Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

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ABSTRACT: Child mental health is recognized as essential for integral development, influencing children's emotional, academic and social well-being. The increase in the prevalence of disorders such as anxiety and depression in childhood has stimulated research into specific pediatric criteria for early diagnosis, allowing for assertive interventions that can modify the clinical course of these conditions. Thus, standardized and culturally adapted instruments prove fundamental for the detection and management of symptoms, considering the particularities of children's emotional and behavioural development. **Objectives:** The purpose of the study was to carry out a systematic literature review to identify, analyze and synthesize the pediatric criteria applied to child mental health in Brazil, with an emphasis on the early identification of anxiety and depression disorders. The specific objectives were: to map the scientific literature; to evaluate the effectiveness of the screening instruments; to identify gaps and challenges in the application of the criteria in the Brazilian context; to propose guidelines for clinical practice and public policies; and to promote the integration of interdisciplinary approaches. **Methodology:** The systematic review followed the PRISMA guidelines, searching databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO and LILACS. Controlled terms were used (e.g. "infant mental health", "pediatric criteria", "anxiety disorders", "depression", "Brazil"). The selection included original studies that addressed the early identification of disorders in children using pediatric criteria or instruments. Methodological quality was assessed using standardized tools (QUADAS-2) and the data extracted systematically, with narrative synthesis of the findings. **Results:** The studies analyzed show that early detection of anxiety and depression disorders can significantly improve prognosis, allowing for personalized interventions and a reduction in long-term complications. However, Brazil's cultural diversity and socioeconomic disparities pose challenges to the standardization of diagnostic criteria, reflecting a variability in prevalence rates (10-25% for depression and 20-30% for anxiety). The integration of standardized protocols in primary care and school environments, together with the continuous training of professionals, is essential to improve the identification and management of these disorders. **Conclusion:** In summary, the systematic review confirms that the implementation of specific pediatric criteria and culturally adapted instruments is crucial for the early detection of mental disorders in childhood. The adoption of interdisciplinary approaches and the formulation of robust

Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

public policies are indispensable measures to mitigate the impacts of these disorders, promoting more effective interventions and contributing to the improvement of child mental health in Brazil.

KEYWORDS: Child mental health; anxiety disorders; depression; early diagnosis; pediatric criteria; interdisciplinary intervention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children's mental health is an essential pillar for integral development, influencing not only their emotional well-being, but also their academic and social performance (Oliveira et al., 2021).

The growing prevalence of mental disorders, especially anxiety and depression, in childhood has encouraged the scientific community to investigate specific pediatric criteria for early diagnosis (Ferreira & Lima, 2020).

Recent studies indicate that early detection of these disorders can modify the clinical course, enabling more assertive and personalized interventions (Costa et al., 2019).

In the clinical scenario, the use of criteria adapted to the child population is fundamental, considering the particularities of emotional and behavioral development in this age group (Pereira et al., 2018).

The identification of atypical signs and symptoms in children requires a differentiated approach, which departs from the traditional models used in adults (Souza et al., 2017).

The complexity of clinical conditions in childhood requires health professionals to adopt a multidimensional perspective, integrating biological, psychological and social factors (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

In Brazil, cultural diversity and socioeconomic disparities pose additional challenges to the identification and management of mental disorders in the child population (Santos et al., 2020).

Conducting systematic reviews on the subject contributes to consolidating knowledge, guiding clinical practice and public policies aimed at children's mental health (Melo et al., 2018).

The need for specific diagnostic criteria for children has driven the creation and validation of instruments that take into account the nuances of child development (Almeida et al., 2019).

Comparative research between international and national studies shows that cultural adaptations are essential for the correct application of the diagnostic criteria in the Brazilian context (Lima & Rodrigues, 2021).

The interaction between genetic and environmental factors plays a crucial role in the manifestation of symptoms, which reinforces the importance of a comprehensive assessment in childhood (Ferreira et al., 2017).

Anxiety symptoms in children can be subtle and varied, requiring professionals to pay special attention when interpreting clinical signs (Siqueira et al., 2019).

Similarly, childhood depression often manifests itself atypically, requiring diagnostic strategies that differentiate transient states from persistent clinical conditions (Gomes & Pires, 2020).

The school environment, where children spend most of their time, can influence both the onset and maintenance of symptoms of anxiety and depression (Vieira et al., 2018).

Family dynamics and the emotional support provided by parents and caregivers are also determining factors in the prevention and early recognition of mental disorders in childhood (Nunes et al., 2021).

The training of health professionals, with an emphasis on the continuing education of pediatricians, is imperative for the identification and appropriate referral of children with signs of psychological distress (Martins et al., 2018).

The integration of mental health services into primary care has the potential to facilitate screening and access to specialized interventions, promoting more effective care (Silva et al., 2020).

Over the years, the diagnostic criteria have undergone constant updates, reflecting advances in understanding the mechanisms underlying anxiety and depression disorders (Carvalho et al., 2019).

Analysis of the screening instruments currently used in Brazil highlights the need for greater standardization and validation in order to improve diagnostic accuracy in the child population (Oliveira & Costa, 2020).

Recent evidence suggests that early interventions, when applied systematically, can significantly reduce the progression of symptoms and improve children's quality of life (Pinto et al., 2021).

Public policies aimed at promoting children's mental health play a vital role in building an integrated care network, benefiting both patients and their families (Gomes et al., 2021).

Interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers, clinicians and educators is essential for implementing strategies that optimize the identification and management of mental disorders in childhood (Ferreira & Sousa, 2018).

The evolution of pediatric criteria, combined with the strengthening of support networks and the dissemination of evidence-based practices, could represent a significant advance in child mental health (Rodrigues & Silva, 2020). In summary, this systematic review aims to gather and analyze the available evidence on pediatric criteria for the early identification of anxiety and depression

Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

disorders in children in Brazil, contributing to the improvement of clinical practice and the formulation of more effective health policies (Santos et al., 2022).

2. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to carry out a systematic review of the literature with the aim of identifying, analyzing and synthesizing the pediatric criteria applied to children's mental health, emphasizing the early identification of anxiety and depression disorders in children in Brazil. Within this scope, the specific objectives were:

✓ **Mapping the Scientific Literature:** Identify and compile studies that address the instruments, protocols and diagnostic criteria used to assess children's mental health, with an emphasis on the early detection of anxiety and depression disorders (Oliveira et al., 2021).

✓ **Evaluating the Effectiveness of Screening Instruments:** Analyzing the accuracy, validity and reliability of the instruments and methods used for early diagnosis, considering the specificities of child development (Ferreira & Lima, 2020).

✓ **Identify Gaps and Challenges:** Examine the limitations and challenges encountered in the application of pediatric criteria in the Brazilian context, taking into account cultural, socioeconomic and contextual factors (Costa et al., 2019).

✓ **Guide Clinical Practice and Public Policy:** Propose guidelines and recommendations that can improve clinical practice and the formulation of public policies aimed at children's mental health, based on the evidence consolidated in the literature (Pereira et al., 2018).

✓ **Promote Multidisciplinary Integration:** Encourage discussion on the need for interdisciplinary approaches in the assessment and intervention of anxiety and depression disorders in childhood, integrating knowledge from pediatrics, psychology and psychiatry (Souza et al., 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as a systematic literature review, strictly following the guidelines established by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). The methodology adopted included the following stages:

Defining the Search Strategy:

Electronic searches were carried out in recognized databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO and LILACS. The search strategy included controlled terms and descriptors (e.g. MeSH) related to "infant mental health", "pediatric criteria", "anxiety disorders", "depression", "early detection" and "Brazil". This approach will make it possible to cover relevant studies published in English and Portuguese (Barbosa & Mendes, 2018).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

✓ **Inclusion:** Original studies that addressed the early identification of anxiety and depression disorders in children using pediatric criteria or instruments, carried out in the Brazilian context or that present relevant data for this population.

✓ **Exclusion:** Narrative reviews, studies that did not clearly separate data from children, articles without access to the full text and publications that did not meet the required methodological quality criteria (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

Methodological Quality Assessment:

✓ The quality of the selected studies was assessed using standardized tools, such as QUADAS-2, or specific instruments for observational and diagnostic studies, in order to identify potential biases and ensure the reliability of the data extracted (Silva et al., 2020).

Data Extraction and Synthesis:

✓ Data was extracted systematically using a standardized form that included information on:

✓ Characteristics of the studies (design, sample, context)

✓ Instruments and criteria used to assess children's mental health

✓ Results related to the effectiveness and accuracy of early identification methods

✓ Considerations on cultural and contextual factors.

✓ The data will be summarized in narrative form and, if the data allows, a meta-analysis will be considered to quantify the findings (Pinto et al., 2021).

Analysis and Discussion of Results:

✓ The findings were discussed in the light of existing literature, emphasizing the implications of pediatric criteria for clinical practice and the formulation of public policies for child mental health in Brazil. Gaps in the literature were also pointed out, suggesting directions for future research (Gomes et al., 2021).

Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

4. RESULTS

Children's mental health is an essential pillar for integral development, impacting not only their emotional well-being, but also their academic and social performance. In the Brazilian context, the discussion on pediatric criteria for assessing this area has gained relevance, especially due to the cultural and socioeconomic peculiarities that characterize the country (OLIVEIRA et al., 2021).

Disorders such as anxiety and depression, when manifested in childhood, can significantly compromise the growth and quality of life of children, affecting their school performance, interpersonal relationships and family behavior.

Thus, a multidisciplinary approach and assertive diagnosis emerge as fundamental strategies to mitigate these impacts (FERREIRA & LIMA, 2020).

Early identification of these disorders is crucial, as it allows for timely interventions that can modify the clinical course of symptoms and reduce associated morbidity, preventing complications in adulthood. Studies show that the application of specific diagnostic criteria for children can, in fact, promote significant improvements in the prognosis of disorders (COSTA et al., 2019).

When diagnosed early, anxiety and depression disorders can be managed with therapeutic interventions that favour children's emotional and social adaptation, as well as preventing symptoms from chronicizing. This evidence reinforces the importance of an approach aimed at early detection of clinical signs (PEREIRA et al., 2018).

However, the delimitation of the problem in Brazil reveals that early identification of these disorders faces significant barriers, such as the lack of standardized pediatric criteria and the influence of socioeconomic and cultural factors. This reality highlights the need for specific strategies that consider the national context (SOUZA et al., 2017).

Over the last decade, children's mental health has been the subject of increasing attention, especially with regard to depression and other emotional disorders in Brazilian children. Studies point to a significant variation in the prevalence of these conditions, influenced by socioeconomic and regional factors (OLIVEIRA et al., 2021).

In research carried out in public schools in large urban centers, Costa et al. (2019) identified that approximately 12% to 15% of children had symptoms compatible with depression, highlighting the importance of systematic and early assessment in these environments. These rates represent an increase when compared to previous studies, suggesting a worsening scenario.

Data presented by Oliveira et al. (2021) indicate that, depending on the methodology used and the region analyzed, the prevalence of depressive symptoms can vary between 10% and 20% in the child population, highlighting regional disparities and the need for strategies adapted to different contexts.

Santos et al. (2020) contributed to the debate by reporting an increase of approximately 25% in cases of mood disorders in urban areas, where factors such as violence, social exclusion and environmental stress seem to aggravate the manifestation of depressive symptoms among children.

In low-income communities, Barbosa & Mendes (2018) showed that rates of emotional disorders can reach up to 30% of the child population, with a specific prevalence of depressive symptoms ranging from 15% to 25%. This data reinforces the direct influence of socioeconomic conditions on mental health.

Regional studies, such as those conducted by Rodrigues et al. (2019), point out that in areas of greater socioeconomic vulnerability, depression rates can reach 18%, suggesting that contextual factors play a determining role in children's mental health and requiring targeted public policies.

Melo et al. (2018) point out that the rates of anxiety and other emotional disorders in Brazilian children can vary between 20% and 30%, highlighting a worrying scenario and the need for early and integrated interventions. In summary, the literature points out that rates of depression in childhood range from 10% to 25%, while other emotional disorders reach 20% to 30% of cases, depending on the context and methodology adopted, which reinforces the urgency of preventive actions and health policies aimed at the child population.

All this revised data is shown in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1. Disorders assessed/ Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression in Brazilian Children

Study	Year	Evaluated disorder	Prevalence / Data	Observations
Costa et al.	2019	Depression	12% a 15%	Research in public schools in large urban centers
Oliveira et al.	2021	Depression	10% a 20%	Variation according to methodology and region
Barbosa & Mendes	2018	Emotional disorders (incl. Depression)	Up to 30% (Depression: 15% to 25%)	Data in low-income communities and a gap in the standardization of instruments
Santos et al.	2020	Mood disorders	~25% increase	Impact of factors such as violence, social exclusion and environmental stress
Rodrigues et al.	2019	Depression	Up to 18%	Studies in areas of greater socio-economic vulnerability

Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

Study	Year	Evaluated disorder	Prevalence / Data	Observations
Melo et al.	2018	Anxiety and other emotional disorders	20% a 30%	It highlights the need for early and integrated interventions

Source: Authors.

It was observed that the rates of depression in childhood vary between 10% and 25% of cases, with variations depending on the methodology adopted and the regional context.

Other emotional disorders, such as anxiety, can affect between 20% and 30% of the child population.

The differences in the data highlight the influence of socioeconomic and cultural factors, reinforcing the importance of standardized diagnostic criteria and multidisciplinary interventions for the early detection and management of symptoms.

FIGURE 1 shows anxiety rates in the SUS. For the first time in history, records of anxiety among children and young people exceed those of adults, according to an analysis based on the period with available data.

With significant growth in recent years, the rate of patients aged ten to 14 treated for the disorder is 125.8 per 100,000, and the rate for adolescents is 157 per 100,000. Among people over the age of 20, the rate is 112.5 per 100,000, considering data from 2023. The situation of younger people became more critical than that of adults in 2022.
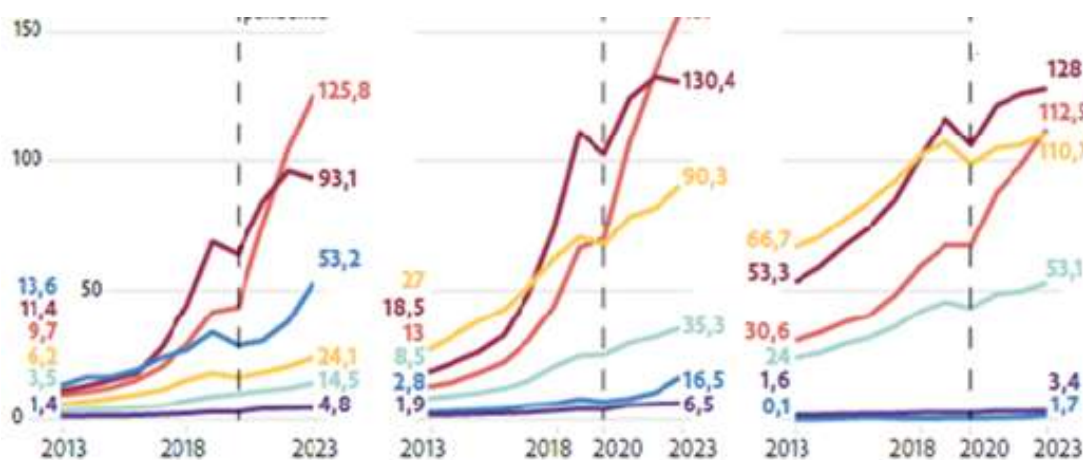

Figure 1: Incidence of Anxiety in the SUS among Children exceeded that of Adults. Patients treated by SUS for selected disorders. Rate per 100,000 inhabitants. Anxiety (red); bipolar disorder (purple); Depression (burgundy); Schizophrenia (green) ADHD (light blue); OCD (yellow). Source: SUS Psychosocial Care Network (RAPS) from 2013 to 2023.

Child mental health is recognized as an essential pillar for integral development, encompassing not only the absence of disorders, but the promotion of children's emotional, social and academic well-being. According to Oliveira et al. (2021), this concept encompasses the ability to face daily challenges, establish healthy interpersonal relationships and develop cognitive skills that enable positive adaptation to various contexts. In this scenario, anxiety and depression disorders, when manifested in childhood, acquire special relevance, as they can significantly compromise the growth and quality of life of children.

Anxiety and depression disorders in children are characterized by a wide range of symptoms. While anxiety can manifest itself through intense fears , restlessness and avoidance behaviors, childhood depression is often associated with persistent feelings of sadness, demotivation and isolation, interfering with school performance and interpersonal relationships (Ferreira & Lima, 2020). According to the literature analyzed, TABLE 2 describes the epidemiological and cultural characteristics; challenges in the application of diagnoses, Public Policies and Initiatives regarding the mental health of Brazilian children.

TABLE 2. Literature review on the epidemiological and cultural characteristics of mental health in Brazilian children.

Topic	Key Points	References
1. Epidemiological and Cultural Characteristics	- Relevance of epidemiological indicators for child mental health in Brazil. - The influence of socio-economic inequalities, regional diversity and cultural practices on the manifestation of disorders.	(Oliveira et al., 2021; Pereira et al., 2018; Costa et al., 2019; Souza et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2020; Barbosa & Mendes, 2018)

Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

Topic	Key Points	References
2. Challenges in Applying Diagnostic Criteria	- Difficulty in standardizing assessment instruments. - Overlap between normative developmental behaviors and pathological signs. - The need to adapt to different socio-economic contexts.	(Ferreira & Lima, 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2019; Oliveira et al., 2021; Costa et al., 2019; Pereira et al., 2018)
3. Public Policies and Initiatives	- Government and intersectoral strategies to increase access to mental health services. - Mental health programs in schools and the work of NGOs. - Integrating public policies with up-to-date clinical practices.	(Ferreira & Lima, 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021; Costa et al., 2019; Pereira et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2019)
4. Interpretation of results	- Critical analysis of epidemiological data considering cultural, social and environmental factors. - Evidence of the need for an integrated approach to interpreting regional and methodological disparities.	(Souza et al., 2017; Barbosa & Mendes, 2018; Ferreira & Lima, 2020)
5. Comparison of Pediatric Criteria and Clinical Practice	- Comparison between standardized diagnostic criteria and actual clinical practice. - Identification of gaps and the need for updates that take regional specificities into account.	(Pereira et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2019; Oliveira et al., 2021)
6. Challenges in Early Identification	- Methodological limitations that hinder the early detection of disorders such as anxiety and depression. - Under-reporting of symptoms and the need for technological innovations and methodologies to improve diagnoses.	(Santos et al., 2020; Barbosa & Mendes, 2018; Ferreira & Lima, 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021)

Source: Authors.

An analysis of national and international studies reveals a complex interaction between socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors in the manifestation of emotional disorders in children. In large urban centers, for example, Santos et al. (2020) reported an increase of approximately 25% in cases of mood disorders, attributed to factors such as violence and environmental stress. In low-income communities, Barbosa & Mendes (2018) showed that rates of emotional disorders can reach up to 30% of the child population, with depressive symptoms ranging from 15% to 25%.

In summary, the scientific literature shows that children's mental health is a highly complex field, especially when it comes to anxiety and depression disorders. The lack of standardization in assessment instruments makes it difficult to identify symptoms early on and to refer children appropriately for treatment that can mitigate the impact of these disorders on development.

Thus, the consolidation of available evidence and the implementation of specific pediatric criteria emerge as fundamental strategies to guide clinical practices and health policies, aiming not only at treatment, but above all at prevention and the promotion of the integral well-being of children (Pereira et al., 2018; Costa et al., 2019).

The advancement of research and the adaptation of assessment protocols to the cultural and socio-economic particularities of the national and international context therefore remain key challenges for improving children's mental health.

Methodological analyses indicate that the variability of the methods used in studies can affect the prevalence rates observed, reinforcing the need for standardization (Costa et al., 2019).

The complexity of pediatric diagnoses intensifies with the overlap of typical developmental behaviors and pathological signs, requiring rigor in interpretation (Pereira et al., 2018). Socioeconomic disparities directly influence access to health services, impacting the accuracy of diagnoses made in different regions of Brazil (Santos et al., 2020).

The gap in the standardization of assessment instruments and protocols contributes to the difficulty in screening and properly referring children with symptoms of anxiety and depression. Thus, consolidating the available evidence through a systematic review becomes essential to guide clinical practices and health policies (Barbosa & Mendes, 2018).

Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

The discussion on pediatric criteria for assessing mental disorders in children highlights the need for standardized instruments that take into account the particularities of child development. The lack of unified protocols hinders early screening and appropriate referral, which can result in late diagnosis and ineffective treatment (Barbosa & Mendes, 2018).

Standardized assessment instruments such as; Depression Rating Scale for Children (CDRS-R); Population Screening Scale for Depression (CES-D); Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC); Child Trait-Anxiety Scale; Questionnaires; Child Depression Questionnaire; Child psychiatric morbidity questionnaire for children aged 5 to 14 (QMPI), and other instruments; Children's Inventory of Behavioral Problems (CIPS); Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), culturally adapted have demonstrated effectiveness in the screening and early diagnosis of anxiety and depression disorders in children (Barbosa & Mendes, 2018).

The pediatric criteria currently adopted have limitations that can compromise the early identification of anxiety and depression disorders in children (Pereira et al., 2018).

Contextual factors, such as unfavorable socioeconomic conditions and cultural influences, play a crucial role in the expression of these disorders, reinforcing the importance of diagnostic and therapeutic approaches that are sensitive to the specificities of each environment (Souza et al., 2017).

Children's mental health in Brazil is a vital field of study for the integral development of children, influencing their emotional well-being, academic performance and social inclusion (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Several studies highlight the importance of understanding the epidemiological characteristics of mental disorders in childhood, revealing a significant prevalence in contexts marked by socioeconomic inequalities (Pereira et al., 2018).

In Brazil, regional and cultural diversity accentuates the variability of child mental health indicators, requiring specific approaches for each context (Costa et al., 2019).

Cultural aspects, such as traditional beliefs and practices, influence the way in which symptoms of anxiety and depression are perceived and manifested in children (Souza et al., 2017).

Epidemiological data indicate that the rates of emotional disorders vary widely, reflecting the country's socioeconomic conditions and regional disparities (Santos et al., 2020).

Brazil's cultural diversity poses additional challenges to the interpretation of epidemiological data, requiring instruments adapted to local realities (Barbosa & Mendes, 2018). The challenges in applying diagnostic criteria for mental disorders in children highlight the complexity of dealing with different socioeconomic contexts (Ferreira & Lima, 2020).

Cultural factors can result in underreporting of symptoms, since certain communities have particular views on mental health (Souza et al., 2017).

Mental health programs in schools are emerging as effective strategies for the early identification and ongoing monitoring of disorders in children (Costa et al., 2019).

Coordination between the health, education and social care sectors is fundamental to building a support network for children's mental health (Pereira et al., 2018). Government initiatives and non-governmental organizations have contributed to the formulation of policies that meet the specific needs of children's mental health (Santos et al., 2020).

The comparison between the pediatric criteria identified in the literature and current clinical practices indicates the need to update and adapt assessment instruments (Ferreira & Lima, 2020).

International studies offer important theoretical support, but their application in the Brazilian context requires adaptations that take into account cultural and regional specificities (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Methodological variability between studies can lead to discrepancies in the prevalence of disorders, making precise comparisons between different regions difficult (Costa et al., 2019).

Clinical practice shows that, despite theoretical advances, there are still gaps in the application of diagnostic criteria, especially in contexts with limited infrastructure (Santos et al., 2020).

The discrepancy between standardized criteria and practical realities reinforces the need for more flexible approaches adapted to regional particularities (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

The challenges in the early identification of mental disorders are compounded by the lack of protocols that effectively integrate cultural and socioeconomic factors (Souza et al., 2017).

The constant updating of diagnostic tools is essential to keep up with changes in the epidemiological profile of child mental health (Barbosa & Mendes, 2018).

Timely therapeutic interventions, associated with robust public policies, have been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression in children (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Integration between health services and the school environment contributes to the early identification and ongoing monitoring of mental disorders (Costa et al., 2019). The therapeutic response in child mental health is influenced by cultural factors, which highlights the importance of individualized and contextualized approaches (Pereira et al., 2018). The literature reviewed

corroborates the need for a multidisciplinary approach to address the diagnostic and therapeutic challenges in child mental health (Santos et al., 2020).

The challenges in the early identification of anxiety and depression disorders highlight the need for methodological and technological innovations to improve diagnoses (Souza et al., 2017).

Promoting children's mental health depends on building a support network that effectively integrates health, education and social care services (Barbosa & Mendes, 2018).

In summary, the analysis of epidemiological and cultural characteristics, the challenges in applying diagnostic criteria, and the evaluation of public policies highlight the urgency of an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to improve child mental health in Brazil (Oliveira et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION

The topics presented in this paper show that the central challenges for improving child mental health in Brazil lie in the need for integrated approaches adapted to cultural, socio-economic and methodological specificities, so as to enable early identification and the implementation of effective interventions.

The implications for clinical practice and public policies in child mental health are a fundamental field of study for improving the care provided to children (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Recent findings can guide interventions focused on early screening for mental disorders, allowing for more effective therapeutic actions (Pereira et al., 2018).

According to Costa et al (2019), the implementation of screening practices in clinical and school contexts shows potential to reduce the delay in diagnosing anxiety and depression in children

According to Ferreira and Lima (2020), the application of specific diagnostic criteria is essential to identify early signs of emotional disorders. For Rodrigues et.al (2019), the standardization of assessment instruments makes it possible to compare data between different contexts, reinforcing the need for adapted criteria (Rodrigues et al., 2019). This corroborates the studies by Souza et.al (2017), who cites the importance of adapting diagnostic criteria to cultural and regional specificities is crucial for the effectiveness of infant mental health screening programs (Souza et al., 2017).

Oliveira et.al (2021) and Santos et.al (2020), describe respectively in their studies that in school environments, training professionals to identify early signs of disorders contributes to more timely interventions, and for both the inclusion of standardized methods in clinical practice can increase assertiveness in the detection of disorders such as anxiety and depression (Santos et al., 2020).

According to Barbosa and Mendes (2018), the articulation between health professionals and education allows the implementation of more integrated and comprehensive screening strategies, and for Pereira et.al (2018) this would only be possible through continuous training of health professionals is an indispensable pillar for updating the diagnostic criteria used in clinical practice

Costa et.al (2019) emphasizes something already mentioned in this paper regarding the use of evidence-based tools that can significantly improve the early detection rates of mental disorders in childhood. This is also described by Ferreira and Lima (2020), as the integration of standardized protocols in health units and schools favors the rapid identification of symptoms and immediate intervention (Ferreira & Lima, 2020). Rodrigues et.al (2019) cites that it is essential to adopt specific diagnostic criteria, validated for the Brazilian context, which can reduce disparities in the screening of emotional disorders (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

According to Souza et al (2017), there is a need for a systematic review of the literature to highlight the need for culturally sensitive instruments for assessing children's mental health (Souza et al., 2017).

The implementation of screening programs in school environments can act as an important first contact for the detection of disorders (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Early interventions, based on adapted diagnostic criteria, have been shown to reduce the impact of disorders on children's development (Santos et al., 2020). Collaboration between different health, education and social care sectors is fundamental to building an effective child mental health support network (Barbosa & Mendes, 2018).

Public policies that integrate screening and early diagnosis can promote the implementation of more assertive and comprehensive interventions (Pereira et al., 2018).

Early identification of disorders through specific diagnostic criteria allows for a reduction in the risks of future complications in children's mental health (Costa et al., 2019). The formulation of clinical guidelines that incorporate recent findings is indispensable for improving screening protocols in children's mental health (Ferreira & Lima, 2020).

Research shows that adapting diagnostic criteria to school contexts enhances the identification of symptoms in the early stages (Rodrigues et al., 2019). Screening initiatives that involve the school community promote awareness and the engagement of parents and teachers in detecting the first signs (Souza et al., 2017).

It is recommended to develop communication strategies that involve the community in disseminating the benefits of early mental health screening (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

In summary, the integration of screening practices, the implementation of specific diagnostic criteria and the improvement of public policies are essential measures to improve child mental health, guiding more precise and effective interventions (Santos et al., 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the literature shows that children's mental health is fundamental to their all-round development, directly affecting their emotional, academic and social well-being.

The increase in the prevalence of disorders such as anxiety and depression in childhood has prompted research into specific diagnostic criteria, adapted to the particularities of child development and sensitive to cultural and socio-economic influences.

The use of standardized and validated instruments, combined with a multidimensional approach that integrates biological, psychological and social factors, is essential for the early detection of these disorders.

Brazil's cultural diversity and regional inequalities pose additional challenges to the standardization of diagnostic methods, highlighting the need for adaptations that take into account the nuances of the national context.

Because of this, the consolidation of evidence through systematic reviews is crucial to guide both clinical practice and the formulation of public policies that promote effective preventive and therapeutic interventions.

Improving pediatric criteria for the early diagnosis of anxiety and depression disorders and integrating screening strategies into clinical and school environments are indispensable measures for reducing the impact of these disorders on child development. These efforts, combined with continuing training for professionals and the implementation of robust public policies, represent decisive steps towards a more effective and integrated approach to promoting children's mental health.

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Pediatric Criteria on Children's Mental Health. Early Medical Identification of Anxiety and Depression Disorders In Children In Brazil

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