RESUMO

Objetivo: Refletir sobre as representações sociais do usuário de drogas psicoativas para a Igreja Católica. Método: Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo, descritivo, tipo reflexivo. Basearam-se os critérios de inclusão em sujeitos com idade superior a 18 anos e que frequentam o grupo religioso há pelo menos seis meses, excluindo-se os participantes que não preencheram tais critérios. Adotaram-se a Teoria das Representações Sociais como referencial teórico e o Teste de Associação Livre de Palavras como instrumento de coleta de dados. Resultados: Compôs-se a amostra final do estudo por 100 participantes dos quais 34 eram do sexo feminino e 66, do sexo masculino. Percebeu-se, referente ao grau de instrução, que a maioria apresentava Ensino Médio completo (39 participantes) e, no que tange à faixa etária, 30 apresentavam idades entre 20 e 30 anos, e 26, entre 31 e 40 anos. Conclusão: Aponta-se a religião católica com maior número de fiéis no Brasil, dessa forma, entender a sua representação a respeito do usuário de drogas psicoativas visa a colaborar, de maneira direta, para a construção de ferramentas capazes de potencializar o tratamento oferecido para estes usuários não só nas comunidades terapêuticas, como também no Sistema Único de Saúde, tendo em vista que hoje se admite que o ser humano é biopsicossocial-espiritual.

Descritores: Religião; Espiritualidade; Representações Sociais; Drogas Psicoativas; Dependência Química; Saúde Mental.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To reflect on the social representations of the psychoactive drug user for the Catholic Church. Method: It is a qualitative, descriptive, reflective type study. The inclusion criteria were based on subjects over 18 years of age who have been attending the religious group for at least six months, excluding those who did not meet such criteria. The Theory of Social Representations was
adopted as a theoretical reference and the Free Association of Words Test as an instrument of data collection. **Results:** The final sample of the study was composed by 100 participants of whom 34 were female and 66 were male. It was noticed, regarding the level of education, that the majority had finished High School (39 participants) and, concerning the age group, 30 were between 20 and 30 years old, while 26 were between 31 and 40 years old. **Conclusion:** The Catholic religion is pointed out as having the largest number of members in Brazil; thus, understanding its representation regarding the user of psychoactive drugs aims to collaborate directly in the construction of tools capable of boosting the treatment offered to such users not only in the therapeutic communities, but also in the Unified Health System (SUS), bearing in mind that today the human being is admitted as being biopsychosocial-spiritual.

**Descriptors:** Religion; Spirituality; Social Representations; Psychoactive Drugs; Chemical Addiction; Mental Health.

**RESUMEN**

**Objetivo:** Reflexionar sobre las representaciones sociales del consumidor de drogas psicoactivas para la Iglesia Católica. **Método:** Es un estudio de tipo cualitativo, descriptivo y reflexivo. Los criterios de inclusión se basaron en sujetos mayores de 18 años que hayan asistido al grupo religioso durante al menos seis meses, excluyendo a aquellos que no cumplieron dichos criterios. Se adoptó como referencia teórica la Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales y como instrumento de recolección de datos el Test de Asociación Libre de Palabras. **Resultados:** La muestra final del estudio estuvo compuesta por 100 participantes de los cuales 34 eran mujeres y 66 eran hombres. Se advirtió, en cuanto al nivel de estudios, que la mayoría había terminado el Bachillerato (39 participantes) y, en cuanto al grupo de edad, 30 tenían entre 20 y 30 años, mientras que 26 tenían entre 31 y 40 años. **Conclusión:** Se señala que la religión católica tiene el mayor número de miembros en Brasil; así, entender su representación frente al usuario de psicofármacos tiene como objetivo colaborar directamente en la construcción de herramientas capaces de potenciar el tratamiento ofrecido a dichos usuarios no solo en las comunidades terapéuticas, sino también en el Sistema Único de Salud (SUS), teniendo en cuenta que hoy se admite al ser humano como biopsicosocial-espiritual.

**Descriptores:** Religión; Espiritualidad; Representaciones Sociales; Drogas Psicoactivas; Adicción Química; Salud Mental.

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INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, a large number of people adhering to different religions can be observed, which classifies religion in the country as diversified and characterized by syncretism. The Brazilian Constitution provides for freedom of religion, while also making the existence of the separation between religion and the State clear, which makes the country a secular State.

It is noticed that 91% of the Brazilians living in the Southeastern region declare themselves to be followers of some religion and the religions that have an expression in this region are: Roman Catholic Apostolic (59.5%); Evangelical (24.6%); Spiritualist (3.1%); Umbanda and Candomblé (0.4%); other religions (3.4%).

It is known that the Catholic religion has the largest number of members not only in the Southeastern region, but throughout the country. In addition, the Catholic Church was pioneer in the fight against the abusive consumption of psychoactive drugs, as it was the first religion to propose the creation of a therapeutic community with care based on religiosity and spirituality, because, for the Catholic Church, the abusive consumption of psychoactive substances is an evil that does not give a break and, besides doing harm to the body, suffocates the spirit.

Thus, it is observed that the abusive consumption of psychoactive drugs, once it alters bodily functions, is represented by the bad care of man over the body that does not belong to him, but, in the conception of this religion, was given by God and is inhabited by the Holy Spirit.

It is stressed that not only is the main message of the Catholic Church about psychoactive drug addicts based on consumption, but it is also at the center of the human person, so that the tools to combat abusive consumption are based on recovering the meaning of life.

Based on these premises, this study is revealed to have as its object the relationship between Catholicism and the person who uses drugs in general. For this purpose, the Theory of Social Representations created by Serge Moscovici was used, since it helps to understand how the individual thinks within his social context as well as to understand the reality where it takes place.
OBJECTIVE

To reflect on the social representations of the psychoactive drug user for the Catholic Church.

METHOD

It is a qualitative, descriptive, reflective type study, originating from reflections on the social representations of drug users for religious groups with a focus on the Catholic Church.

The Theory of Social Representations was adopted as a theoretical reference, and the Free Word Association Test as a data collection tool. It was thus possible to establish the representative elements of the social representations of the drug user. Under this technique, the subjects are invited to say the first five words that come to their minds when they hear an inducing term that, in this study, was: alcohol and drug user. The inclusion criteria were based on subjects over 18 years of age who have been attending the religious group for at least six months, excluding those participants who did not meet such criteria.

The study was submitted to the Committee of Ethics in Research of the Castelo Branco University, being approved under CAEE n°: 06246419.7.1001.8144.

RESULTS

The final sample of the study was composed by 100 participants of whom 34 were female and 66 were male. It was noticed, regarding the participants’ level of education, that the majority had finished High School (39 participants), as can be seen in Figure 1. It is pointed out, in relation to the age group of the participants, that 30 were between 20 and 30 years of age and 26 were between 31 and 40 years of age.

![Figure 1 - Distribution of study participants by education level (Incomplete Elementary School 1%; Elementary School 5%; High School 39%; University Degree 37%; Specialization 14%; Post-Graduation 4%).](image-url)
The data collected from the Free Word Association Test were typed and organized in corpus form, in order to enable its treatment by means of EVOC 2000 software, thus making it possible to create the four-house frame with the elements that make up the representative structure divided into four quadrants, where: the upper-left quadrant represents the central nucleus; the upper-right quadrant, the first periphery; the lower-right quadrant, the second periphery and the contrast zone is represented by the lower-left quadrant.

Figure 2 of four houses can be observed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E.M.R. &lt; 2,50</th>
<th>E.M.R. ≥ 2,50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Freq.</td>
<td>Evoked term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 16 Dependent</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addiction &lt; 16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addict</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Houses referring to the Catholic participants' evocations to the inducing term user of alcohol and drugs. Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Brazil, 2019. (Note: N= 100; F min=5; F intermediate=16; Rang=2,50)

DISCUSSION

The central nucleus of this social representation is made up of the cognems help and sadness linked to the affective dimension, and the terms dependent and disease linked to the imagetic dimension. Regarding the elements of the central nucleus, the cognem help linked to the user of psychoactive drugs is related to the difficulty that the user presents in starting treatment in view of its complexity and the difficulty users have in starting and adhering to the treatment. The individual becomes impotent due to the use of drugs, which becomes a priority over other activities. These individuals are often pointed out as needing help to see the need for treatment. Still in the central nucleus, the presence of the cognems disease and dependency is observed, this fact being consistent with the Brazilian psychiatric reform, which has defined psychoactive drug dependency as a mental disorder, that is, a disease that needs treatment.
It is reported that, as from the Brazilian psychiatric reform, patients with mental disorders related to the use of psychoactive drugs began to be assisted by the Alcohol and Drugs Psychosocial Attention Centers (CAPS-ad), health institutions that have the objective of treating the patient and reinserting him into society in order to reduce drug-related stigma and prejudice. The psychiatric reform has also made it possible to extinguish asylums and create therapeutic communities, which are institutions maintained by religions for the treatment of psychoactive drug abuse, reinforcing the presence of the help and dependency elements in the central nucleus, once these institutions help the individual to be free from the dependency.10

In the central nucleus, the term sadness related to the affective dimension is also verified. The use of alcohol and drugs brings suffering not only to the person who consumes, but also to all those around them, such as friends and family, causing this feeling of sadness to all involved.11 Sadness can also be described as one of the reasons that drive the individual to use psychoactive substances, that is, it can be described as a factor that triggers the use.12

The terms which were most readily and frequently evoked are found in the central nucleus, i.e., the cognems belonging to the central nucleus represent the social thinking of Catholic participants towards drug users.

In the first periphery, the presence of the cognem family linked to the imagetic dimension is observed. The family plays an important role in the development of the individual. Today's society in the family is regarded as the central element of the individual, performing the role of loving and caring. Thus, the parents' self-esteem is deeply affected when their child falls ill, meaning, for them, the failure of the family system and, consequently, of their upbringing system.13-14 It is revealed that the cognem family is multidimensional, that is, it contains other cognems, such as sadness and help.

It is demonstrated that the data presented in the second periphery, as well as in the first, have the objective to reinforce the elements of the central nucleus. Thus, the second periphery is composed of the cognems: drugs, related to the conceptual dimension; weakness and pity, to the affective dimension; and treatment, to the institutional dimension. The idea that drug use is considered a disease that deserves treatment is reinforced by the appearance of the institutional dimension with the cognem treatment.

In the contrast zone of this representation, the following cognems are present: dependency; addiction; sick; suffering; and addict. Attention is drawn to the term addict, thus raising issues related to the stigma and prejudice attached to the user of psychoactive drugs. Such stigma and prejudice are presented as one of the main factors why drug users do not seek treatment and, when they do, they fail to abide by it in the proposed way.15 Stigma and prejudice, still in this
sense, stand out as a social phenomenon that can collaborate directly to the increase in cases of suicide related to drug use,\textsuperscript{16-17} as well as for the devaluation of the individual and his social isolation.\textsuperscript{18-19}

For nursing, this study brings direct impacts on caring, since nursing provides services directly linked to the human being, and the latter is in constant interaction with the universe and the social environment, attributing them characteristics such as authenticity and individuality. Therefore, nursing should develop actions aimed at achieving this individuality, focusing on the care of the human being as a whole, in accordance with SUS principles as well as with the World Health Organization, since the latter defines health as the complete state of physical, social and mental well-being.\textsuperscript{10}

Thus, the spiritual dimension of the human being is understood as integrating the psychological one, and nursing should involve strategies for treatment that address not only physical but also psychological issues.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

The use of drugs has been shown to involve several factors related to the beginning of the consumption, and the various social groups have distinct ideas regarding the drug and the person who uses it.

It should be noted that the social representations of Catholics regarding the user of psychoactive drugs do not present terms connected to the religious institution itself, since it was not possible to observe cognems related to the transcendental sphere.

It has been observed that the understanding of the social representations of drugs for religious groups impacts directly on health care and nursing, once one of the principles of SUS is the integrality that aims at caring for the patient as a whole.

Today the human being is understood to have psychological, physical, social and spiritual needs, with a view to defining him as a biopsychosocial-spiritual being, thus reinforcing the need for assistance that is capable of involving all areas.

The theory of basic human needs created by Wanda Horta makes the need to understand the human being as a whole, as a multifactorial being, clear, so that care can be provided with quality.

It has been highlighted that this representation makes all the suffering that pervades the life of the drug user and his family clear, given the several elements related to the affective dimension in this representational structure.
As a limitation of this study, it is important to point out that centrality tests have not been carried out, since they are tools that can confirm the centrality of terms present in the central nucleus and, thus, reinforce the meaning of social representation for the group investigated.

The Catholic religion is claimed to have the largest number of members in Brazil, therefore understanding its representation regarding the user of psychoactive drugs aims to collaborate directly in the construction of tools capable of enhancing the treatment offered to such users not only in therapeutic communities, but also in the Unified Health System, given that today the human being is regarded as biopsychosocial-spiritual.

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