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RESEARCH

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ASSESSMENT OF LIFE SATISFACTION AND RISK OF VIOLENCE IN ELDERLY

*Avaliação da satisfação com a vida e o risco para violência em idosos**Evaluación de la satisfacción con la vida y riesgo de violencia en personas mayores***Gleicy Karine Nascimento de Araújo-Monteiro¹** **Renata Clemente Santos-Rodrigues²** **Cláudia Quézia Amado Monteiro Leal²** **Bárbara Maria Lopes da Silva Brandão²** **Rafaella Queiroga Souto²** **Waglânia Mendonça Faustino e Freitas²** 

ABSTRACT

Objective: to describe the relationship between life satisfaction and risk of violence among elderly men and women. **Method:** quantitative study, cross-sectional, conducted with 159 elderlies, using the Life Satisfaction Scale and Hwalek-Sengstock Elder Abuse Screening Test. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistic (absolute and relative frequency, measures of central tendency and dispersion) and inferential (Student's t-test; Linear regression). **Results:** life satisfaction according to gender presented significant difference between the averages of the risk of violence, verifying that older men that presented risk of violence were less satisfied with life. It was observed negative correlation for male group ($\beta=-0,416$) and female between these variables. ($\beta=-0,293$). **Conclusion:** older men that presented risk of violence exhibit lower satisfaction scores, pointing out that life satisfaction increases as the risk of violence decreases.

DESCRIPTORS: Aged; Personals; Sex; Exposure to violence; Violence.

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RESUMO

Objetivo: descrever a relação da satisfação com a vida e o risco para violência entre homens e mulheres idosos. **Método:** estudo quantitativo, transversal, realizado com 159 idosos, utilizando a Escala de Satisfação com a Vida e Hwalek-Sengstock Elder Abuse Screening Test. Os dados foram analisados mediante estatística descritiva (frequência absoluta e relativa, medidas de tendência central e dispersão) e inferencial (Teste t de Student; Regressão Linear). **Resultados:** a satisfação com a vida segundo o gênero apresentou diferença significativa entre as médias do risco para violência, verificando que os homens idosos que apresentavam risco para violência estavam menos satisfeitos com a vida. Observou-se correlação negativa para o grupo masculino ($\beta=-0,416$) e feminino ($\beta=-0,293$) entre essas variáveis. **Conclusão:** homens idosos que apresentam risco para violência exibem menores escores de satisfação, apontando que a satisfação com a vida aumenta à medida em que o risco para violência diminui.

DESCRITORES: Idoso; Satisfação pessoal; Sexo; Exposição à violência; Violência.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: describir la relación entre la satisfacción vital y el riesgo de violencia entre hombres y mujeres ancianos. **Método:** estudio cuantitativo, transversal, realizado con 159 ancianos, utilizando la Escala de Satisfacción con la Vida y Hwalek-Sengstock Elder Abuse Screening Test. Los datos se analizaron mediante estadísticas descriptivas (frecuencia absoluta y relativa, medidas de tendencia central y dispersión) y estadísticas inferenciales (prueba t de Student; regresión lineal). **Resultados:** la satisfacción con la vida según el género mostró diferencia significativa entre las medias de riesgo de violencia, verificando que los hombres ancianos que presentaban riesgo de violencia estaban menos satisfechos con la vida. Se observó correlación negativa para el grupo de hombres ($\beta=-0,416$) y mujeres ($\beta=-0,293$) entre estas variables. **Conclusión:** los hombres ancianos que presentan riesgo de violencia muestran puntuaciones de satisfacción más bajas, lo que indica que la satisfacción con la vida aumenta a medida que disminuye el riesgo de violencia.

DESCRIPTORES: Anciano; Satisfacción personal; Sexo; Exposición a la violencia; Violence.

INTRODUCTION

The exponential growth of people over 60 years old worldwide reflects a dynamic and subjective aging process that, although there are chronological determinants, biopsychosocial factors interfere directly in facing the challenges of this phase of life.¹ The challenging aspects of the new reality are related to work activity, retirement, income, emotional, affective, and marital relationships, comorbidities, cognitive changes, healthy lifestyle habits, and education.²⁻³

Demands of this nature make the transition to old age explicit as a moment that requires physical and psychological adaptations as potentially protective strategies against instabilities, such as the impact of changes from a work routine to retirement and the need to prepare to face this condition.⁴

The aforementioned variables reflect on the way each individual interprets his or her reality, which in turn influences the overall health outcomes. Such perception is a particular and variable phenomenon beyond physical, mental, and social involvement called life satisfaction.⁵⁻⁶

Satisfaction with life refers to the elderly subjective assessment and interpretation of the psychological and social resources available to them for active, healthy, and resilient aging, which allows them to effectively perform their social role in this period of life.^{3,7} Multiple factors are capable of interfering in the judgment of the elderly about their reality.

International authors,⁹⁻¹⁰ have elucidated the close relationship of satisfaction with psychological factors, showing that social and affective relationships, religiosity, social support,¹⁰ and emotional intelligence,⁹ exert a protective influence on the mental health

of the elderly and on the perception of satisfaction with their own lives.

Concomitantly, national studies,²⁻³ also highlight that satisfaction with life may suffer interference from gender, resilience, advancing age, socioeconomic level, family support network, presence of diseases, and being inserted in the labor market; on the other hand, other authors,² have already signaled the occurrence of changes in the understanding of the elderly as to their satisfaction beyond the aspects attributed to aging.

Furthermore, factors such as the occurrence of Violence Against the Elderly (VCPI) may present a direct association with their level of life satisfaction, which, as a multicausal phenomenon, has been investigated as a risk tool capable of pointing to weaknesses in the search for healthy aging, being the target of scientific studies and public policies for the elderly.¹¹ The impact of violence against the elderly goes through negative cultural and environmental elements, which have increasingly compromised self-satisfaction, mental health, and quality of life.¹²

However, the literature does not clarify significant differences between genders in relation to life satisfaction in the elderly, although some studies reaffirm higher scores of life satisfaction in this same group, believing that the subjective content and cultural changes of social roles cause an imminent change in this variable.²⁻³

Based on the above, and considering the biopsychosocial characteristics that alter the aging process and the elderly, and the lack of studies measuring the difference in life satisfaction among men and women, the question is: are there differences between life satisfaction and risk for violence as a function of gender? To this end, the study aimed to describe the relationship

between life satisfaction and risk for violence among elderly men and women.

METHOD

This is a cross-sectional quantitative study, conducted between 2016 and 2017, in the municipality of Recife-PE. The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) guide,¹³ was used to guide the study.

The participants of this research were elderly people registered in the coverage area of the three teams of a Family Health Unit (USF), located in the municipality of Recife, Pernambuco. The population was composed of 1209 individuals. The sample size calculation was performed using the finite population formula for epidemiological studies, and a confidence level of 95% was applied, composing a final sample of 159 elderly individuals. The sampling technique was of the proportional systematic type.

Inclusion criteria were people aged 60 years or older, registered at the unit. Excluded were those in terminal stage, with severe reduction of auditory and visual abilities, and with expressive cognitive deficit. These last criteria were identified by the interviewer through observation or information coming from the caregivers.

The elderly residence was the place where the data was collected, after being informed about the purpose of the study, data confidentiality and the signing of the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF).

Validated instruments were used for the data collection stage: the Escala de Satisfação com a Vida (ESV),¹⁴ and the Hwalek-Sengstock Elder Abuse Screening Test (H-S/EAST).¹⁵

The ESV was applied to assess the elderly's level of satisfaction with life. This instrument is composed of 5 questions with answers ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), and the closer to 35, the better the result.¹⁴

The H-S/EAST is an American instrument, consisting of 15 items that seek to identify the risk for violence among the elderly. A score of three or more represents an increased risk of some type of violence present.¹⁵

Life satisfaction was determined as the dependent variable of the study, while sociodemographic data (gender, age, marital status, education, work activity, housing arrangement, and income) and the characterization of the occurrence of the risk for violence were the independent variables.

The data collected were typed in SPSS, version 21.0, in double entry by independent typists and discrepancies were reviewed and corrected by a data collection coordinator.

Subsequently, data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics (absolute and relative frequency, measures of central tendency and dispersion) and inferential statistics (Student's *t* test and Linear Regression). The parametric test was chosen because the variables presented normal distribution. For all tests, a 5% significance level was established (p -value<0.05).

This research was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco for consideration and was approved under opinion no. 1413599/16,

following all the recommendations and ethical principles necessary for research involving human beings.

RESULTS

Regarding the characterization of the sample, there was a predominance of 85 elderly aged 60 to 70 years (53.5%); 122 females (76.7%); 106 literate (66.7%); 105 widowers, divorced or never married (66.0%); 137 who live with someone (86.1%); 113 with income of up to one minimum wage (71.1%) and 124 who do not have any work activity (77.9%). Moreover, the mean score of life satisfaction among men was 25.08 and women 25.82.

Table 1 shows the relationship of socio-demographic data with the ESV according to gender. It can be seen that the highest means of life satisfaction for the male group were in elderly people aged 70 years or less (26.14), who cannot read or write (27.88), have a relationship (27.00), work (29.46), live with someone (26.10), and have an income higher than one minimum wage (25.83). There was a difference between genders regarding the schooling ($p=0.046$), marital status ($p=0.041$) and work ($p=0.015$) variables.

Regarding the female group, it can be observed that elderly women older than 70 years (26.64), with no education (26.68), married or living together (27.33), who have some work activity (26.00), live with someone (26.06) and have an income of up to one minimum wage (26.02) present higher life satisfaction averages. Regarding this group, no difference between genders was identified.

When assessing the distribution of the means of life satisfaction according to the risk for violence (Table 2), a significant difference was found from a statistical point of view between the male gender ($p=0.033$) and the female gender ($p=0.010$).

Linear regression was performed to estimate the relationship of risk for violence on life satisfaction among the elderly (Table 3). The analysis resulted in a statistically significant model for both groups assessed. The risk for violence showed a negative correlation for the male group ($\beta=-0.416$) and female group ($\beta=-0.293$), making it possible to understand that life satisfaction increases as the risk for violence decreases.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the sociodemographic data corroborate the profile of elderly people in other studies, which are characterized by young, female, literate, widowed, divorced or never married elderly people.¹⁶⁻¹⁷

As for the results obtained in the ESV, it was observed that in both genders the indices of satisfaction were considered good; however, the female gender showed a higher score. Satisfaction with life is a multidimensional concept, based on personal criteria, expectations, besides having a direct relationship with quality of life.¹¹ In the elderly, this condition reflects in positive health outcomes and expresses a fundamental measure for psychosocial functioning, life circumstances, subjective well-being, and resilience.^{7,18}

Table 1 – Relationship of life satisfaction with sociodemographic variables according to gender. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2016-2017

Variables	Life Satisfaction			
	Male		Female	
Age	mean ± SD*	p-value†	mean ± SD*	p-value†
≤70 years old	26,14 ± 6,74	0,528	25,25 ± 7,18	0,269
> 70 years old	24,43 ± 8,50		26,64 ± 6,51	
Education				
Literate	22,95 ± 8,58	0,046	25,45 ± 6,97	0,370
Illiterate	27,88 ± 5,85		26,68 ± 6,81	
Marital status				
Married/Living together	27,00 ± 6,56	0,041	27,33 ± 5,67	0,169
Widowed/divorced/never married	21,54 ± 8,97		25,33 ± 7,24	
Works				
Yes	29,46 ± 2,40	0,015	26,00 ± 8,05	0,927
No	23,13 ± 8,67		25,82 ± 6,89	
Housing arrangement				
Lives alone	19,83 ± 10,22	0,072	24,25 ± 9,06	0,453
Live with someone	26,10 ± 7,04		26,06 ± 6,55	
Income				
Up to 1 minimum wage	24,37 ± 8,16	0,577	26,02 ± 7,12	0,558
More than 1 wage	25,83 ± 7,63		25,14 ± 6,25	

* SD: Standard Deviation; †: Student's t-test

Table 2 – Distribution of the means of satisfaction with life according to the risk for violence. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2016-2017

Variables	Life Satisfaction			
	Male		Female	
Risk for violence	mean ± SD*	p-value†	mean ± SD*	p-value†
No risk	28,77 ± 4,65	0,033	27,74 ± 5,29	0,010
With risk	23,08 ± 8,53		24,49 ± 7,60	

* SD: Standard Deviation; †: Student's t-test

Table 3 – Linear regression analysis of the total score of risk for violence and total score of satisfaction with life among the elderly participants. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2016-2017

Variables	Total H-S/EAST score †		
	Adjusted R ²	β ‡	p-value §
Male	0,173	-0,416	0,010
Female	0,086	-0,293	0,001

* ESV: Escala de Satisfação com a Vida; † H-S/EAST: Hwalek-Sengstock Elder Abuse Screening Test; ‡ β: Correlation coefficient; § Test significance value

This finding corroborates the study developed in Juiz de Fora – MG,² in which the authors proposed to characterize the social representations of life satisfaction among retired elderly people.

No evidence was found to prove the relationship between satisfaction and schooling; however, international studies have pointed out higher levels of life satisfaction among elderly men who had good schooling, social integration, and access to employment; such findings make it possible to observe literacy as a health determinant in which women are at a disadvantage.^{19,7}

Comparing the life satisfaction indices with the sociodemographic variables, the male gender stands out in the comparison between the averages. Young elderly people presented better life satisfaction indices, which may be related to greater functional capacity and feelings of well-being. Moreover, unlike other studies,^{19,7} the fact of not being able to read or write showed a

difference from the statistical point of view with good satisfaction indexes; however, it was not possible to find justifications for such a relationship in the literature.

Regarding the female gender, the results were similar to the male group, except for the variables age range and income. Elderly women over 70 years of age reported better life satisfaction, confirming research that proves greater longevity and cultural conception of self-care for this group.²⁰

Housing arrangement and marital status also showed a positive relationship with life satisfaction in the elderly of both genders. Having a companion and receiving help to perform domestic and personal care activities contribute not only to the physical well-being, but also help maintain an effective support network that meets the emotional needs of the elderly. Further-

more, providing emotional support represents a protective factor against dependence and violence against the elderly.²¹⁻²²

The work variable showed a statistical relation with the satisfaction scale for males. Contemplating what was previously described about retirement, it is added that the maintenance of work during aging contributes to the continuity of the social role and provides cognitive stimulation, feelings of personal satisfaction related to occupation, and quality of life to this population.³ The financial aspect is also taken into consideration because, in most cases, the income from retirement is not sufficient for household expenses. On the other hand, it reinforces the gender stereotype, in which being a man is related to production, while being a woman to reproduction, which delimits male and female social spaces.

The elderly women in the study indicated better satisfaction receiving only one minimum wage. Culturally, during the 19th century, women did not have access to education and were responsible for domestic activities and maternal care; consequently, this reflected in job opportunities, since the options were more restricted.⁷ Therefore, it is verified that in old age gender stereotypes remain reinforced, and the feminine space is of less value, which is translated throughout life by lower salaries until retirement. For men, being retired is related to someone to take care of them. For women, domestic relations do not change, they remain providers of care legitimized by gender.³

Considering that the elderly in the study showed good levels of satisfaction with life, when analyzed with the scale of risk for violence, a significant relationship was found between these variables, understanding that this population is not at risk of suffering violence. Violence against the elderly is a public health problem, with high rates of morbidity and mortality and negative repercussions, especially in the psychological field.¹²

Thus, it is of utmost importance to encourage studies on the satisfaction with life of the elderly, deepening the theme and adding more content to the literature. By verifying the association of life satisfaction with the risk of violence, it is expected that studies such as this one will strengthen the intra – and intersectoral health networks and guide health professionals regarding the assessment and confrontation of this problem, ensuring completeness, safety, and respect for the elderly.

A limitation of the study was the difficulty in making comparisons between other realities for not finding studies that evaluated the investigated relationship

CONCLUSION

The elderly showed good levels of life satisfaction, being possible to verify that the highest satisfaction averages for both genders were among the elderly who have no schooling, are in a relationship, work and live with someone.

Life satisfaction shows an inversely proportional relationship with the risk for violence, allowing us to conclude that life satisfaction increases as the risk for violence decreases. Finally, it is

noteworthy that older men who are at risk for violence are less satisfied with life

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