



Screening test to identify the prevalence of violence against the elderly

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1 INTRODUCTION

The stigma of aging as synonymous with dependence and disabilities results in conflicting relationships, generating violent interactions in the intra-family environment between the elderly and their children, spouses, grandchildren, and caregivers (SILVA and DIAS, 2016; GARCÍA-PEÑA et al, 2017). These prejudices appear in the way of judging aging as a pathological process, as a stage of decay of the individual and, consequently, as a problem constituting myths that enhance abusive acts (BRAZIL, 2014).

The Ministry of Health (MOH) defines violence against the elderly as "a single, repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring in any relationship in which there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or suffering to an elderly person. It also adds that this is a global social issue that affects not only human rights, but also the health of millions of elderly people around the world, making it a major problem that needs special attention, even at the international level. Among the forms of violence against the elderly, these can be classified as physical, sexual, psychological, economic / financial, institutional, abandonment / neglect and self-neglect (SHIMBO; LABRONICI; MANTOVANI, 2011; BRAZIL. Ministry of Health, 2022).

Regarding the practices that lead to acts of violence against the elderly, there is the refusal of privacy in the environment where the elderly live because they share the same physical space, cases of uncontrolled use of alcohol, financial dependence, and the history of disharmonious family relationships in the past, which began with unpleasant situations of verbal abuse resulting in physical aggression (PAMPOLIM and LEITE, 2020).

In such a way, data from Fiocruz show that in addition to half, about 60% of cases related to acts of violence against the elderly occur in the intra-family environment, with two-thirds of the aggressors being sons, more than daughters, daughters-in-law or sons-in-law, and spouses, respectively, still according to data from Fiocruz, the consumption of alcohol and drugs reach a percentage of 53% by



family members who reside in the same place and are financially maintained by the elderly (GAMEIRO, 2019).

Many are unaware of the existing forms of such acts, as well as how to identify them and even to whom to report them, especially when it involves family ties. Violence is far beyond the physical touch, destroying psychological barriers. And, it is in this sphere that research comes in to quantify existing violence in the population of elderly people, in the intra-family environment, building subsidies that can contribute to the creation of social projects, encouraging complaints and encouraging the development of public policies based on real and updated data, making this a study of great relevance.

2 OBJECTIVE

To identify the prevalence of intrafamily violence against the elderly in the South, South Central and East zones of the city of Manaus from data obtained through the *Hawlek Sengstock Elder Abuse Screening Test* (H-S/EAST).

3 METHODOLOGY

Epidemiological study of population base, quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical nature. The study was developed with data on violence against the elderly obtained in the South, South Central and East zones of the city of Manaus, Amazonas.

The *Hawlek Sengstock Elder Abuse Screening Test* (H-S/EAST) instrument adapted for Brazil was used. It is an instrument with 15 final items, which cover three main domains of the theme violence against the elderly person: evident violation of personal rights or direct abuse; vulnerability characteristics and potentially abusive situations. The H-S/EAST assesses installed or presumed violence from the perspective of the older person him/herself. In calculating the score, a point is attributed for each affirmative answer, except for items 1, 6, 12 and 14, in which a point is given for a negative answer (PAIXÃO JR; REICHENHEIM, 2006)).

The city of Manaus has a population of 2,145,444 inhabitants and is the seventh most populous capital city, among the most populated in the country (IBGE, 2018). According to IBGE (2018), the elderly population of the municipality of Manaus is composed of 108,081 elderly people distributed in distinct age groups. And, based on this universe of the elderly population residing in Manaus, a sample size calculation was performed resulting in a sample of 380 elderly people per studied zone, totaling 1,140 people interviewed, with a margin of error of 5% and Confidence Coefficient of 95%.

The sample for this study was random, obtained by drawing lots for neighborhoods in the administrative areas corresponding to the South, Center-South and East zones, and the call for participation in the research was made through community centers, churches, associations and other



services for the elderly in the neighborhood drawn. During the pandemic, data collection was restricted to health units and churches.

The eligibility criteria for participation in the research were: elderly aged ≥ 60 years, who agreed to participate in the research by signing the Free Consent Form and in enjoyment of their cognitive abilities and not being self-declared indigenous.

The study was submitted to Plataforma Brasil to ensure the ethical precepts of Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council (CNS) and approved under Opinion: 3.173.698.

The results of the analysis were presented by means of graphs representing the area of coverage of violence in the city of Manaus according to the administrative zone under study, in which the simple absolute (fi) and relative (%) frequencies were calculated.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The distinct forms that are directed to what is expressed under the denomination of "mistreatment", "violence" or "abuse" are classified and their conceptualization herein are officialized in the document of the National Policy for the Reduction of Accidents and Violence from the Ministry of Health (BRASIL, 2001), and can be defined in the following terminology (SOUZA; MINAYO, 2010):

Physical violence: the use of physical force with the intention of hurting, causing pain, even disability or death, or to compel the elderly to do what they often do not want to do.

Psychological violence: is inferred by verbal or gestural aggression with the aim of terrorizing, as well as humiliating, blocking the freedom or restricting the elderly from social interaction.

Sexual violence: occurs through sexual acts or games, homo- or hetero-relational, that use older people to obtain excitement, sexual intercourse, or erotic practices through grooming, physical violence, or threats.

Financial violence: this consists of the practice of improper, illegal or not, consented exploitation of the financial and property assets of the elderly.

Negligence: refers to the refusal or omission of due and necessary care to the elderly, by family or institutional caregivers. It may be associated with other types of violence that generate injuries and trauma, usually in the elderly who have a higher degree of dependency.

Self-neglect: refers to the conduct of the elderly person that threatens their own health or safety by refusing to provide themselves with necessary care.

Abandonment: consists of the absence or desertion of governmental, institutional, or family caregivers who are in the role of supporting the elderly person in need of protection.

After identifying the possible forms of violence against the elderly, it is necessary to understand how they can be reported. Thus, the MS claims that older people with a careless appearance, who have

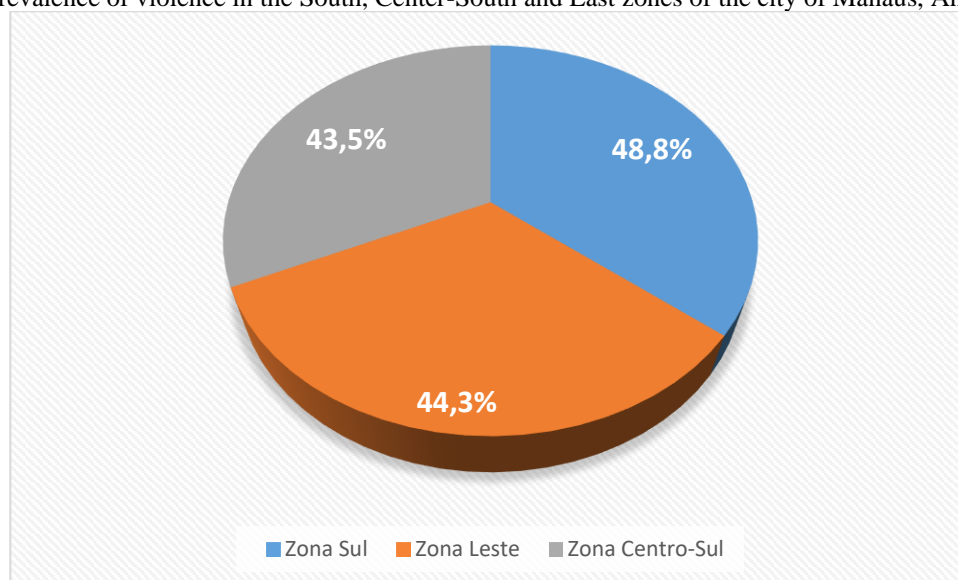


marks on their body, with little or difficult explanation and who have family members or caregivers indifferent to them, have evidence that they may be suffering abuse and for guidance and reporting, may be resorting to municipal health units, police stations, dial 100 for human rights care and 190 for military police in cases of imminent risk (BRAZIL. Ministry of Health, 2022).

In addition, the MOH reports that the most common type of violence is neglect, which is followed by abandonment (seen as an act of extreme neglect); then comes the psychological or emotional violence, seen as the most imperceptible violence because it includes behaviors that affect self-esteem, and that can sometimes go unnoticed by the one who practices it or even considered as a normal act; and finally, financial violence, by the non-consented exploitation of the elderly person's finances, denuding its real use (BRAZIL. Ministry of Health, 2022).

In the present study, the prevalence of violence was sought without its typification, through interviews of 380 elderly in each zone studied, so that it could be observed how much it is present in the family environment of the elderly. Between the years 2019 and 2022, the prevalence of violence against the elderly in the city of Manaus reached an index of 48.8% in the South zone; 43.5% in the Center-South zone and 44.3% in the East zone of the city of Manaus (Graph 1). It is noteworthy that the East zone represents the second largest area in territorial extension of the city and one of those with a more socially vulnerable population, however, it showed rates below the South zone, which has the largest number of protection equipment installed for the care of the elderly. This may mean that domestic violence against the elderly may be present in families, regardless of their social situation.

Figure 1 - Prevalence of violence in the South, Center-South and East zones of the city of Manaus, Amazonas, 2022



Source: field research



During the production of this study, it was verified that there is little data that investigates the elderly and reports whether they suffer some kind of abusive or exploitative act, and even more difficult when it comes to underdeveloped countries such as Brazil. Making it difficult to take measures that can reduce its prevalence, especially when the data sometimes differ from each other.

The pandemic brought with it social woes with strong intensification of economic inequalities, and the mandatory social isolation, which ended up further reducing access to health services, and it was in this scenario that it became plausible to discuss intrafamily violence against the elderly, described as an important public health problem, being even more worrisome for being suffered in silence and camouflaged by close relationships and strong dependence between the perpetrator of mistreatment of the elderly and the victim. And it was in this scenario that the Ministry of Women, Family, Human Rights, predicted that the use of "Dial 100" in the pandemic period exceeded 3 thousand in March to 8 thousand in April and 17 thousand in May (months with higher rates of social isolation), which corresponds to a growth of 267% and 567% during the pandemic period in Brazil (MORAES *et al*, 2020).

The Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship - MDH estimates that the hotline 100 will register more than 35,000 reports of human rights violations against the elderly in 2022. This is an easily accessible channel, in which the individual's identity is preserved, and it has a 24-hour call center, which is free and open even on weekends and holidays. There is also a WhatsApp service (61-99656-5008), or the application Human Rights Brazil, for cases in which citizens with some kind of disability or incapacity have accessibility resources to report (BRASIL. Ministério dos Direitos Humanos, 2022).

Among 25 institutions, the 16 managers participating separately from Integrated Center for the Protection and Defense of the Rights of the Elderly; Foundation for the Support of the Elderly Dr. Thomas; Home Care Program for the Elderly; Municipal Park for the Elderly - (PMI); State Department of Public Safety; Specialized Police Station for Crimes against the Elderly; State Council for the Elderly; Municipal Council for the Elderly; State Public Defender's Office; State Public Ministry that were consistent with the research, claimed that the existing protection network to combat violence against the elderly in the city of Manaus does not have the necessary articulation so that the demands of the elderly can receive cohesive treatment with quick answers. For them the demands are streamlined through personal contacts and still reinforce that the articulation needs to be strengthened, and still add that there is no flow of care outlined and followed by the network in Manaus (MELEIRO *et al*, 2021).

According to the aforementioned arguments, both prevention and the line of care should be based on networked responses, through articulation and integration in an intersectoral manner, involving all projects aimed at a better quality of life for the elderly, through "public health policies, social assistance, emergency economic support, security and justice in actions to protect rights, of health



promotion and early detection, notification and care of cases already installed", requiring a better professionalization of the actors of each sector and making them recognize the value of their work in this scenario, being able to obtain potential answers in function of the eradication of violence in this significant population group (MORAES *et al.*, 2020; MELEIRO *et al.*, 2021).

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is clear from this study that violence against the elderly is a current problem in the city of Manaus, being considered a relevant health problem and requiring health actions that prevent, combat and eradicate this mistreatment through social programs and effective public policies. Programs that treat it as an intersectoral case, in which each one knows that they have a relevant position, that make explicit the several types of intrafamily violence since the victim is often unaware that she is going through such a situation, the structuring of health professionals so that they can early identify it, of this basic health care if the elderly person is facing family conflicts, the encouragement of studies and data collection on this scenario, so that public policies can emerge in order to rare the prevalence of mistreatment, as presented here and have support in this context to this significant population group, which receives little prestige and respect.



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