Psychological violence against the elderly in the urban areas of Manaus

Cleisiane Xavier Diniz
Maria de Nazaré de Souza Ribeiro
Paula Gabriela de Paula Lima
Mariane Marques Queiroz
Camile Chama Bezerra

ABSTRACT

Psychological violence is the most common after physical violence and is usually present along with the other types of violence. It involves affective and family ties, and because of this the elderly feel guilt, shame, and fear of exposing the situation, having silence as the only alternative, so as not to harm the family member. The systematic identification of elderly people in situations of violence, or in life contexts that promote a higher risk of suffering it, is a non-existent action in the current practices of care for the elderly in Brazil. Objective: To identify psychological violence against the elderly in the administrative areas of the city of Manaus, Amazonas, through data obtained from the instrument "Assessment of Violence and Mistreatment Against the Elderly". Methodology: This is a population-based epidemiological study, quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical nature, which interviewed 2,280 elderly people out of their home. Results: Between the years 2019 and 2022, the prevalence of psychological violence distributed by zone in the city of Manaus corresponded to: 53.4% in the South Zone; 49.7% in the North Zone. 43.7% in the Central Zone; 41.8% in the East Zone; 41% in the West Zone; and 40.5% in the Center-South Zone. Final Considerations: It was possible to evidence that psychological violence against the elderly is a serious public health problem and very present in the urban areas of the city of Manaus, which should be identified, combated and prevented through the sharing of information and public policies.

Keywords: Violence Against the Elderly, Elder Abuse, Frail Elderly, Psychological Abuse, Health Care of the Elderly.

1 INTRODUCTION

The act of violence against the elderly is considered any action or omission practiced in public or private spaces causes death, harm, or physical or psychological suffering to an elderly person, and can be represented in the following ways: physical, psychological, sexual, abandonment, neglect, financial and self-neglect, all of which can be prevented (BRASIL, 2014).

The acts of psychological violence are characterized by words or gestures that hurt the elderly person, with the aim of belittling, frightening, limiting their freedom or isolating them from social life, causing emotional suffering (PAMPOLIM; LEITE, 2020). It is the most common after physical violence and is usually present along with other types of violence. It involves affective and family ties and because of this the elderly feel guilt, shame and fear of exposing the situation, having silence as the only alternative, so as not to harm the family member. This situation makes it more difficult to identify this type of violence. It can occur through verbal aggression, which include insults, the aggressor makes the victim feel incompetent and incapable, affecting her dignity and self-esteem, also offending her appearance, personality, way of speaking, lack of respect for individuality and the victim's will, and social isolation (WANDERBROOCKE *et al*., 2020).

The systematic identification of elderly people in situations of violence, or in life contexts that promote a higher risk of suffering it. It is a non-existent action in the current practices of elderly care in Brazil. Supported by the agenda of research priorities of the Ministry of Health and the imminence of population aging in Brazil, this study is justified in the need to map psychological violence more clearly.

This study is relevant because the disclosure of the problem of violence and mistreatment against the elderly can help to encourage reporting, especially in cases of psychological violence, in which the victim often feels fear and guilt, or is unaware of being subjected to this type of violence.

2 OBJECTIVE

To identify psychological violence against the elderly in the administrative zones of the city of Manaus, Amazonas, through data obtained from the instrument "Assessment of Violence and Mistreatment Against the Elderly".

3 METHODOLOGY

This is a population-based, quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical epidemiological study.

The study was developed with data on violence against the elderly obtained in the West, Midwest and North zones of the city of Manaus. The city of Manaus has a population of 2,145,444 inhabitants; the elderly population of the city of Manaus is composed of 108,081 elderly people distributed in different age groups. Based on this universe of the elderly population living in Manaus, a calculation was made to obtain the sample size, the result was 380 elderly people per administrative area studied, making a total of 2,280 elderly people interviewed, using a margin of error of 5% and a 95% Coefficient of Confidence. We used the Evaluation Instrument of Violence and Mistreatment against the Elderly, developed in Puerto Rico, adopted by the Ministry of Health in the Basic Care Notebooks (BRASIL, 2006).

The eligibility criteria for participation in the study were: elderly aged ≥ 60 years, who agreed to participate in the study by signing the Informed Consent Form (ICF), in possession of their cognitive abilities and not being self-declared indigenous. As exclusion criteria, all those who demonstrated difficulty in understanding the questions inherent to the instruments used and the self-declared indigenous people were considered.

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. All participants were explained the composition of the TCLE for knowledge and signature in two copies or placement of fingerprint; that participation in the research would be voluntary, with the subject

having the right to withdraw from the research at any time, without any prejudice; and was assured confidentiality and secrecy with respect to their answers.

The data were initially plotted in an Excel spreadsheet. Then, they were transferred to the statistical program Epinfo. After that, the results of the analysis were presented by means of simple absolute (fi) and relative (%) frequencies.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Between the years 2019 and 2022, the following results were obtained regarding psychological violence against the elderly in the six urban areas of Manaus: South Zone, with 53.4% (Table 1), representing the zone with the highest prevalence of this type of violence, among the six zones of the city of Manaus. It is noteworthy that the South zone has the largest amount of protection equipment for the elderly in the city of Manaus (RIBEIRO *et al.,* 2021).

Table 1 - Prevalence of psychological violence in the administrative zones of the city of Manaus, Amazonas, 2022

Administrative Zones	*f*	%
South Zone	1218	53,40%
North Zone	1133	49,70%
Mid-Western Zone	996	43,70%
East Zone	953	41,80%
West Zone	935	41,00%
South-Central Zone	924	40,50%

Table 1 shows the other zones of the city with the distribution of the prevalence of psychological violence, being: Northern Zone 49.7%; Central-Western Zone 43.7%; Eastern Zone 41.8%; Western Zone 41.0%; and Central-Southern Zone 40.5%.

Data from PNS show that the highest prevalence of cases corresponded to psychological violence has the highest number of cases (84.6%), six times more than physical violence (13.7%), in contrast data from SINAN show that psychological violence has the second highest prevalence (28.9%), just after physical violence (68.9%). PNS covers unrecorded information, which ends up exposing a greater number of cases and that there is underreporting of psychological violence in SINAN (SANTIAGO *et al.,* 2019).

In another survey, data show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, physical violence was the most common (49.2%), followed by psychological or moral violence (22.8%), with the main cause being social isolation and increased tensions and intensified conflicts in the home environment (RANZANI *et al.,* 2023).

Research considers that in addition to longevous age, gender, health status, socioeconomic status, and disability are among the different risk factors that leave the elderly vulnerable to violent acts (DIEL; BARBIANI, 2018; MAIA *et al*., 2019, GOMES *et al*., 2020).

In most cases the focus is on finding visible signs of violence, which ends up generating a difficulty in identifying cases of psychological violence, since the signs of this are not like visible marks on the body, only being possible to know from the report of the abused elderly, but that the victim does not always choose to expose the abuse suffered and their aggressors, either by fear, shame or guilt. There are some psychological signs that the elderly may present as: frustration, fear, sadness, signs of depression, stress, anger, psychological trauma and poor health perception (MACHADO *et al.,* 2022). Thus, the knowledge of these signs contributes to the recognition that the elderly may be suffering psychological abuse, making it possible even to identify the abuser (SCHUESSLER, 2022).

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

From this study, it is possible to show that psychological violence against the elderly is a serious and very present public health problem today, which should be identified, combated and prevented by sharing information and public policies. The culture of information becomes effective for the identification of psychological violence, which occurs in a veiled way within the family, since the victim is often unaware that he or she is going through this situation.

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