DOI 10.18471/rbe.v36.37598

REPERCUSSIONS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION OF ELDERLY PEOPLE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

REPERCUSSÕES DO ISOLAMENTO SOCIAL DE PESSOAS IDOSAS DURANTE A PANDEMIA DA COVID-19

REPERCUSIONES DEL AISLAMIENTO SOCIAL DE LAS PERSONAS MAYORES DURANTE LA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19

Adriana Valéria da Silva Freitas¹ Tânia Maria de Oliva Menezes² Larissa Chaves Pedreira³ Juliana Bezerra do Amaral⁴

How to cite this article: Freitas AVS, Menezes TMO, Pedreira LC, Amaral JB. Repercussions of social isolation of elderly people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rev baiana enferm. 2022;36:e37598.

Objective: reflecting on the repercussions of social isolation of elderly people during the COVID-19 pandemic according to Wanda Horta's Theory. Method: theoretical reflection study, developed through the search of articles in periodicals and official documents which deal with the disease, based on Wanda Horta's Theory of Basic Human Needs. Results: the study reflected on the psychobiological, psychosocial and psycho-spiritual repercussions of the social isolation of elderly people in the context of the pandemic and the performance of nursing professionals. Final considerations: The psychobiological, psychosocial and psycho-spiritual repercussions of social isolation on the elderly person during the pandemic may bring changes to their health situation and interfere with their well-being and quality of life. Health professionals should pay attention to these repercussions, in order to avoid illness and its complications in the life of the elderly person.

Descriptors: Aged. Pandemics. Nursing Care. Nursing Theories.

Objetivo: refletir sobre as repercussões do isolamento social de pessoas idosas durante a pandemia da COVID-19 à luz da Teoria de Wanda Horta. Método: estudo de reflexão teórica, desenvolvido mediante a busca de artigos em periódicos e documentos oficiais que tratam sobre a doença, embasados pela Teoria das Necessidades Humanas Básicas, de Wanda Horta. Resultados: o estudo refletiu acerca das repercussões psicobiológicas, psicossociais e psicoespirituais do isolamento social de pessoas idosas no contexto da pandemia e a atuação dos profissionais de Enfermagem. Considerações finais: as repercussões psicobiológicas, psicossociais e psicoespirituais do isolamento social na pessoa idosa durante a pandemia podem trazer alterações à sua situação de saúde e interferir em seu bem-estar e qualidade de vida. Os profissionais de saúde devem prestar atenção a essas repercussões, para evitar o adoecimento e suas complicações no viver do idoso.

Descritores: Idoso. Pandemias. Cuidados de Enfermagem. Teorias de Enfermagem.

Objetivo: reflexionar sobre las repercusiones del aislamiento social de las personas mayores durante la pandemia del COVID-19 a la luz de la Teoría de Wanda Horta. Método: estudio de reflexión teórica, desarrollado a través

Nurse. PhD in Public Health. Professor at the Nursing School of the Universidade Federal da Bahia. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. adrianaf719@gmail.com. http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1831-4537.

Nurse. PhD in Nursing. Professor at the Nursing School of the Universidade Federal da Bahia. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5819-0570.

Nurse. PhD in Nursing. Professor at the Nursing School of the Universidade Federal da Bahia. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8939-324X.

⁴ Nurse. PhD in Nursing. Professor at the Nursing School of the Universidade Federal da Bahia. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7465-0183.

de la búsqueda de artículos en publicaciones periódicas y documentos oficiales que tratan de la enfermedad, con base en la Teoría de las Necesidades Humanas Básicas de Wanda Horta. Resultados: el estudio reflexionó sobre las repercusiones psicobiológicas, psicosociales y psicoespirituales del aislamiento social de las personas mayores en el contexto de la pandemia y la actuación de los profesionales de enfermería. Consideraciones finales: las repercusiones psicobiológicas, psicosociales y psicoespirituales del aislamiento social en la persona mayor durante la pandemia pueden provocar cambios en su situación de salud e interferir en su bienestar y calidad de vida. Los profesionales de la salud deben prestar atención a estas repercusiones para evitar la enfermedad y sus complicaciones en la vida de la persona mayor.

Descritores: Anciano. Pandemias. Atención de Enfermería. Teorías de Enfermería.

Introduction

The COVID-19, a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, appeared in the year 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China. In 2020, this disease reached several countries and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and it was directed that the population use protective measures such as hand washing, cough etiquette and self-isolation to control the spread of the virus, thus preventing deaths and reducing the impacts on health systems⁽¹⁾.

It should be emphasized that elderly people and those with pre-existing health conditions, such as hypertension, heart and lung diseases, cancer or diabetes, are considered a risk group for COVID-19, and greater care should be offered, especially regarding social isolation⁽²⁾. Elderly people show a higher direct risk of severe COVID-19, are more likely to live alone and less likely to use online communications, at risk of social isolation⁽³⁾.

The risk of age-related genocide was mentioned, as most severe cases and deaths related to the pandemic worldwide occurred in elderly people. On the other hand, the repercussions of social isolation on these people and the impact on their psychological and social well-being are evident. This social isolation does not mean loneliness, and the adoption of monitoring and communication strategies is necessary to reduce the feeling of being alone and helpless, to increase community resilience, and to occupy time with meaningful and pleasurable activities⁽⁴⁾.

The COVID-19 and the accelerated spread of SARS-CoV-2 has led public health authorities to indicate tough control measures such as testing,

screening, contact tracing, social distancing, travel restrictions, and ordering people to stay home when they are sick or in the risk group⁽⁵⁾.

Thus, the social isolation of elderly people during the pandemic has become a relevant issue, requiring reflection on how to accompany this measure, to protect them from possible iatrogenesis, and to prevent infection by coronavirus. In this sense, it is considered fundamental to treat the most vulnerable groups with respect, keeping them informed and seeking to implement policies that can collaborate with the real needs of these groups⁽⁶⁾.

Based on what has been said, this article aimed to reflect on the repercussions of the social isolation of elderly people during the VOCID-19 pandemic in light of Wanda Horta's Theory.

Method

It is a theoretical reflection study with a qualitative approach, based on the theoretical framework of the Basic Human Needs Theory (BHNT), by Wanda Horta⁽⁷⁾. For this, it was conducted a search on scientific productions related to Basic Human Needs, from April to May 2020, in databases of the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), Google Academic and Brazilian Periodical Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Graduate Level Personnel (CAPES), using as descriptors nursing theory, nursing processes, nursing care, in addition to publications that dealt with the elderly person and COVID-19, so that other studies could collaborate in the foundation of the reflection. Thus, the text emerged from the proposal to bring reflections

on social isolation for the health of the elderly, considering the biopsychosocial-spirituals aspects.

In this sense, the reflection has been divided into two axes. The first focused on the Basic Human Needs Theory, in which a brief discussion was held in view of its relationship with Nursing care and the consequences of social isolation of elderly people during the COVID-19 pandemic; the second focused on social isolation of elderly people during the COVID-19 pandemic and the action of Nursing in the face of the possible repercussions identified.

In the Reflection on screen, the research was directed to socially isolated elderly people in their homes.

Results and Discussion

Wanda Horta's Basic Human Needs Theory and Social Isolation

Wanda Horta, a Brazilian nurse, developed in the 70's a theoretical model based on the Basic Human Needs (BHN) and the model developed by Maslow in the Theory of Human Motivation, in turn, based on the laws of balance, adaptation and holism⁽⁷⁾. Horta, who also relied on João Mohana and his denomination of needs at the psychobiological, psychosocial and psychospiritual levels, developed a theory adapted to our customs and culture⁽⁸⁾.

About the needs of psychobiological level are those related to hormonal regulation, neurological, oxygenation, cardiovascular regulation, thermal regulation, hydration, elimination, food, mucosal cutaneous integrity, therapeutic and physical safety. Regarding the psychosocial level, the needs are gregarious and emotional security, among others. Psycho-spiritual needs refer to the subjective dimension of the individual including the religious and philosophy of life⁽⁹⁾.

A study performed with post renal transplantation patients identified that altered NHB in these patients provided subsidies to the nurse for the elaboration of a specific care plan, making it possible to predict, prevent, detect and control potential complications⁽¹⁰⁾.

Thus, it is important to have knowledge of how BHN are classified, in order to be able to recognize what needs may be committed in the elderly person to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. A study on nursing care for oncologic patients, based on BHNT, states that social isolation is considered an empirical indicator linked to the psychosocial needs for love and acceptance (11).

Faced with the situation of social isolation and with the understanding of the control condition in which the elderly person lives during the COVID-19 pandemic, an open letter to the World Health Organization and the member states warned about the need for specific guidelines, so that the elderly person and his/her family know how to deal with the situation⁽¹²⁾, due to the repercussions that social isolation can trigger. Following the BHNT, three repercussions will be discussed: psychobiological, psychosocial and psychospiritual.

Psychobiological repercussions of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic

The psychobiological repercussions that can be afflicted with social isolation are related to the condition of knowing how to deal with the risks and the fear of infection coming from the contagion with the coronavirus. Many elderly people can be confused by the excess, but indispensable, of information provided by the media about preventive measures and need guidance and support in making decisions. However, due to isolation, the elderly may not have the opinion and presence of relatives to help them at the necessary moment, thus intensifying insecurity in the adoption of care.

In this way, it is important to guide elderly people and their families to maintain hygiene measures, such as frequent hand washing, reducing the possibility of infection with the coronavirus. The transmission of the virus is done by the contact of person to person, through respiratory droplets expelled by speech, cough or sneeze, and by direct contact with infected people, or indirect, through hands, objects or

surfaces contaminated, besides the possibility of transmission of the virus through aerosols⁽¹³⁾.

Other pre-existing health changes should be monitored by the elderly themselves and their families who, although distant due to isolation, may be participative, or by health professionals, to prevent worsening of chronic situations. In the diabetes situation, for example, a risk factor for the worsening of COVID-19, a study directed to nursing homes for the elderly has created a support protocol involving well defined objectives, clarification about conducts, prevention and treatment of hypoglycemia, besides support in the treatment of people with suspicion and infected. Such information and monitoring are important to guide the elderly in their treatment, avoiding decompensation and going, often unnecessary and risky, to the medical service (14).

It is also important to emphasize that due to the social isolation occurs the suspension of several important health services for physical and cognitive rehabilitation of elderly people with sequelae of stroke, Alzheimer's, among other diseases. Thus, the discontinuance of rehabilitation sessions directly interferes with advances in functional capacity, favoring the dependency of the elderly.

Researchers point out the importance of empowering family members, caregivers and elderly people about their self-care by offering online services with support guidelines, including those related to rehabilitation⁽¹⁵⁾.

Moreover, being isolated, the elderly person who lives alone ends up diminishing the possibility of acquiring healthy food, depending on other people for this need to be met. Another important need is hydration. Thirst diminishes with aging, and the elderly person may not have who motivates her to supply this need, and the family and other carers should look for strategies so that this doesn't happen, because of the possibility of dehydration.

Psychosocial repercussions of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic

The psychosocial repercussions of social isolation concern the limitation of the coming

and going of elderly people, with the risk of wider problems, such as feelings of sadness, loneliness and even the triggering of depressive symptoms; and should be monitored.

This limitation imposed by social isolation also causes a change in the daily routine of the elderly person and, consequently, the need to adapt to the remoteness of significant people in their lives and different social activities developed, such as participation in groups of coexistence, religious groups, parties, conversations in public squares, among others.

Loneliness in old age has been considered a public health problem today, and being alone at this time of life can lead to mental health consequences such as depression and cognitive decline⁽¹⁶⁾, in addition to decreased quality of life, increased morbidity and mortality⁽¹⁷⁾.

In this sense, it becomes important to create strategies to deal with these feelings. A randomized study that tried to test an intervention with 235 elderly, with activities such as therapeutic writing, exercises and group discussions and artistic activities, observed, after two years, that the intervention group obtained subjective health improvement and better survival when compared to the control group. Thus, using this work as a basis, researchers from the University of Saint Louis conducted the experience of creating a "circle of friends" of isolated elderly people at home, by means of calls and meetings scheduled by digital platforms, in order to perform narrative writing, creative arts and exercises for strength training. They also advised that family members and/or caregivers help and encourage the elderly to participate (18).

In Brazil, such strategies can also be used, besides video calling (with discussion of several topics, family members calls, mainly grandchildren, for daily conversations and stimulation of exercises), meetings, when they are safe for both, keeping the recommended distance, among other shared activities.

Finally, it is important to point out that the uncertain scenario of a health emergency, with economic repercussions in the face of job closures, can also make this age group more vulnerable to situations of domestic violence, due to the family

member's financial dependence on the elderly person's income, as well as the exposure on public roads of the elderly who live alone and need to leave home to go to the supermarket.

A cross-sectional study that analyzed the cases of economic-financial and patrimonial violence against the elderly, registered in a Security and Protection of the Elderly Police Station of a capital city of the Northeast, revealed that financial violence presented a prevalence of 58.9%, and that the older (67.9%), male (70.4%) and single (75.0%) had a higher percentage of financial violence, in comparison with the other types, occurring mainly in a public place⁽¹⁸⁾.

Thus, it is incumbent to maintain actions to prevent and combat violence against the elderly. Nursing, in turn, should be attentive to the signs of violence in health services, investigating, notifying and caring for the well-being of the elderly person.

Psychospiritual repercussions of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic

Regarding the psycho-spiritual aspects, a study points out that aging, in its different aspects, has an intimate relationship with spirituality, being one of the age groups where spirituality has more relevance⁽¹⁹⁾. The spiritual and religious perspectives are accentuated as the age progresses⁽²⁰⁾, bringing repercussions in the life of the elderly person, when their practice is compromised.

Still in this theme, the social isolation prevents the elderly person from going out to the religious temples of their belief, because they are closed, compromising their organizational religiosity, the presential contacts with people of their belief and the participation in groups of visits to which they are linked; common activities in the daily life of the elderly person.

Elderly people value participation in groups related to their religion, and the absence of these activities can trigger sadness, anxiety, and feeling of less value. On the other side, it is evident that spirituality presents itself to the elderly as an important resource in facing social isolation in

the pandemic, because it allows the occupation of free time and the reduction of uncertainties and losses in their daily lives.

In this sense, the family and health professionals should give the necessary support, stimulating the reading of texts, the listening of television programs related to their religion, the links to people of their beliefs and the dialogue about this moment, in addition to individual practices, such as prayer and meditation, aiming to reduce the gap caused by isolation.

The study is limited to the incipient theme of the COVID-19 pandemic, since there are not enough studies on the repercussions of social isolation in this population segment to advance the discussions, and new reflections are needed so that Nursing, based on BHNT, can act avoiding the impacts of this isolation on the daily life of the elderly person.

Final Considerations

The Basic Human Needs Theory, from Horta, made it possible to reflect on social isolation and its repercussions for the elderly person during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among these, the psychobiological repercussions can lead to changes in health status, causing aggravation of problems such as hypertension, diabetes, dementia, among others. Regarding the psychosocial consequences, the violence calls attention and must also be observed and reported during this period. The psychosocial consequences lead the elderly to the loss of their relationship with organizational religiosity, and can trigger feelings of loneliness and sadness, with damage to their well-being and quality of life.

Thus, Nursing is one of the professions in the health area that has the role of offering care, which can be carried out with specific guidelines to the target public and the problems identified. Thus, Nursing theories, with emphasis on the Basic Human Needs Theory, is the framework that collaborates for this action, giving subsidies for the improvement of the individual's health condition, according to their needs identified by

6

the Nursing Process, even when the elderly are at home, and especially in times of pandemic.

Collaborations:

- 1 conception, design, analysis and interpretation of data: Adriana Valéria da Silva Freitas, Tânia Maria de Oliva Menezes, Larissa Chaves Pedreira and Juliana Bezerra do Amaral;
- 2 writing of the article and relevant critical review of the intellectual content: Adriana Valéria da Silva Freitas, Tânia Maria de Oliva Menezes, Larissa Chaves Pedreira and Juliana Bezerra do Amaral;
- 3 final approval of the version to be published: Adriana Valéria da Silva Freitas, Tânia Maria de Oliva Menezes, Larissa Chaves Pedreira and Juliana Bezerra do Amaral.

References

- Organização Mundial de Saúde. Folha informativa COVID-19: doença causada pelo novo coronavírus [Internet]. Genebra (CH);
 2020 [cited 2020 May 15]. Available from: https://www.paho.org/bra/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6101: covid19&Itemid=875
- 2. Conselho Nacional de Saúde. Recomendação n. 20, de 7 de abril de 2020. Recomenda a observância do Parecer Técnico n. 128/2020, que dispõe sobre as orientações ao trabalho/atuação dos trabalhadores e trabalhadoras, no âmbito dos serviços de saúde, durante a Emergência em Saúde Pública de Importância Nacional em decorrência Doença por Coronavírus COVID-19 [Internet]. Brasília (DF); 2020 [cited 2020 May 20]. Available from: http://conselho.saude.gov.br/images/Recomendacoes/2020/Reco020.pdf
- Douglas M, Katikireddi SV, Taulbut M, McKee M, McCartney G. Mitigating the winder health effects of covid-19 pandemic response. BMJ. 2020;369:m1557. DOI: https://doi.org/10. 1136/bmj.m1557
- 4. Dias BC. Pandemia da Covid-19 e um Brasil de desigualdades: populações vulneráveis e o risco de um genocídio relacionado à idade [Internet]. Rio de Janeiro: Associação Brasileira de Saúde Coletiva; 2020 [cited 2020 Apr 23]. Available from: https://www.abrasco.org.br/site/

- gtenvelhecimentoesaudecoletiva/2020/03/31/pandemia-do-covid-19-e-um-brasil-dedesigualdades-populacoes-vulneraveis-e-o-riscode-um-genocidio-relacionado-a-idade/
- Adalja AA, Toner E, Inglesby TV. Priorities for the US Health Community Responding to COVID-19. JAMA. 2020;323(14):1343-4. DOI: https://doi. org/10.1001/jama.2020.3413
- Berger ZD, Evans NG, Phela AL, Silverman RD. Covid-19: control measures must be equitable and inclusive. BMJ. 2020;368:m1141. DOI: 10.1136/ bmj.m1141
- Horta WA. Processo de Enfermagem. 16a ed. São Paulo: EPU; 1979.
- Silveira RCP, Robazzi MLCC. Avaliação de enfermagem ao adulto e idoso e teoria das necessidades humanas básicas: uma reflexão. Rev enferm UFPE on line. 2014;8(10):3525-32. DOI: 10.5205/reuol.6039-55477-1-ED.0810201432
- Almeida VS, Querido DL, Esteves APVS, Vigo PS, Bornia RBRG, Jennings JM. Validation of an instrument for the history of maternal and child nursing using Horta: a methodological study. Online braz j nurs [Internet] 2019 [cited 2020 May 15];17(1):28-42. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332263392_Validacao_de_instrumento_para_historico_de_enfermagem_materno-_infantil_utilizando_Horta_estudo_metodologico
- 10. Souza TL, Trindade TRO, Mendonça AEO, Silva RAR. Necessidades humanas básicas alteradas em pacientes pós-transplante renal: estudo transversal. Online braz j nurs. 2016 jun;15(2):265-75. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17665/1676-4285.20165253
- 11. Rodrigues SMN. Construção e validação de um instrumento de coleta de dados para pacientes onco-hematológicos em tratamento quimioterápico ambulatorial [dissertação na Internet]. Fortaleza: Universidade Estadual do Ceará; 2017 [cited 2020 Apr 10]. Available from: http://www.uece.br/mepges/index.php/downloads/doc_download/2152-silvana-maria-nunes-rodrigues
- Lloyd-Sherlock P, Ebrahim S, Geffen L, McKee M. Bearing the brunt of covid-19: older people in low and middle income countries. BMJ. 2020;368:m1052. DOI: https://doi.org/10. 1136/bmj.m1052
- Brasil. Ministério da Saúde. Nota Técnica GVIMS/GGTES/ANVISA n. 04/2020. Orientações

saúde: medidas para servicos de de prevenção e controle que devem ser adotadas durante a assistência aos casos suspeitos ou confirmados de infecção pelo novo coronavírus (SARS-CoV-2) [Internet]. Brasília (DF); 2020 [cited 2020 Apr 20]. Available from: http:// portal.anvisa.gov.br/documents/33852/271858/ Nota+T%C3%A9cnica+n+04-2020+ GVIMS-GGTES-ANVISA/ab598660-3de4-4f14-8e6f-b9341c196b28

- 14. Sinclair A, Dhatariya K, Nagi D, Higgins K, Hopkins D, Patel M, et al. Guidelines for the management of diabetes in care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic. Diabetic Medicine. 2020;37(7):1090-3. DOI: 10.1111 / dme.14317
- 15. Lim WS, Liang CK, Assantachai P. COVID-19 and older people in Asia: Asian Working Group for Sarcopenia calls to actions. Geriatr Gerontol Int. 2020;20(6):547-58. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/ggi.13939
- 16. Pitkala KH, Pirkko R, Kautiainen H, Tilvis RS. Effects of Psychosocial Group Rehabilitation on Health, Use of Health Care Services, and Mortality of Older Persons Suffering From Loneliness: A Randomized, Controlled Trial. J Gerontol. 2009;64A(7):792-800. DOI:10.1093/gerona/glp011

- Zubatsky M, Berg-Weger M, Morley J. Using Telehealth Groups to Combat Loneliness in Older Adults through COVID-19. J Am Geriatr Soc. 2020;68(8):1678-9. DOI: 10.1111/jgs.16553
- 18. Santos AMR, Nolêto RDS, Rodrigues RAP, Andrade EMLR, Bonfim EG, Rodrigues TS. Violência econômico-financeira e patrimonial contra o idoso: estudo documental. Rev Esc Enferm USP. 2019;53:e03417. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1980-220X2017043803417
- Lucketti G, Lucketti ALG, Bassi RM, Nasri F, Nacif SAP. O Idoso e sua espiritualidade: impactos sobre diferentes aspectos do envelhecimento. Rev Bras Geriatr Gerontol. 2011;14(1):159-67. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1590/ S1809-98232011000100016
- Castañeda-Flores T, Guerrero-Castañeda RF. Espiritualidad en adultos mayores hospitalizados, oportunidad de cuidado para enfermería: aproximación cuantitativa. Rev Cuid. 2019; 10(3):e724. DOI: https://doi.org/10.15649/cuidarte. v10i3.724

Received: June 29, 2020

Approved: October 5, 2020

Published: November 22, 2021



The *Revista Baiana de Enfermagem* use the Creative Commons license – Attribuition -NonComercial 4.0 International. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

This article is an Open Access distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons (CC BY-NC). This license lets others remix, adapt and create upon your work to non-commercial use, and although new works must give its due credit and can not be for comercial purposes, the users do not have to license such derivative works under the same terms.