

THE ROOTING OF MACHISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM: PHYSICAL AND/ OPSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE TOWARDS FEMALES

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Abstract: Objective: Compile and analyze data on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the worsening of violence against women (VAW), identifying its intensifiers and possible mechanisms that can be used to deal with this phenomenon, discussing the challenges of guaranteeing the protection of women and its effectiveness through the need to adapt these measures. **Methods:** Integrative bibliographic review with the following guiding question: What was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on violence against women in Brazil? The databases used in the search were: *National Library of Medicine (PubMed)*, *Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO)* and *Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS)*. For the selection of articles, the following health descriptors (Decs) and Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) were used combined with Boolean operators: Violence Against Women AND Covid-19. **Results:** Among the 46 articles located, 09 were selected whose analysis was outlined in three topics: VAW Intensifiers, Question of Social Classes and Combat Strategies. **Conclusion:** Social isolation during the pandemic period intensified violence against women (VWM), by restricting coexistence together with barriers to access and reception in health services, thus increasing the vulnerability of this group.

Keywords: Gender violence, Domestic violence, pandemic, gender analysis in health

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women (VAW) comprises actions that harm their dignity as a human being, whether in the physical scope (any behavior that compromises their integrity or bodily health) or in the symbolic aspect (psychological, moral or patrimonial). (BRASIL, 2006; CORTES LF, et al., 2020). According to the World Health Organization

(WHO), 30% of women in the world have experienced situations of physical and/or sexual domestic violence (WHO, 2013).

According to the United Nations-UN (1995), as it is a serious public health problem, coping with VAW is one of the twelve priority areas contained in the Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Platform).), however, 26 years after the Beijing Declaration was formulated, studies carried out in Brazil indicate that the percentage of women who reported being victims of physical and/or sexual violence committed by an intimate person ranged from 14% to 17% (BOTT GA, et al., 2019), and, according to the Institute of Applied Economic Research -IPEA, in 2019, 7,756 deaths from violent causes were recorded in women, among which, 3,736 were homicides, which is equivalent to a homicide rate in women of 3.5 per 100,000 women (IPEA, 2021). According to the Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security carried out in 2020, 35.5% of the women who suffered intentional homicides in 2019 were victims of femicide, that is, they were killed due to their gender condition and 1,246 of the total occurred in their own homes (BUENO S and LIMA RS, 2020).

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, social isolation measures were adopted in order to contain the high rate of transmissibility of the virus and, consequently, the morbidity and mortality rates caused by the disease (CRODA JRH and GARCIA LP, 2020; SHARMA A, et al., 2021). However, this measure may have contributed to the increase in VAW. A recent study pointed out that, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the numbers related to VAW grew exponentially, highlighting cases that occurred in China, France, Spain and Colombia, and this trend also had repercussions in Brazil (SILVA YAM, 2021).

Given this information, the present study aimed to analyze the factors that potentiated the worsening of violence against women during the Covid-19 pandemic. This work is justified by the fact that VAW is a historical-social problem of great impact on public health, urging greater attention in the face of the weaknesses resulting from the pandemic period, in addition, it points out possible strategies to combat VAW.

METHOD

This is a qualitative research, through an integrative review, as stated by Souza MTD, et al., (2020) and Aromataris EMZ (2020). This type of review was chosen due to the scarcity of published studies regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on VAW, thus being appropriate for data compilation, analysis and synthesis. To formulate the research question, the PICO strategy was used (P: population; I: phenomenon of interest; Co: context) (CARLSON NS, 2016). It was then considered P: women, I: violence against women, Co: Covid-19. Thus, the guiding question of the research was: What is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on violence against women in Brazil?

DATABASE AND SEARCH STRATEGY

Article searches were carried out from July 1 to November 20, 2021 in the following databases: *National Library of Medicine (PubMed)*, *Scientific Eletronic Library Online (SciELO)* and *Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS)*.

For the selection of articles, the following health descriptors (Decs) and Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) were used combined with Boolean operators: Violence Against Women AND Covid-19.

CRITERIA OF ELIGIBILITY

The eligibility of the studies was carried out as recommended by *Joanna Briggs Institute* for review, according to the PCC structure - Population, Concept and Context (AROMATARIS EMZ, 2020).

The descriptors and keywords were used in an associated manner, respecting the specific characteristics of each of the selected databases. The searches were limited to articles published during the Covid-19 pandemic peak period, that is, December 2019, and were limited to November 2021, given the purpose of identifying evidence on the topic.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The inclusion criteria of the articles were: a) articles published in Portuguese, English and/or Spanish, with abstracts available in the selected databases, b) works published in the period between December 2019 and November 30, 2021; c) complete articles related to the research theme and of free access. Articles that did not meet the aforementioned criteria, duplicates and those that, after analyzing the title, abstract or reading in full, were not related to the formulated guiding question were excluded.

RESULTS

A total of 46 articles were located in the databases, in figure 1 the search strategies used by the researchers are described. Among the 46 articles located, 19 were excluded, and 27 were chosen for full reading and the final sample was then constituted by 09 articles. Figure 1 contains the selection and sampling flowchart.

After the complete reading of the final sample, the integrative synthesis was performed, which is organized in Table 1.

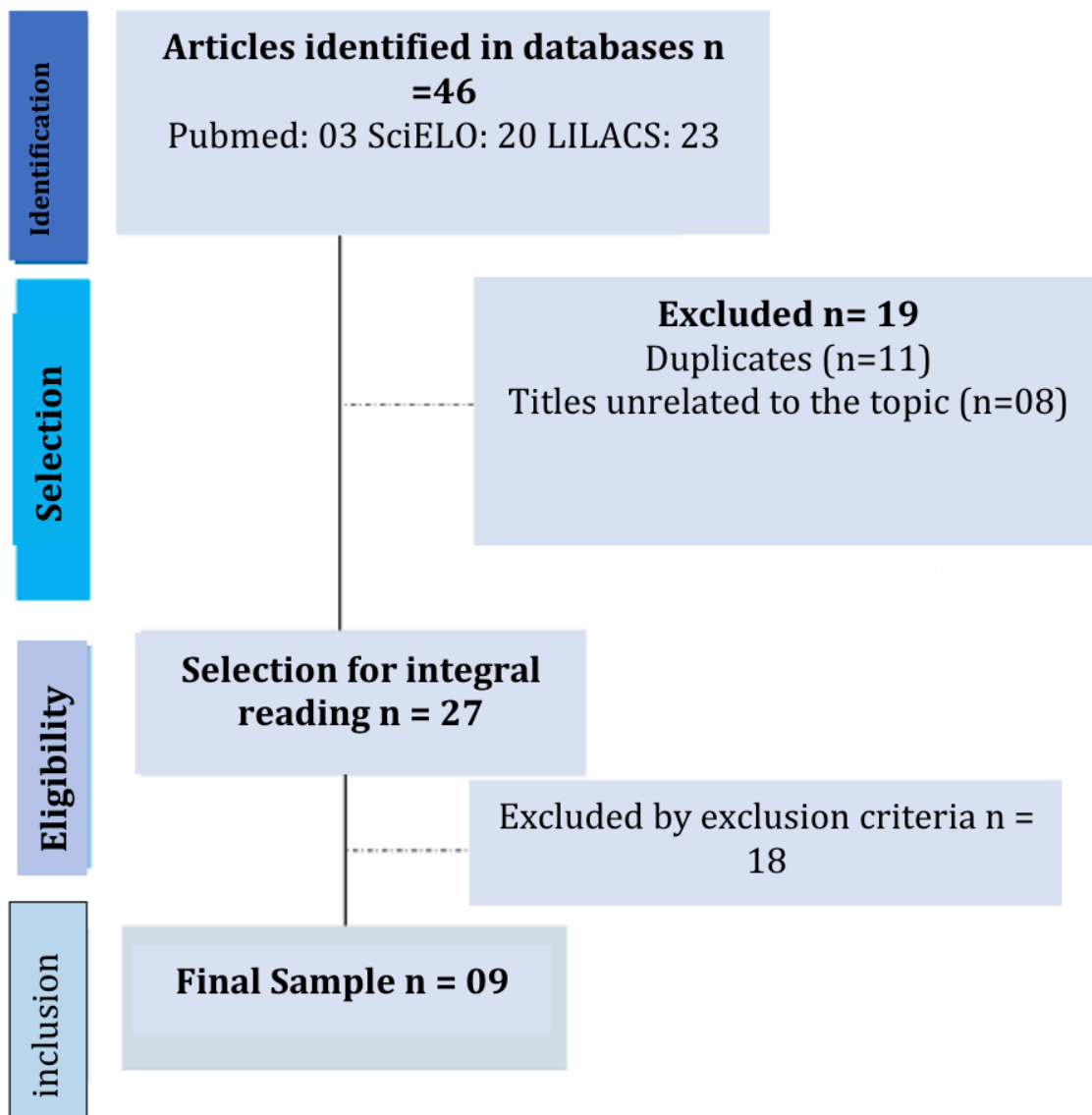


Figure 1- Search strategy for the integrative literature review and number of articles published from December 1, 2019 to November 30, 2021 according to the database.

Source: Machado AAV, et al., 2023.

| Author | Objective | Main results | Type of Study |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Corrêa et al. (2021) | Point out and discuss some of the forms of violence experienced at the intersection of race, gender and class in a territory of social vulnerability during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and before it. | Structural and international violence intensified due to the difficulty in obtaining economic aid and the need to stay for long periods in unhealthy homes and collective spaces. Violence against women, especially black and poor women, became even more evident through physical, emotional and psychological aggression. It is worth mentioning the lack of means of help and empowerment for these women, due to issues such as low education, lack of income, and the historical perpetuation of patriarchy. | Qualitative prospective longitudinal study |
| Santos et al. (2020) | Reflect on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence against women, based on the analysis of Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation. | Covid-19 has made it difficult for women victims of gender-based violence to meet all five of Maslow's human needs. Thus, they probably cannot have their basic needs met, as well as having their relationships affected and thus fail to reach satisfactory levels of esteem and self-realization. | Documentary qualitative research |
| Barbosa et al (2021) | To problematize the relationship between violence against women and social isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic, understood as an event based on the dialogue between the contributions of intersectional studies and the Institutional Movement (IM), through Gilles' philosophy of difference Deleuze, in order to uncover inequalities and violence already experienced | Social isolation alone does not cause violence. In fact, when taken as an event, it has the power to make singularities emerge: racial, gender and social class inequalities, erased by generalization, revealing how structural machismo is configured in society. | Qualitative documentary study |
| Aponte et al. (2020) | To investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction and the risk of violence from the perspective of one of the spouses before and during isolation | There is a relationship between marital satisfaction and the risk of violence: the greater the satisfaction, the lower the risk of violence, and the components of the variable marital satisfaction are: emotional aspects, interaction, structural aspects and sexuality | Quantitative and descriptive research. |
| Campos et al. (2020) | Discuss the response to violence against women in the first months of the SARS-CoV-2/Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on the dynamics of programmatic vulnerability based on reports from health and social care professionals | The factors that increase social vulnerability to violence against women add to the precariousness of programs that would mitigate it. In addition, the fear and real risk of infection by SARS-Cov-2 is disqualified, accompanied by evidence of the structural dimension of VAW, by the federal government, requiring the adoption and improvement of programmatic actions in the near future | Qualitative study |

| | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cortes et al. (2020) | Discuss the challenges of ensuring protection for women in situations of violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic | The pandemic has contributed to the permanence of women in situations of violence, which indicates the need for protection. It is essential to strengthen public protection policies based on an intersectoral network, as well as the activation of a care network in the context of a pandemic and post-pandemic. | Theoretical-reflective essay |
| Ferreira et al. (2020) | Reflect on the necessary skills for medical students, seeking comprehensive care for women's health and in dialogue with current public policies and National Curriculum Guidelines due to the worsening social inequalities caused by COVID-19, especially women. | To ensure women's comprehensive health, medical schools must provide students with the opportunity to learn a set of skills so that, once trained, they can base their conduct on scientific evidence, listen to women, communicate properly with them, respecting their singularities at each stage of the gynecological cycle, building a more symmetrical relationship, adopting a broad view of their living conditions and giving women greater control over their own bodies, health, sexuality and life. | Theoretical-reflective essay |
| Madeira et al. (2021) | Propose an agent-based model (ABM), called VIDA (Domestic Violence), in order to illustrate and examine multicausal factors that influence events that generate violence using the Covid-19 pandemic (Sars-COV-2) as a factor of intensification of coexistence that led to the increase in cases of domestic violence | Forced quarantine increased VAW cases by 10%, and also demonstrated that more populous places have comparatively fewer attacks than less populous capitals or rural areas of urban concentrations. In addition, the contributions of the work include the formalization of a model of domestic violence through agent-based modeling, apparently non-existent in the literature, which illustrates socioeconomic, demographic, educational, gender and color factors, with detailed data in the intra-urban level and for all large Brazilian population agglomerations. | Qualitative study through Agent-Based Modeling (ABM) artificial simulations performed in a computational environment. |
| Fornari et al. (2021) | Knowing the strategies for coping with domestic violence against women disseminated by digital media at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic | The pandemic has increased vulnerability for women's health-disease process. Measures to contain violence against women were: adaptation of existing strategies by extending opening hours and adopting a remote format; contingency plans and bills; and dissemination of information and discussion of the issue through online broadcasting. However, it is worth highlighting the lack of access to digital media, of strategies that address the health area, and of strategies that address moments that precede violations. | Documentary study with a qualitative approach |

Table 1- Integrative synthesis of selected articles.

Source: Machado AAV, et al., 2023.

DISCUSSION

From what is exposed in Table 1, the following topics of analysis were outlined: VAW Intensifiers, Question of Social Classes and Race and Combat Strategies.

AGGRAVATING FACTORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Covid-19 Pandemic had in the process of social isolation, one of the main strategies for coping with the disease. However, this process, by expanding the time spent together within the family, contributed to an increase in the rate of domestic violence, in addition to hindering access to support networks and public services specialized in combating this type of violence (CORTES LF, et al. al. 2020).

Yet Cortes LF, et al. (2020) emphasizes that the scenario of temporary closure of day care centers and schools also contributed to aggravating the context of the pandemic moment, as these spaces provide many women with a condition of social support. Another study by Lima LLG, et al. (2019) also showed that domestic violence is committed by people close to women, specifically their relationship partners, who are also responsible for 38% of cases of femicide, understood here in conceptual terms to designate the homicides of women due to their gender status.

It can be seen in the analyzed literature that there are sociocultural issues that affect the context of the VAW intensifiers, which have a bearing on the patriarchal mentality that operates in Brazil as a constituent element of the social imaginary (WUNEMBURGER JJ, 2007). The patriarchal mentality is understood in this study as a form of social organization, through which the male figure (patriarch) submits the other members of the family group to his control and power (LIMA LLG, et al., 2019; ELGELS F, 1991). Among these issues are: sexual division of household chores and the economic

crisis that affected the country, generating unemployment, inflation, increased informal working conditions and a drop in family income (APONTE C, et al.2020; CAMPOS B, et al.,2020).

The situation worsened due to the changes that were made in public policies related to the payment of emergency aid, since the funds allocated to programs linked to the Secretariat for Women were cut, which also constituted a harmful element in this historical moment (CAMPOS B, et al., 2020).

Still Campos B (2020) points out as intensifying elements of VAW the growth of consumption and abuse of licit and illicit drugs, whose effects potentiate behaviors associated with euphoria, self-confidence and disinhibition, which can lead to acts of violence. On the other hand, according to a study by Lopes APAT, et al. (2015) it is important to point out that this type of behavior was already correlated with VAW even before the pandemic and thus only intensified during this period.

A QUESTION OF SOCIAL CLASSES AND RACE

The pandemic, and the consequent adoption of social isolation, alone do not cause violence. In fact, both events assume the character of an intensifying and catalytic agent, which has the power to bring out the singularities of structural violence, which was historically naturalized and institutionalized. Scholars claim that, given this context, an intersectional reading of reality is necessary because, from this perspective, there is an intertwining of social and cultural categories, namely, those marked by elements inherent to the condition of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class and nationality (BARBOSA JPM, et al. 2021).

Therefore, these catalytic elements related to social and economic aspects become VAW intensifiers by increasing individuals' tension, especially in the home environment. It is worth mentioning what was observed by Corrêa MD, et al. (2021) regarding the fact that the pandemic has aggravated deficiencies in the distribution of basic survival elements for the low-income population. Added to this are other issues such as: the precariousness of the basic sanitation system and minimum housing conditions, which are also factors that intensify conflicts within the family.

Furthermore, during the pandemic, the Brazilian public and private health system was compelled to prioritize care for cases of Covid-19, which led to difficulties in other services, including care for women victims of violence.

With regard to the issue of race, territories such as quilombos, geographical reminiscences of the slavery period, have their population made up mostly of black people (ROSELLO FT, 2009), and social vulnerability is something inherent to their condition of existence and this is due to a socio-historical situation marked by structural racism that makes use of social and political technologies, relegating this portion of the population to subalternity. In addition, it is known that black women are the majority among cases of VAW (CORREA MD, et al. 2021; ALMEIDA SL, 2019).

Furthermore, in Brazil, poverty is closely related to the issue of race insofar as the majority of the black population is kept short of access to material and/or symbolic goods, so that there is a relationship between race and class in the context of the country social. This way, the lack of access to educational conditions, decent work and other elements that enable economic ascent subordinates the black population, especially women who end up burdened by numerous circumstances

which were aggravated by the pandemic scenario as a result of the closure of support networks, such as schools and day care centers (CORREA MD, et al. 2021).

Added to the issues already addressed, the lack of an intersectional approach with regard to public policies, constitute an aggravating situation of vulnerability to which women, especially black women, are victims. Such elements can be proven from processes pointed out in the study by Correa et al. 2021, for example, difficulties faced by women in accessing the Women's Police Station. Added to this picture are other points such as: restricted opening hours of public bodies that must provide care to women at risk, difficulties in terms of public transport that prevent these women from traveling, organized crime in certain communities, in addition to the organizational failures of the system that fails to promote the effective protection of women victims of violence (IPEA, 2021; BUENO S and LIMA RS, 2020; CORREA MD, et al. 2021).

STRATEGIES IN COMBATING VCM

The study by Campos B, et al. (2020) highlighted the need to implement emergency measures that guarantee care for women victims of violence during the pandemic period. Corroborating with the work of Fornari LF, et al. (2021), who pointed out the main areas that would need adjustments to better serve women victims of violence, among them: the information system for women, health care services and the legislative system. In general, such strategies acted in the process of adaptation to remote assistance, using information and communication technologies (ICTs), and the extension of service hours, which would provide the expansion and facilitation of access to the various public services.

Furthermore, it is worth questioning the effectiveness of the use of ICTs, since internet access is still very restricted to the low-income population in the Brazilian scenario and, as pointed out in the studies analyzed in this article, issues related to VAW have an intersectionality with questions referring to social class, agreeing that the most vulnerable population in socioeconomic terms, falls short of the protective measures that use ICTs as a contribution.

Campos B, et al. (2021) also infer on the issue of secrecy as a way of guaranteeing anonymity to women victims of violence, as well as to people who promote this type of complaint. The guarantee of anonymity/secrecy is an established act of trust, being a key element for victims and whistleblowers to be safe and confident with regard to the use of the service.

Also noteworthy is the lack of dialogue between services, especially the area of social assistance and health in partnership with public security and the judiciary, a process that predates the context of SARS-CoV-2/ Covid-19 and emphasizes itself as an obstacle continually. It is noticeable that the prevention of VAW leaves something to be desired and, not infrequently, the public power in its most varied instances only acts when the VAW has already been installed.

An analysis of the studied articles allows observing the construction of actions to be carried out primarily in the fight against VAW, namely: expansion in the number of shelters for women victims of violence; expansion of the number of places to care for women victims of violence in existing homes; expansion of reception in cases of aggravation in situations related to mental illness and abusive use of licit or illicit substances; improve and expand the distribution of fundamental resources and inputs, such as basic food baskets, considered

vital items for survival; and create protocols that guarantee ethical secrecy with regard to remote assistance to women victims of VAW by social assistance, health and security sector professionals.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals the factors of intensification and aggravation of VAW that emerged during the pandemic and points to questions that reflect on the effectiveness of the protective measures adopted by the public system to care for women victims of violence. The depth of the problem of this type of violence is highlighted, mainly because it is a comprehensive issue that encompasses elements of structural and intersectional characteristics, which have cultural, political, economic, social and health nuances, a fact that implies the adoption of measures to fight VAW that are multifactorial and adequate to each reality. On the other hand, the lack of dialogue and debate that culminates in effective actions is also notorious, making it necessary to expand this discussion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND FUNDING

To the UEMS Institutional Extension Scholarship Program (PIBEX-UEMS) and the UEMS Institutional Scientific Initiation Scholarship Affirmative Actions Program (PIBIC-AAF - UEMS).

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