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## STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN AFRO-DESCENDANT SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES THROUGH MEDITATION: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Belonging to sexual and gender minorities and being afro-descendent brings an intense burden to these individuals, because of the stigma strongly present in society. Therefore, it is necessary to practice activities that provide the well-being and quality of life, such as meditation. **Objective:** To report the experience of the extension project “The influence of the practice of meditation focusing on breathing in the signs and symptoms of anxiety in the afro-descendant LGBT population”, which was part of the “Nucleus of African-Brazilian Studies” of the University Federal de Alagoas.

**Methodology:** This is a descriptive study, of the type of experience report. This extension project began in June 2018 and lasted until September 2019. The scholarship and collaborators were responsible for mediating the meditation meetings, which took place from Tuesday to Friday, both in the nursing school, as well as in the University Residence of the Federal University of Alagoas. Each participant was invited to attend a weekly meeting of meditation practice with focus on breathing, with three meditation blocks lasting 10min each, totaling 30min per meeting. In addition to the weekly meetings at the university, the participant received a meditation diary so that he could meditate daily at home, write down the difficulties encountered and the feelings experienced during the practice, in order to bring better results with the meditation routine. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Alagoas. **Results:** According to the records of the meditation practices made by the participants in the meditation diary, it was observed that, initially, they had a lot of difficulty in keeping the attention in breathing and other thoughts ended gaining space. However, with the course of the practices and the implementation of the meditative routine, there were feelings of lightness, tension relief, sleep improvement, concentration and anxiety. This is confirmed through the following reports of feelings experienced during the practices: “I felt good, with a certain peace, I felt grateful for feeling good”, “I felt calm, my bad feelings were mitigated”, “I felt calm and with less tension”, “Calmed me down and allowed me to have a peaceful sleep”, “disconnected me from my problems for a moment”, “renewed my energies of the week, to keep me calm and understanding”, “I went out with a peace and without haste, taking advantage of every detail of everything”. **Conclusions:** In this sense, mental health promotion activities such as meditation are essential, in order to contribute positively to the improvement of mental health and the quality of life of this population, considering the uniqueness of each one and stimulating the humanized self-care. It is a lightweight technology that does not demand high costs and can be used by any health professional.

**Keywords:** Mental health, Meditation, Sex and gender minorities.

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