

# Indigenous university students in the first semester of the Covid-19 pandemic: experiences in a student housing

Indígenas universitários no primeiro semestre da pandemia de Covid-19: experiências em uma moradia estudantil (resumo: p. 17)

Indígenas universitarios en el primer semestre de la pandemia de Covid-19: experiencias en una residencia estudiantil (resumen: p. 17)

Raniel Martinha de Souza<sup>(a)</sup>

<ranielsouza@estudante.ufscar.br> 

Willian Fernandes Luna<sup>(b)</sup>

<willianluna@gmail.com> 

Iraí Maria de Campos Teixeira<sup>(c)</sup>

<irai@ufscar.br> 

<sup>(a)</sup> Graduando do curso de Medicina, Departamento de Medicina, Universidade Federal de São Carlos (Ufscar). Rodovia Washington Luis, km 235. São Carlos, SP, Brasil. 13565-905.

<sup>(b)</sup> Departamento de Medicina, Ufscar. São Carlos, SP, Brasil.

<sup>(c)</sup> Departamento de Metodologia de Ensino, Ufscar. São Carlos, SP, Brasil.

The article describes the experiences of indigenous university students who lived in a student housing during the period of increased social distancing in the first half of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a qualitative research, using a field diary, documental survey and interviews. Thematic content analysis was carried out, from the perspective of limit-situation and unpublished-feasible concepts and resilience. Two categories were identified: suffering in the context of social distancing and strategies for overcoming difficulties. They experienced uncertainties and limits brought about by the pandemic, fears of being distant and illnesses. As confrontations, adaptations emerged in teaching, research and extension, individual resilience beyond academic activity and sought possible collective strategies towards resilience and deconstruction of stereotyped and romanticized views in the academic environment.

**Keyword:** Health of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples. Student health. Covid-19. Physical distancing.



## Introduction

Affirmative Action in universities involves investing in the deconstruction of asymmetries in access and permanence for the customarily excluded, such as people on low incomes, blacks, indigenous people and people with disabilities<sup>1</sup>. The affirmation of citizenship rights requires freedom and equality so that they represent the concrete possibility of equal treatment and opportunities, taking into account the various historical conditions to which subjects are subjected<sup>1,2</sup>.

A system of reserved quota places for indigenous people on undergraduate courses is in place at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), since 2008. Self-declared members of anyone of the indigenous peoples of Brazilian territory and with ties to their community of origin can apply, through a specific selection process, for an additional place on the 64 face-to-face undergraduate courses.

In 2020, in light of the worldwide pandemic, UFSCar adopted measures to prevent Covid-19, an infectious disease caused by the SARS-COV-2 virus. Its high virulence, coupled with the lack of an effective treatment for the disease, led to the adoption of emergency preventive measures capable of protecting health, such as extended social distancing (ESD)<sup>3</sup>. Thus, from the second half of March, all physical and face-to-face activities were suspended indefinitely.

In that context, UFSCar had 218 indigenous university students enrolled on its four campuses, 166 of them in the municipality of São Carlos, 96 of whom lived in the institution's student housing, located on campus. Some of the indigenous students returned to their places of origin with institutional help. However, some remained in the student housing.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, situations of vulnerability of indigenous peoples in Brazil have become evident, since due to the complexity of socio-historical issues, different groups have accessed and experienced situations in unequal ways, with issues relating to gender, race, color, ethnicity and economic condition being relevant<sup>4</sup>.

In this way, approaching the experiences of indigenous people during that period means recognizing moments that can be related to Paulo Freire's concept of limit-situations, in other words, challenging and problematic situations that were being experienced at the time<sup>5</sup>. Overcoming limit-situations occurs through limit acts, which are understood as necessary responses that reflect the protagonism of the subjects in relation to the world. Thus, when subjects clearly perceive the challenges of limit situations, they feel mobilized to act and discover the unprecedented-feasible<sup>5</sup>.

In the same vein, Gersem Baniwa's understanding of resilience among indigenous peoples brings this active, creative and reactive stance by refusing to be passive victims, in the name of their protagonism, their autonomy and recognizing possible paths in the face of problems<sup>6</sup>.



It's worth pointing out that Brazil's indigenous context has a diversity of peoples, with 305 ethnic groups speaking 274 languages, with unique ways of organizing themselves and living. In addition, the violence and violations suffered over time expose situations of vulnerability and are threats to the physical, mental and social health of these populations, which has been accentuated during the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, the issues directly related to the Covid-19 pandemic, such as the ESD situation triggered by prevention measures, added to the situation experienced by indigenous peoples in Brazil, bringing up repercussions for indigenous people living in student housing. This is how the research referred in this article was developed, in an attempt to understand the experiences of these students during the first semester of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Method

This is qualitative research, investigating the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes that correspond to a deeper space of relationships, processes and phenomena<sup>8</sup>.

We used Larrosa's concept of experience, understanding it as "what passes through us, what happens to us, what touches us" (p. 21), generating transformation in those who live it<sup>9</sup>.

The aim was to understand the experiences of the indigenous university students who, from March to September 2020, stayed in student housing at UFSCar - São Carlos, i.e. the first six months of ESD, and are referred to in this article as "residents". This period was defined for three reasons: it was the first semester of the Covid-19 pandemic and of intense application of the ESD; there were no curricular activities for most of the undergraduate courses; there was a greater flow of residents from October onwards due to the flexibilization of the ESD.

The research was carried out by one of the residents, the first author of this article and a student on the Medicine course, and two faculty members.

The construction of the data used three strategies: Field diary; Mapping of residents and Individual interviews.

## Field diary

Built by the student-researcher, describes personal reflections, as well as experiences, perceptions, expectations and relationships established with the research participants<sup>10</sup>.

As a resident and part of the group being studied, the initial stage involved observing the daily life in which the researchers were inserted, as well as taking notes on what was experienced. As such, the researcher was in the field at all times, recording everyday experiences by writing, looking and walking<sup>10,11</sup>. An ethnographic perspective was used in the careful observations made and in the writing about daily life in student housing<sup>11</sup>.



The material from the field diary was incorporated into the description of what was experienced by the residents and is present in the categories of analysis.

## Mapping the residents

Documents were collected from the Center for Indigenous Culture (CCI) and the Department of Student Assistance (DEAE), mapping that of the total of 96 indigenous students who lived in the house, 27 remained during the period.

## Individual interviews

The participants in the interviews were defined by convenience. The student-researcher contacted the closest residents via messaging app and, starting with the first, invited others to take part.

The interviews were semi-structured, with the possibility of deepening understandings based on the answers provided by the interviewees to the questions in the pre-established script<sup>8</sup>.

The inclusion criteria were: undergraduate student at UFSCar; indigenous; having stayed in student housing from March to September 2020. Exclusion criteria: under 18 years of age. After accepting the invitation, they were presented with the Informed Consent Form and asked to fill in a questionnaire about their profile.

A total of 12 interviews were carried out until the point of saturation was reached when the new interviewees began to repeat the content already obtained in previous interviews, without adding any new information<sup>8</sup>.

The student-researcher conducted the interviews on a digital platform in October and November 2020 and transcribed them. The participants were identified by bird names, as the student-researcher is from the Tikuna people and is part of the air clan or mutum clan. Thus, the proper names among the Tikuna of the air clan refer to birds, their characteristics and actions. The Tikuna people also have the fire, earth and water clans.

Therefore, naming the residents taking part in the research after birds in the Tikuna language sought to value their ancestry and bring them closer together as relatives. Even though they are from different peoples, when the indigenous people arrive at the university they treat each other as relatives, showing their collectivity and common struggle for rights, similar to the indigenous movement<sup>12</sup>.

Eight men were interviewed, three women and one who preferred not to identify gender. They were studying for degrees in: social sciences, chemical engineering, image and sound, mechanical engineering, computer science, librarian science, computer engineering, pedagogy, special education, gerontology, psychology and physical education. They were part of the Tukano, Tariano, Piratapuia, Baré, Pankará, Dessana and Pankararu peoples.



The study carried out thematic content analysis<sup>8</sup>, ordering, breaking down and drawing up an interpretative synthesis, allowing the axes identified to be dialogued with the residents' experiences. Cores of meaning were identified, which made up two categories: suffering in the context of social distancing and strategies for overcoming difficulties.

We used the theoretical frameworks of Popular Education, in particular Freire's limit-situations and the unprecedented-feasible<sup>5</sup>, and Indigenous Education, focusing on the Baniwa concept of resilience<sup>6</sup>.

This research was cleared by the National Research Ethics Committee, under CAAE: 36234020.0.0000.5504.

## Results and discussions

### Category 1 - Suffering in the context of social distancing

Three core meanings were used to describe this category: uncertainties and limits brought on by the pandemic; fears due to the distances; illness.

The beginning of the pandemic brought a context of uncertainty and contact with a situation never before experienced by this generation. Little was known about the disease, its complications, forms of control and treatment. In this sense, some groups have been even more impacted by Covid-19, such as Brazil's indigenous peoples.

Due to social inequalities and their ethnic, social and cultural diversity, the indigenous population has faced additional challenges in containing the pandemic and the problems it has caused<sup>13</sup>, and these issues were also observed in this investigation when analyzing the experiences of indigenous people who stayed in student housing.

Thus, the residents reported difficulties when experiencing moments of uncertainty, recognizing the problems and suffering they caused:

Nobody expected [...] Nobody wants something like this to happen, right? And as soon as you arrive on vacation, when you're excited to study, you're in a state of excitement. [...] My sister sent me a message. It had already started... classes at the Federal University were on their second day, Friday. [...] She said: "Is everything normal?" Then I said yes and asked: "Why?" [laughs] And she said that Unicamp had already stopped. Then I said: "Look, I don't think it's going to happen here" [...]. And then on the same day... and then when it was the afternoon, the... the university shut down [...] And then I saw the girls super desperate. (NAÍ - red macaw)



Another development accompanied the health situation, which was the circulation of a lot of news, some of it reliable, some of it not. There was difficulty in organizing official and scientific information and, consequently, difficulties in interpreting and analyzing the content, with possible negative impacts on the control of the pandemic itself and raising doubts in the university environment and for the general population<sup>14</sup>.

In this sense, the students' reports bring a situation of anguish due to the difficulty of understanding the real circumstances and their impacts, since they were at a time of many uncertainties and because they were indigenous, they were more exposed:

[...] there's a question of feeling... a certain uncertainty about how things are going to turn out. What might change, perhaps some social rules. How might that change? What might it affect? Of course, there's the uncertainty of the economy... I, for example, today depend on a grant [...] and I keep thinking, will I still be receiving a grant? How are things going to be? What direction will the university take from now on? It's these external things that worry us indigenous people the most." (TAÚ - Tucano)

Conversations in the food distribution lines, in the corridors between neighboring apartment dwellers and in WhatsApp groups were full of worries and conflicting news.

Borderline situations could thus be recognized in the face of the pandemic and the ESD. Borderline situations are understood as brakes, walls, which are imposed on people's lives, but which can be overcome<sup>5</sup>. Thus, they are barriers that are related to the oppressive system of society and are intended to prevent the oppressed from overcoming them<sup>5</sup>.

In a process of constructing a critical reflection on their living processes, the residents described that their trajectories were being impacted not just momentarily:

[...] because of studies, classes... it became more... more worrying for me. I couldn't take any subjects and the internet was a bit bad... I was supposed to do an internship in person and I couldn't do it. So I was left with... some... these subjects were pending, that was it. Yeah, some subjects were left unfinished, I couldn't get through them... so I'm going to have to stay on for another year." (NGÜNÜ - mutum)

In this sense, the uncertainties of everyday life were different for the residents who had recently arrived at the university and for the older ones. For the former, there was a drop in expectations, as they had hoped to socialize with other university students and get to know their new place of residence. For those at the end of their course, the impossibility of doing practical placements meant that their graduation was postponed:

It was a new place for me. Having arrived... so... I just didn't get to know many places and people, because of the pandemic. It's difficult for indigenous people because they come from far away and don't know anything. (COWA - maguari)



[...] It's totally in a way that I didn't expect. I was preparing for the final stretch of my studies, right? And that really demotivated me in terms of... my personal life, my psychological life, it affected me in a negative way. So my experience with the pandemic was totally negative, because you can't expect anything good from a pandemic. (DYAWIRÚ - jaburu)

The suspension of face-to-face and on-campus activities brought with it a feeling of even greater distancing from other people. The streets of the university, the university restaurant, the cafeterias and the leisure areas were suddenly paralyzed, quiet and without any human presence. Only the housing students, security and general services staff continued to move around.

The residents described various reasons for not returning to their place of origin during the pandemic. The first reason was the risk of getting sick and taking the virus back to their place of origin; another was the fear of getting sick and being far away, accompanied by the feeling of fear:

I heard reports of some people going back to... their homes, let's put it that way, and they ended up catching Covid. So, I was afraid of catching covid too [...] then I was afraid to go back. (ITURI - bem-te-vi)

At first you get scared. Then, after the fear, comes anxiety and then worry... You get scared because you don't know if you're going to come back, if you're going to get sick, if you're going to survive and... More anxiety because you're alone. In a way you're with different people and deep down they're not your family. So you're kind of helpless when it comes to family. (WEU - parrot)

Other issues that justified staying at the university were: financial limitations that made it impossible to make long journeys; unstable internet access in their places of origin; the possibility of dedicating more time to their studies by staying at the university.

The residents were from places distant from the state of São Paulo, mainly Amazonas and Pernambuco. Thus, these university students usually only visited family members during vacations or breaks, which became more difficult during the pandemic.

The feeling of sadness was highlighted when they experienced other students returning to their places of origin and not being able to do the same:

I felt totally abandoned and by myself when my housemates went back to their homes. [...] Seeing them all leaving little by little and you being left alone, I felt very sad. Very helpless and it was complicated, right? (DYAWIRÚ - jaburu)



In addition to the physical distance, there were difficulties in communicating with family members, which caused anguish:

So there was a lot of despair in that sense. It wasn't so much for me, but for those close to me that I was worried about. [...] You're afraid that your parents aren't there, your family isn't there, and... (WEU - parrot)

In that context of high mortality from Covid-19, the fear of loss was real and there were reports of family members dying, generating a painful experience of mourning far from their place of origin:

I would describe that my experience in the isolation period was the worst possible, both because of the fact that I was worried about my relatives and far from them, and because of the fact that I had lost my mother. The fact that I didn't get to be with her in her last moments. And the fact that I didn't take part in the wake and didn't have my relatives around during this time of mourning. (WOCARA - heron)

Wocara's speech shows that the ESD made it impossible for her to be present in the context of her mother's death, generating sadness and intensifying the experience of loss. Thus, a bond was broken, but she was unable to take part in the usual mourning ritual carried out in her sociocultural context, which marks the process of the individual's "social death"<sup>15</sup>.

In other experiences, such as Luna's<sup>16</sup> study, indigenous university students also reported experiencing losses during their time at university, described mainly when they were unable to be closer to their places of origin and had no opportunity to maintain customs and traditions<sup>16</sup>. In this study, the losses were described even more intensely.

During the study period, none of the residents was diagnosed with Covid-19, which suggests that the ESD was carried out severely. However, there were many difficulties and sufferings described, which interfered with quality of life, interpersonal relationships and everyday pleasures.

In this sense, some of these problems were identified by the residents themselves as promoting illness, especially in terms of mental health, in addition to the violence and violations suffered over time in their lives, due to the fact that they are indigenous<sup>5</sup>:

I didn't sleep properly; I didn't eat properly. In the beginning, right? I didn't enjoy cooking, I didn't enjoy doing anything, I became... very... isolated, right? Desolate, really. And that really affected my psyche, I had a lot of anxiety at the time." (DYAWIRÚ - jaburu)





I think that, like, homesickness, like, it's very closely linked to depression as well, so if there's a distance, then of course I had these thoughts. These feelings of sadness, of being anxious. To this day. (MUÜ - bem-te-vi)

The complexity of the experiences and the overlapping of difficulties during the period were described as potentiating new, or already pre-existing, suffering and illness:

[...] I often felt very alone... I even had very heavy bouts of self-mutilation. [...] If you have anxiety and depression, you live on that rollercoaster. You can't have emotional stability. So, for me, dealing with all this, plus the pandemic, plus the academic demands, plus the family demands, plus the social distancing and the distance from my home, from places and people I know... made me suffer a lot." (NGOÜ - macaw)

During the period of the study, a serious and sad episode marked the residents. One of the residents of the student housing committed suicide, which had a direct impact on everyone who lived there. The student was not indigenous, but the academic community as a whole, especially those who lived in the housing, was shaken by what happened. This triggered other sufferings and illnesses:

I think the case that really shocked me, that really marked me was... the suicide that happened in the dormitory. I think it could have happened to anyone. I don't think anyone is... anyone is... I don't know, far from it. Or nobody is out of it, out of this box. And it really hurt me, you know? Because just as it was him, it could have been me, it could have been you and... I was sick for weeks, because I said: "My God, what he hasn't suffered!" [...] It was what happened in the apartment and I feel it was a shame, it was a loss for everyone and I think we have to take it as a life lesson now. (NGOÜ - macaw)

During the narratives of the processes of mourning and struggle, when describing the tragic experience in the student housing, the limiting situations emerge and also make it possible to learn something. Therefore, the participants' experiences are recognized when they provide meaning and spaces for transformations to take place based on what was experienced. Thus, using Larrosa's<sup>9</sup> concept of experience, we can see that what they experienced during this period affected them and transformed their trajectories.

Therefore, it is from the relationship between person and experience that the knowledge of experience emerged, which is personal, private knowledge, where each person elaborates and attributes meaning, or the lack of meaning, to their existence and to what they have lived<sup>9</sup>.



In understanding limit situations<sup>5</sup>, there is the feeling of will, which is centered on the “plane of wanting”, followed by the “plane of reflecting”, which brings the possibility of understanding the reasons for the existence of limit situations, as well as the motives that must be established in order to change or fight for a dream<sup>17</sup>. These two planes were described and problematized by the residents, and are the initial stage in the construction of the unprecedented-feasible.

## Category 2 – Strategies for overcoming difficulties

In this second category, three nuclei of meaning were described: adaptations in teaching, research and extension; individual resilience beyond academic activities; in search of the possible collective. The nuclei are intertwined in the various experiences recounted and appear to be complementary for the residents.

Although not described by Freire as a concept, the unprecedented-feasible can be understood as something unheard of, not yet known and experienced, but dreamed of and which can become a reality<sup>5,17</sup>. Considering the “denunciation-announcement” binomial, two aspects proved to be particularly important in the residents’ experiences that indicate the direction of the unprecedented-feasible.

Firstly, the fact that the unprecedented-feasible not only presupposes a dream and utopia, but also foresees action, as it contains a methodological perspective. The second aspect indicates that this dream is a collective dream.

It is from the articulation between these two perspectives that the unprecedented-feasible can be taken as a collective project to be initiated when something from the established, reproduced and sometimes naturalized world is taken as strange and is highlighted<sup>17</sup>. This estrangement has the meaning of better understanding what is “wrong with it” and, by recognizing it as unjust, as a limit situation, alternatives are sought to deal with this something or the contexts in which they are produced. And no less complex is undertaking this whole process collectively<sup>17</sup>, which was very present in the residents’ experiences.

During the first five months of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were no regular teaching activities at UFSCar, but academic extension and research activities continued remotely. Thus, in this first set of strategies built by the residents, extracurricular academic activities provided by the university itself stood out:

I think that during the quarantine, getting involved academically made all the difference, because I got involved in research groups, extension groups. I wanted to contribute in some way as a health student. I became more active in indigenous issues again. (NGO Û - macaw)

Dedication to academic activities was important for the mental health of the residents, and even helped them to get involved in social issues relating to indigenous peoples.



In one of the extension experiences developed at the same institution, by the Indigenous Tutorial Education Program Actions in Health, there was indigenous protagonism through the construction of various actions, which provided opportunities for theoretical study of the health situation and communication with indigenous people in the communities. Social communication publications were produced, virtual meetings were held on health and with indigenous intellectuals, and videos and podcasts were produced to overcome the invisibility of indigenous peoples<sup>14</sup>.

There was also an individual movement to study academic topics and content:

In my week I set aside at least three hours to study, and I read a lot. I learned a lot of new things, so I was able to apply what I learned. (MUÛ - hummingbird)

From the moment I knew for sure that I wasn't going to travel anymore, I said to myself: "I'm going to study... I'm going to take advantage of the opportunities I have. I'm not going to hurt myself to the point where I give in to discouragement or pessimism or negative thoughts". It's already been a difficult time, isn't it? So the study so far... strategies like this... I'm going to occupy my mind by studying, reading, studying English." (NAÍ - scarlet macaw)

From August 2020, the academic calendar was opened up to offer emergency non-face-to-face teaching activities (ENPE). With this return to the activities of the undergraduate courses, the residents began to take subjects and other curricular activities, which brought a need for adaptation:

[...] I stayed at home doing that ENPE business, right? [...] During the time I was here, I was studying. And the good thing is that we got into distance learning. (ÊNE - parakeet)

I feel like I'm succeeding, I feel better [laughs] because I feel like I'm achieving more than I did last year. I don't know why, but I feel that... I seem to have done so well, remotely... studying virtually or watching recorded lessons... watching the videos that the teacher plays a thousand times. More materials that you can keep, that you can watch another time. (NAÍ - scarlet macaw)

It was an initial process of filling some of the gaps created by the interruption of activities and the opportunity to use remote teaching technologies and dedicate more time to studying.

The leisure activities reported were more restricted to the domestic environment, since there were restrictions from the municipality and the university:



I read a lot of literature, right? And that helped me a lot. [...] Reading more books that we usually can't read when we have a lot of undergraduate books to read. [...] And dedicating myself to culture, you know? [...] Watching things, watching documentaries that enrich me with culture. [...] That's what I've been able to do more. Understand more about Western culture and everything else. (TAÚ - tucano)

I was more like watching something on TV, a series, a movie or playing a game. (ÏYÜ - hawk)

They described watching movies, series, cooking, painting, photographing and reading as opportunities, since there were no undergraduate activities, diversifying the range of possibilities for well-being.

Similar to the residents of the present study, the study by Montenegro et al.<sup>18</sup> with students from the Federal University of Amapá showed that leisure activities were possible during the pandemic, which added up to a contemporary characteristic in leisure activities, most of which took place indoors. Montenegro's research<sup>18</sup> states that ESD has triggered an increase in the "residentialization" and "virtualization" of leisure, with the internet being the form most cited by participants<sup>18</sup>.

Unlike the study by Costa et al.<sup>19</sup>, which observed a reduction in physical activity during the pandemic in all Brazilian regions, in this study, residents did not reduce their physical activities and some increased them:

[...] in the midst of the pandemic, it's kind of exhausting to study, I don't know, it's like a prison. And there's nothing to distract yourself, it gets boring if you just study. So, to distract myself, I'd go for a run, I'd do some calisthenics, I'd play ball. (MUÜ - hummingbird)

I've walked a lot recently. A lot. I'd take the street that was as isolated as possible, without people. I was able to do more of that, which I didn't do during class. (TAÚ - toucan)

Thus, physical activities were one of the coping measures described, and it should be recognized that the location of the student housing, within the university campus, which is very wooded and spacious, made it possible for them to take place. They described individual practices, such as walking, running and cycling, and collective ones, such as table tennis and soccer, as early as the sixth month of the pandemic.

In coping with the various limiting situations, they tried to get closer to other people by using communication technologies or by socializing with the other students in the house. They communicated via messaging apps and video calls, since they couldn't interact face-to-face:



From the beginning, I tried to talk to people a lot. I tried to get close to everyone, practically all my contacts. Even those with whom I didn't have much affinity for chatting, typing, video calls... I felt the need to talk to someone every day, even if it was the same person every day. [...] Especially on days when I felt sad. (NAÍ - scarlet macaw)

Communication was an important way of overcoming difficulties, especially when they felt sad and alone. It was a way of getting closer to people they knew little about, making them closer. Or even as a way of keeping in touch with friends and family and with the local and national indigenous collective.

In this sense, through the residents' narratives, we can see their stances of struggle in the context of the ESD and their search to reflect on their limiting situations. With this, they built strategies for survival, resilience and adaptation to the process.

Taking the experience of the Amazon regions of Peru, the pandemic has shown the capacity of indigenous peoples to implement autonomous and non-institutional initiatives<sup>20</sup>. The importance of thinking about a differentiated policy for indigenous people and valuing their ancestry is clear<sup>20</sup>.

Using Gersem Baniwa's understanding of indigenous people's resilience when discussing education, it is worth noting that among the residents there was an attitude of making choices, of recognizing in meetings and events what could be given new meanings, even in the face of the violence and human tragedies they had experienced<sup>6</sup>.

Several of these resilience and survival strategies were not so different from those already used by indigenous people in the university environment, even outside the pandemic period. As described by Luna<sup>16</sup>, when suffering at federal universities, indigenous people needed to find "loopholes", which would be opportunities to face and survive the difficulties imposed on them, based on a strategy of resilience by strengthening their culture. This attitude can be recognized in the residents' speeches:

Most of my experiences have been good. Apart from depression, anxiety, crises... everything intensified during quarantine. That's obvious. But I think that... looking on the bright side of everything, these experiences that I had last year, I wouldn't take anything away or put anything back. [...] During this quarantine period, I think my vision became sharper for our indigenous issues, for indigenous movements. We learned to look at each other and our people with more affection. Sometimes people think that being indigenous makes us "weak", but we have our strengths. We are strengthened by our relatives. (NGO'ü - macaw)

According to Baniwa<sup>21</sup>, in the face of the insensitivity and inhumanity of non-indigenous society during the pandemic, indigenous peoples have reaffirmed their ideals of life, which are inspired by ancestry and collectivity.



The experiences described are related to the student-researcher's name in his mother tongue, Goecü, which means the flight of the mutum in the forest. It carries a meaning of resilience because it is a bird that takes short flights through the branches of trees in pursuit of its goals, even if in stages. Thus, each branch is a new stage reached in the search for food, shelter and other challenges. The residents' experiences were also close to this resilience, as were those of the first author, who through this research was able to immerse himself in his own experiences and give them new meanings.

Therefore, the residents showed the unprecedented-feasible for breaking with romanticized and stereotyped attitudes about indigenous people in higher education, deconstructing the idea that indigenous students are fragile, vulnerable and sometimes incapable of being included in universities. The residents' experiences are much more diverse and resilient, even in the face of the uncertainties of the moment.

## Final considerations

The indigenous university students living in the student housing experienced suffering during the period, reporting uncertainties and fears as limit situations, i.e. historical obstacles and challenging and concrete dimensions at the time. It was clear that the Covid-19 pandemic, and the responses to it, were accompanied by an excess of information, some accurate and some not, which made it difficult to find reliable guidance on what was happening. Rumors and misinformation, as well as the manipulation of information with dubious intent, were largely responsible for the uncertainties and concerns reported by residents.

By not passively accepting this reality, they described coping with the difficulties, survival strategies and adaptations, both individual and collective, which highlighted the chance of unprecedented-feasible, pointing to characteristics of resilience built creatively in the subject-world relationship, which are very evident in the indigenous people's way of surviving in society.

This shows the importance of the process of critical awareness of reality in order to unveil the unprecedented-feasible, making it possible to create new perceptions of reality, which allow for the identification of possible actions that were not previously seen as solutions.

The psychological suffering and illness experienced by the research participants became more evident during the ESD period, but they were also present throughout their undergraduate studies. The narratives denounce the prejudice present in the university context and other spaces in which they live, since they experience various limitations and judgments, often being seen as fragile, vulnerable and outside the context of higher education.

In this way, their active stance in building coping strategies and resilience - most of the time non-institutional - deconstructs stereotypes. They have thus produced their own viable ways of overcoming the ESD period during the Covid-19 pandemic.



### Authors' contribution

All authors actively participated in all stages of preparing the manuscript.

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### Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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Félix Héctor Rigoli Cáceres

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O artigo descreve experiências de indígenas universitários que viveram em uma moradia estudantil durante o período de distanciamento social ampliado no primeiro semestre da pandemia de Covid-19. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, com utilização de diário de campo, levantamento documental e entrevistas. Foi realizada análise temática de conteúdo, sob a óptica dos conceitos de situação-limite, inéditos viáveis e resiliência. Foram duas categorias identificadas: sofrimento no contexto do distanciamento social e estratégias de superação de dificuldades. Vivenciaram incertezas e limites trazidos pela pandemia, medos por estarem distantes e adoecimentos. Como enfrentamento, surgiram adaptações no ensino, na pesquisa e na extensão; estratégias individuais para além de atividades acadêmicas; e busca de construções coletivas possíveis visando à resiliência e à desconstrução de visões estereotipadas no ambiente acadêmico.

**Palavras-chave:** Saúde das populações indígenas. Povos indígenas. Saúde do estudante. Covid-19. Distanciamento social.

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El artículo describe experiencias de indígenas universitarios que vivieron en una residencia estudiantil durante el período de distanciamiento social ampliado en el primer semestre de la pandemia de Covid-19. Se trata de una investigación cualitativa con utilización de diario de campo, estudio documental y entrevistas. Se realizó un análisis temático de contenido, bajo la óptica de los conceptos de situación-límite, inéditos-viables y resiliencia. Se identificaron dos categorías: sufrimiento en el contexto del distanciamiento social y estrategias de superación de dificultades. Vivieron incertidumbres y límites causados por la pandemia, miedos por estar distantes y por enfermarse. Como enfrentamientos, surgieron adaptaciones en la enseñanza, investigación y extensión, estrategias individuales más allá de las actividades académicas y buscaron construcciones colectivas posibles en el sentido de la resiliencia y de la desconstrucción de visiones estereotipadas en el ambiente académico.

**Palabras clave:** Salud de las poblaciones indígenas. Pueblos indígenas. Salud del estudiante. Covid-19. Distanciamiento social.