

The knowledge of health students about obstetric violence: Integrative review

RESUMO | Objetivo: analisar o que versa a literatura sobre o saber de acadêmicos da área de saúde sobre violência obstétrica. Método: Trata-se de revisão integrativa realizada a partir de artigos publicados entre 2017 e 2022 na Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde, Google Acadêmico e PubMed. A busca dos artigos ocorreu em abril de 2022 e utilizou-se a estratégia PICo. Sete estudos se adequaram aos critérios de inclusão e exclusão e responderam à questão norteadora de pesquisa. Resultado: A análise dos estudos possibilitou identificar que o saber de estudantes sobre a violência obstétrica apresenta algumas divergências entre os cursos de enfermagem, psicologia e medicina. O conhecimento dos estudantes variou entre insuficiente e satisfatório. Conclusão: Os estudantes em sua maioria foram capazes de reconhecer formas de violência obstétrica. No entanto, fica evidente a necessidade de mais debates sobre a temática durante a graduação para estimular o senso crítico dos futuros profissionais.

Descritores: Violência obstétrica; Estudantes; Conhecimento; Universidades; Saúde da Mulher.

ABSTRACT | Objective: to analyze what the literature says about the knowledge of academics in the health area about obstetric violence. Method: This is an integrative review based on articles published between 2017 and 2022 in the Virtual Health Library, Google Scholar and PubMed. The search for articles took place in April 2022 and the PICo strategy was used. Seven studies that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria and answered the guiding research question were analyzed. Result: The analysis of the studies made it possible to identify that the knowledge of students about obstetric violence presents some divergences between the nursing, psychology and medicine courses. The students' knowledge ranged from insufficient to satisfactory. Conclusion: Most students were able to recognize forms of obstetric violence. However, it is evident the need for more debates on the subject during graduation to stimulate the critical sense of future professionals.

Keywords: Violence; Students; Knowledge; Universities; Women's health.

RESUMEN | Objetivo: analizar lo que dice la literatura sobre el conocimiento de académicos del área de la salud sobre la violencia obstétrica. Método: Se trata de una revisión integradora basada en artículos publicados entre 2017 y 2022 en la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud, Google Scholar y PubMed. La búsqueda de artículos se realizó en abril de 2022 y se utilizó la estrategia PICo. Siete estudios cumplieron los criterios de inclusión y exclusión y respondieron la pregunta guía de investigación. Resultado: El análisis de los estudios permitió identificar que el conocimiento de los estudiantes sobre la violencia obstétrica presenta algunas divergencias entre los cursos de enfermería, psicología y medicina. El conocimiento de los estudiantes varió de insuficiente a satisfactorio. Conclusión: La mayoría de los estudiantes fueron capaces de reconocer formas de violencia obstétrica. Sin embargo, es evidente la necesidad de más debates sobre el tema durante la graduación para estimular el sentido crítico de los futuros profesionales.

Palabras claves: Violência obstétrica; Estudantes; Conocimiento; Universidades; Salud de la mujer.

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INTRODUCTION

Obstetric violence is practiced by health professionals through actions characterized by mis-

treatment, disrespect or abuse during all stages of childbirth. Assistance of this kind violates women's rights and threatens the right to life, physical integrity and non-discrimination.⁽¹⁾

Gender issues related to obstetric violence extend to professional assistance that routinely violates women considering the role of social inferiority perpetrated by society. Physical, psychological and verbal abuse are forms of violence frequently witnessed in obstetric sectors that diminish the role of women and make them subject to unnecessary professional interventions.⁽²⁾

Research carried out at the national level identified that in Brazil one in four women suffers some type of violence during labor.⁽³⁾ The prevalence of obstetric



violence experienced by women in different studies and locations varies in rates between 11 and 97%.^(4,5,6,7)

Making students aware of obstetric violence can be one of the mechanisms to prevent new cases of this type of violence directed at women when they act in the future.⁽⁸⁾ The inclusion of the theme in the curriculum, with discussions in the classroom through active and effective methodologies, can sensitize students, aiming at changes in concepts, behaviors and practices.⁽⁹⁾

These guidelines carried out in the classroom, symposia or conversation circles introduce debates that favor greater recognition by students of women's rights and contribute to better assistance during labor.⁽¹⁰⁾

Given the above, this article aimed to analyze what the literature says about the knowledge of academics in the health area about obstetric violence.

METHOD

This is an integrative literature review study that seeks to synthesize published studies that portray similar themes, in order to allow the findings to have an impact on scientifically based practice.⁽¹¹⁾ For the construction of this study, the following guiding question was initially formulated: what is the knowledge of health students about obstetric violence? To proceed with the review, the PICO strategy was used to designate Participant (P), phenomenon of interest (I) and research context (Co).⁽¹²⁾

Thus, in the PICO strategy, the first element (P) consists of students in the health area; the second element (I) students' knowledge about obstetric violence; and the third element (Co) universities. Then, an online search for studies was carried out in April 2022 on the portals of the Virtual Health Library (BVS) and Google Scholar with descriptors belonging to the DeCS: "Violência obstétrica", "Estudantes", "Conhecimento" and "Universidades"; and on the National Center for

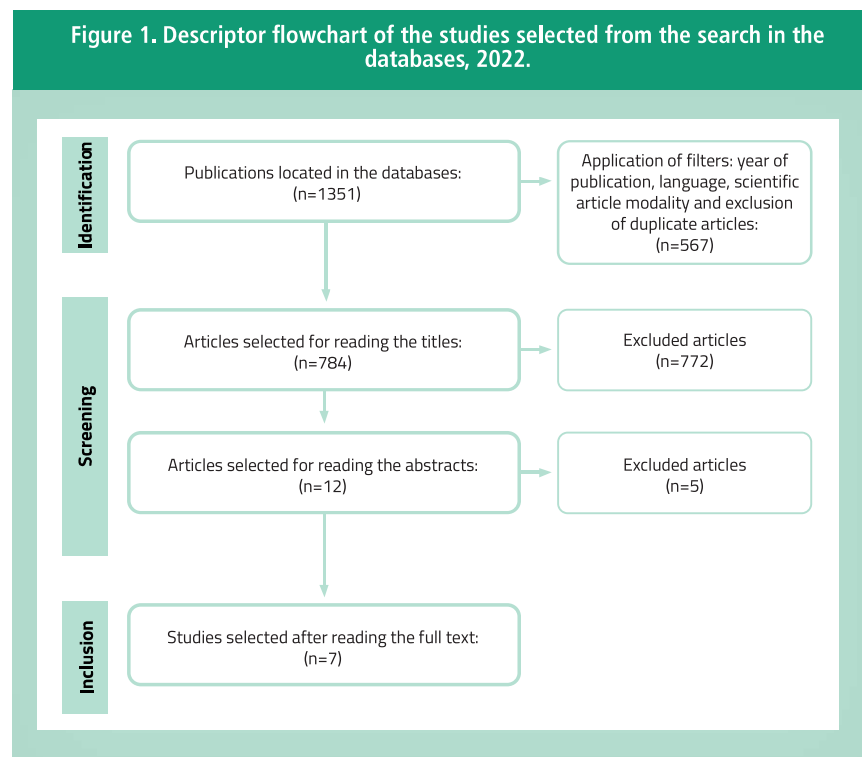
Biotechnology Information portal of the National Library of Medicine (PubMed) from the Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (Medline) database with MeSH descriptors: "Violence", "Students", "Knowledge", "Universities" in addition to the free term "Obstetric violence". The Boolean operator AND was used.

The search strategy with crossing the descriptors used in the VHL was: "violência obstétrica" AND estudantes AND conhecimento AND universidades. "violência obstétrica" AND estudantes. "violência obstétrica" AND conhecimento. "violência obstétrica" AND universidades. Google acadêmico: "violência obstétrica" AND estudantes AND conhecimento AND universidades e para PubMed: Violence AND Students AND knowledge AND Universities e "obstetric violence" AND students. As inclusion criteria, studies were selected that were published in the scientific article modality between the years 2017 and 2022, in Portuguese, English and Spanish and that

addressed the objective of the study. The exclusion criteria adopted were: duplicate articles and other types of documents.

Initially, 1,351 articles were found in the databases selected for this study. After using the filters, this number was reduced to 784 articles. Then, the titles were read and 12 articles were selected to read the abstracts, of which only seven articles answered the research question, which were selected to compose this review and in the data analysis of the articles, we sought to find the most relevant findings and a common approach to them.

Finally, a thorough analysis of the selected publications was carried out, to then fill out a previously prepared instrument with emphasis on the title, authors and year of publication, country, type of study and main findings (Chart 1). Then, in the discussion phase, the results were compared with other publications, making it possible to present the threads of students' thoughts and conceptions about obstetric violence.



Source: Survey data, 2022.



RESULTS

In this review, seven articles were selected that address the knowledge of university students in the health area about obstetric violence, which were analyzed and characterized in Table 1. Regarding the year of publication, the articles were published between the years 2017 and 2022. The participants of the selected studies are from the nursing, medicine and psychology courses.

The studies showed that the knowledge of students about obstetric violence presents some divergences between the analyzed courses. The students' knowledge varied from insufficient to satisfactory, with personal academic experiences and opinions on the approach to the subject during graduation being pointed out.

DISCUSSION

Nursing and medical students showed satisfactory knowledge about obstetric violence, a fact related to previous contact with the topic, either through classroom guidance or experiences in maternity hospitals. However, greater representation was observed in the classifications of satisfactory and adequate knowledge in nursing students when compared to medical students, this may be associated with the majority of medical students considering violent procedures as routine.⁽⁹⁾

Practices that do not match scientific evidence, added to the decision-making only by health professionals at the time of delivery, collaborate so that non-recommended procedures continue to be reproduced and are considered normal.⁽¹⁸⁾ In this sense, the student, by integrating knowledge from the beginning of their undergraduate learning, can be a way to detect this type of violence and prevent the occurrence of new cases.⁽¹⁶⁾

In Spain, nursing and medical students who performed internships in gynecology-obstetrics departments and attended births were more capable of

Table 1. Characterization of articles according to title, authors/year, country, type of research and main findings. Jequié, Bahia, Brazil, 2022.

Author and year	Country	Type of study	Main findings
Mena-Tudela D et al, 2022 ⁽¹³⁾	Spain	Quantitative	Among nursing, medicine, psychology and obstetrics students, 56.5% were already familiar with the concept of obstetric violence. Situations such as trichotomy of the intimate region and lithotomy position were less perceived as obstetric violence. On the other hand, Kristeller's maneuver, use of offensive language or lack of respect for the parturient presented considerable perception of obstetric violence among students.
SOUZA MCA, PORFIRIO LM, 2022 ⁽¹⁴⁾	Brazil	Quantitative	Of the total number of participants, 84.3% reported knowing the meaning of obstetric violence. Perception rates of different forms of obstetric violence cited by students ranged from 71.6% to 91.8%.
GRAY T et al, 2021 ⁽¹⁵⁾	United Kingdom and India	Quantitative	Most students were unaware of the term obstetric violence. Less than 35% had ever heard of the term. However, most students were able to identify inappropriate behavior on the part of health professionals.
Mena-Tudela D et al, 2020 ⁽¹⁶⁾	Spain	Quantitative	The completion of internships in the gynecology and obstetrics sectors and having followed a birth was significantly associated with greater participants' perception of some forms of obstetric violence.
Mena-Tudela D et al, 2020 ⁽⁸⁾	Spain	Quantitative	The perception of obstetric violence among nursing, obstetrics and medicine students was considered satisfactory. However, female participants, nursing students and having completed internships in the gynecology and obstetrics sectors were significantly associated with greater perceptions about forms of obstetric violence.
Vieira SN et al, 2019 ⁽⁹⁾	Brazil	Quantitative	Knowledge about obstetric violence among nursing students was considered adequate and satisfactory regarding concepts, understanding and recognition of forms of this violence. The university was the first place of contact with the subject for most nursing and medical students.
Costa FL, Cintra HMP, Azevedo FHC, 2017 ⁽¹⁷⁾	Brazil	Qualitative	Most students knew how to characterize obstetric violence. Psychological violence was the most cited by the students, followed by the Kristeller maneuver, preventing the entry of a companion, episiotomy, oxytocin to accelerate labor and rupture of the amniotic sac.

Source: Survey data, 2022.

perceiving obstetric violence than students who were not in these sectors.⁽¹⁶⁾ The university has been a place that often provides the first contact with the subject in the academic environment. However, dialogues about obstetric violence in the family and hospital environment during internships in the obstetric sectors also

allow discussions between students.⁽¹⁰⁾

Exposure to the topic through interventions such as seminars at the university enabled a change in students' perception of different forms of obstetric violence.⁽⁸⁾ The main forms of obstetric violence perceived by nursing and medical students were psychological, physical

and verbal abuse.⁽⁹⁾

Most of the studies analyzed in this review indicated adequate knowledge of nursing, psychology and medicine students about obstetric violence. The perception of health science students about this type of violence and its forms is considered a key to action and changes in the obstetric scenario.⁽¹³⁾

The inclusion of the theme in the curriculum during graduation, with greater emphasis on discussions about obstetric violence between students and teachers, may drive changes in future professional conduct and practices.⁽¹⁴⁾ However, the approach to Violence Against Women (VAW) in general has been little explored in the undergraduate period. Most of the time, this theme is pointed out in classes with insufficient workload and that do not stimulate the critical sense of nursing students.⁽¹⁹⁾

In universities, the curricular components that bring nursing students closer to the subject in question are mostly related to women's health care. In this way, gaps are left in teaching during graduation, which in turn are filled with alternative measures to add knowledge on the subject through parallel activities through courses and lectures.⁽²⁰⁾

In contrast to the studies already presented, medical students from India and the United Kingdom presented unsatisfactory perceptions about the object of this study, so that 66% and 74% of these students, respectively, had not heard about the term obstetric violence during graduation, even though most had completed internships in obstetrics and gynecology.⁽¹⁵⁾

A qualitative study carried out with nursing students identified that knowledge about VAW in general is superficial, incipient and has been learned through personal experiences or common sense, due to flaws left by the approach to the subject during graduation.⁽²⁰⁾

In Brazil, medical students showed less knowledge about the concepts, understanding and recognition of obstetric

violence, when compared to nursing students, and this may be associated with the majority of medical students naturalizing violent obstetric procedures in routine care for women.⁽⁹⁾



Research carried out at the national level identified that in Brazil one in four women suffers some type of violence during labor.



A study that analyzed the syllabus of nursing courses at universities in Northeast Brazil identified that the approach to VAW during graduation is directed at women with a biological focus. Appro-

aching the theme in this way limits the character of nursing care and does not allow transversality of the syllabus.⁽²¹⁾

It is evident, therefore, that undergraduate courses can enable initial changes in the behavior of future health professionals, in addition to improving their knowledge for the identification and prevention of cases of violence. There is a need to carry out debates on VCM so that positive practices in clinical care for women are carried out.⁽²²⁾

CONCLUSION

This review made it possible to analyze the knowledge of health students about obstetric violence and identified mostly articles in which nursing, psychology and medicine students reported having prior knowledge on the subject. Different forms of this violence were identified by the students, and incidents of mistreatment of women were routinely described in the obstetric sectors.

However, some students, among them, those of medicine, still had limited knowledge about concepts, forms and practices considered obstetric violence. The current model of childbirth care, focused on technicality, perpetrates attitudes considered violent among professionals in the area and directly influences the behavior of students when providing care to women.

Há evidências da maior necessidade de abordagem do tema durante a graduação para promover formação profissional centrada na humanização e evidências científicas. A universidade pode contribuir para iniciar debates que favoreçam o pensamento crítico dos estudantes, oportunizando a detecção e prevenção de novos casos de violência obstétrica.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

I, Amanda de Alencar Pereira Gomes, certify that I do not present any conflicts of interest related to the article.

I, Aline Vieira Simões, certify that I do not present any conflicts of interest related to the article.

I, Vilara Maria Mesquita Mendes Pires, certify that I do not present any conflicts of interest related to the article.

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I, Vanda Palmarella Rodrigues, certify that I do not present any conflicts of interest related to the article.

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