Interdisciplinary academic league of mental health: expanding the formation and the practice in the field of psychosocial care

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ABSTRACT

**Basis:** The interdisciplinary academic league of mental health (LAISME in Brazilian Portuguese) constitutes a place of knowledge and critical reflection in the area of mental health that aims to expand the formation and the practice of psychosocial care. **Objective:** To report the experience of bachelor students in the creation, organization, and accomplishment of activities through a league of mental health as a strategy to expand the knowledge about the psychosocial care area. **Method:** it is a descriptive study developed through reporting experiences of a mental health league from a public university in the northeast of Brazil, in the period from 2016 to 2019. **Result:** From the developed activities, the league benefited broader learning and closeness with the scenarios and actors of the mental health, besides enabling the development of abilities as the scientific production, the events’ organization, the work along with the community in actions of health-promoting. **Conclusion:** the experience of integrating the LAISME provided to the students a broader closeness with the psychosocial care area, besides benefiting the development of abilities in the development of events and teamwork. It is important to stress the importance of encouraging strategies as the academic leagues as a way of establishing learning experiences, research, and extension of interdisciplinary coexistence.

**Key words:** Mental health, Mental health services, College education, Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The academic leagues are known as non-profit students’ entities, associated with Universities (IES in Brazilian Portuguese) which have the support or coordination of professors or professionals of the institution. They can be constituted from diverse forms: by the professional category, destined to students of a specific course; by a specificity, within some professional categories; or broader, being from a general area of knowledge, having the participation of students from several courses and professional categories, which is the case of the Interdisciplinary Academic League of Mental Health¹.

These leagues constitute an option for the students to deepen their knowledge in regards to determining themes and as a strategy to develop several practice activities in determined areas of knowledge. These activities developed by the league are in general classes or courses of qualification and are verified by several professors or professionals, which dominate or perform in the area of interest of the academic league. Some of the leagues benefit from the accomplishment of practice in the assistance of several health care services, besides contributing to the development of researches and actions in the community².

By being an extracurricular activity, the academic leagues host in its objectives the theory discussion, practice, and research about the proposed theme in an inseparable way in order to complement the curricular learning. In the development of several activities of these areas, the student benefits from the professional and interdisciplinary experience that is essential to the
Complementary formation through the Interdisciplinary academic league of Mental Health

Scenarios that form their learning context, especially in mental health while contributing to the assistance in this area. The motivation to participate in an Academic League may emerge from several factors. It can be a curiosity to know or to get closer to determining subjects. The motivation can be in order to deepen the knowledge of some themes, by the opportunity of practice in health assistance, or even by the little emphasis and deepening in determining areas in the subjects and bachelor’s courses, which allows that the student complements its formation through activities developed in the league, providing new experiences.

Besides all opportunities that the leagues may provide to the students, they can be places for the students to practice teamwork, respect, leadership, problem-solving, and broader contributions to the academic field. Examples are the execution of events, seminars, in order to discuss with the academic community and in general, the issues that have been debated in the course of the developed activities.

One of the areas little explored in the majority of the bachelor’s courses is mental health. This motivates the students from several universities to participate in academic leagues, extension projects, events, or courses as a way of closeness or deepening in the theme and guarantee a broader practice and knowledge about the care to the people who need this kind of attention.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to report the experience of bachelors in the creation, organization, and accomplishment of activities through a mental health league as a strategy of expanding the knowledge about the psychosocial care area.

METHODS

It is a descriptive study with experience reports, which benefits the reflections about the practice and perceptions developed in the professional and academic sphere, above all in the context of interdisciplinary experience at SUS. In addition to the reports, we utilized information about the league.

The present study brings information about the creation, organization, and actions developed by the Interdisciplinary Academic League of Mental Health (LAISME). A non-profit student’s entity, associated with the Pro-Rectory of Extension (PROEX in Brazilian Portuguese) of a University in the Brazilian Northeast, and that has the aim to promote activities and actions of bachelor’s extension in the Mental Health and Psychosocial care area in the perspective of Psychiatric reform and having as a referential the public policies of health and education.

The league provides annually twenty vacancies to students, which happens from the participation of the student in the introductory course and subsequently in the selection test, in which the students with higher punctuation become members. Students of health area courses of the university and/or similar areas that belong to the institution and other institutions of superior education from Alagoas can fill the spots of the LAISME.

The members also take part in education actions in health at schools and institutions; they also visit the mental health services, besides the events that are performed by the LAISME in the year, like seminars, meetings, symposiums in the celebration dates as in the anti-asylum movement, yellow September, worldwide mental health, among others.

The student that attends the league remains twelve months, he/she had to follow the remaining rules and development of activities to remain as a member. After twelve months, the members receive certification for the time they dedicated to the league and new members are select for the next twelve months. For receiving the certification, the participants need to achieve 75% of attendance in the league’s activities along the twelve months.

The materials utilized by the LAISME in its meeting and activities are materials of the University or bought through fundraising events by the league. The LAISME has the support of health institutions, non-profitable institutions, and other leagues to develop of its activities and actions. The meeting records, the projects and the reports of the developed events as well...
as other registration instruments of the activities of the league are part of the data source in the construction of this report, the materials were classified in chronological order and from constant reading, we established the principal topics described in the study.

RESULT

The creation of LAISME

The LAISME came up through the interest of the University students to know more about the Mental Health and Psychosocial area. The creation of the league allowed the members to have a broader contact with the themes along with their learning at the university. In some courses, mental health is a short subject or an integrated topic in other subjects and it barely includes the relevance of the work developed and the existing policies about the services, the work and mental health care. The opening of the league approximated the students to the professionals of the area and expanded the horizons about the formation in this theme.

LAISME was founded in July of 2016, through the creation of its regulation and registration in the pro-rector of extension, having as member’s directors and student founders from the course of nursing, medicine, occupational therapy and phonoaudiology. The first event performed by LAISME was the I Introductory course, which happened in November of 2016, with the theme “The Interdisciplinary care in the child mental health”. It started in the cycle of 2016-2017 of the league, with ninety-nine people among students and professionals of several areas and formations, which attended and acclaimed the event, initiating the LAISME. The event had the intention to have an interesting theme for everybody, mainly the students of the universities; since it was through the course, the selection of new members for the league was performed.

Figure 1: Logotype used by the Interdisciplinary Academic League of Mental Health

Source: https://www.instagram.com/laismeuncisal/.

After the introductory course, the LAISME organized the selection test for the students that would be part of the new members of the league. The test was also taken in November 2016, offering 20 vacancies for students from all areas. Through the first test, we selected students from the courses of nursing, phonoaudiology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychology, medicine, social service, law, social communication/journalism, and biology. The students spent a year developing activities and actions for the league. The LAISME cares about the interdisciplinary formation and it comprehends that working in mental health demands the contribution of several health professionals and other areas that carry out an important role in mental health care.

Organization of the league and developed actions

After selecting new members, along with the directors (founder members), we started to articulate to organize and carry out several activities in the league. The activities started in February 2017 along with the scientific meetings.

In the year 2017, we performed 10 scientific meetings, one each month, in which the members had the participation of professors and health professionals that taught classes, workshops,
and pieces of training about the most diverse themes in mental health. The themes were Psychiatric Reform, Public Policies in Mental Health, Mental Health in Basic Care, matrix-based in mental health, substance dependency, population at the streets, reduction of damage, Psychosocial Care network, Psychosocial care centers, Mental Disorders, Self-care practice, integrative and complementary practices, among others.

Besides professionals and professors, some meetings, organized and managed by the league’s members, benefited the autonomy of its students in the interaction and construction of knowledge.

**Chart 1: Number of members of LAISME per graduation course and cycle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of member’s course</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cycle 2017-2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cycle 2018-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Biology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Communication/Journalism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Laws</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Nursing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Physiotherapy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Audiophonology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Psychology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Social Service</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Occupational Therapy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elaborated by the authors, 2020

The league also carried out 2017 a technical visit to a Teaching Hospital of Psychiatric Care in the state, which belongs to the University. The aim of the visit was that the members could know the psychiatric assistance of the hospital to make it possible to compare the psychiatric area. The psychiatric hospital is located in the assistance center along with the care of the services after the psychiatric reform that recommends the care within the community, as it is examples the Psychosocial Care Centers (CAPS). The visit was an enriching moment that provided the students a moment of reflection about the two assistance models to the person with mental disorders.

Along the cycle of 2017-2018, the LAISME was also the protagonist of several mental health events in the state. In the year 2017, we carried out three events: the *I conference of Mental health, Human Rights, and The anti-asylum project*, which alluded to May 18, the National day of Anti-Asylum Project. The second one was the *I Conference about Suicide Prevention*, which happened to discuss the issues about suicide during the Yellow September. At last, the *I Symposium of Worldwide Mental Health Day*, in which the aim was to bring the perception of self-care for everybody, comprehending that there are several internal and external factors, which can lead any person to develop a mental disorder.

All the members of the league performed the organization of these events. All the members participated in the whole process for each event, with the dissemination activities, fundraising, inviting speakers, establishing communication with the external community that wanted to be part of the events, with the ergonomics of the events places and several activities. These events allowed the students to practice the work team, besides inserting them in several scenarios that provided them with personal and collective abilities.

The league members also took part in several local, regional, and national events, taking the experience of the league to the events while presenting scientific papers. Members presented papers in the first Congress of Mental Health of the state; they formed a round-table discussion about the extension in mental health. In the *VII Academic Congress* of the University, in which the members had the opportunity to make presentations about developed activities by the league; in the *IV Brazi-
lian Congress about Mental Health and substance dependency, in João Pessoa, a large group of the team participated and presented scientific papers. This participation of the league in other activities and events contributes for the students to share their experiences in the league and comprehend the perception of other students about the area, benefiting an enriching exchange of knowledge.

Chart 1: Events performed by LAISME from 2016 to 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eventos realizados pela LAISME</th>
<th>Ano</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Introductory Course of LAISME</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Conference about Mental health, Human Rights and Anti-Asylum movement</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Conference about Suicide Prevention</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Symposium of the Worldwide Mental Health Day</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Introductory Course of LAISME</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Conference about Mental Health, Human Rights and Anti-Asylum movement</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Conference about Suicide Prevention</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Symposium of the Worldwide Mental Health Day</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Conference of Mental Health Nursing</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Introductory Course of LAISME and III Conference about Suicide Prevention</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: elaborated by the authors, 2020.

The LAISME also performed some activities and meetings with other leagues of UNCISAL, such as the Academic League of the Health Education (LAEDES in Brazilian Portuguese) and the Academic League of Public Health (LASP in Brazilian Portuguese). This interaction with other leagues from the institution reinforces the integral speech that the Health System (SUS in Brazil) recommends that all must be involved in promoting health.

After the conclusion of the cycle 2017-2018, some founder members and directors decided to quit the activities of LAISME, which lead the management to select, within the new members, some of them to be part of the director members that are responsible for all the organization and administration of the activities of LAISME. At the end of the cycle, the other members received a certification for the time they stayed and contributed to the activities of the league. This period with the students benefited the progression of both parts, both for the directors and the members who worked for a year and contributed to the development of the LAISME events.

At the beginning of 2018, the league started planning the schedule for the activities of the cycle from 2018 to 2019. They initiated the organization of the II Introductory Course in May of 2018 with the theme “Actual Overview of Mental Health: Where are we heading?” to perform a new selection exam for other students to become part of the league and to contribute with new activities, actions, and events. The selection exam was performed in May of 2018 and it selected students of the following courses: Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Medicine, Social Service, and Psychology. In June of 2018, the members of LAISME took part in the 2nd Congress of Mental Health, presenting papers.

Figure 2: Members of LAISME. On the left are the members from the cycle of 2017-2018 and on the left are the members from the cycle of 2018-2019.

Source: archive of the authors, 2020.
The new cycle activities started in July of 2018, with the collaboration of all the new members for the planning of the news cycle. Along the year 2018, with the collaboration of the management team and the members, the second editions of the events of the LAISME happened.

In 2019, besides the events, the league organized the first edition of the Nursing Conference in Mental Health, especially for students and nurses, technicians, and nursing auxiliaries. Besides, the members and the management team contributed and took part in the 3rd Alagoas Congress of Mental health, through paper presentations and conferences.

Along the three years of the league’s existence, we performed several activities, actions, and events that provided the students, the founders, and those who worked for the league during the cycles contact with professionals and public health services. We also provided contact with other students from several institutions for the exchange of experience, allowing the autonomy of the students in several scenarios, stimulating interdisciplinary teamwork.

DISCUSSION

The creation, organization, and development of the actions through LAISME, while complimentary activity and parallel to the curriculum activities of the graduation created the opportunity of a broader contact with the area. It made possible the teaching and research development, implementing extension actions, and it promoted the establishment of connection among the students, professors, professionals, and the community, it allowed a scenario of integration and further development about the Psychiatric Reform and its basis, as it contributed for the permanent education and the consolidation and encouragement of the interdisciplinary teamwork.

Organizing the events developed by LAISME was a challenge for all people involved, for the necessity of knowing about the assistance in mental health and the assistance in the city. For this purpose, the students got in touch with professors and professionals to learn the main subjects, which could be discussed in the event, this was an opportunity to invite these professionals and professors to present some content with the members of the league.

Before so many changes that are part of the health formation, the extension activities are great opportunities to contribute in a meaningful way in the curricular complementation of the students.

From the formal point of view in the health area, there is a clear effort to modify the traditional model of organization care to the user and the community, historically centered on the disease and the hospital service. It was for the search of reaching this transforming profile that the several university courses of this area changed their national curricular guidelines (DNC in Brazilian Portuguese), proposed changes to the formation models, with the perspective of approximating the professional’s health skills profile to the necessities of the services, of the communities and the work processes.

It is in this sense that the actual DCNs of the courses of the health area discusses a curricular reformulation based on the most frequent health needs of the community, suggesting the development of attitudes focused on community agreements and valuing methodologies that benefit the integration among the teaching, the research, the extension, and assistance.

Some authors warn about the necessity of promoting teaching, research, and extension practices at the universities, which can benefit new attitudes of the future professionals in regards to mental health assistance. Before these reflections, we realize the importance of adopting different formation courses and of the autonomy of the active and complementary methodologies in the construction of the teaching and learning process of the future health professionals, which is the case of the leagues’ constitution, like the Interdisciplinary Mental Health League quoted here.

Other authors emphasized the importance of the academic leagues for the formation in health, focusing on the professional qualification and the expansion of the look about the care process benefitted with the practice of these
groups – quality so much needed to the Mental Health work.

The proposal of contributing with the approximation of the bachelors with the mental health area, an area that has not been explored as a work field by the professors of the mental health area, is explored by the league. This aspect is shared by some authors\cite{13} that affirm the participation of the students in academic leagues increases the interest of the students in the area, making the students closer with the reality and with the developed functions by the professionals in their areas of practice.

The motivation to the active interaction with the community, the reinforcement of the formation with the social needs, the implementation of didactic activities aiming to develop the creativity, the self-learning, and the criticality of the scientific were aspects developed along with the actions of LAISME.

LAISME benefitted broader learning and closeness of the students of several health courses and related areas, with practical performances and experiences in the mental health area. Besides, it provided linked relationships and knowledge about compounds of the region’s psychosocial care, the development of skills with scientific production and the organization of events, and the work with the community to promote health.

These several opportunities are responsible for the development of new skills, by other authors\cite{3}. These authors reinforce that the leagues are not limit to deepen the knowledge in a specific area, valuing the academic and personal formation and contributions to the society, either by offering a more capable professional to the service, or for the development of actions to promote health and social transformations executed by the academic leagues.

The mental health area is known to be one of the branches with more rooted prejudice formulated by the community. A study\cite{14} performed with participant students of an extension in mental health demonstrated that the participation of the students contributed to the deconstruction and reformulation of the formulated concepts until the first contact with mentally ill people and their families, which expanded the knowledge of the participants in the area. Following the same perspective, the activities of LAISME also were opportunities to a new conception of mental health and assistance in this work field, discussing political-based approaches to the organization of the care network.

The approaches of Mental Health and Psychosocial Attention based on the Psychiatric Reform with the referential of public policies of restructuring of the mental health assistance network in the health systems of Brazil discussed by the league are coherent to what some authors discuss. They talk about the importance of the professional formation, reorientation of attitudes, and reorganization of the formation process in health for establishing political, ideological principles that are part of the anti-asylum movement ideology\cite{15,16}.

It is known that the several mental health assistances at RAPS from SUS are also responsible for the formation of several students and professionals, mainly from the health area and other areas, qualifying people to work, to the assistance and the care of mentally ill people\cite{16,17}.

These services have teams composed of professionals from several areas, acting through the perspective of inter-branch professions and interdisciplinary, allowing the students to have opportunities of practicing, either with extension projects or classes, to expand the development of knowledge in the area of mental health, mainly in the inter-branch professions\cite{18,19}.

Besides, the interdisciplinary perspective of the league is a benefit for the reason it allows the integration of several university courses in the health area. It allowed the students to obtain the practical knowledge of concepts as the responsibility of care, the range of the human being, the importance of forming teams, health promotion, the necessity of creating therapeutic connections, and the assistance integrality.

Likewise, we mention the contribution of the early contact with the professionals that integrate the multi-professional team of RAPS, responsible for benefiting the exchange of knowledge of the students with the team about the functions and activities developed and the contact with the structure of RAPS.
CONCLUSION

In other more analytical studies, we will verify the perception of the students, professionals, and the community that received the developed actions of the league, in an attempt to verify the impact of this attitude for the academic formation, benefits generated for the society and others.

The contributions from the experiences here reported reinforce the importance of the universities and their triad teaching-research-extension and more specifically, the extension in mental health, since as demonstrated, it brings considerable contributions for the students and the involved community, being the mediator of a quality and complementary formation in mental health connected to the precepts of the contemporary health formation.

One limitation of the study was the short availability of publications in the last five years about the theme to enrich and expand the paper discussion. The developed activities have added value to the formation of future professionals of health and mental health, with overcome paradigms and skills that only the teaching in the classroom would be able to deliberate.

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