

## LEVELS OF VULNERABILITY AND POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN NURSING STUDENTS

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**Introduction:** Positive mental health can be defined as a value in itself (feeling good) or as a capacity to perceive, understand and interpret the context, to adapt and alter it, if necessary, in order to promote its autonomy, integration and adaptation. University students are exposed to a group of variables that generate stress. Healthcare professionals must proceed to an evaluation of their mental health in order to intervene in the most vulnerable students, thus developing their capacity to deal with adversity and increase their levels of mental health.

**Objectives:** To evaluate the levels of mental health and vulnerability of Higher Education students.

**Methods:** This is a quantitative descriptive and explanatory cross-correlated study with a non-probability convenience sample of 2,238 students of universities in Portugal and Spain. The evaluation protocol includes a socio-demographic questionnaire, the scale of

vulnerability and a questionnaire of positive mental health. The tools are validated in Portugal and Spain, with good psychometrics properties (Lluch, 1999; Sequeira et al., 2014).

**Results:** The 2,238 students have an average age of 21 years old, with 225 (11.4%) being from the male gender and 1975 (88.2%) from the female gender. 217 (9.7%) claim to have a physical health problem and 58 (2.6%) a mental health problem. In terms of positive mental health, 912 (40.9%) seem to claim to have difficulties in establishing satisfactory interpersonal relationships; 1,141 (51.1%) claim to see their future with pessimism and 969 (43.4%) feel insecure when making decisions.

**Conclusions:** Nursing students find themselves in situations of bigger vulnerability and so they need intervention in the level of mental health promotion to minimize the risk of falling ill.

**Keywords:** Mental health. Students. Vulnerability. Nursing.