

## **Individual, racial, and social experiences with affirmative actions: a scoping review protocol**

**Experiências individuais, raciais e sociais com ações afirmativas: um protocolo de revisão de escopo**

**Experiencias individuales, raciales y sociales con acciones afirmativas: un protocolo de revisión del alcance**

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### **Abstract**

Affirmative action in Brazilian public universities have enabled the different social and ethnic/racial groups to coexist in higher education. One of the main concerns of this policy is the promotion of social equality. Even though there are some empirical studies on this topic, there is no scoping review on the experiences of students in this new reality. Our aim is to identify, analyze and synthesize the existing literature on the personal, social, and racial experiences of the public involved with affirmative action in Brazilian higher education. This scoping review protocol follows the Joanna Briggs Institute method and the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR). The PICo strategy (population, intervention, and context) systematized the search that we will carry out in January and February of 2022, in the Scielo, VHL – health, LILACS, VHL-PSI, EBSCO, APA/PsycNet, MEDLINE/PubMed databases, ProQuest-ERIC, Web of Science, Scopus, Embase (Elsevier). We will analyze the results quantitatively in terms of absolute and relative frequency and qualitatively through synthesis and thematic categories. This scoping review will synthesize the current literature and identify gaps in research and ways to advance the development or implementation of strategies that contribute to the success of the policy and promotion of students' mental health.

**Keywords:** Affirmative action; Ethnic-racial relations; Social integration; Higher education; Literature review.

### **Resumo**

Ações afirmativas nas universidades públicas brasileiras têm possibilitado a convivência de diferentes grupos sociais e étnico-raciais no ensino superior. Uma das principais preocupações desta política é a promoção da igualdade social. Embora existam alguns estudos empíricos sobre o tema, não há uma revisão de escopo sobre as experiências dos alunos nesta nova realidade. Nosso objetivo é identificar, analisar e sintetizar a literatura existente sobre as experiências individuais, sociais e raciais dos sujeitos envolvidos com as ações afirmativas no ensino superior brasileiro. Este protocolo de revisão de escopo segue o método Joanna Briggs Institute e as diretrizes dos itens de relatório preferidos para revisões sistemáticas e extensão de meta-análises para revisões de escopo (PRISMA-ScR). A estratégia PICo (população, intervenção e contexto) sistematizou a busca que realizaremos nos meses de janeiro e fevereiro de 2022, nas bases de dados Scielo, BVS - saúde, LILACS, BVS-PSI, EBSCO, APA / PsycNet, MEDLINE / PubMed, ProQuest-ERIC, Web of Science, Scopus, Embase (Elsevier). Analisaremos os resultados quantitativamente em termos de frequência absoluta e relativa e qualitativamente por meio de síntese e categorias temáticas. Esta análise de escopo sintetizará a literatura atual e identificará lacunas na pesquisa e maneiras de avançar no desenvolvimento e implementação de estratégias que contribuam para o sucesso da política e promoção da saúde mental dos estudantes.

**Palavras-chave:** Ação afirmativa; Relações étnico-raciais; Integração social; Ensino superior; Revisão de literatura.

## Resumen

Las acciones afirmativas en las universidades públicas brasileñas han permitido que los diferentes grupos sociales y étnicos / raciales coexistan en la educación superior. Una de las principales preocupaciones de esta política es la promoción de la igualdad social. Si bien existen algunos estudios empíricos sobre este tema, no existe una revisión de alcance sobre las experiencias de los estudiantes en esta nueva realidad. Nuestro objetivo es identificar, analizar y sintetizar la literatura existente sobre las experiencias personales, sociales y raciales del público involucrado con la acción afirmativa en la educación superior brasileña. Este protocolo de revisión de alcance sigue el método del Instituto Joanna Briggs y las pautas de los elementos de informes preferidos para revisiones sistemáticas y la extensión de metaanálisis para revisiones de alcance (PRISMA-ScR). La estrategia PICO (población, intervención y contexto) sistematizó la búsqueda que realizamos en enero y febrero de 2022, en las bases de datos Scielo, BVS - salud, LILACS, BVS-PSI, EBSCO, APA / PsycNet, MEDLINE / PubMed, ProQuest, -ERIC, Web of Science, Scopus, Embase (Elsevier). Analizamos los resultados cuantitativamente en términos de frecuencia absoluta y relativa y cualitativamente mediante síntesis y categorías temáticas. Esta revisión de alcance sintetizará la literatura actual e identificará brechas en la investigación y formas de avanzar en el desarrollo o implementación de estrategias que contribuyan al éxito de la política y promoción de la salud mental de los estudiantes.

**Palabras clave:** Acción afirmativa; Relaciones étnico-raciales; Integración social; Educación superior; Revisión de la literatura.

## 1. Introduction

In the educational context, the debate on inequalities in access to public higher education in Brazil culminated in the Law 12711/2012, known as the "Quota Law". This law has the aim of expanding both social and educational opportunities through the democratization of the access to public higher education (Souza et al., 2021). The law established the mandatory reservation of vacancies in all Public Higher Education for public high school students. In addition, it has a social aspect (low-income students), a racial/ethnic distinction (self-declared black, brown, and indigenous students), and for people with disabilities (Brasil, 2012).

The "Quota Law" has promoted heated discussions. The main criticisms are about the possible decrease in the quality of education due to the performance of the quota holder (Garcia & Jesus, 2015). There is also concern about the lack of equality in the criteria, which should consider only merit (Cunha, 2017), and the defense that social inclusion would be sufficient for racial inclusion (Haas & Linhares, 2012; Leite, 2012). However, some studies have already presented indicators of the effectiveness of this policy, even before the "Quota Law" (Vieira et al., 2019), and latter studies confirmed the same indicators such as good academic performance and low dropout of quota students (Feres Junior & Campos, 2016), social inclusion (Grisa et al., 2020; Noro & Moya, 2019), and especially racial inclusion (Senkevics & Mello, 2019).

These changes in the representation of some groups in higher education alter the cycle of inequality (Almeida, 2019; Ventura, 2021). Groups considered inferior or minor now occupy positions of power and privilege, being a way to strengthen racial/ethnic identities (Munanga, 2003, 2008). Thus, experiences provided by affirmative actions in higher education promote both social transformation, personal and subjective change of all those involved in the process: students, professors and the entire community.

As some studies point out, coexistence reduces prejudice and negative stereotypes (Rutland et al., 2010). This happens because of the construction of cooperative relationships and interaction between different groups. In this way, the social ascension of minority groups promotes the process of complexity of intergroup relations. These experiences constitute rich opportunities for personal and collective review about the normativity of the groups and the different beliefs about exclusion, justice, and equity (Souza et al., 2020).

Our interest is to expand the review based on academic issues. We will focus on studies that discuss the experiences and perceptions of the people involved in this policy. These points of view are fundamental for the development, consolidation, maintenance and improvement of public policies on affirmative actions. Thus, we propose this scoping review protocol. The aim is to map, analyze and synthesize publications related to the existing literature on personal, social and racial experiences of the

people involved with affirmative action in higher education in Brazil. This analysis will help in student permanence strategies, aiming at optimizing the social policy.

## 2. Methodology

To this end, the review will be conducted by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) (Peters et al., 2020). The choice to conduct a scoping review is because it is a systematic way of exploring existing evidence to a research area by identifying gaps, searching, selecting and synthesizing existing knowledge. Unlike systematic reviews, the research questions for a scoping review are broader and more exploratory, appropriate for this research, due to the lack of synthesized knowledge. One of the particularities of this method is that it does not aim to analyze the methodological quality of the studies, given that its goal is not to find the best scientific evidence, but rather to map the existing evidence (Tricco et al., 2016).

The review process will be guided by the five steps set out in the Joanna Briggs Institute (Peters et al., 2020) and Tricco et al. (2018) methodology for scoping reviews: (1) identification of the research question; (2) identification of relevant studies – January of 2022; (3) selection of studies – January of 2022; (4) data extraction – February of 2022; and (5) collection, summary and reporting of results – February of 2022. This scoping review protocol has been registered in the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/kmvc7/>).

### Step 1: Identify the research question

The research question will follow the recommendations of PRISMA-ScR (Tricco et al., 2018), being structured using the PICo (Patient, Intervention, and Context) strategy: What are the personal, social, and racial (I) experiences of the public involved (P) with affirmative action in Brazilian higher education (Co)?

### Step 2: Identify relevant studies

As the research theme is Brazilian educational affirmative actions, the following international and Brazilian electronic databases will be systematically searched: Scielo, BVS – health, LILACS, BVS-PSI, EBSCO, APA/PsycNet, MEDLINE/PubMed, ProQuest-ERIC, Web of Science, Scopus, Embase (Elsevier). Affirmative actions in public higher education became mandatory in 2012, therefore, the searches will be limited from January 2011 to the start date of this research. That is to ensure that the literature reflects the current context of this educational policy. The title, abstract and keyword fields will be searched using a combination of terms, using the Boolean operators 'AND' and 'OR', according to the specifications of each database. The search strategy combined MeSH (MEDLINE/PubMed), Thesaurus (APA-PsycInfo/Proquest-ERIC) and DeCS (BVS) terms, adjusted to other databases, as shown in Table 1. The terms will also be used in Portuguese.

**Table 1.** Database and Search Terms.

Database	MESH/DeCS	ERIC (Thesaurus)	APA (Thesaurus)
Scielo, BVS –saúde, BVS-PSI, LILACS, EBSCO; APA-PsycINFO, MEDLINE, ERIC, Web of Science, Scopus, Embase (Elsevier)	1 - "affirmative action" [Text Word] OR "public policy" [MeSH] OR Admission [All Fields] OR equality [All Fields] OR "minority groups" [MeSH]	"Affirmative Action" OR Quota OR "Admission Criteria" OR Equal OR "Reverse Discrimination" OR Opportunities OR Access OR "College Attendance"	"Affirmative Action" OR "Minority Groups" OR Equality
	2 – education [MeSH] OR students [MeSH] OR college [All Fields] OR universities [MeSH] OR Schools [MeSH]	Education OR Students OR College OR Universities OR School OR "Higher Education"	Education OR "Higher Education" OR Colleges OR Students
	3 – experience [All Fields] OR "perception" [MeSH Terms] OR "self-report" [MeSH Terms] OR "emotions" [MeSH Terms] OR "discrimination, psychological" [MeSH]	Experience OR Perception OR "Self-Report" OR "Emotional"	Experiences (Events) OR Perception OR Emotions
	4 - Brazil OR Brazilian	Brazil OR Brazilian	Brazil OR Brazilian
	Strategy (1) 1 AND 2 AND 3 AND 4 Strategy (2) 1 AND 2 AND 4		

Note. Scielo, Scientific Electronic Library Online; BVS-saúde, Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde; ; BVS-Psi, Biblioteca Virtual de Psicologia (Brasil); LILACS, Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature; EBSCO, Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal; APA-PsycNet, American Psychological Association, Psychology Information; MEDLINE, Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online; ERIC, Education Resources Information Center; EMBASE, Excerpta Medica Database; MESH MeSH, Medical Subject Headings; DeCS, Descritores em Ciências da Saúde (Health Science Descriptors).

Source: Authors.

Reference lists of included articles will also be reviewed to ensure that all relevant articles are included. Additional search strategies may be incorporated as the review progresses and any additions or changes will be documented. The search strategies will be conducted on January 07, 2022 and will be updated in February 2022 and is scheduled to be completed in March 2022. For the search, the following filters will be used: published full articles, peer-reviewed, published between 2011 and 2021.

### Step 3: Selection of studies

As for the study design, we will include qualitative and quantitative studies that investigate the experiences of the individuals involved with affirmative actions in higher education. However, we will exclude theoretical studies that analyze the policy of affirmative action (implementation, legislation, assumptions) or review studies that analyze academic performance and data on evasion and enrollment, without explicitly investigating these experiences. The inclusion and exclusion criteria, following the PICo strategy are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

PICo	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
P - Population	Professors, students, administrative technicians, groups such as NGOs and those working in public higher education, of both sexes and of any age	Professors, students, administrative technicians and groups of basic education, private university, postgraduate courses and indigenous people.
I - Intervention	Reports of experiences or perceptions, individual, social and racial	Studies without the explicit investigation of experiences or perceptions
Co - Context	Affirmative actions of university education in Brazil	Affirmative action of policies, work, another country
S – Study design	Quantitative and Qualitative studies	Theoretical and review studies of the policy of affirmative action or data of academic development and the gray literature
Language	English, Portuguese, and Spanish	Other languages

Source: Authors.

In order to file, organize and select articles after the search, all identified citations will be managed by the bibliographic software Mendeley Reference Manager (<https://www.mendeley.com/search/>). The selection of potentially eligible publications will follow the following process:

a) Studies' titles and abstracts will be screened according to the selection criteria and will be categorized as 'include', 'exclude' or 'uncertain '

b) Full articles will be evaluated according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the reason for exclusion must be documented. This process will be carried out by two researchers independently and when there is disagreement, it will be resolved by discussion between the researchers and a third researcher will be called in for review. In order to measure the agreement between researchers at each screening stage, Cohen's kappa will be used. The study selection process will be reported using the PRISMA-ScR checklist items (Tricco et al., 2018).

#### **Step 4: Data extraction**

Data extraction should present information about the study that aligns with the aim and questions of the review. Appropriate data from eligible studies will be extracted using a custom data extraction spreadsheet. If necessary, the categories will be modified and the extraction spreadsheet revised. According to the research question for this review, the following data will be extracted:

a) Study identification: Article title; journal title; impact factor; authors; country of study; language; year of publication; study host institution (community, hospital, university, research center, multicenter); conflict of interest and funding source;

b) Methodological characteristics: study design; aim, research question or hypothesis; sample characteristics (sample size, age, ethnicity, groups, recruitment methods), measures used, statistical analysis, adjustments;

c) Main findings and implications: themes/categories, differences between groups, investigated characteristic;

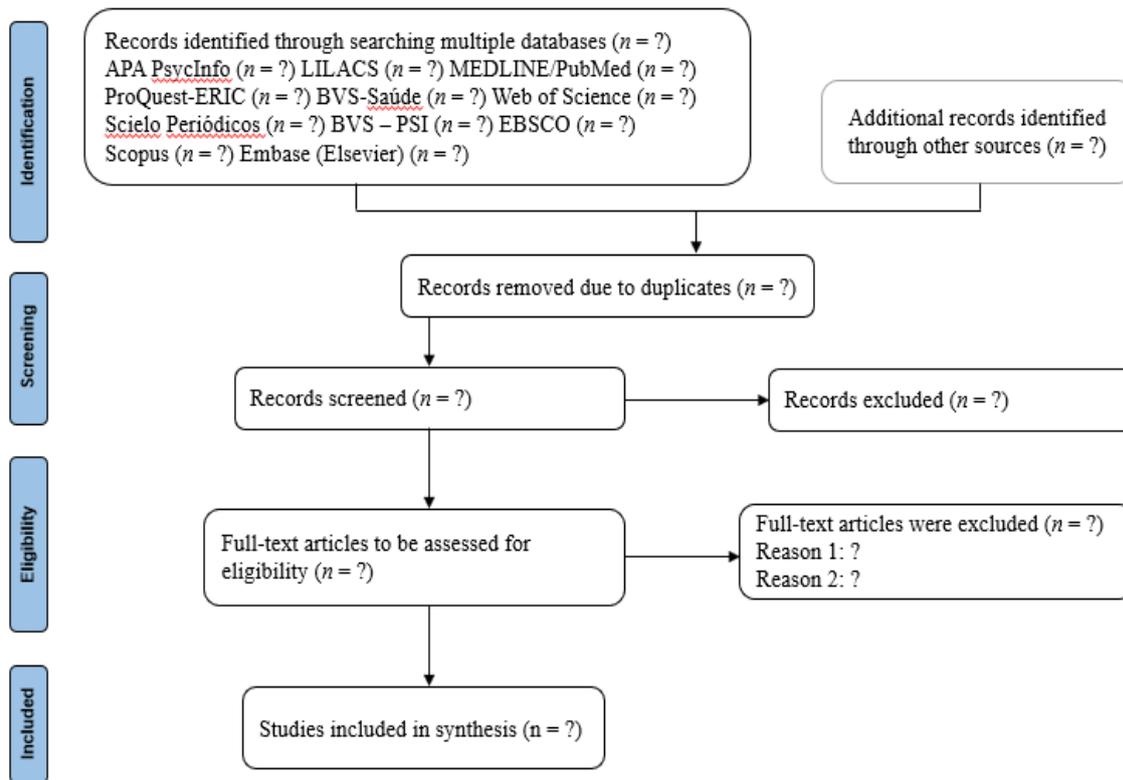
d) Conclusions: recommendations and limitations.

To reduce possible selection and analysis biases, the data will be extracted by two researchers separately and independently, and when there is disagreement, the article will be submitted to a third researcher. Cohen's kappa will be used to measure the agreement between the researchers. The included studies will be systematized and managed in the Mendeley Reference Manager bibliographic software.

#### **Step 5: Collect, Summarize and Report the Results**

The risk of bias will not be assessed, as proposed by PRISMA-ScR (Tricco et al., 2018), because the scoping review aims to provide an overview of the existing literature and not to critically evaluate the included articles. However, we will include in the discussions the limitations found in the included studies. The screening process will be visualized through a flow diagram, as presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** PRISMA-ScR flow diagram.



Source: Tricco et al. (2018). Adapted by the authors.

### 3. Results

The results will be summarized quantitatively and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with support from the JAMOVI 2.2.2 Software and qualitatively by a meta-synthesis. Given the exploratory nature of this study, any factors related to experiences, perceptions, behaviors will be considered for review. Both facilitators and barriers reported in affirmative action experiences will be considered. The discussion will be structured based on the themes that emerge from the review.

### Ethics and dissemination

As this scoping review is intended to synthesize the current breadth of knowledge on the experiences of college students, no ethics approval is required. The results of this review will be disseminated through publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

### 4. Discussion

One of the strengths of the proposed scoping review is to apply a reproducible and transparent procedure. In this protocol, we describe the types of studies, participants, intervention/exposure, and outcomes that will be considered according to the research question, as well as the data sources, search strategy, data extraction methods, and data synthesis (Silagy, Middleton, & Hopewell, 2002). By publishing this research protocol, we reinforce the clarity of the strategy and reduce the risk of bias, in other words, selective reporting of results (Silagy et al., 2002).

Potential limitations of this scoping review may include the heterogeneity of the studies, as well as the failure to perform methodological bias assessment. This is due to the exploratory nature of scoping reviews, which may influence external validity.

The results of this study will aid in the current knowledge about the experiences of people involved in affirmative actions in Brazilian higher education. As far as we know, this scoping review protocol is the first on this topic and will identify

the main themes and gaps in understanding how those involved in social policy experience or perceive this reality. The results can inform future research, such as the qualitative exploration of how facilitators and barriers are experienced in the academic context. They may also assist in systematic reviews on specific interventions or strategies that may be effective in improving student-friendliness.

By identifying alternative strategies that help coexistence and permanence, educational managers can focus on specific programs. Including the perspectives of students, professors, and other people directly involved with this policy helps to find the cultural influences that impact inclusion or exclusion behaviors in the academic world. This is a significant consideration both due to the dropout rates and academic performance verified in some courses, as well as the guarantee of representation of diverse populations in Brazilian public higher education and promoting the well-being of those involved.

## 5. Final Considerations

In sum, this literature synthesis supports the development of evidence-based practices regarding the experiences of subjects involved with affirmative action in seeking quality education. It also provides support strategies that recognize the needs of diverse groups and promote coexistence, seen as essential for the success of the policy and promotion of students' mental health.

We emphasize that this research does not exhaust the theme of the study, and that further studies are possible. For the purpose of further explanation of the theme addressed in this study, we suggest further qualitative studies on the experiences of the subjects in universities.

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