of Pedagogy students into higher education was analyzed, showing notable disparities in several areas depending on the students' academic status, age, and employment status. Students who were about to graduate showed higher positive integration than first-year students. In addition, it was observed that the adjustment of first-year students was affected by their age and employment position.
24	Soares et al. (2021)	Adaptação Acadêmica de Estudantes de Primeiro Ano de Psicologia	Academic expectations, satisfaction, and social skills positively impacted the academic adjustment of first-year Psychology students. In addition, academic satisfaction and level of maturity in career decision-making were also of the utmost importance. Discussion focused on the implications of providing support to incoming students.
25	Couto & Vicente (2018)	Psicoterapia de grupo com foco na adaptação acadêmica: um experimento com estudantes	Group psychotherapy improved academic adjustment in first-year Psychology students, while the control group declined their adaptability.
26	Porto & Soares (2017b)	Expectativas e adaptação acadêmica em estudantes universitários	Significant disparities in expectations and adjustment between novice and advanced students were observed but with limited impact. Academic expectations proved to be a significant predictor of academic adjustment in university.

Table 1.
List of final studies (continued)

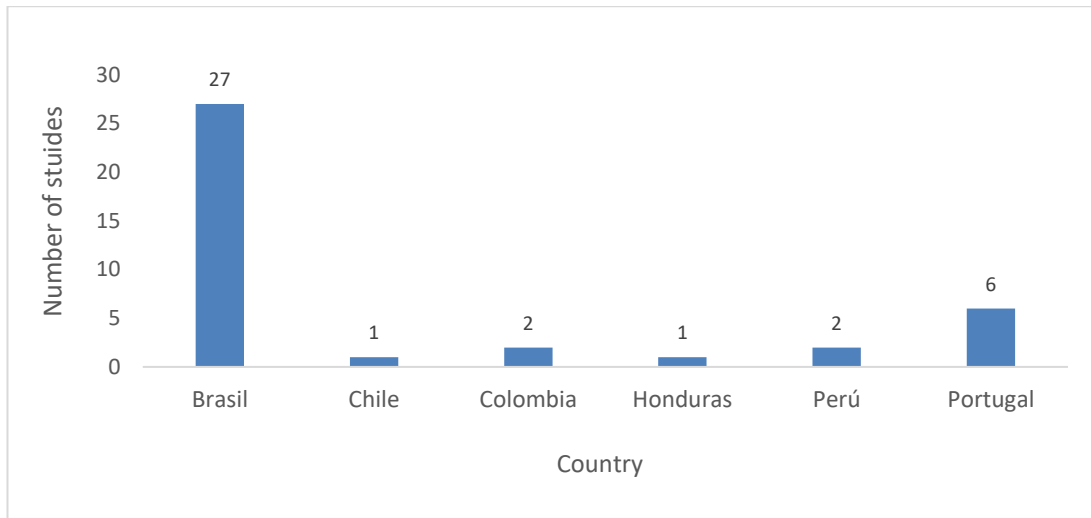
No.	Authors	Study	Main findings
27	Soares et al. (2017)	Expectativas acadêmicas e habilidades sociais na adaptação à universidade	A positive correlation was found between academic expectations and academic adjustment. However, no notable correlation between social skills and academic expectations was found, accounting for only 4.8% of academic adjustment.
28	Oliveira et al. (2016)	College Adjustment as a Mediator Between Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Symptoms and Work Self-Efficacy	ADHD symptoms affected job self-efficacy through university adjustment. Improving student well-being and fostering social support may mitigate this impact.
29	Soares et al. (2007)	Autonomía y ajuste académico: un estudio con estudiantes portugueses de primer año	The level of autonomy students had at the start of the year impacted their ability to adjust academically at the end of the first year. Time management and emotional independence influenced academic adjustment, with students who did not leave home showing better adjustment, especially males.
30	Soares et al. (2009)	Habilidades sociais e adaptação acadêmica: um estudo comparativo em instituições de ensino público e privado	This research explores the correlation between social aptitude and educational experiences in Psychology students. The results indicate that students from public institutions have better academic adjustment than those from private institutions. Correlations between academic adjustment and social skills were found, especially in various dimensions depending on the institution.
31	Oliveira et al. (2014)	Adaptação acadêmica e coping em estudantes universitários brasileiros: uma revisão de literatura	We noticed a lack of research directly addressing the relationship between coping strategies and academic adjustment in Brazilian university students. Most studies focused on the development and validation of instruments and the investigation of academic experiences and correlations with psychological health variables.
32	Borzzone (2017)	Autoeficacia y vivencias académicas en estudiantes universitarios	This research identified strong correlations between self-efficacy in academic activities and academic experiences in Chilean university students, highlighting the importance of these dimensions in the student's experience.
33	Andrade et al. (2016)	Vivências Acadêmicas e Sofrimento Psíquico de Estudantes de Psicologia	The research examined academic experiences and psychological distress in Psychology students at a Brazilian university. Despite having an overall positive perception of the course, many students reported experiencing psychological distress and emphasized the importance of addressing these problems in the training of psychologists.

Table 1.
List of final studies (continued)

No.	Authors	Study	Main findings
34	Cunha & Carrilho (2005)	O processo de adaptação ao ensino superior e o rendimento acadêmico	The relationship between the academic experiences of first-year university students and their academic performance in a military engineering program was analyzed. The results suggest that academic experiences, especially at the personal and academic achievement levels, may affect academic performance in the first year of the course.
35	Soares et al. (2011)	Ambiente académico y adaptación a la universidad: un estudio con estudiantes de 1º año de la Universidad do Minho	A total of 677 first-year students were examined to analyze how perceptions of classroom climate affect their academic experiences. These experiences vary by gender and field of study and positively impact academic experiences.
36	Araújo et al. (2003)	Transição E Adaptação Acadêmica Dos Estudantes À Escola De Enfermagem	The internal consistency of the Academic Experiences Questionnaire was evaluated in first year nursing students, demonstrating its adequacy for analyzing their adaptation and academic success.
37	Jung & Pereira (2009)	Adaptação à universidade de estudantes internacionais: Um estudo com alunos de um programa de convênio	The adaptation of foreign undergraduate students at UFRGS, linked to the Programa Estudante Convênio-Graduação (PEC-G), was evaluated. Most showed reasonable or good levels of adaptation but faced family, health, and housing difficulties and expressed less satisfaction with leisure activities and medical care.
38	Soares et al. (2006)	Construcción y validación de un modelo multidimensional de ajuste de los jóvenes al contexto universitario	The research examines the variables affecting university students' academic performance and psychological well-being. The decisive elements are grades at entry and the level of autonomy given to students. On the other hand, initial expectations and the social environment have a limited influence.
39	Almeida et al. (2000)	Transição e adaptação à Universidade: Apresentação de um Questionário de Vivências Acadêmicas	The Academic Experiences Questionnaire (QVA) was presented to analyze university students' adaptation. It focuses on the interaction between personal characteristics and the demands of the academic environment. The indices of the QVA in a sample of first-year students at the University do Minho are described.

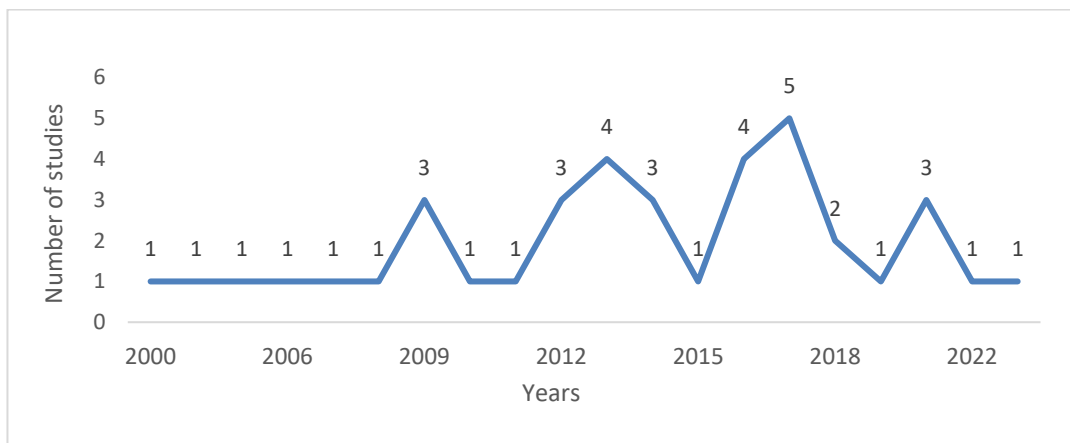
From the final count, most of the studies came from Brazil, totaling 27 (69.23%), followed by Portugal with six studies (15.38%). The rest of the countries reported between 1 and 2 studies, with Chile and Honduras being the countries with the lowest production for the search terms. Figure 2 presents the report of studies per-country.

Figure 2.
Number of studies per country



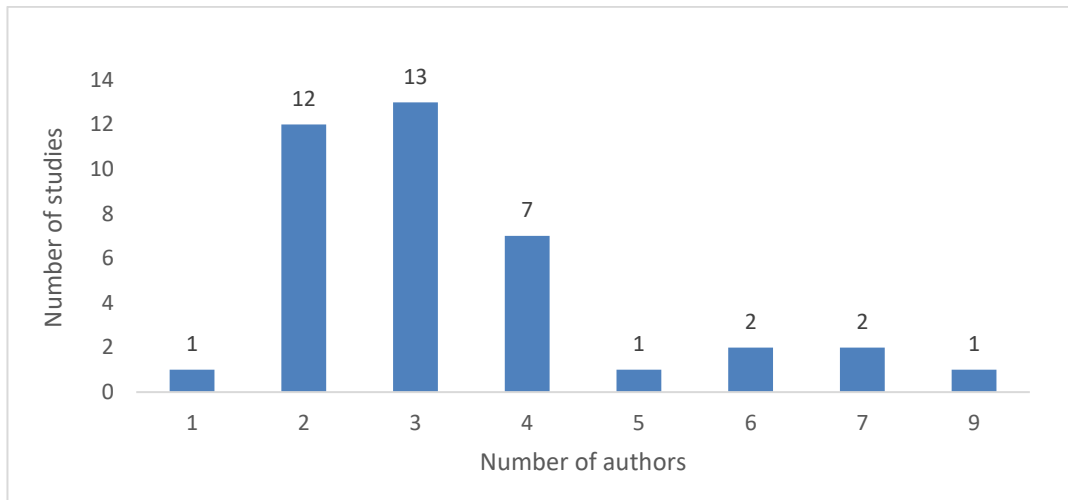
A count of the production of related research between 2000 and 2023 in the above-mentioned three databases was carried out. The range of highest research productivity was between 2015 and 2018, with 12 studies (30.77%), highlighting, in second place, the range between 2011 and 2014, with 11 (28.21%), as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3.
Number of studies per year



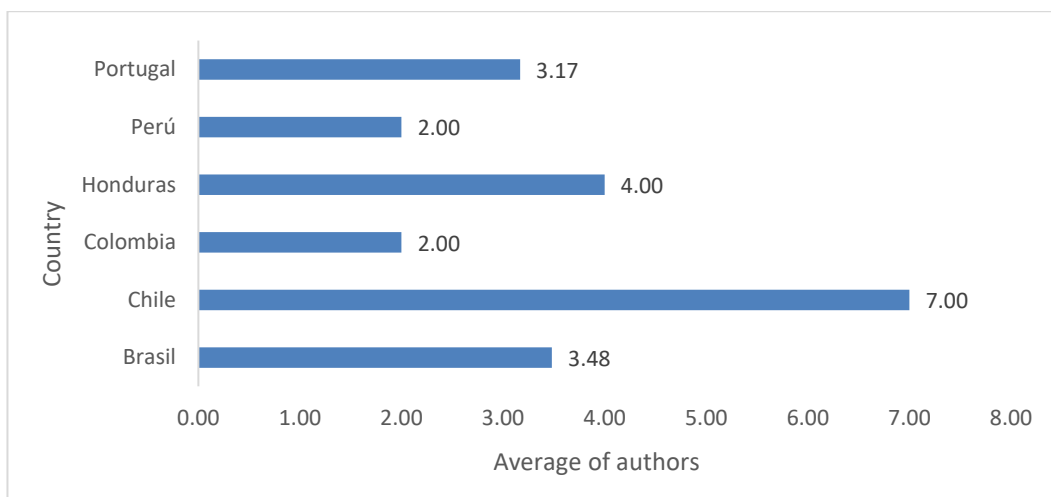
Likewise, the maximum number of authors reported was eight, while the majority included the participation of three in 13 of the 39 studies (33.33%). In second place, the participation of two authors per publication stood out, accounting for 12 studies (30.77%). In third place was the participation of four authors in 7 studies (17.95%). Figure 4 shows the information in more detail.

Figure 4.
Number of authors per publication



It should also be noted that the overall mean of authors was 3.39, with the highest mean of authors per single publication in Chile ($M = 7.00$). The second most representative mean was obtained by Brazil, with 3.48 authors per publication, followed by Portugal, with a mean of 3.17 authors. The last places were obtained by Peru and Colombia, with two authors per publication, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5.
Mean of authors per publication



DISCUSSION

The main goal of this systematic review was to draw a comprehensive overview of research on academic adjustment in university students. This approach allowed to address studies with a significant time range and geographic diversity, thus enhancing the external validity of the analysis

(Soares et al., 2018). The choice of this time range and the specific databases underline the commitment of this study to the comprehensiveness and timeliness of the available research. As Domingues et al. (2023) indicate, academic adaptation in the last decade has been influenced, in particular, by disruptive events, such as the pandemic, reinforcing the importance of addressing recent studies. The selection of Scopus, Redalyc, and SciELO also responds to the need to include perspectives from different regions and academic contexts, thus broadening the representativeness of the findings.

Despite the wealth of reviewed literature on academic adjustment in university students, there is a notable lack of specific psychometric studies on the Academic Experiences Questionnaire (QVA) and its reduced version (QVA-r). Although several studies using these instruments as part of their research were identified, the lack of detailed analyses on their validity and reliability is evident, as Angeli et al. (2013) point out. The QVA and QVA-r are instruments designed to evaluate various dimensions related to students' academic experience, and their use has been widespread in academic adjustment research. However, as mentioned by Márquez-Rodríguez et al. (2009), the absence of studies that delve into these instruments' internal structure, internal consistency, and other psychometric properties raises questions about the robustness of the measurements derived from them.

Instrument validation is a critical step in psychometric research, and its absence may compromise the accurate interpretation of findings (Angeli et al., 2013). A rigorous psychometric analysis of the QVA and QVA-r would allow to evaluate their adequacy for measuring academic experiences reliably and validly in diverse populations and educational contexts. The lack of evidence in psychometric studies also highlights the need for greater transparency in the methodology of studies using these instruments. Abello et al. (2012) emphasize that a clear description of the adaptation and validation of the scales used is essential to ensure the replicability of research and comparability among studies.

Consequently, a valuable opportunity arises for the academic community specializing in psychometrics and educational psychology. Conducting comprehensive psychometric studies on the QVA and QVA-r can strengthen the methodological basis of academic adjustment research, ensuring the reliability and validity of the measurements and, thus, improving the overall quality of research in this field (Abello et al., 2012; Angeli et al., 2013; Márquez-Rodríguez et al., 2009). These efforts would contribute to consolidating the empirical evidence on academic adjustment measurement and facilitate a more solid interpretation of the results of future research using these instruments.

The systematic review of the literature on academic adjustment in university students shows various significant findings shedding light on the complexities and determinants of this crucial experience. One of the most relevant aspects is the variability in the factors influencing academic adjustment. Studies such as Domingues et al. (2023) in Brazil and Castillo-Díaz et al. (2022) in Honduras highlight the negative impact of remote teaching and mental health disturbances on student adjustment. These findings suggest the importance of considering specific contexts and external events, such as the pandemic, in analyzing academic adjustment. In addition, research addresses the relationship between mental health and academic performance, as evidenced in the study conducted by Castillo-Díaz et al. (2022) which identifies a negative connection between

mental health and university adjustment. This finding emphasizes the need for interventions addressing academic and psychological well-being aspects to promote more positive adjustment.

The analysis of adjustment to the university environment in different groups of students conducted by Andriola & Castro (2021) highlights the influence of variables such as gender, class shift, and work activity on academic adjustment. These results suggest that support and guidance strategies should be adapted to the specific characteristics of students to be effective. Likewise, studies explore the importance of social skills in academic adjustment, as noted by Soares et al. (2013), who find significant correlations between social skills and academic adjustment. This finding emphasizes the need for educational programs promoting academic development and social skills to improve students' adaptation.

Within the corpus of studies analyzed, several themes have emerged as particularly salient in the context of university students' academic adjustment. One of the key aspects highlighted by the research is the direct link between academic expectations and university adjustment. Albuquerque and Bueno (2020) highlight that academic expectations are predictive of academic adjustment and significantly influence several of its dimensions. This finding emphasizes the importance of understanding students' perceptions and anticipations for a more successful adjustment process.

Another emerging crucial topic is resilience, addressed in the study conducted by Albuquerque and Bueno (2020). This work emphasizes that resilience is a determining factor for academic adaptation in challenging contexts such as migration. Considering resilience as a key component in the university experience suggests the need for support programs strengthening this ability in students. Likewise, participation in extracurricular activities and their influence on academic adjustment also stands out as a relevant topic (Almeida et al., 2012). This finding highlights that experiences beyond the formal classroom significantly impact students' adjustment. Incorporating these activities as an integral part of the academic experience may be crucial to improving students' adaptation.

The link between stress and academic adjustment explored in Chau and Saravia's (2016) research shows an intricate connection between psychological well-being and academic performance. This topic suggests the need for stress management strategies as an integral part of academic adjustment support programs. This analysis identifies several promising areas for future research on academic adjustment in university students. The relationship between coping strategies and academic adaptation, especially in specific contexts, as pointed out by the Brazilian (Oliveira et al., 2016), emerges as an area requiring more detailed attention. Understanding how coping strategies impact adaptation can inform interventions to strengthen students' resilience in the face of academic and personal challenges (Chau & Saravia, 2016).

The predominance of studies from Brazil and Portugal highlights the need for research on academic adjustment in students from other geographic regions and cultures. Intercultural studies could provide valuable insights into how cultural and contextual factors influence the experience of academic adjustment (Jung & Pereira, 2009). Likewise, further exploring the relationship between academic expectations and adaptation, as indicated by Soares et al. (2017), could show how these expectations vary across different student cohorts and educational contexts. As such, the literature

reviewed provides a rich and multifaceted view of the complexities associated with academic adjustment in university students. However, the diversity of approaches and geographic limitations suggest that there is significant room for research expansion, addressing specific aspects of academic adjustment and exploring new variables and contexts. This future research may provide additional knowledge to inform effective student support strategies and improve the university experience.

CONCLUSIONS

From the above results, several significant conclusions can be drawn regarding the geographical, time, and collaborative distribution of the research reviewed. Firstly, there is a notable disparity in the production of studies, with Brazil being the country with the largest contribution, accounting for a considerable percentage of the total collected. This phenomenon may indicate Brazil's specific relevance and interest in the QVA and QVA-r use.

Secondly, the accounting for of Portugal as the country with the second highest production suggests a significant participation in generating knowledge in the QVA and QVA-r use. However, it is important to contextualize these findings regarding each country's size and research capacity to avoid misinterpretations based solely on the number of studies.

Regarding time distribution, a specific period between 2015 and 2018 stands out as the one with the highest research productivity, followed closely by the interval between 2011 and 2014. These findings could indicate an increased research interest or activity in these periods, which could be the subject of further analysis to identify possible causes.

Regarding co-authorship, the number of participants per study was diverse, with a maximum of eight authors. The prevalence of 3-author participation in approximately one-third of the studies suggests a trend towards moderate-sized research teams. These data support the notion that collaboration in smaller groups is common in the QVA and QVA-r use.

The overall mean of authors per publication at 3.39 provides a consolidated view of the collaborative dynamics in the studies analyzed. The variability in the means of authors per country highlights differences in collaborative practices among the nations examined, with Chile and Brazil being the extremes in this regard.

In summary, the detailed analysis of the geographic, time, and collaborative distribution of studies shows interesting patterns and trends that may be useful for better understanding the research landscape in the QVA and QVA-r use. These results contribute to academic knowledge and may channel future research and international collaborations in this specific area.

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