

*ANALYSIS OF CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC***ANALYSIS OF CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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ABSTRACT

Objetivo: Analisar a partir de uma revisão de literatura, o aumento de casos de feminicídio no contexto da pandemia da covid-19. **Métodos:** Estudo bibliográfico do tipo revisão integrativa de literatura, que ocorreu na Biblioteca Virtual da Saúde (BVS), Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde (LILACS) e PubMed. **Resultado:** Foram selecionadas 12 publicações completas para subsidiar resultados e conclusão, incluíram-se apenas publicações disponíveis em sua totalidade, publicados nos anos de 2020 a 2021, nos idiomas português, inglês e Espanhol. Os estudos incluídos ressaltaram que grande parte das agressões é perpetrada pelo cônjuge ou ex-parceiros das vítimas, em virtude disso, o espaço doméstico no isolamento social é sem dúvida o lócus para ocorrência de violência doméstica contra a mulher e feminicídio. **Considerações finais:** Identifica-se a necessidade de ampliação das ações específicas sobre a prevenção da violência contra a mulher e feminicídio, como também verificar a necessidade de fortalecimento das redes de assistência a mulher violentada, todas as estratégias supracitadas são válidas e complementam-se.

Keywords: Social Isolation; Covid-19; Domestic Violence; Aggression; Murder.

ABSTRACT

Objective: Analyze, based on a literature review, the increase in cases of femicide in the context of the covid-19 pandemic. **Methods:** Bibliographic study of the integrative literature review type, which took place in the Virtual Health Library (BVS), Latin American Literature, the Caribbean in Health Sciences (LILACS), and PubMed. **Result:** 12 complete publications were selected to support results and conclusion, only publications available in their entirety were included, published in the years 2020 to 2021, in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. The included studies highlighted that most of the aggressions are perpetrated by the victims' spouse or ex-partners, as a result, the domestic space in social isolation is undoubtedly the locus for the occurrence of domestic violence against women and femicide. **Final considerations:** It identifies the need to expand specific actions on the prevention of violence against women and femicide, and verify the need to strengthen the assistance networks for women who have been raped. All of the above strategies are valid and complement each other

Keywords: Social Isolation; Covid-19; Domestic Violence; Wounds and Injuries; Homicide.

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INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a global public health problem and also represents a violation of human rights, negatively affecting the physical, emotional, and reproductive health of victims. ⁽¹⁾It's being perceived that many cases of violence against women result in homicide, also called femicide, since such action is generally practiced by the spouse or ex-partners of the victims. In addition, social isolation was determined as a preventive measure and to reduce community transmission of Sars-cov-2 restricted people to their homes and resulted in an increase in cases of domestic violence and femicide. ^(two)

Although the evidence linking the incidence of cases of violence against women with the social isolation imposed by the covid-19 pandemic is incipient, reports from international organizations allude that there has been an increase in cases of domestic violence and femicide. Furthermore, in countries such as China, Italy, France, and Spain, in police records, the occurrences of violence against women in the period of mandatory home isolation doubled. ⁽¹⁾In Brazil, this increase is evidenced by the denouncements made to dial 180, since, in 2019, 32.9 thousand were registered between January and April, and 37.5 thousand in the same period of the year 2020. ⁽³⁾

As an effect of the covid-19 pandemic, the aggravation of social and gender inequalities became even more urgent to pay attention to the specificities of vulnerable populations, including women. These represent 70% of the workforce and are ahead

of their responsibilities, whether domestic or business. In addition, social isolation, economic crisis, change in social relationships, unemployment, and anxiety resulting from the moment of public calamity and economic instability are contributing factors to the occurrence of domestic violence and femicide. ⁽⁴⁾

In this context, the objective was to analyze, from a literature review, the increase in cases of femicide in the context of the covid-19 pandemic. It is of great importance to emphasize that the period of social isolation and/or quarantine has hampered access to health and public safety services due to changes in care protocols and the insecurity of the victim in seeking assistance. It is necessary to seek strategies to support women during the pandemic and to offer support and care to victims of violence.

METHODS

This is an integrative literature review, supported by the following guiding question, "How can the social isolation imposed by the covid-19 pandemic influence the increase in cases of violence against women?"

The integrative literature review is a method that aims to synthesize results obtained in research in a systematic, orderly, and comprehensive way, using different methodologies. It is called integrative because it provides broader information on a subject, constituting a body of knowledge, and can be directed towards the definition of concepts, review of theories, or methodological analysis of studies. ⁽⁵⁾

Thus, it determined the construction of the PICO strategy, which represents an acronym for Problem (P), Interest (I), Context (Co), which makes it possible to locate relevant studies that answered the research problem. ⁶Indexed and non-indexed descriptors were used (“violence against women”, “Public Health Policies”, “women’s health”, “health strategies”, “Social Isolation”, “pandemic”, “Sars -cov-2”) in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. Thus, the descriptors were obtained from the *Medical Subject Headings* (MESH), the Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS), as shown in **Table 1**.

The Virtual Health Library (VHL), Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS), and PubMed were consulted using descriptors and keywords. Twelve complete publications were selected to support results and discussion. Inclusion criteria were studies available in their entirety, published in the years 2020 to 2021, in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. Book chapters, abstracts, incomplete texts, theses, dissertations, technical reports, and other forms of publications that were not characterized as complete scientific articles were excluded from the initial search.

Table 1 - Elements of the PICO strategy, descriptors, and keywords used. Senator Alexandre Costa - MA, Brazil, 2021.

Elements		Decs	mesh	Keywords
FOR	Violence against women.	<i>Violence against women;</i> <i>Violence Against Women;</i> <i>Violence against la Mujer.</i>	<i>Violence Against Women;</i>	<i>Violence against women.</i>
I	Public Health Policies; Women's health; Health Strategies.	<i>Public health policies ;</i> <i>Public Health Policy;</i> <i>Public Health Policies;</i> <i>Women's health;</i> <i>Women's Health;</i> <i>Salud de la Mujer;</i> <i>Health strategies;</i> <i>eHealth Strategies;</i> <i>eHealth Strategies;</i>	<i>Public Health Policy;</i> <i>Women's Health;</i> <i>eHealth Strategies;</i>	<i>Public policies of Health;</i> <i>Women's health;</i> <i>Health strategies;</i>
Co	Social isolation; Pandemic; SARS-CoV-2.	<i>Social isolation;</i> <i>Social Isolation;</i> <i>Social isolation;</i> <i>Pandemic;</i> <i>pandemics</i> <i>Pandemic;</i> <i>Covid-19;</i> <i>Betacoronavirus;</i>	<i>Social Isolation;</i> <i>Pandemics;</i> <i>Betacoronavirus;</i>	<i>Social isolation;</i> <i>Pandemic;</i> <i>SARS-CoV-2;</i>

Source: Decs, Mesh terms and keywords (2021).

The descriptors and terms defined during the research were classified and combined in the databases (**Table 2**),

resulting in specific strategies in each database.

Table 2 - Search strategies used in BIREME and PUBMED databases. Senador Alexandre Costa - MA, Brazil, 2021.

DATABASE	SEARCH STRATEGY	RESULTS	FILTERED	SELECTED
LILACS (BDENF)	(Violence Against Women) AND (Public Health Policy) AND (Social Isolation)	07	03	03
PubMed (MeSH descriptors)	((Violence Against Women) AND (Public Health Policy)) AND (Social Isolation)	58	27	09

Source: Databases (2021).

RESULTS

After searching each database and extracting studies that did not fit the time frame or were not complete scientific articles,

12 studies were selected that met the inclusion criteria and were classified and organized according to **Table 3** and **Table 1**, which have the information regarding the characteristics of the studies.

Table 1 - Descriptive analysis of scientific productions on “COVID Pandemic 19 and relation to cases of domestic violence”. Senador Alexandre Costa – MA, (2021).

VARIABLES	No.	%
Articles approach		
Quantitative	03	25%
Qualitative	09	75%
research design		
case-control study	02	16.6%
cohort study	03	25%
Randomized Clinical Trial	02	16.6%
Systematic review	05	41.6%
Grade of recommendation and level of evidence		
"1 A"	07	56.3%
"2 B"	03	25%
"3B"	02	16.6%
origin		
USA	04	33.3%
Brazil	04	33.3%
England	01	8.3%
Tunisia	01	8.3%
Peru	01	8.3%
Canada	01	8.3%

Source: Prepared by the authors (2021).

It was evaluated that, of the total number of studies analyzed, most studies were produced in the USA (33.3%) and Brazil (33.3%), with 74% of the studies having a

qualitative approach, with a predominance of systematic review studies. (41.6%), and in general, presented a high quality of scientific evidence (1A).

Table 3 - Publications included and selected according to the database used, article title, journal, language, and year of publication. Senador Alexandre Costa - MA, Brazil, 2021.

BASE	ARTICLE TITLE	MAGAZINE	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
LILACS	Women's Health, Gender, Public Policy, and Medical Education: Issues in the Context of the Pandemic / Women's Health, Gender, Public Policies, and Medical Education: Issues in the Context of the Pandemic	Rev. bras. education avg.	2020
LILACS	Challenges in protecting women in situations of violence in the context of the covid-19 pandemic	Science care Health	2020
LILACS	Social isolation and the rise of domestic violence: what does this tell us?	Rev. bras. Epidemiol.	2020
PubMed	Violence against women in the Covid-19 pandemic: A review of the literature and a call for shared strategies to tackle health and social emergencies	Forensic Science International	2021
PubMed	Domestic violence against women amid the pandemic: coping strategies disseminated by digital media	Rev. Bras. Nursing	2021
PubMed	COVID-19 and the rise of intimate partner violence	World Development	2021
PubMed	Women's mental health: acute impact of COVID-19 pandemic on domestic violence	Archives of Women's Mental Health.	2020
PubMed	COVID-19 pandemic and violence: rising risks and decreasing urgent care-seeking for sexual assault and domestic violence survivors	BMC Medicine	2021
PubMed	The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the precipitation of intimate partner violence	International Journal of Law and Psychiatry	2020
PubMed	Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence during Lockdown and the COVID-19 Pandemic	Journal of Family Violence	2021
PubMed	Covid-19 and Domestic Violence: an Indirect Path to Social and Economic Crisis	Journal of Family Violence	2020
PubMed	COVID-19: urgency for distancing from domestic violence	European Journal of Psychotrauma	2020

Source: Prepared by the authors (2021).

The covid-19 pandemic caused an increase in violence against women,

specifically domestic violence, which encompasses all forms of violence that occur

within the family, therefore, femicide. Since acts of aggression against women are committed by the spouse or ex-partner of the victims. ⁽⁷⁻⁸⁾

Although social isolation is a measure to control the spread of Sars-cov-2, it has been opportune for aggressors to persist with acts of violence, as it is a period of change in social relations and change in care protocols as a way of avoiding agglomerations, unemployment, anxiety resulting from the moment of public calamity, among other factors that make the victim feel insecure in seeking health and public safety support, thus promoting the rupture of the cycle of violence. ^(1,2,9)

The studies also presented digital media as a way of coping with domestic violence in this period of social isolation, they have been used as a universal resource, for communication, work, as a source of information, teleconsultations, in addition to serving as a support to give visibility to causes such as these that need activist behaviors. ^(2,7)

In summary, there is a need for reorganization of services for women in situations of violence, as well as the urgent need for interventions that can minimize the incidence of occurrences of domestic violence, since the data show the exceptional increase in violence against women and femicide in this period of a global pandemic. ^(10,11)

DISCUSSION

Violence against women is a global problem with a great impact on the health of the population, as it not only affects the victim but also interferes with the quality of

life of family members and communities. ^(7,12) In this sense, violence perpetrated by an intimate partner can be practiced in different ways, including physical violence (beating, torture, and murder); psychological (manipulation, humiliation, threats); patrimonial (obsessive control of finances; subtraction of money and control of personal objects), sexual violence (unwanted sexual relations, harassment, and prohibition of the use of contraceptives). ^(13,14,15)

Some evidence highlights that the incidence of cases of violence against women is notorious in periods after natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, where the increase in cases of violence rose from 12.5% in 2006 to 34.4% in 2007, with a predominance of domestic and psychological violence. Although studies on cases of violence against women in the covid-19 pandemic are insufficient, as well as in previous outbreaks of Ebola and Zika virus, which also have irreversible consequences, the health system must adapt to the circumstances and identify interventions applicably. ^(7,9)

Not only in countries such as China, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, there was an increase in cases of domestic violence against women during the period of mandatory social isolation, as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. As well as in Brazil, there was a significant increase when compared to police incidents of assistance to women from March 2019 to April 2020, since the complaints rose from 17.9% in March to 37.6% in April, as if that wasn't enough

femicide rates increased 22% in 12 states. ^(2, 12, 14)

In addition, the most common factors that intensify the occurrence of violence against women are anxiety, economic crisis, poverty, social isolation, mandatory quarantine, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorder, and substance abuse disorder. ^(13, 15) Several reasons have been suggested as a way to explain the exceptional increase in violence against women and femicide in the pandemic period, as it can contribute to marital dissatisfaction, reinforcing aggressive behaviors to manage conflicts. ^(10, 15)

Abusers use the pandemic period as a justification to intensify acts of violence due to being confined with the victim in the same family life, consequently, an increase in femicide in the period of social isolation was identified, where regulations impose restrictions on travel, social distancing and additional measures to control Sars-cov-2. ^(8, 9, 14) Therefore, it is necessary to change the care and safety protocols, establishing exceptions to cases of violence against women.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study allowed a descriptive analysis of the increase in cases of violence against women and femicide in the covid-19 pandemic period, as well as the factors that significantly contributed to the occurrence of cases of violence. Although Sars-cov-2 is a serious health problem for the population, there is another global public health emergency that is becoming a challenge and needs immediate interventions as an

exceptional increase in female deaths has been identified. of childbearing age.

In this sense, social isolation measures to reduce the community transmission of Sars-cov-2, in addition to favoring the incidence of occurrence of domestic violence cases, can also result in serious economic, social and psychological crises, since the factors of risks are amplified, thus, home confinement causes difficulty in accessing protection resources, as victims are separated from their usual support system, which makes it very difficult or impossible to ask for help and/or survive the abusive relationship.

Based on the above, the studies showed that the main protection resources used by the victims were the cell phone to access the complaint channels such as telephone channels, dial 180, 100, 181, 197, 129, 190, and 192; applications such as WhatsApp, women's protection service, Civil Police, Public Defender's Office, emergency service; Website with the ombudsman for the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights. Another strategy adopted was to encourage participation and guide neighbors to report cases.

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen and implement public policies on women's health with actions to prevent violence against women and femicide worldwide. In addition, government institutions must include services and measures to protect victims in their contingency plans.

Adding to the fact that health professionals have an important role to play in identifying, welcoming the victim, notifying cases of violence, and referring them to specialized care such as a forensic clinician,

more research should be carried out to provide reliable information and create strategies to guide women in situations of violence.

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