

BETWEEN THE LATTES CURRICULUM AND QUALITY OF LIFE: THE CULTURE OF ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY AND ITS EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH, IDENTITY, AND THE CAREERS OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

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Carlos Lopatiuk¹, Carla Emanuele Lopatiuk², Gustavo Dantas Antunes³, Bleno Wendell Vieira da Silva⁴, Maico Danúbio Duarte Abreu⁵, William Magnago de Mattos Panciere⁶, Jean Cláudio Araújo da Silva⁷ and Héder Moreira da Costa⁸

Abstract

The growing centrality of scientific productivity in academic careers has intensified discussions about its effects on quality of life, mental health, professional identity, and faculty career trajectories. This study

¹ PhD in Applied Social Sciences
Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa - UEPG, Ponta Grossa PR
E-mail: carloslopatiuk@yahoo.com.br

Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/9701518133630285>
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5918-0657>

² Undergraduate Medical Student
Centro Universitário Campo Real - CAMPO REAL, Guarapuava PR
E-mail: carla.emanuele2201@gmail.com

Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/1290510601340514>
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3293-6534>

³ Postgraduate Specialist in Public Health Management
Faculdade Integradas do Ceará - UNIFIC, Iguatu CE
E-mail: gustavodantasodonto@gmail.com

Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/4389360687400541>
⁴ Postgraduate Specialist in Higher Education Teaching
Faculdade Integradas do Ceará - FI, Iguatu CE
E-mail: wendell.nutri3@gmail.com

Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/4689536765433702>
⁵ Bachelor's Degree in Physics and Mathematics
Escola Técnica Everardo Passos - ETEP, Pelotas RS
E-mail: maicodanubio@yahoo.com.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8654-8493>
⁶ Undergraduate Medical Student
Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo - UNESC, Coletiva ES
E-mail: will.magnago@gmail.com

Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/2428348425205256>
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4430-4970>

⁷ Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics
Universidade Estadual Vale do Acaraú - UVA, Sobral CE
E-mail: jeanclaudioadv@gmail.com

Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/6856732109768484>
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1685-3442>

⁸ Master's Degree in Education
Universidade Metropolitana de Santos - UNIMES, Santos SP
E-mail: hederp84@gmail.com
Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/6048431113717394>

aimed to critically analyze the relationship between the culture of academic productivity and the professional experience of university professors, considering the influence of publication requirements and evaluation mechanisms on different dimensions of their careers. This systematic literature review was conducted using the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), PubMed, Scopus, and Latindex databases, as well as Open Journal Systems (OJS) repositories, and encompassed publications in Portuguese and English from 2021 to 2026. Studies related to academic productivity, the “publish or perish” culture, mental health, quality of life, professional identity, and academic careers were analyzed. The results showed that pressure to publish and perform may be associated with stress, anxiety, fatigue, psychological distress, and burnout, while also contributing to conflicts involving professional identity and the meaning attributed to teaching work. Differing repercussions were also identified depending on career stage, institutional context, and socioprofessional conditions. It is concluded that scientific productivity is a relevant component of academic work, but its use as the predominant criterion for recognition may compromise professional sustainability and faculty well-being. Evaluation models must therefore be developed that value the plurality of academic activities, mental health, the quality of professional relationships, scientific relevance, and quality of life.

Keywords: Academic career, Mental health, Professional identity, Productivity culture, University professors.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, changes in the organization and evaluation of academic work have repositioned scientific productivity as a central component of faculty careers. Publications, citations, projects, supervision, participation in research groups, and other performance indicators have become part of measurement systems capable of influencing recognition, career advancement, and professional opportunities. In the Brazilian context, this dynamic finds particularly significant expression in the Lattes CV, which, although an important instrument for documenting academic trajectories, may also assume the

symbolic function of representing a researcher's productivity, competence, and professional value (Steingard; Rodenburg, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the consolidation of the “publish or perish” culture has established an increasingly close relationship between scientific publication and professional survival or advancement. This logic takes different forms depending on academic contexts and structural conditions, making it particularly important to consider the inequalities that exist in the Global South (Amutuhaire, 2022). The perceptions of professionals subject to publication requirements also show that productivity may become a criterion used by academics themselves to assess their performance, recognition, and professional standing (Nath et al., 2025).

Under this model, the intensification of teaching, research, outreach, supervision, and administrative activities may result in overlapping responsibilities and greater demands on faculty members' time and cognitive resources. Evidence from a systematic review and qualitative meta-synthesis indicates a range of experiences involving stress, psychological distress, and diminished well-being among researchers working in academic environments (Nicholls et al., 2022). Similarly, university faculty face challenges related to working conditions, balancing responsibilities, and maintaining mental health, indicating that the contemporary academic experience cannot be separated from the conditions under which academic work is performed (Smith et al., 2022).

At the same time, understanding the impacts of productivity requires moving beyond interpretations focused exclusively on an individual's capacity to adapt. Different factors associated with researchers' mental health demonstrate the influence of professional and organizational conditions on well-being and psychological functioning (Páez Moreno; Rios Incio; Sánchez, 2024). Processes of stress adaptation and resilience development are also related to the characteristics of institutional environments, available resources, and the demands inherent in academic work (Ross; Scanes; Locke, 2023).

In addition to its repercussions for mental health, productivity culture affects how professors interpret their role and attribute meaning to their profession. Academics may experience tension between

teaching and publishing when these dimensions are assigned different values within institutions (Yang; Shu; Yin, 2021).

In this process, quality of life becomes a fundamental dimension for understanding the sustainability of an academic career. An approach focused on the positive mental health of university professors emphasizes the need to promote psychological resources, well-being, and conditions conducive to professional development (Deroncele-Acosta et al., 2024).

Another relevant element concerns the indirect effects that professors' emotional conditions may have on the university environment. Faculty members' emotional competencies have implications for students' academic and psychological well-being, demonstrating that faculty health has a relational and pedagogical dimension (De Souza; Jacomuzzi, 2025).

Despite the risks associated with productivity culture, scientific production remains indispensable to social, technological, and educational development. The problem, therefore, does not lie in valuing research or in the existence of evaluation mechanisms, but in the possibility of reducing academic excellence to quantitative output indicators. The consequences associated with the concept of "publish or perish" reveal the need to critically examine its effects on researchers and on the very purpose of scholarly communication (Aronson, 2025). At the same time, discussion of the societal impacts of academic research points to the need for models that value the contribution, relevance, and reach of the knowledge produced (Steingard; Rodenburg, 2023).

In this context, analyzing the relationship between the Lattes CV and quality of life makes it possible to understand a relevant dimension of academic careers, namely, the symbolic connection between an instrument used to document professional trajectories and expectations of performance, recognition, and belonging. The CV may represent achievements and scientific contributions, but it may also make visible the mechanisms of comparison and pressure that permeate the experiences of university professors.

Accordingly, this study aims to critically analyze how the culture of academic productivity relates to quality of life, mental health, professional identity, and faculty career development. It seeks to contribute to a more balanced understanding of academic excellence and to reflection on institutional models capable of reconciling scientific production with professional sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

This is a systematic literature review with a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach, conducted to identify, gather, analyze, and synthesize scientific evidence concerning the culture of academic productivity and its repercussions for the quality of life, mental health, professional identity, and careers of university professors. The choice of this method made it possible to bring together different scientific perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation, fostering a broad understanding of the relationships among productivity requirements, working conditions, and professional experience in the university context.

The following guiding question was established to direct the study: *What are the effects of the culture of academic productivity on the quality of life, mental health, professional identity, and careers of university professors?* This question was used as the central element for delimiting the object of study and guiding the definition of descriptors, search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, publication selection, and organization of the results.

The literature search was conducted in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), PubMed, Scopus, and Latindex databases, in addition to searches of Open Journal Systems (OJS) repositories. These sources were selected because of their relevance to the retrieval of studies in education, health, psychology, social sciences, labor, and scientific production. To broaden the identification of relevant publications, combinations of descriptors and keywords were used with the Boolean operators AND and OR, taking into account the indexing practices and search mechanisms of each database.

The following descriptors and search terms were used in Portuguese and English: “*produtividade acadêmica*”, “*produtividade científica*”, “*publish or perish*”, “*professores universitários*”, “*docentes universitários*”, “*saúde mental*”, “*qualidade de vida*”, “*bem-estar*”, “*identidade profissional*”, “*carreira acadêmica*”, “*academic productivity*”, “*scientific productivity*”, “*university professors*”, “*university faculty*”, “*mental health*”, “*quality of life*”, “*well-being*”, “*professional identity*” and “*academic career*”. The terms were combined according to the research objectives in an effort to encompass different representations of the phenomenon under investigation.

Regarding the timeframe, publications made available between 2021 and 2026 were considered, with priority given to recent scientific evidence concerning academic productivity, work intensification, mental health, and changes in faculty careers. Studies published in Portuguese and English were included, provided that they were directly related to the subject of the review and contributed to an understanding of the repercussions of productivity culture for university professors.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: scientific articles published between 2021 and 2026; studies available in full text; publications in Portuguese or English; research involving university professors, higher education faculty, academic researchers, or professionals working directly within the university context; studies addressing academic productivity, scientific productivity, pressure to publish, performance culture, the “publish or perish” logic, mental health, quality of life, well-being, professional identity, or academic careers; and studies presenting results or discussions relevant to the established objective.

The exclusion criteria eliminated studies published outside the specified period, publications in languages other than Portuguese and English, articles without full-text access, duplicate records, editorials, letters to the editor, news articles, commentaries, opinion pieces, simple abstracts, and documents lacking a scientific basis. Studies focused exclusively on students or professionals from other levels of education were also excluded, as were studies that mentioned academic productivity without

establishing a meaningful relationship with the mental health, quality of life, professional identity, or careers of university professors.

The selection process involved successive stages of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. Initially, studies were identified in the selected databases, after which the records were organized and duplicates removed. Titles and abstracts were then examined in accordance with the established eligibility criteria. Potentially relevant publications underwent full-text review to verify their alignment with the objective, the guiding question, and the previously defined criteria. Finally, the studies demonstrating the greatest thematic and methodological relevance were selected for inclusion in the synthesis.

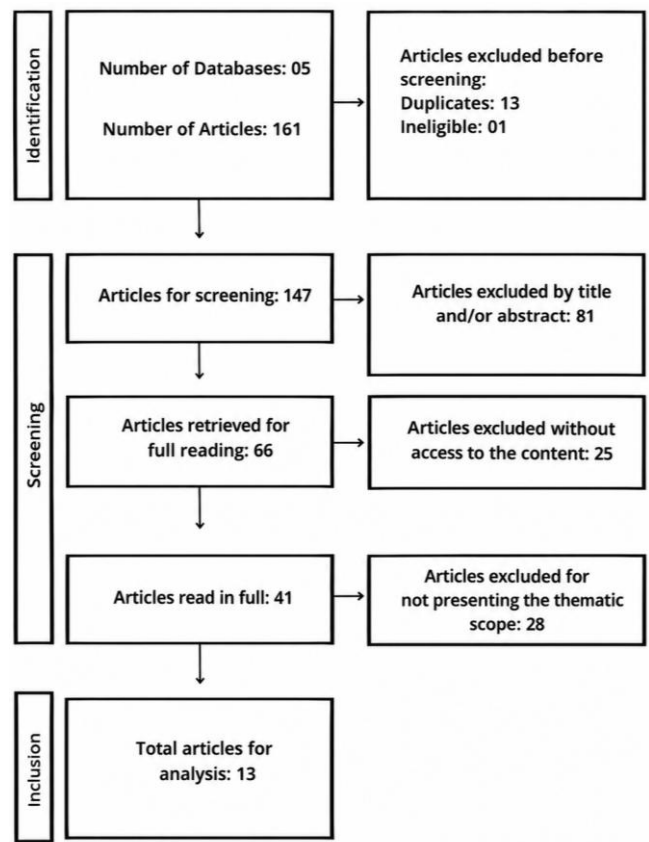
To systematize the information, a data extraction instrument was developed containing the following fields: author and year, title, country in which the study was conducted, objective, methodological design, population or context investigated, aspects related to academic productivity, repercussions for mental health, effects on quality of life, implications for professional identity, impacts on careers, and main findings. Organizing this information made it possible to compare the selected studies and identify similarities, differences, and gaps in the scientific literature.

The studies were analyzed qualitatively through critical reading and the organization of findings into thematic categories. Four main themes were established: the culture of academic productivity and the “publish or perish” logic; repercussions for mental health and quality of life; impacts on professional identity and faculty experience; and consequences for development, retention, and advancement in academic careers. The synthesis made it possible to integrate different perspectives and understand how academic performance requirements may affect individual, professional, and institutional dimensions.

The process of identifying, selecting, and including the publications will be presented in Figure 1, providing a systematic overview of the stages followed during the review, from the initial identification of studies to the definition of the final sample used in the analysis.

Figure 1

Flowchart of the selection process for studies included in the systematic review.



Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

Because this systematic review was conducted exclusively using data from previously published scientific studies available in databases and repositories, submission to a Research Ethics Committee was not required, since the study did not involve the direct participation of human beings, the collection of primary data, or the use of personally identifiable information. Throughout the research process, the principles of scientific rigor, methodological transparency, fidelity to the findings, and proper identification of the sources used were observed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the selected studies revealed convergence regarding the existence of a productivity-oriented academic culture in which scientific publication, performance, and professional recognition play

a central role in the trajectories of university professors. The findings also indicated repercussions for mental health, well-being, quality of life, and professional identity, particularly amid the intensification of academic demands and pressure to deliver results.

To systematize the evidence identified, Table 1 presents the main studies analyzed, their objectives, methodological approaches, and findings related to academic productivity, mental health, identity, and faculty careers.

Table 1

Summary of selected studies on academic productivity, mental health, quality of life, identity, and the careers of university professors

No.	Author/Year	Study objective/theme	Main findings
1	Abraham <i>et al.</i> (2025)	To analyze the mental health conditions of academic professionals, considering psychological distress, burnout, and the influence of organizational culture.	The results showed an association between characteristics of the institutional environment, psychological distress, and burnout, demonstrating that organizational conditions, professional relationships, and management models significantly influence the mental health and well-being of university faculty.
2	Cadena-Povea <i>et al.</i> (2025)	To systematize sociodemographic and psychosocial determinants related to burnout among university professors.	The literature analysis demonstrated that burnout is multifactorial in nature, arising from the interaction of sociodemographic characteristics, working conditions, and psychosocial factors. Work overload, institutional demands, and insufficient support were identified as relevant contributors to faculty exhaustion.
3	Da Silva; Nazarovets (2025)	To critically discuss the different manifestations of academic publication culture and their consequences for researchers.	The discussion revealed that the “publish or perish” culture is taking progressively more complex forms, increasing pressure for productivity, competition, and sustained performance, while also having potential repercussions for scientific integrity, job security, and researcher well-being.
4	Deroncele-Acosta (2026)	To develop and validate an instrument for measuring publication-related anxiety in the academic context.	The development of the scale made it possible to identify publication anxiety as a specific dimension of academic experience related to scientific production requirements and performance expectations, providing a systematic instrument for assessing the psychological impacts associated with pressure to publish.

5	González Flores (2025)	To examine academic fatigue among young researchers and its relationship with the “publish or perish” culture.	Among early-career researchers, continuous pressure to publish was found to contribute to academic fatigue, stress, and professional strain, demonstrating that productivity requirements entail significant costs for well-being and the sustainability of scientific careers.
6	Halat <i>et al.</i> (2023)	To analyze factors related to the mental health and well-being of university faculty and discuss health-promotion strategies in this context.	From institutional and occupational perspectives, professional stressors, academic demands, interpersonal relationships, and organizational conditions were found to directly affect faculty mental health and well-being, reinforcing the need for institutional policies aimed at preventing psychological distress.
7	Hanitzsch; Markiewitz; Bødker (2024)	To investigate the repercussions of publication culture for the mental health of researchers in communication and media studies.	In the context of scientific production, the findings associated pressure to publish with experiences of stress, anxiety, and psychological distress, indicating that turning publication into a permanent performance requirement may compromise academics’ well-being, job satisfaction, and relationship with their work.
8	Hlatshwayo; Ngcobo (2023)	To understand the experiences of early-career Black women in the face of requirements associated with the “publish or perish” culture.	The reported experiences demonstrated that productivity requirements are shaped by inequalities involving gender, race, and professional position, leading early-career Black women academics to develop specific strategies of adaptation, resistance, and negotiation to remain and advance within the university environment.
9	Marck <i>et al.</i> (2024)	To examine relationships among organizational culture, mental health, and the well-being of early- and mid-career health academics.	Regarding workplace culture, organizational conditions and professional relationships were found to be significantly associated with academics’ mental health and well-being, while contexts characterized by pressure, insecurity, and limited institutional support may intensify psychological vulnerabilities.
10	Muradoglu <i>et al.</i> (2021)	To investigate impostor feelings among academics, with particular attention to underrepresented women and early-career professionals.	The study identified a greater prevalence of impostor feelings in academic environments that place a high value on the idea of brilliance, suggesting that certain cultural standards of excellence may affect academics’ perceptions of competence, professional identity, and confidence, particularly among members of underrepresented groups.
11	Mutongoza (2023)	To analyze the negative consequences of the “publish or perish” phenomenon among early-career academics.	During the process of professional consolidation, pressure for productivity was found to have negative repercussions for well-being, motivation, and the academic experience, making early-career researchers particularly susceptible to publication requirements and the continuous need to demonstrate performance.

12	Wang <i>et al.</i> (2023)	To understand university faculty responses to managerialism and productivity requirements associated with “publish or perish.”	In response to managerial demands, faculty members developed different ways of responding and adapting to productivity pressures, demonstrating that cultural values, institutional structures, and evaluation mechanisms influence the behaviors, perceptions, and strategies used to cope with academic performance requirements.
13	Xu; Poole (2023)	To analyze transformations in Chinese higher education and the increasing centrality of publications in academic evaluation.	In the context of Chinese higher education, scientific publication was increasingly used as a mechanism for professional recognition, differentiation, and advancement, meaning that an absence of publications may represent a career disadvantage and reinforcing the centrality of productivity indicators in academic evaluation.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

CULTURE OF ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF FACULTY CAREERS

The consolidation of performance-oriented academic models is progressively changing the criteria used to recognize professional excellence. Steingard and Rodenburg (2023) argue that the expansion of productivity logic shifts publication away from being an activity intended to disseminate knowledge and turns it into a mechanism for recognition and differentiation within institutions. This transformation makes performance metrics central components of academic trajectories.

In this regard, Amutuhaire (2022) observes that the principle of “publish or perish” produces particularly complex effects in Global South contexts, where researchers face structural inequalities, institutional constraints, and differing conditions of access to the resources needed for scientific production. This perspective broadens the understanding that productivity does not depend exclusively on individual effort, but also on the material and organizational conditions supporting academic work.

From another perspective, Da Silva and Nazarovets (2025) demonstrate that contemporary productivity culture extends beyond the traditional logic of publishing to remain in academia. According to the authors, new configurations are emerging in which publication, retraction, and the maintenance of

productivity become interdependent, increasing pressure on researchers and creating an environment marked by the constant need to demonstrate performance.

The transformation of recognition criteria also has repercussions for professional identity. Yang, Shu, and Yin (2021) identify tensions among different dimensions of academic work, particularly when teaching and publication are assigned different institutional values. In this context, professors may experience conflict between what they consider central to their vocation and what university evaluation systems actually reward.

Xu and Poole (2023), in turn, demonstrate that the centrality of publications may redefine relationships of power and belonging in higher education, causing scientific production to function as a marker of professional status. Such a configuration tends to transform an academic career into a trajectory that is heavily dependent on the ability to continuously meet quantitative and qualitative expectations of productivity.

The experiences of academics at different career stages reinforce this interpretation. Mutongoza (2023) finds that researchers at the beginning of their professional trajectories experience significant pressure to demonstrate productivity, particularly when publication is a requirement for recognition and advancement. This condition may encourage adaptation strategies that prioritize meeting indicators at the expense of other relevant dimensions of academic work.

Among the consequences of this model, Wang et al. (2023) highlight varied responses to managerialism and requirements associated with “publish or perish.” Faculty members do not respond uniformly to institutional pressures, but instead develop different mechanisms of negotiation, compliance, or resistance. This heterogeneity demonstrates that productivity culture also affects perceived autonomy and how professionals construct their relationship with the institution.

PRODUCTIVITY, MENTAL HEALTH, IDENTITY, AND QUALITY OF LIFE

In the field of mental health, recent evidence suggests that productivity pressure should be understood as a component of the psychosocial conditions of academic work. Smith et al. (2022) identify experiences of distress, stress, and challenges related to well-being among university faculty members. These findings indicate that accumulated professional demands may compromise emotional balance and perceived quality of life.

Consistent with these findings, Halat et al. (2023) emphasize that promoting faculty mental health depends on factors extending beyond an individual's ability to cope. According to the authors, the institutional environment, professional relationships, recognition, and working conditions all contribute to well-being, indicating the need for organizational responses to the psychosocial risks present within universities.

The relationship between the work environment and psychological distress becomes even more evident in Marck et al. (2024), who associate workplace culture with the mental health and well-being of academics at different career stages. The results reinforce the understanding that experiences of support, safety, and belonging may serve as protective factors, while dysfunctional environments tend to heighten vulnerabilities.

In line with this perspective, Abraham et al. (2025) relate psychological distress and burnout to characteristics of university organizational culture. The authors demonstrate that mental health cannot be separated from how work is organized, institutional relationships, and professional expectations, shifting the discussion away from an exclusively individual approach toward a structural understanding of the phenomenon.

Regarding occupational burnout, Cadena-Povea et al. (2025) identify an interaction between sociodemographic and psychosocial determinants in the occurrence of burnout among university professors. The review shows that overload, professional demands, and characteristics of the institutional

context combine to produce exhaustion, suggesting that effective interventions must operate at multiple levels of academic life.

Another relevant dimension emerges in the study by González Flores (2025), which relates academic fatigue to the “publish or perish” culture among young researchers. Pressure to produce continuous results may reduce the physical and emotional resources available for academic activities not measured by traditional indicators. Consequently, excessive productivity may paradoxically compromise the ability to sustain a long-term scientific career.

Anxiety specifically related to publication provides additional evidence of this problem. Deroncele-Acosta (2026) demonstrates that this phenomenon may be analyzed as a multidimensional construct, showing that pressure to publish has distinct psychological repercussions. The existence of a specific measure for this type of anxiety reinforces the need to recognize productivity-related distress as a legitimate subject of academic investigation.

From the perspective of identity, Muradoglu et al. (2021) show that environments that place great value on attributes of excellence and brilliance may foster impostor feelings, particularly among underrepresented women and early-career academics. This reality demonstrates that seemingly neutral criteria of excellence may have differing effects on perceptions of competence and professional belonging.

Finally, Hlatshwayo and Ngcobo (2023) deepen this discussion by showing that early-career Black women face specific experiences in relation to productivity requirements. The authors demonstrate that strategies for retention and advancement are shaped by power relations and structural inequalities, indicating that the effects of academic culture are not distributed uniformly among different professional groups.

Taken together, the studies make it possible to understand academic productivity, mental health, and professional identity as interdependent dimensions of the university experience. In a systematic review, Páez Moreno, Rios Incio, and Sánchez (2024) highlight the presence of different factors

associated with researchers' mental health, reinforcing the need to analyze psychological distress in connection with the demands and characteristics of the scientific environment.

In addition, Deroncele-Acosta et al. (2024) advocate for a broader understanding of the positive mental health of university professors, emphasizing the importance of strategies aimed not only at reducing distress but also at strengthening psychological resources and conditions conducive to professional development. This perspective shifts the focus from a merely reparative logic to an approach centered on promoting well-being.

Regarding the relationship between academic work and professional experience, De Souza and Jacomuzzi (2025) add that professors' emotional competencies have implications for the educational environment and the well-being of those involved in the teaching and learning process. Preserving faculty members' emotional health is thus relevant beyond the individual level, extending to the quality of pedagogical relationships and institutional functioning.

In summary, Hanitzsch, Markiewitz, and Bødker (2024) demonstrate that publication-related demands may constitute a significant component of researchers' psychological experience, particularly when scientific production comes to be perceived as a permanent obligation. The convergence of these findings supports the interpretation that evaluation models excessively centered on productivity may undermine well-being, autonomy, and the meaning attributed to teaching work.

In light of this evidence, quality of life must be reconsidered as a legitimate component in the evaluation of academic careers rather than as a secondary dimension subordinate to output indicators. Preserving mental health, recognizing different forms of academic contribution, and valuing a balance among teaching, research, outreach, and personal life may promote more sustainable professional trajectories.

Consequently, stronger institutional care policies must be accompanied by changes to academic recognition systems themselves. Individual coping strategies are important but insufficient when implemented in environments where productivity is permanently associated with professional survival.

Structural changes may reduce psychosocial risks and improve the conditions needed to develop sustainable academic careers.

Finally, a joint analysis of the evidence demonstrates that the contemporary challenge is not to reject scientific production, but to prevent it from becoming an almost exclusive measure of professional value. Steingard and Rodenburg (2023), Amutuhair (2022), and Da Silva and Nazarovets (2025) converge in highlighting the tensions produced by the centrality of publication, while Halat et al. (2023), Marck et al. (2024), and Abraham et al. (2025) reinforce the need to consider organizational conditions and mental health. Therefore, a university committed to scientific excellence must also recognize quality of life, professional identity, and career sustainability as fundamental components of its own development.

CONCLUSION

The analysis made it possible to understand that the culture of academic productivity significantly influences the quality of life, mental health, professional identity, and career trajectories of university professors. In this regard, the guiding question was answered by demonstrating that continuous pressure to publish, perform, and achieve recognition may have psychological, professional, and relational repercussions, particularly when productivity is used as the primary criterion of academic value.

The results demonstrated that the “publish or perish” logic extends beyond the quantitative dimension of scientific production and affects the very organization of academic work. Permanent requirements to publish, advance professionally, and demonstrate performance may intensify workloads, increase competitiveness, and reduce the space available for academic activities that are not equally valued by traditional evaluation systems.

In the area of mental health, the evidence analyzed indicated associations among professional pressures, psychological distress, anxiety, fatigue, and burnout. It was also observed that these repercussions should not be interpreted exclusively as individual difficulties, since organizational

conditions, management models, professional relationships, and the availability of institutional support directly shape faculty well-being.

Regarding professional identity, excessive emphasis on productivity was found to generate conflicts among different dimensions of academic work. Teaching, research, outreach, supervision, and administrative activities have distinct forms of relevance, but systems centered predominantly on bibliometric indicators may produce feelings of inadequacy, a loss of professional meaning, and difficulties reconciling what professors consider meaningful with what institutions actually reward.

In relation to academic careers, the findings indicated that the impacts of productivity culture are particularly relevant among early-career professionals and groups subject to structural inequalities. Pressures related to publication, recognition, and advancement may foster professional insecurity and adaptation strategies, while factors such as gender, race, career position, and institutional context may determine differing levels of exposure to the model's negative effects.

Accordingly, the objective of the study was achieved by critically analyzing the relationship between the academic CV and quality of life, demonstrating that a CV should not be understood merely as a record of productivity but as an expression of a professional trajectory constructed under specific institutional conditions. It is therefore necessary to broaden the concept of academic excellence to encompass mental health, the quality of professional relationships, pedagogical contributions, outreach, scientific collaboration, and career sustainability.

For future research, a multicenter empirical study involving university professors from different fields and Brazilian institutions is recommended, using quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluate relationships among scientific output, indicators of anxiety and burnout, perceptions of professional identity, career satisfaction, and quality of life. Studies of this nature may produce more specific evidence concerning the Brazilian context and inform institutional policies capable of reconciling scientific productivity, professional recognition, and health promotion within the university environment.

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