BULLYING IN HAZING PRACTICES: A STUDY ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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OVERVIEW

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1. INTRODUCTION

• A student’s entrance in higher education corresponds to a transition characterized by new challenges to individual development, both in the perspective of the building of the self as a person, as of the role of student.

• The academic hazing, promoted by different Academic Associations in the reception of new students, may become important as a way of integrating them in the new institution and as a way of making the creation of new relational dynamics easy, as well as a way of promoting a sense of belonging [3, 4, 5].
1. INTRODUCTION – Hazing

- The concept of hazing is a broad term that encompasses many activities, situations and actions that a person must tolerate in order to be part of a group [6].

- “Hazing is a broad group of traditions, rituals, ways and habits that are put into practice repeatedly in a community, academic or otherwise, over the years” [3].

- Hazing can play a facilitative role in the integration of the new students, contributing to their adaptation [3], provided that there is compliance with the rules of hazing, that one respects the will of the students to participate or not, and that situations involving humiliation, embarrassment or other forms of physical or psychological violence don’t occur [7].
1. INTRODUCTION – Hazing

Controversial topic that produces different reactions in the Portuguese student community

- *Study in a School of Health in Portugal* [5] – students, mostly tend to agree with the idea that the practice helps new students to meet and relate with colleagues and the institution of education through fun activities and a lively atmosphere. More than a third of respondents still seems to distance himself from that position by stating that the reception and integration of newcomers could render differently from the one practiced.
1. INTRODUCTION – Hazing

• Notwithstanding the testimony found on the positive effects of hazing, it may also be noted that there is indication of some hazing receptions to new students being based on power relations, inequality and coercion, raising fear of reprisal and triggering feelings of apprehension, anxiety and humiliation, thus hampering the transition and adaptation to higher education [4, 7, 9].

• Hazing may be a form of bullying in which "the victim often submits so they won’t be marginalized" [14] and which consequences are manifested at the level of "low self-esteem, low academic performance, school evasion, stress, anxiety and aggressiveness" [15], compromising their academic and social life.
1. INTRODUCTION – Hazing

- University, being an institution that rejects any practice associated with bullying or any behavior that harms the dignity of the students or reflects physical or psychological damage, offering legal procedures to eradicate these misconducts, has the duty to prevent any abusive hazing practice, outside or inside the premises, punishing those responsible according to their internal rules [16].

- **Present study** aimed to **know how the students of a Portuguese institution of higher learning** – the **University of the Azores** – **perceive bullying situations**, in order to obtain **useful knowledge that can contribute to more informed decisions by Governing Bodies of the University and the students' Association**, thus facilitating the **emergence of practices of reception and integration of new students**, favoring their **better adaptation to higher education**.
2. METHODOLOGY

- **DATA:** 247 students participated in this investigation of the 1st Cycle of Studies, in the University of the Azores, of both sexes, aged between 18 and 43 years (mean=21.66), from different years, courses and departments.

- **SAMPLING:** quota sampling (non-probabilistic) considering the variables (gender and department)

- **SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:** gender (male, female); age (variable coded into two categories: 20 years or less and more than 20 years); department of the university to which the course of the student is associated (coded into nine categories); year of the course the student attends (1st year, 2nd year and 3rd year).
2. METHODOLOGY

• **INSTRUMENT**: “Bullying Situations in Higher Education Hazing Practices Evaluation Scale” from Matos et al. [1], which assesses situations of bullying in the contexts of practices in university educational establishments. 15 items of self-response, in a Likert scale whose extreme positions are 1 "strongly disagree" and 5 "strongly agree“.

• **INSTRUMENT WAS APPLIED AND VALIDATED IN PORTUGAL**: factorial structure with three factors, with an explained variance of 63.19% a KMO of 0.905 and an internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha of 0.904. The first factor called "positive relationship with hazing“, the second factor, termed “negative relationship with hazing”, and the third factor, called the "social dimension“ [1].
2. METHODOLOGY

Table 1 – "Evaluation Scale of Bullying Situations Praxes in Higher Education" - distribution of items per factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There are rules for who hazes</td>
<td>F3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can talk about the hazing practices whenever I needed</td>
<td>F3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I'm glad when I'm hazed</td>
<td>F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can count on my family when I need</td>
<td>F3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I believe that the hazing practices contribute to my university integration</td>
<td>F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Those who hazed me liked me</td>
<td>F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I like to be hazed</td>
<td>F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I'm looking forward to the end of the hazing</td>
<td>F2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I like to participate in hazing</td>
<td>F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. They respected my desire to be or not to be hazed</td>
<td>F2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hazing contained some violence</td>
<td>F2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I was assaulted by acts or words</td>
<td>F2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Managed to cope well with hazing practices</td>
<td>F2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I was disgusted</td>
<td>F2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. My self-esteem was damaged</td>
<td>F2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same instrument was later applied in Brazil (n = 206), and its psychometric properties have been replicated (Cronbach's alpha = 0.707; factor analysis of the scale presented a KMO of 0.711), allowing the conclusion that the scale is valid for assessing the relationship between higher education students with hazing [8].
2. METHODOLOGY

• **VARIABLES**: are qualitative in the case of *sociodemographic characteristics* and are rated on a *nominal* scale and in the case of variables characterizing the items related to the "Evaluation of Situations of Bullying in Higher Education Hazing Practices" are on an *ordinal* scale.

• **STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES**:
  • 1) U Mann-Whitney test and the Kruskal-Wallis test, in order to verify if there are significant differences between groups.
  • 2) Spearman correlation coefficient was also used between the items on an ordinal scale, inquiring also whether or not this correlation is significant for the population.
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

• **Hazing as a form of welcoming new students**: slight prevalence (37.7%) of those who disagree over those who agree (30.4%) that the idea that *the activities practiced by hazers to new students contribute to the integration of the latter* (24.7% did not agree nor disagree; 7.3% did not answer).

• **Participation in hazing**: just over a third of respondents (35.6%) claims to have participated in hazing, having been registered a *slight supremacy of students who reported that they had not enjoyed the activities practiced* (38.7%) over those who reported liking them (32.4%) and over those who expressed indifference (28.8%) (10.3% did not comment on this topic).
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

• **Satisfaction at the participation in the practices** came mainly from the 1st year students (41.1%), followed by the 2nd (39.2%), the 3rd being the most distant (19.7%).

• Most students said they did not see hazing as a form of violence (92.8%) and in an intra-group analysis it is observed that this opinion was tendentiously more marked among young men (95.2%) than among young women (91.4%).

• Globally young men are the ones who are inclined to agree and adhere to the practices [8], and regarding the perception of the practice as not threatening or violent [5, 8].
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

• Little recognition of the initiatives that define hazing practices at the University of the Azores for the transition and adjustment of students to higher education and **poor adherence to proposed activities**. **Despite the prevailing opinion that they are not violent or coercive actions, their attractiveness is reduced.**

Table 2 - **Type of differences found between the sociodemographic variables and the factors of "Scale Evaluation of Situations Bullying in hazing practices on Higher Education"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociodemographic variables</th>
<th>Positive relationship with Hazing</th>
<th>Factors Negative relationship with Hazing</th>
<th>Social dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Significant differences</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>Significant differences</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Significant differences</td>
<td>Significant differences</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year attended</td>
<td>Significant differences</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Significant differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

• The "positive relationship with hazing" showed statistically significant differences considering the groups defined by gender (p = 0.001), age (p = 0.024), department (p = 0.002) and year of the course taken by students (p = 0.040).

• In the case of "negative relationship with hazing" there are only significant differences regarding the department (p = 0.020) to which the student is allocated, including the departments of Economics and Management and of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences.

• The “social dimension" only revealed significant differences taking into account the year of the course taken by students (p = 0.017), observing the overhang of 1 year (39.6%), followed by 2 years (34.0%) and 3 years (26.4%).
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 - Crossing items of factors 1, 2 and 3 of "Rating Scale of Bullying in hazing situations on Higher Education" with sociodemographic variables. Study of the significance of the relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Sociodemographic variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>There is no relation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Items of factor “positive relationship with hazing”:
  - the variable “sex” did not stand out as a differential;
  - differences occur significantly in terms of age in the case of items 5 \((p = 0.000)\), 6 \((p = 0.009)\), 7 \((p = 0.038)\), 9 \((p = 0.001)\) and 10 \((p = 0.021)\) in favor of younger students.
  - significant differences between some departments in the case of items 3 \((p = 0.041)\), 5 \((p = 0.014)\), 6 \((p = 0.009)\) and 9 \((p = 0.017)\); and between the years attended at the level of items 6 \((p = 0.027)\) and 10 \((p = 0.003)\), always in favor of the students in the area of health.

- Items of “negative relationship with hazing”:
  - significant differences between departments in items 8 \((p = 0.003)\) and 12 \((p = 0.028)\) in favor of the School of Nursing and the Department of Modern Languages and Literature.
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

• In the case of items of "social dimension“:
  - **significant differences** in item 4 \((p = 0.002)\) was verified between the years of the 1st cycle, having recorded the highest value in the 3rd year \((92.5\%)\) and the lowest value in the 2nd year \((82.3\%)\), which may suggest that it is when entering and leaving university that students perceive family support more strongly.

• One might think that students of the University of the Azores perceive hazing as a relatively sane event, though it doesn’t set high attractiveness.
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

• The correlation coefficient of Spearman, used to measure the intensity of the relations between the factors, informs that the correlations are significant ($\alpha = 0.01$), but relatively weak (positive versus negative relationship, $r_s = 0.213$ and $p = 0.002$; positive relationship versus social dimension, $r_s = 0.344$ and $p = 0.000$; negative relationship versus social dimension, $r_s = 0.249$ $p = 0.000$).

• The low intensity of the correlation ensures that the items that are the factors, although they concern a common idea, relate to relatively independent aspects, thereby allowing to capture a variety of facets on any constraints perceived by the university students.
References


References


