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PROFILE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST ELDERLY PEOPLE IN THE STATE OF PERNAMBUCO FROM 2019 -2022

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ABSTRACT

Population aging is a global phenomenon, and in Brazil, its manifestation is evident in the increase in the proportion of elderly people (aged 60 or over), a result of the reduction in the birth rate, the decrease in mortality rates and the increase in expectations of life. This is a descriptive, ecological time series study carried out with secondary data obtained through consultations with SINAN (Notifiable Diseases Information System), made available by the Information Technology Department of the Unified Health System (DATASUS), at the electronic address www.datasus.gov.br, health information (TABNET)/epidemiological and morbidity. The study population consisted of cases of violence against elderly people in the state of Pernambuco, registered in the Notifiable Diseases Information System – SINAN in the period from 2019 to 2022. This interval was selected due to the coincidence with the emergence of the COVID pandemic -19 and the subsequent implementation of social isolation measures. The data was accessed in March/April 2024. During the period analyzed, from 2019 to 2022, a total of 76,336 cases of violence against elderly people were recorded. Observing the data by year of notification, the following numbers stand out: 2019 with 19,332 cases, 2020 with 14,956 cases, 2021 with 19,072 cases and 2022 with 22,988 cases. Notably, the year 2022 recorded the highest number of cases of violence against the elderly, as shown in Table 1. There is an increase of approximately 294.52% in the registration of cases between 2019 and 2022. Violence against the elderly is a complex issue due to its dynamics and determining factors intrinsically linked to the family environment, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and the dependence that is often present in this context. These initiatives aim to establish a comprehensive safety net for older people, with the aim of breaking the silence around this issue and increasing reporting. The expectation is that this will have a positive impact on reducing cases of violence against the elderly.

INTRODUCTION

Population aging is a global phenomenon, and in Brazil, its manifestation is evident in the increase in the proportion of elderly people (aged 60 or over), a result of the reduction in the birth rate, the decrease in mortality rates and the increase in expectations of life (Alarcon, 2021). According to data from the latest censuses carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2020, the country's age structure has shown a constant growth in the proportion of elderly people. In 2010, they represented 7.4% of the population, totaling 22,169,101 people. On the other hand, in 2022, this population increased, representing 10.9% of the Brazilian population, which reflects a growth of 57.4% compared to 2010 (IBGE, 2021). In addition to the natural transformations associated with the aging process, such as physiological changes and pathologies frequently observed in old age, elderly people also face the challenge of violence (Alves, 2020), such as a drop in quality of life, psychological stress, feelings of insecurity, physical injuries and emotional trauma, in addition to increased morbidity and mortality (Chang, 2021). According to the Elderly Statute, violence against the elderly is defined as any action or omission, regardless of whether it is carried out in a public or private place, that results in death, damage or physical or psychological suffering for the elderly person (De Souza, 2021). This type of violence often manifests itself in forms such as injuries, pain, deprivation of human rights and a significant reduction in quality of life (Matos, 2021). The types of violence against the elderly include: physical violence, psychological violence, neglect/abandonment, institutional violence, financial abuse, property violence, sexual violence, discrimination (Moraes, 2020).

Violence against the elderly, prominently observed in Western cultures, transcends socioeconomic barriers (Mazer, 2020). Given its importance as a public health problem, violence against elderly people became the object of epidemiological surveillance in Brazil from 2006 onwards, through the implementation of the Violence and Accident Surveillance System (VIVA), in accordance with the Law no. 12,461/2011 (Nora, 2021). This legislation determines that cases of suspected or confirmed violence against the elderly must be compulsorily notified by public and private health services to the health authorities (Osorio, 2024). Faced with this new demographic and epidemiological reality, in which violence against elderly people stands out, it is necessary to analyze and publicize the profile of notifications made in health services (Oliveira, 2024). Thus, violence against the elderly not only reflects the evolution of social perceptions regarding old age, but also highlights significant gaps in support and protection systems for the elderly, both at institutional and community levels (Silva, 2022). A comprehensive and proactive approach to combating this problem is essential, involving awareness, education and the implementation of policies that promote respect and safety for older people in all spheres of society (Sousa, 2021). Considering the ongoing demographic transition and the severity of violence against the elderly, this study aimed to describe the profile of this violence in the state of Pernambuco during the period from 2019 to 2022. Seeking to obtain a deeper understanding of the situation faced by this portion of the population, the in order to promote targeted actions that can improve their quality of life.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive, ecological time series study carried out with secondary data obtained through consultations with SINAN (Notifiable Diseases Information System), made available by the Information Technology Department of the Unified Health System (DATASUS), at the electronic address www.datasus.gov.br, health information (TABNET)/epidemiological and morbidity. SINAN is supported by the notification and verification of cases of diseases and conditions subject to compulsory notification from health services, which forward a copy of the notification to the Epidemiological Surveillance of the Municipal Health Departments, followed by the State Department of Health (SES) and for the Ministry of Health. The study population consisted of cases of violence against elderly people in the state of Pernambuco, registered in the Notifiable Diseases Information System – SINAN in the period from 2019 to 2022. This interval was selected due to the coincidence with the emergence of the COVID pandemic -19 and the subsequent implementation of social isolation measures.

The data was accessed in March/April 2024. Elderly people aged 60 and over were included. Cases recorded as ignored for any selected variables were excluded from the analysis. The variables selected for analysis were those already existing in the system: region of occurrence, year of notification, sex, race/color, education, place of occurrence, type of violence and characteristic of the aggressor. To analyze the data, tables were created using the Excel and Word programs of the Microsoft Office 2016 software and the DATASUS Tabnet Program. Information related to the variables of interest was analyzed using absolute frequency and relative frequency and presented in tables and graphs. The study followed the standards of Resolution 466/12 of the National Research Ethics Council, and used secondary data in the public domain, therefore, it does not present ethical and moral implications and does not require authorization from the research ethics committee.

RESULTS

During the period analyzed, from 2019 to 2022, a total of 76,336 cases of violence against elderly people were recorded. Observing the data by year of notification, the following numbers stand out: 2019 with 19,332 cases, 2020 with 14,956 cases, 2021 with 19,072 cases and 2022 with 22,988 cases. Notably, the year 2022 recorded the highest number of cases of violence against the elderly, as shown in Table 1. There is an increase of approximately 294.52% in the registration of cases between 2019 and 2022. When analyzing by month, it stands out The highest number of notifications occurred in November 2022, with a total of 1,966 cases. The demographic characteristics of elderly victims of violence are detailed in Table 2. Of the total number of reported cases, 58.3% referred to female victims. The average age of elderly victims of violence was 71.1 years (standard deviation = 8.8 years), ranging from 60 to 109 years. Approximately half of the elderly were between 60 and 69 years old (50.2%), 64.8% declared themselves mixed race, 87.9% reported having completed up to 8 years of study, 58.1%. The most reported place for violence against elderly people to occur was the residence for both sexes, with 77.19% of female cases and 22.81% of male cases, totaling 100% of the 48,942 cases. In the "happened other times" category, 84.35% of women reported having previously suffered violence, while 15.65% of men said the same.

According to the data in Table 3, it was observed that the health regions furthest from the capital of Pernambuco, Recife, presented a greater number of notifications of cases of violence against the elderly. Health region VIII, located in the city of Petrolina, had 13,223 registered cases, followed by regional Caruaru IV, with 7,716 cases. Table 4 presents the distribution of notifications of violence against the elderly, classified according to the type of violence and the means of aggression, segmented by the sex of the victim. The most frequently reported types of violence include physical abuse (25.34%), neglect/abandonment (19.59%), and psychological violence (5.58%). In smaller proportions, cases of sexual abuse (1.61%), financial violence (0.60%) and torture (0.46%) were observed. All cases of violence showed a significantly higher frequency among women.

The aggressors were predominantly unknown people (52.09%), followed by children (30.42%), caregivers (32.82%), marital partners (10.19%), siblings (7.55%) and other people known to the victim (17.83%). There was a significant difference in the distribution of perpetrators according to the sex of the victim: women were more often victims of children and marital partners than men. These, in turn, were more often victims of unknown people and their social circle.

Table 1. Reports of violence against the elderly according to characteristics of occurrence per year. Pernambuco, Brazil, 2024

Ano da Notification	Jan	Fev	Mar	Abr	Mai	Jun	Jul	Ago	Set	Out	Nov	Dez	Total
TOTAL	6.004	6.267	6.482	5.854	5.729	5.435	6.284	6.799	7.222	7.250	6.677	6.345	76.336
2019	1.551	1.501	1.453	1.608	1.740	1.461	1.544	1.564	1.809	1.881	1.674	1.541	19.330
2020	1.668	1.615	1.403	939	786	964	1.229	1.263	1.357	1.329	1.236	1.160	14.949
2021	1.378	1.492	1.586	1.389	1.328	1.250	1.612	1.791	1.882	1.853	1.798	1.710	19.069
2022	1.407	1.659	2.040	1.918	1.875	1.760	1.899	2.181	2.174	2.187	1.966	1.922	22.988

Source: Ministry of Health/SVS - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net.

Table 2. Reports of violence against the elderly according to demographic characteristics by sex. Pernambuco, Brazil, 2024

Sex	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
TOTAL	19.327	14.956	19.064	22.986	76. 336
Masculine	5.412	5.412	3.893	6.577	21.031
Feminine	13.915	11.063	13.918	16.409	21.031
Age Range					
60 and over	1.735	1.735	1.821	2.228	7.174
Race					
White	2.788	1.939	2.525	3.092	10.344
Black	1.369	1.023	1.352	1.498	5.242
Yellow	345	177	250	229	1.001
brown	14.478	11.515	14.679	17.657	58.329
Indigenous	111	61	121	135	428
Education					
Illiterate	230	164	202	196	792
1ª a 4ª series incompleta do EF	982	698	819	841	3.340
4ª complete series of EF	446	397	534	519	1.896
5ª a 8ª series incomplete of EF	2.256	1.612	1.716	1.967	7.551
Complete primary education	731	531	715	747	2.724
Incomplete high school	1.239	882	1.160	1.305	4.586
Complete high school	1.901	1.627	1.992	2.413	7.933
Incomplete higher education	350	304	365	422	1.441
Complete higher education	442	304	384	467	1.597

Source: Ministry of Health/SVS - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net.

Table 3. Reports of violence against the elderly according to occurrence characteristics by health region. Pernambuco, Brazil, 2024

Notification Health Region (CIR)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Afogados da Ingazeira X	239	279	312	319	1149
Arcoverde VI	751	510	1156	1217	3634
Caruaru IV	1579	1431	1951	2755	7716
Garanhuns V	1439	846	1110	1006	4401
Goiana XII	758	534	554	551	2397
Limoeiro II	435	383	330	343	1491
Ouricuri IX	646	463	474	625	2208
Palmares III	338	298	266	283	1185
Petrolina VIII	3017	2585	3514	4107	13223
Recife I	9310	6904	8562	10777	35553
Salgueiro VII	340	298	232	313	1183
Serra Talhada XI	410	377	572	608	1967
Total	19262	14908	19033	22904	76107

Source: Ministry of Health/SVS - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net.

Table 4. Reports of violence against the elderly according to type of violence and means of aggression by sex. Pernambuco, Brazil, 2024

Characteristics			TOTAL
Type of violence	Masculine	Feminine	
Physical	9084	26793	35877
Psychological/moral	2.001	14.563	16.564
Negligence/abandonment	7.027	8.399	15.433
Financial/economic	214	2.197	2.411
Sexual	576	8.361	8.937
Torture	164	1.245	1.409
Other Violence	3.791	10.714	14.508
Means of aggression			
Body strength	4.199	19.137	23.336
Threat	613	9.630	10.243
Sharp object	2.726	5.130	7.856
Blunt object	881	2.005	2.886
Fire gun	1.318	1.250	2.568
Hanging	497	1.901	2.398
Poisoning	3.589	11.047	14.638
Hot substance/object	361	598	959
Another Aggression	6.600	11.209	17.815
Aggressor			
Children	1.515	3.459	4.974
Unknown	2.591	4.301	6.892
Partners	507	7.797	8.304
Caregiver	1.634	3.393	5.027
Brothers	376	1.045	1.421
Other ties	887	2.759	3.646

Source: Ministry of Health/SVS - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net.

DISCUSSION

Violence against the elderly is a complex issue due to its dynamics and determining factors intrinsically linked to the family environment, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and the dependence that is often present in this context. The results found in this research reveal important differences in the epidemiological profile of violence against the elderly according to gender, allowing us to know in more detail aspects related to the victim, the reported event and the aggressor. It was identified that the majority of elderly people who suffered some type of violence during the period analyzed were female. These findings are in line with other studies already documented in the literature, which also highlighted a significant prevalence of violence against the elderly (Alarcon, 2021). The profile identified in this study reveals that the majority of victims are brown women with low education. These results corroborate previous studies conducted by Souza (2021), which highlight the importance of these factors in generating gender-based violence. Furthermore, they emphasize that ethnicity/color is associated with socioeconomic conditions and situations of vulnerability, including poverty. The results obtained in this research reveal a higher profile of elderly people with a low level or length of education and without a partner, when we consider the marital situation. These characteristics were also highlighted in other research, which classified such factors as associated with the practice of violence. However, not all research on the topic recorded in the literature includes these findings, since a significant percentage of items are not reported in the notification forms, especially the category of education and marital status, as well as race/color (Moraes, 2020). This ends up making it difficult and even impossible to carry out an adequate analysis and outline this profile (Alves,2020).

In relation to the health region, Regional VIII, located in the city of Petrolina, recorded the highest number of notifications of violence against the elderly. However, as Camacho (2023) points out, this difference may be related to geographic location at a regional level, as this may cause fluctuations in the results obtained. With regard to the relationship between the aggressor and the victim, the present study identified a greater predominance of close or known perpetrators, such as the victim's children and brothers. A North American study shows that around 90% of cases of violence have the aggressor as a close relative, such as children and spouses (Oliveira, 2022). The prevalence of physical violence, evidenced by the results presented, is also observed in another study carried out in the city of São Paulo in 2018, which recorded 289 cases of physical violence against women in a single year. These findings reveal that physical violence is one of the types of violence that most affects the elderly population (De Souza et al (2021). Another study reinforces the prevalence of physical violence against the elderly, carried out in the extreme south of Rio Grande do Sul, and brings results based on the perception of community health agents, most of whom reported having already dealt with cases of this type. The agents also add that, in addition to physical violence, other types of violence occur in the family environment, which alerts us to this. the importance of being aware of other types of violence that can occur with the elderly, in addition to physical violence (Camacho, 2023). Studies that rely on secondary reporting data face inherent limitations, such as underreporting, which must be taken into account when analyzing the data. This is because such data do not capture the full extent of the violence suffered by the elderly person, often due to the lack of information in specific fields of the records analyzed. This gap may be the result of negligence at the time of notification, which makes accurate epidemiological analyzes difficult. Failure to complete notification forms by health professionals has a direct impact on data recorded in DataSUS, which was the source used in this study. The data presented in this article reflect efforts to implement notification systems to support public policies to prevent violence against elderly people. The health sector is playing a crucial role by committing to the identification and monitoring of reported cases, thus providing input for the formulation of effective policies (Sousa, 2021). Despite increased awareness of violence against the elderly, underreporting of cases and lack of

disclosure through information systems continues to be a challenge. This gap can contribute to the increase in violence in society by preventing a complete understanding of the problem and, consequently, the implementation of effective preventive measures (Nora, 2021).

The results of this study highlight the need to create effective support networks to guarantee comprehensive care for elderly people in the state of Pernambuco. This requires a commitment from both the State and civil society. It is crucial that policies are able to offer adequate coverage to the needs of the elderly, which involves understanding the protection system and recognizing the importance of notification by health professionals in cases of violence (Camacho, 2023). Furthermore, it is essential to properly forward these cases to the responsible sectors, both within and outside the health sector (Oliveira, 2022). This study proposes continuous training for health professionals on the topic of violence against the elderly, as well as encouraging them to properly complete the notification form for interpersonal/self-inflicted violence against elderly people. This approach aims to minimize possible biases in the recording of these variables in health systems, which can contribute to better understanding and intervention in cases of violence against the elderly.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that violence against elderly people in the state of Pernambuco occurred frequently during the period of analysis, with a considerable tendency towards female elderly people, of mixed race and with little education. It was also observed that the most frequent location for violence is the health regions furthest from the capital, with unknown people as the main perpetrators of aggression, followed by children, caregivers, and marital partners. Physical abuse, neglect/abandonment and psychological violence stood out as the main type of violence, a fact that deserves to be the object of study in new research focused on the topic. Violence against the elderly is a public health problem that requires greater attention from political and health authorities, given that this is a population that is more vulnerable to many problems. However, violence presents itself as a problem that can be intervened, aiming at a better quality of life and active aging for this population. The aging of the population is a contemporary reality, and violence against the elderly is a worrying phenomenon. The functional dependence of elderly people and the fragility of family relationships make them more susceptible to violence. Therefore, it is crucial that this information is used to develop educational measures, promote social mobilization and develop multidisciplinary and intersectoral actions. These initiatives aim to establish a comprehensive safety net for older people, with the aim of breaking the silence around this issue and increasing reporting. The expectation is that this will have a positive impact on reducing cases of violence against the elderly.

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