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Victims of bad treatment, negligence or abandonment in a Northeast Brazilian state

ABSTRACT | Objective: describes an epidemiological situation of people who have been victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment in a state in northeastern Brazil. Method: This is an exploratory and descriptive study, with a quantitative approach and retrospective data, developed with data obtained from the Notifiable Diseases Information System. Results: The population comprised people attended and notified in the services themselves and under the Unified Health System, due to maltreatment, neglect or abandonment, between 2015 and 2018. It was observed that the majority were female (59, 6%), aged up to 9 years (56.4%) and residents of the urban area (79.1%). As for people who committed abuse, neglect or abandonment, the majority were female, had not drunk alcohol and violence was motivated by generational conflict (20%). Conclusion: The need for public policies to protect children and people who are in a situation of vulnerability was highlighted.

Keywords: Violence; Negligence; Child abuse; Epidemiology.

RESUMEN | Objetivo: describe una situación epidemiológica de personas que han sido víctimas de abuso, negligencia o abandono en un estado del noreste de Brasil. Método: Se trata de un estudio exploratorio y descriptivo, con enfoque cuantitativo y datos retrospectivos, desarrollado con datos obtenidos del Sistema de Información de Enfermedades Notificables. Resultados: La población estuvo conformada por personas atendidas y notificadas en los propios servicios y en el Sistema Único de Salud, por maltrato, negligencia o abandono, entre 2015 y 2018. Se observó que la mayoría eran mujeres (59, 6%), de hasta 9 años (56,4%) y residentes del casco urbano (79,1%). En cuanto a las personas que cometieron maltrato, abandono o abandono, la mayoría eran mujeres, no habían bebido alcohol y la violencia estuvo motivada por conflicto generacional (20%). Conclusión: Se destacó la necesidad de políticas públicas para proteger a la niñez y a las personas en situación de vulnerabilidad.

Palabras claves: Violencia; Negligencia; Abuso infantil; Epidemiología.

RESUMO | Objetivo: descrever a situação epidemiológica de pessoas que foram vítimas de maus-tratos, negligência ou abandono em um estado do nordeste brasileiro. Método: Trata-se de estudo exploratório e descritivo, com abordagem quantitativa e dados retrospectivos, desenvolvido com dados obtidos do Sistema de Informação de Agravos de Notificação. Resultados: A população compreendeu pessoas atendidas e notificadas nos serviços próprios e conveniados ao Sistema Único de Saúde, por causas de maus-tratos, negligência ou abandono, entre 2015 e 2018. Observou-se que a maior parte era do sexo feminino (59,6%), na faixa etária de até 9 anos (56,4%) e residentes da zona urbana (79,1%). Quanto as pessoas que cometeram maus-tratos, negligência ou abandono, a maioria era do sexo feminino, não havia ingerido bebida alcoólica e a violência foi motivada por conflito geracional (20%). Conclusão: Evidenciou-se a necessidade de políticas públicas que proteja as crianças e as pessoas que estão em situação de vulnerabilidade.

Palavras-chaves: Violência; Negligência; Maus-tratos Infantis; Epidemiologia.

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INTRODUCTION

From the 1980s onwards, the theme of violence came to occupy a prominent place in the agendas of political and social debates and in the health sector, becoming incorporated as a public health issue and a challenge for the managers of the Unified Health System (SUS).¹

The World Health Organization (WHO) presented in its World Report on violence and health that every year, more than one million people lose their lives and many others suffer non-fatal injuries due to violent causes. The Brazilian context does not escape from the world reality and because it is an underdeveloped country, the data tend to be more expressive. In Brazil, in the 90s alone, more than one million people died from violence and accidents and of these, around 400 thousand died from homicides.¹

How to talk about violence and not mention the growing cases and reports of mistreatment, neglect and abandonment by people considered to be legal guardians and or family members.

Violence is defined as any attitude or behavior that uses force and power to

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intentionally cause harm or intimidation against physical or psychological integrity, through self-harm, interpersonal or collective aggression.²

It should be noted that violence became part of the compulsory notification list as of 2011, with the publication of Ordinance No. 104, of January 25th, 2011, and later through Ordinance No. 1.271, of June 6th, 2014, universalizing this procedure for all health services. The individual notification form should be used to record any suspected or confirmed cases of domestic/intra-family, sexual, self-harm, human trafficking, slave labor, child labor, torture, legal intervention and homophobic violence against women and men in all the ages.³

However, even in the face of such an alarming scenario, data are still underreported and many professionals are unaware or do not recognize the importance of data notification through a collection instrument. Thus, it is important to train health professionals to improve the quality of information, in view of the real diagnosis of the situation, so that epidemiological surveillance and violence prevention actions are carried out.⁴

Therefore, notification is an institutional obligation, with services, managers and health professionals having the responsibility to carry out compulsory notification in accordance with current legislation, as the notification/ investigation form collects and provides extremely important data for preparation strategies and action plans to combat violence.

Another advance in relation to violence prevention was the implementation of the Violence and Accident Surveillance System (VIVA - Vigilância de Violências e Acidentes), between 2006 and 2008, in reference services for violence, such as reference centers for violence, reference centers for violence, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), specialized outpatient clinics and maternity hospitals. As of 2009, VIVA became part of the Notifiable Diseases Information System (SINAN

- Sistema de Informação de Agravos de Notificação), joining the list of mandatory notification in sentinel units.⁵

In accordance with the above, mistreatment, neglect and abandonment are considered themes of extreme relevance to society, as these are public health problems in which it cracks and causes damage that is often irreparable, both for the individual as for other family members. However, this problem can be avoided and its confrontation requires coordinated and systematized efforts from different government sectors, social segments and the population in general, so the search for a solution must be thoroughly researched until it is no longer a cause of victims.



In this context the present article is inserted, which aims to describe the epidemiological situation of people who have been victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment in a state in northeastern Brazil.



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METHOD

This is an exploratory and descriptive study, with a quantitative approach and retrospective data. Data were obtained from the Notifiable Diseases Information System (SINAN) - Registered Domestic/Intrafamily Violence Notification Sheets and Violence and Accident Sheet in Sentinel Urgency and Emergency Services, made available by the Health Surveillance Secretariat of the State Secretariat and Municipal Health through the electronic portal of the Informatics Department of the Unified Health System (DATASUS).

The population comprised all the people who were served and notified in the services themselves and under SUS agreements, due to maltreatment, neglect or abandonment and between 2015 and 2018 in Natal, Capital of Rio Grande do Norte.

According to a notification sheet, the definition of Interpersonal/Self-harmed Violence refers to a "suspected or confirmed case of domestic/intra-family, sexual, self-harmed violence, human trafficking, slave labor, child labor, torture, legal intervention and homophobic violence against women and men at all ages."

For the research to take place, the following procedures were adopted: forwarding a letter to the Secretary of State for Public Health of Rio Grande do Norte, in which he informed about the research and requested authorization to carry it out, in addition to the formal use of the institution's name in the final investigation report. The researchers undertook, in this profession, to honor the scientific, ethical and legal principles that govern research with databases, whose information is aggregated, with no possibility of individual identification, recommended in Resolution No. 541/2016 of the National Health Council.

After approval by the State Health Secretary of Rio Grande do Norte, data collection began.

Data treatment was performed using the Microsoft Office Excel® program and

Table 1. Sociodemographic characterization of victims of abuse, neglect and neglect in the State of Rio Grande do Norte. Natal/RN, Brazil, 2019.

Categorias	n	Porcentagem
Sexo		
Feminino	260	59,6
Masculino	176	40,4
Faixa etária		
Criança (0 a 9 anos)	246	56,4
Adolescente (10 a 19 anos)	101	23,2
Jovem (20 a 24 anos)	6	1,4
Pessoa adulta (25 a 59 anos)	26	5,9
Pessoa idosa (60 anos ou mais)	57	13,1
Orientação sexual		
Heterossexual	69	15,8
Homossexual (gay/lésbica)	3	0,7
Não se aplica*	315	72,2
Ignorado	49	11,2
Identidade de gênero		
Mulher Transexual	2	0,5
Não se aplica*	376	86,2
Ignorado	58	13,3
Raça/Cor		
Parda	162	37,2
Branca	66	15,1
Preta	20	4,6
Amarela	1	0,2
Indígena	1	0,2
Ignorado	182	41,7
Escolaridade		
Analfabeto	8	1,8
Ensino fundamental incompleto/completo	84	19,2
Ensino médio incompleto/completo	2	0,5
Ensino superior incompleta/completo	2	0,4
Ausente	19	4,4
Não se aplica*	214	49,1
Ignorado	107	24,5
Grávida		
Não	42	9,6
Sim	3	0,7
Não se aplica*	374	85,8
Ignorado	17	3,9
Zona		

submitted to the SPSS 25.0 program for cleaning and consistency checking of the reported data, as well as descriptive analysis. After the treatment of the database, a descriptive analysis was carried out through the measures of the distribution center of the variability or variability and dispersion for the quantitative variable and the use of absolute values and percentages of the qualitative variables. The construction of tables or graphs was carried out using Microsoft Office Excel® 365.

RESULTS

In the period from 2015 to 2018, 12,665 cases of violence were reported in the State of Rio Grande do Norte, with 436 (3,4%) cases of abuse, neglect or abandonment. The highest percentage of notifications occurred in 2017 (142), followed by 2018 (130).

Regarding the characterization of victims who suffered abuse, neglect or abandonment, through the analysis of table 1, it is observed that the majority were female (59,6%), in the age group from 0 to 9 years old (56,4%), heterosexual (15,8%), without identification of gender identity (86,2%), brown color (37,2%), with incomplete/complete elementary education (19,2%), was not pregnant (85,8%), from the urban area (79,1%), of those who were old enough to have a relationship, most (11,7%) were single.

37 (8,5%) people were reported to have some type of disability/disorder, however, there was a significant percentage (23,0%) of data recorded as ignored or absent. Of those who had some type of disorder, most were reported as physically disabled (35,0%).

With regard to data on the occurrence of violence related to abuse, neglect and neglect, Table 2 shows that the majority occurred in the urban area (76,6%), suffered violence at home (82,8%) and it had already occurred other times (44,5%).

As for the type of violence suffered, showing that psychological/moral violence (26,6%) was predominant, followed by

Urbana	345	79,1
Rural	81	18,6
Periurbana	1	0,2
Ausente	7	1,6
Ignorado	2	0,5
Situação conjugal / Estado civil		
Solteiro	51	11,7
Casado/união consensual	30	6,9
Viúvo	11	2,5
Separado	4	0,9
Não se aplica*	300	68,8
Ignorado	28	6,4
Ausente	12	2,8

Source: SVS/MS * data registered with a young age or disability

Table 2. People who are victims of abuse, neglect and neglect in the State of Rio Grande do Norte according to the data of the event. Natal/RN, Brazil, 2019.

Categoria	n	Porcentagem
Zona de Ocorrência		
Urbana	334	76,6
Rural	71	16,3
Periurbana	1	0,2
Ignorada	2	0,5
Ausente	28	6,4
Local de Ocorrência		
Residência	361	82,8
Habitação coletiva	2	0,5
Escola	3	0,7
Local de prática esportiva	1	0,2
Via pública	11	2,5
Outros	32	7,3
Ignorado	25	5,7
Ausente	1	0,2
Ocorreu outras vezes?		
Sim	194	44,5
Não	62	14,2
Ignorado	176	40,4
Ausente	4	0,9

Source: SVS/MS

Table 3. Characterization of abusers of abuse, neglect and neglect in the State of Rio Grande do Norte. Natal/RN, Brazil, 2019.

Categoria	n	Porcentagem
Sexo do provável autor da violência		

physical violence (25,5%). Regarding the bond/degree of kinship with the person who suffered the violence, it is observed that the mother (11,1%) was predominant, followed by the father (52,3%).

Table 3 presents the data related to the characterization of the aggressors, observing that the majority were female (43,1%), had not ingested alcoholic beverages (37,6%), were adults, aged 25 to 59 years (66,5%) and the violence was motivated by generational conflict (20,0%).

DISCUSSION

Neglect includes abandonment, the absence or insufficiency of physical and emotional care, and can reflect the abandonment of the family itself, the rupture of family ties. Violence and aggression practiced in the family environment can damage the well-being, physical and/or psychological integrity, freedom and the right to the full development of people, especially children.^{6,7}

With regard to the characteristics of people who have suffered abuse, neglect or abandonment, the results of the present study are similar to other studies carried out on the theme, in which they show that the majority were female and under nine years of age. This fact is justified by situations of authoritarianism and domination, replicating situations of oppression in more vulnerable populations. Authors have attributed cultural aspects that reinforce a masculine view of society, applying violent attitudes more intensely against girls and younger children.⁷

Regarding the place where the maltreatment occurred, it was observed that the home was the most frequent, data confirmed by other studies. Because this type of violence has occurred more in children and they remain at home for a longer time, the occurrence of violence becomes more frequent in this place. The residence should represent an environment of protection and care, but it becomes the place of aggression and victimization for certain children.^{7,8}

Feminino	188	43,1
Ambos os sexos	128	29,4
Masculino	87	20,0
Ignorado/ausentes	33	7,5
Ingestão de bebida alcoólica		
Não	164	37,6
Sim	97	22,2
Ignorado/ausente	175	40,1
Ciclo de vida do provável autor da violência		
Criança (0 a 9 anos)	6	1,4
Adolescente (10 a 19 anos)	28	6,4
Jovem (20 a 24 anos)	22	5,0
Pessoa adulta (25 a 59 anos)	290	66,5
Pessoa idosa (60 anos ou mais)	11	2,5
Ignorado	79	18,1
Violência motivada por:		
Conflito geracional	87	20,0
Sexismo	20	4,6
Situação de rua	6	1,4
Deficiência	4	0,9
Outros	49	11,2
Não se aplica	180	41,3
Ignorado	90	20,6

Source: SVS/MS

The present study showed serious and worrying results, because in addition to the victims' age-related vulnerability, since 56,4% were less than nine years old, still 8,5% of them had physical, mental and visual deficiencies or disorders. It is important to highlight that the recognition of signs of maltreatment among children

and adolescents with intellectual disabilities can be hampered by the inability they have to verbalize that they are being mistreated, or because they do not understand that they are being attacked. In those with physical disabilities, the difficulty in talking about the violence suffered may be associated with the fact that those who

attack are the same as those who care, with affective links, in addition to the fear of abandonment after the identification of mistreatment.⁹

CONCLUSION

The present study described the epidemiological situation of people who were victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment in a state in northeastern Brazil, drawing the following conclusions:

Regarding the characteristics of people who were victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment, it was observed that most were female, aged 0 to 9 years old, heterosexual, with no identification of gender identity, brown color, with incomplete/complete elementary school, was not pregnant, from the urban area. Of those who were old enough to have a relationship, most were single.

As for the profile of people who committed abuse, neglect or abandonment, the majority was female, had not had alcohol, was an adult, between 25 and 59 years old and the violence was motivated by generational conflict.

Thus, the research showed the need for public policies that protect children and people who are in a situation of vulnerability. The existing laws currently prove to be ineffective for the promotion and protection of minors and also for people with some type of disability or disorder, that is, special needs bringing up the scenario of abandonment, lack of inspection and preventive interventions. 🌱

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