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FEMINIZATION OF OLD AGE AND ITS INTERFACE WITH DEPRESSION: INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

FEMINIZAÇÃO DA VELHICE E SUA INTERFACE COM A DEPRESSÃO: REVISÃO INTEGRATIVA

FEMINIZACIÓN DE LA ANCIANIDAD Y SU INTERRELACIÓN CON LA DEPRESIÓN: REVISIÓN INTEGRADORA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the scientific literature on the feminization of old age and its interface with depression. ***Method:*** an integrative review in the databases Lilacs and Medline, and ScIELO virtual library. The review process was guided by the question << ***What is the interface between the feminization of old age and depression?*** >>. For the analysis of the studies, the units of meaning of the 15 selected articles were sought. ***Results:*** The studies describe the existence of a significant relationship between aging phenomena, feminization and depression, as well as point out the main factors that are associated with this problem. ***Conclusion:*** it is still possible to identify the existence of epistemological gaps related to knowledge produced about the feminization process of aging and depression. ***Descriptors:*** Aging; Women; Depression; Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo*:** analisar a literatura científica sobre a feminização da velhice e sua interface com a depressão. ***Método*:** revisão integrativa nas bases de dados Lilacs e *Medline*, e biblioteca virtual *ScIELO*. O processo revisional foi norteado pela pergunta << ***Qual a interface entre a feminização da velhice e a depressão? >>. Para a análise dos estudos buscou-se os núcleos de sentido que compõem o corpus de 15 artigos selecionados. ***Resultados*:** os estudos descrevem a existência de uma significativa relação entre os fenômenos envelhecimento, feminização e depressão, bem como apontam os principais fatores que estão associados a essa problemática. ***Conclusão*:** ainda é possível identificar a existência de lacunas epistemológicas relacionadas aos conhecimentos produzidos sobre o processo de feminização da velhice e depressão. ***Descritores*:** Envelhecimento; Mulheres; Depressão; Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Analizar la literatura científica sobre la feminización de la vejez y su interrelación con la depresión. ***Método:*** una revisión integradora en las bases de datos LILACS y MEDLINE, y la biblioteca virtual de ScIELO. El proceso revisional fue guiado por la pregunta << ***¿Qué es la interfaz entre la feminización de la vejez y la depresión?*** >>. Para el análisis de los estudios tratado de las unidades de significado que componen el cuerpo de 15 artículos seleccionados. ***Resultados:*** Los estudios describen la existencia de una relación significativa entre los fenómenos de envejecimiento, feminización y la depresión, así como señalar los principales factores que están asociados con este problema. ***Conclusión:*** todavía es posible identificar la existencia de vacíos epistemológicos relacionados con el conocimiento producido sobre el proceso de feminización del envejecimiento y la depresión. ***Descriptores*:** Envejecimiento; Las Mujeres; Depresión; Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

Health professionals, services and society in general experience the challenges of population aging. This issue brings the discussion about the role of different social actors in different contexts, and the need to draw up new policies to encourage the prevention, care and comprehensive health care facing the elderly.

This theme has never been so evident in a developing country, as Brazil, since it has been found increased longevity associated with improved quality of life. This process has been identified from projections that point to a population of 63 million older people, in the year 2050.[1]

In the last Brazilian census, it was found that women represent 55.5% of the elderly population.[2] The statistics show that, although aging is a natural process, it has a strong gender component – predominantly women, featuring the feminization of old age.[3] In this context, several care demands emerge over the changes in the physical, psychological and social aspects of being human.[4] Moreover, it is important to note that, during this phase of life, it is common to elderly woman face the loss of a spouse, financial difficulties, presence of chronic degenerative diseases and the lack of family support, which may favor the emergence of depressive symptoms.

Depression, therefore, emerges as one of the psychiatric disorders that affect more female elderly population, characterized by feelings of sadness, dejection, hopelessness, sleep disturbances, and lack of appetite and social isolation.[5]

Given the magnitude of the problems, there is the need to discuss the multidimensionality of female aging and its interface with depression. In addition, the expansion of the scientific production to address these issues is of great importance. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the scientific literature on the feminization of old age and its interface with depression.

METHOD

Integrative review, relevant research method to strengthen the Evidence-Based Practice (EBP).[6-7] The method consisted of six stages: preparation of the guiding question, literature search, data collection, critical analysis of the included studies, discussion of results and presentation of the integrative review.[8]

The guiding question for the review process was built through the peak strategy (P = Patient or Problem, I = Intervention, C = comparison or control, O = Outcomes or outcomes)[9]: *which interface between the feminization of old age and depression?*

For the search of articles, the internet was used to access the databases: Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences (LILACS), and Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE) via PubMed and the virtual library Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO)

The survey in the literature occurred in the months of September to December, 2014. For the literature the boolean marker was applied among registered controlled descriptors in the Descriptors in Health Sciences (DECS) and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH Terms), as presented in Figure 1.

Database / Virtual Library	Descriptors controlled
LILACS	Aging and feminization and Depression
SciELO	Aging and feminization and Depression
MEDLINE	*Aging and Feminization and Depression*

Figure 1. Databases / virtual library used to search the primary studies and controlled descriptors used to query the databases. Teresina - PI 2014.

The following inclusion criteria were established: studies that address the interface between the feminization of old age and depression and they were published in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Studies that were repeated in the surveyed bases were discarded.

From the combination of descriptors, 12 studies in Lilacs, Scielo in 9 and 21 in Medline were identified. Initially, the selection of studies was carried out by reading the title and summary for verification of compliance with previously established inclusion criteria. Thus, it included only five studies of Lilacs, Scielo 4 and 11 of Medline (Figure 1).

It is noteworthy that these 20 studies were critically analyzed by an instrument proposed by the Brazilian researchers.[8] After

application of the instrument and critical analysis of research studies, five works were excluded for not having consistency in the discussion on the interface between the feminization of old age and depression, totaling the inclusion of 15 studies that made it possible to observe, describe and classify data in order to group the knowledge produced according to the theme of the study (Figure 2).

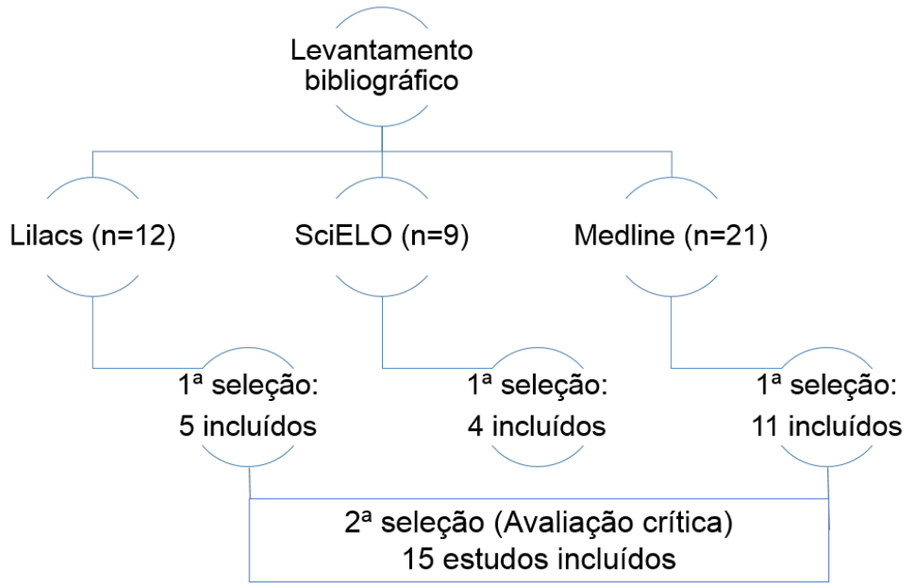

Figure 2. Mapping of the identification, selection and analysis of results. Teresina, 2014.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

♦ Characteristics of included studies

The analyzed studies confirm the interface between phenomena (aging, feminization and depression), and describe the factors that are associated with this problem. The theoretical studies that support this discussion are shown in Figure 3:

Authors, Year	Title	Methodology	Periodic
Carreira et al, 2011[10]	Prevalence of depression in institutionalized elderly	Quantitative approach	Rev. enferm. UERJ
Baptista et al, 2006[11]	Correlation between depressive symptoms and practice of social activities in the elderly Understanding the experience of sexuality of the elderly	Quantitative approach	Avaliação Psicológica
Lyra; Jesus, 2007[12]	Understanding the experience of elderly sexuality	Qualitative approach	Nursing
Santos, 2010[4]	Theoretical and philosophical views on aging, old age, elderly and geriatric nursing	Reflection	Rev Brasileira de Enfermagem
Veras, 2012[13]	Experiences and international trends in models of care to the elderly	Reflection	Ciência & Saúde Coletiva
Rodrigues; Duarte; Lebrão, 2009[14]	Gender, sexuality and aging	Quantitative approach	Saúde Coletiva
Lehn et al, 2012[15]	Nutritional status of elderly in a long term care facility	Quantitative approach	J Health Sci Inst
Figueiredo et al, 2007[3]	Gender differences in old age	Qualitative approach	Rev. Brasileira de Enfermagem
Irigaray; Schneider, 2007[16]	Prevalence of depression in elderly women attending the University for the Third Age	Quantitative approach	Rev Psiquiatria do Rio Grande do Sul
Pinho;	Incidence of depression and associated		

Custódio; Makdisse, 2009[17]	factors in elderly residents in the community: literature review	Literature Review	Rev. Bras. Geriatr. Gerontol.
Resende et al, 2011[18]	Mental health and aging	Quantitative approach	Rev Psicologia
Souza; Paulucci, 2011[19]	Analysis of depression among institutionalized elderly	Quantitative approach	Rev Enfermagem do Centro-Oeste Mineiro
Minghelli et al, 2013[20]	Comparison of levels of anxiety and depression among active and sedentary elderly	Quantitative approach	Rev Psiq Clín Portugal
Soares et al, 2013[21]	Depression in elderly assisted in Basic Health Units	Quantitative approach	Rev enferm UFPE on line.
Silva; Ferreira-Alves, 2012[22]	Mourning in older adults: the nature of the individual challenge and contextual variables in different models	Reflection	Psicologia: reflexão e crítica.

Figure 3. Presentation of the studies analyzed about the interface between the feminization of old age and depression. Teresina - PI 2014.

The production of scientific knowledge, which addresses the feminization of old age and its interface with depression, took place mainly in the years 2008, 2011 and 2012. As for the methodological approach of the selected studies, it was observed that most of the included studies was of quantitative approach. The Brazilian Journal of Nursing (Reben) stood out as the journal that more addressed the topic of study.

♦ Feminization of old age and its interface with depression

Aging appears as an object of study that has gained increased visibility and interest of Brazilian researchers in the last three decades, due to accelerated growth in percentage terms, of people in the third age. This is due in part to the decline in fertility rates, the reduction of child mortality, improvement in health care and quality of life, which has contributed positively to the increase in the number of elderly, constituting an achievement in the last century in our country.[10-1]

Aging is characterized as a part of the human life cycle, and can be understood as a sequential process, accumulative, universal and physiological that begins at birth and continues throughout life causing the individual to experience a continuous and irreversible process marked mainly by biological, psychological and social changes.[12]

The biological changes are evidenced by the appearance of wrinkles, white hair, age spots, among others, it is important to note that a positive self-image will encourage the acceptance of their own body. Psychological changes reflect the adaptation that humans need to develop every new situation, such as the loss of ties both by distance and by death. As for the social are checked by the limitations, economic and physical power losses, a direct result of decreased productivity and retirement.[4,12]

It is emphasized that aging in Brazil, as in other countries, is configured as a predominantly female phenomenon, becoming a matter of gender.[13] In this context, it is necessary to understand that gender refers to culturally constructed differences between men and women and the relationships between them. Thus, from the observations of sex differences, society creates and establishes what is to be a man and what is to be a woman, and these differences will intensify throughout life, especially in old age.[14] Added to this context, the responsibility given to women for the whole care of the house, with the children, with the emotions and the affective relationships.

This reality ratify the fact that women are still in a position of inferiority and domination/ subordination to men and, hence, are most vulnerable to mental illness, especially depression.[16] Scientific evidence also shows that, associated with this mental condition, there are other risk factors, such as social inequality, poverty, cumulative effect of malnutrition, physical inactivity, multiparity, beyond the physical and psychological strain of arduous and double working hours.[3]

Depression is characterized by a set of signs and persistent symptoms that involve from sleep disorders, feelings of intense sadness to loneliness, hopelessness and despondency. This clinical condition is one of the most common types of mood disorders with a prevalence ranging from 4.8 to 23% in

the elderly and is more common in women than in men.[11,16-7]

It is noted that depression in the elderly woman can be, in most of times, masked by other diseases, besides the fact that the symptoms may be confused with times of “feeling blue”, "bad mood" or rebate, making it difficult for early diagnosis.[18]

Therefore, it is a problem of severe magnitude to public health, since it involves high costs for the health sector and damage to the subject who experiences and the family. Depression is a major cause of morbidity and mortality, suffering and that greatly affects the quality of life of women, especially the elderly.[18-19]

In Brazil, the decline of the clinical condition of the elderly woman is further exacerbated by socioeconomic issues. Studies show that low educational level, long institutionalization and greater degree of dependence for daily activities are factors that can influence the onset of depression.[19-20]

It is stressed that even retirement, presence of chronic degenerative diseases, loss of spouse and/or partner, family abandonment, social isolation and physical inactivity contribute to increased anxiety levels and the onset of depression in older women.[20-21]

In light of this context, there is also evidence that the levels of anxiety and/or depression are more prevalent in older and can depressive disorder is diagnosed twice more in women than in men. However, there is that older women seek more aid to health, adhere more to treatment and are more social, which consequently leads to greater detection of these cases.[20,22]

It is also noteworthy that depression in old age is associated with self-care neglect which generates higher suicide risk in this population. Before the importance of this issue and care about the health of the elderly, especially women, there is the National Health Policy for the Elderly, that aims to restore, maintain and promote the autonomy and independence of the elderly and establishes Attention Basic as a gateway for these users to the health service[21], being necessary to encourage multidimensional approach to older attending these services.

CONCLUSION

Population aging is a current issue and, predominantly, female. In this context, there is, usually, presence of diseases such as depression, which significantly affects the quality of life of older women, meriting further investigation about its determinants, as well as prevention and treatment.

The integrative review identified that the feminization of old age has interface with depression, since in this process low educational level, longer institutionalization, greater degree of dependence for daily activities, retirement, presence of chronic degenerative diseases, spouse loss and/or partner, family abandonment, social isolation and physical inactivity may contribute to the onset of depressive symptoms.

According to the searched studies, there is still the existence of epistemological gaps that shows the interface between the feminization process of aging and depression, since the researched scientific literature refers to aging men and women without taking into consideration the specific gender.

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