

**EDUCATIONAL ACTIONS AS A POSSIBILITY OF RETHINKING THE
SEXUALITY OF THE ELDERLY PERSON****AÇÕES EDUCATIVAS COMO POSSIBILIDADE DE REPENSAR A SEXUALIDADE
DA PESSOA IDOSA****ACCIONES EDUCATIVAS COMO POSIBILIDAD PARA REPENSAR LA
SEXUALIDAD DE LAS PERSONAS MAYORES**

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to describe educational activities about sexuality developed with the elderly. **Method:** This is a descriptive study, with a qualitative approach, based on the assumptions of action research, mediated by questioning whether the activities can enable rethinking about the sexuality of the elderly. **Results:** The activities developed allowed the participants to have a different view and a greater understanding of what sexuality really means, and how it is directly involved with the aging process, providing the conception that sexuality can be experienced at any stage of life and of shapes. **Conclusion:** It was noted, after the educational activities developed, not only a better understanding of the theme, but the fear of talking about a subject permeated by taboos in this population segment.

Descriptors: Health Education; Aged; Sexuality.

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RESUMO

Objetivo: descrever atividades educativas sobre a sexualidade desenvolvidas com os idosos. **Método:** Trata-se de um estudo descritivo, com abordagem qualitativa, fundamentado nos pressupostos da pesquisa-ação, mediada pelo questionamento se as atividades podem possibilitar o repensar sobre a sexualidade da pessoa idosa. **Resultados:** As atividades desenvolvidas permitiram que os participantes pudessem ter uma visão diferenciada e uma compreensão maior sobre o que realmente significa sexualidade, e como ela está diretamente envolvida com o processo de envelhecimento, proporcionando a concepção de que a sexualidade pode ser vivida em qualquer fase da vida e de várias formas. **Conclusão:** Notou-se, após as atividades educativas desenvolvidas, não somente a melhor compreensão sobre a temática, mas a ruptura do receio de falar sobre um assunto permeado de tabus nesse segmento populacional.

Descritores: Educação em Saúde; Idoso; Sexualidade.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: describir actividades educativas sobre sexualidad desarrolladas con ancianos. **Método:** Se trata de un estudio descriptivo, con abordaje cualitativo, pautado en los supuestos de la investigación-acción, mediada por el cuestionamiento de si las actividades pueden posibilitar repensar la sexualidad de los ancianos. **Resultados:** Las actividades desarrolladas permitieron a los participantes tener una mirada diferente y una mayor comprensión de lo que realmente significa la sexualidad, y cómo ella está directamente involucrada con el proceso de envejecimiento, brindando la concepción de que la sexualidad puede ser experimentada en cualquier etapa de la vida y de formas. **Conclusión:** Se constató, después de las actividades educativas desarrolladas, no sólo una mejor comprensión del tema, sino el temor de hablar sobre un tema permeado por tabúes en este segmento de la población.

Descritores: Educación en Salud; Anciano; Sexualidad.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that Brazilian society is undergoing a change in the age pyramid, with an increase in the number of elderly people each year, and it is important for managers and health services to prepare and act to serve all aspects of this population.¹ Sexuality is present in this totality, although it is often forgotten or not discussed by society and even by the elderly themselves, however, actions aimed at health education can make it possible to rethink and talk about the theme aimed at this public.²

Sexuality in this population segment is seen with a lot of prejudice, as it involves aspects that involve the individual's intimacy, which is seen as forbidden and negative in the eyes of society. Added to this, there is also the stigma created around aging, in which, upon reaching that age, people become asexual beings, being treated wrongly by health professionals who are in charge of the care of this population segment.³

These two words, sexuality and prejudice, when addressed to the elderly are strongly intertwined, because culturally

there is still social and family repression of this subject. Although the sexual performance of the elderly has benefited from scientific and technological advances, improving their expectations and lifestyle, even so, affirmative stereotypes that at this age there is no active sexual activity prevail.⁴

The sexuality of this population is not lost over time, it undergoes changes, as it is not based only on the sexual act itself, but is the involvement of multiple feelings that seek companionship, love, friendship, social interaction and respect.⁵

However, elderly people are afraid to express these feelings, because of prejudices, stereotypes and myths created by society, in which the fear of being misunderstood, resulting in repression by their relatives, ends up leading them to develop negative feelings.²

With this scenario in which fear and lack of information end up depriving the elderly of living freely in their entirety, it is that educational measures need to be developed to come to free society and the elderly themselves from these erroneous conceptions about sexuality, since that health education seeks, through activity, to reflect on subjects in which the population or the individual has to analyze and seek to understand their real meaning.⁶

These health education activities seek to reformulate the teaching method, as it allows the participant to be active in the construction and reflections on the theme worked, in which the knowledge of the researcher and the researched are taken into account through the dialogical relationship-reflective.⁷

In this context, the following question arises: can educational activities make it possible to rethink the sexuality of the elderly?

The research becomes relevant, because when addressing educational practices as a means of transforming and reformulating the population's thoughts and attitudes about sexuality in old age, it can fill existing gaps on the subject, as well as the healthy and integral experience of the elderly person when point out the possibility of encouraging quality of life by involving sexuality as something inherent to human beings.

Therefore, this study aims to describe educational activities about sexuality developed with the elderly.

METHODS

This is a descriptive study, with a qualitative approach, based on the assumptions of action research, which aims to solve collective problems in a given area. In this type of study, researchers and

researched are involved in a cooperative and participatory way in the actions to be developed.⁷

The research was carried out at the Cidade Madura Housing Condominium, which is located in the municipality of Cajazeiras, Paraíba, between November 2017 and January 2018, with the participation of ten elderly people who live there.

This environment was prepared by the State Government with the help of the State Housing Company of Paraíba – CEHAP, which has the objective of offering housing to support the needs of people aged 60 or more, who have their integrity preserved.

Elderly people who effectively participated in the debate group that took place weekly, addressing topics related to health education, were adopted as an inclusion criterion. As an exclusion criterion, those who had some impediment in the articulation of words caused by some disabling disease.

Data collection took place through a semi-structured interview, carried out by the researcher at the residence of the participants who agreed to participate in the research individually, which occurred before, as a way of identifying the problems related to the theme, and after the interventions were carried out, to identify whether the

educational actions developed had positive results.

To carry out the actions, the stages that met the scientific requirements in the development of the research were covered, which ensured the success of the proposed objectives. The steps were: situational diagnosis of reality, planning of actions; implementation of planned changes and evaluation of actions by the participants involved.

Before starting data collection, participants had to agree to the research by signing a Free and Informed Consent Term (TCLE) in two copies of the same content, certifying the secrecy and anonymity of the data obtained. It was also used as a means of protecting those involved, the use of the word ELDERLY plus an Arabic numeral, to report their speeches.

Three educational actions were carried out with the elderly. These actions were built based on an initial stage of the action research, in which issues related to sexuality were identified.

The first meeting was held in the living space located in Cidade Madura with the participation of 10 elderly people. The dynamics of the day began with a presentation activity, in which they made a circle so that a box, in which there was a mirror inside, could pass through each one. When opening, they would have to say what

or who they saw inside the object. As they saw their own reflection, they started talking about themselves to the group.

Then, they were invited to form a group of three people, so that together they could build a panel with images about what they thought when approaching the subject of sexuality. For this dynamic, cardboard, glue, magazines, newspapers, paints and colored pencils were made available to help the creativity of the participants.

After the construction of the panels, the presentation was made by each group, initiating the debates. In the midst of the subjects, it was possible to discuss and clarify the real meaning of the word sexuality, the difficulties and wrong thoughts that one has on the subject and the need to address issues like this, in order to live sexuality in an integral way.

Finally, they were exposed to the image of a child, teenager, adults and an elderly person, and then they were asked to think about whether sexuality would be present in all these age groups or, if it was limited to just some phases of them. Based on these images, it was possible to show that sexuality is something inherent in the human being, in which he is born and dies with it regardless of age, it is something natural and of great relevance in the life of each one.

This theme, which the elderly person has difficulty or avoids approaching, as it is

a subject entailed by prejudices and negative conceptions, generated a fear of the lack of adherence of the participants to the non-involvement of the actions, however, in the course of the activities they become involved contributing their arguments.

In this first activity, the following themes were developed with the elderly person: meaning of sexuality; association of sexuality with the sexual act; difficulty talking about the subject and sexuality as something natural for human beings.

The second meeting was held in the same space as the previous activity, however, only seven seniors participated. At the beginning of the speech, the themes that emerged in the first meeting were aborted, to reinforce what had been discussed and to resolve doubts that might have remained.

Then the following question was asked to the participants, what else did people hear when the topic of sexuality in old age was mentioned? The lines that were being mentioned by them were written on paper and placed inside balloons, distributed to each of the participants.

After delivering the balloons, they were asked to get up from their seats and throw the balloons in the air while the music played, when the music ended they would have to take the one closest to each one. They stood in a circle again, and popped the balloons they had in their hands, and

clockwise, one by one, they were reading what they had written on the paper.

Finally, they received geometric figures (circle, triangle and square) and were instructed to keep moving in the hall while the music was playing, and during that time, they could dance and talk with fellow participants.

When the music was interrupted, they should hand one of the pieces it contained to another participant, this process was repeated four times. After the end of the fourth round, they were asked to form the circle again, then asked if they understood the meaning of the symbols they had in their hands, and all said they did not understand the meaning. Then the meaning of each one was revealed.

The circle represented a healthy person; the triangle someone with a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) and the square simulated a person living with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus – HIV and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome – AIDS.

After the game and the explanation of the figures, guidance was given about condoms and their importance during the sexual act, and it was also emphasized that the elderly person was not exempt from exposure to an STI. The themes worked on in this second meeting were: Society's

stereotypes of the asexual elderly and STIs in old age.

In the third and last meeting, ten participants were involved, and the activities were carried out in the same place as the previous ones, in Cidade Madura's living space. To start the activities proposed for the day, a brief review of the subjects addressed in the last action was carried out.

In a circle made by the participants, a box was given that contained some papers inside, in which, when passing by the elderly person, they would have to remove one of the papers and perform the action that was written on it. Some of these challenges were: eating a chocolate; dance to a song; pass a lipstick; get a foot or head massage; blindfolded, they would have to smell and find out what it was; do a relaxation exercise; watch an exciting video; tell a joke; win a compliment or win a gift.

After the game, they were asked to find out what emotions they were feeling during the action, and if they thought they were working on sexuality. From this survey, one can work with them on the feelings involved in the small acts present in their daily lives, showing that they were also linked to sexuality.

At that moment, the surprise of the participants was observed when relating sexuality to the feelings that were developed in that period and the evolution noticeable in

some participants who began to approach sexuality as something common in their life, deconstructing the stereotype previously present. The subjects worked on in this action were: Feelings/Sensations and Sexuality.

The elements obtained from this study were analyzed and arranged using the Collective Subject Discourse (DSC) technique, which is an instrument used as a means to favor the representation of knowledge and thoughts of a defined collectivity with a non-numerical aspect. The DSC is understood as a tool that helps in the composition of the qualitative data acquired through statements in verbal reports, which evaluate the collected data to collect from them the Ideas – Central (CI) and their Expressions – Keys (ECH). The contents are part of the main subject, executed in the form of a speech – synthesis in the first person (collective) of the singular, although demonstrating the presence of the individual in the speech, it mentions the collective subject, due to the individual dialogue in favor of a collectivity.⁸

This study is the result of an undergraduate nursing course conclusion work at the Federal University of Campina Grande – UFCG, Cajazeiras campus. Prepared according to the norms established in resolution 510/2016 of the Ministry of Health, respecting dignity, freedom and

autonomy.⁹ Initiated after approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the aforementioned institution, with opinion number 2,338,566.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After completing the educational activities, seven elderly people who participated in the actions were interviewed, with the intention of analyzing the repercussion of the interventions on the theme of sexuality if the research objectives were achieved. The results obtained were divided into two categories.

The first category addressed the changes in the elderly person's conception of what sexuality is after the educational actions. For the elaboration of the DCS of this category, four elderly people participated (ELDERLY 01; ELDERLY 02; ELDERLY 05; ELDERLY 06).

CATEGORY 01 – Changes in the conception of the elderly person about what sexuality is

DISC01: Yes, it changed, because before when I talked about sexuality I used to get embarrassed, thinking it was just sex, because we grow up hearing that talking about it is ugly, then you come and talk so normally that even the shame is gone. And I thought it was something and I was able to learn here that it is a bigger thing, that involves more than the physical part, right!? It's in people, in life, in good feelings, right!? It's not just a new person thing, as many think.

It is noticeable in these speeches the structuring of existing stereotypes around the elderly person, and how it is present in the daily lives of these people, and in some events they themselves collaborate for its propagation. Through the educational actions developed with the elderly, it is possible to work on knowledge and empowerment about sexuality as a tool in the reconstruction of the understanding of the theme.

In turn, the second category addresses the useful experiences of the elderly in educational activities. For the construction of the CSD on this topic, four elderly people participated (ELDERLY 01; ELDERLY 02; ELDERLY 05; ELDERLY 06).

CATEGORY 02 – Useful experiences of the elderly in educational activities

DISC02: I liked it a lot, few people talk about it and at first we are kind of ashamed. But learning new things is always good. It was different things that helped us learn more about this subject, right!?

It is noticeable in DCS01 that the actions were able to deconstruct some conceptions related to sexuality, allowing them to begin to abandon the erroneously constructed ideas about the theme, in which they had a conception of an exclusive

relationship with the sexual act, used only for pleasure and reproduction.

This conception brought by them was much discussed and worked on during the educational actions, addressing that everyone was born as sexual subjects and that sexuality is used in different ways in each age group of life, not excluding old age from these desires.

Through this discourse, it is noticeable that sexuality came to be understood as something that is expressed in their living environment. For the authors¹⁰, the elderly stop considering the prejudices, taboos and limitations that are imposed by the prejudiced society, which summarizes sexuality only to carnal desire, and start to take full advantage of it in this more mature phase and full of changes.

Corroborating this study, Researchers¹¹ report that sexuality addresses several factors such as: stories; experiences; result of culture; subjectivity and fields of knowledge, not restricted to a definitive and static event, being able to manifest and be experienced in several ways, involving a mixture of feelings and pleasure such as love, tenderness and affection.

The aging process is not linked to the synonym of disability, it is a phase of life full of rediscoveries, in which they seek new activities and desires in a simple way to express their sexuality, and it demonstrates

that, despite their chronological age, they still have the capacity to live the uniqueness of life.¹²

It is possible to identify by the DSC02 that the activities developed generate positive responses in the elderly, since it was accepted that they could have a new thought about the theme that is forgotten or not worked with them.

The use of educational techniques as a means of debating, informing and educating on issues related to sexuality to promote healthy and active aging, which enables the participation of the elderly in groups. This way of sharing knowledge favors increased control of their lives, empowering them to make decisions about it, as it is a factor that favors social and political transformation. Encouraging the dialogue-reflective relationship between the elderly and society, allowing them to see themselves as active participants in changing their lives.⁷

In this sense, it is relevant to approach the educational actions of sharing with the elderly the theme of sexuality. These actions enable the autonomy of this public, since the dissemination of this knowledge comprises a form of health education, enabling the distribution of knowledge and guided practices to experience and enjoy the fullness that aging offers, without forgetting their sexuality.

With this perspective, health education is understood as a practice that has the purpose of transforming the ways of life of individuals and the community, being able to observe all aspects of the subjects, regardless of the age group in which they are, to provide a quality of life and adequate health.¹³

It is important to point out that the promoted activities had the intention of always taking into account the thinking and way of life of the participants, considering the popular knowledge they possessed, and using this baggage of knowledge, to reflect on the theme addressed in the rounds of debates, leaving aside the idea of transmitting knowledge, and adopting the sharing of knowledge.

Continuing with the same reasoning, health education actions for the elderly require the use of methodologies that take into account the complexity of the aging process and involve the factors that surround the individual, such as their way of life, their values, norms and beliefs. However, actions must be implemented based on the principles of health education and that are consistent with the needs of the elderly person, because when taking into account the culture, knowledge and the environment in which they coexist, it is possible to obtain the Targeted results.⁷

The activities developed allowed the participants to have a different view and a greater understanding of what sexuality really means, and how it is directly involved with the aging process, providing the conception that sexuality can be experienced at any stage of life. and in ways.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe educational activities on sexuality developed with the elderly who live in the Cidade Madura Housing Condominium and to analyze the results obtained after the actions.

The methodology addressed was action research, which is based on open dialogue and with a historical-social approach, developing reasoning in the subject throughout his involvement, letting the student build his own liberating education, granting autonomy for changes and transformations involving issues related to health in order to transform a certain reality.

The articulation in the activities developed with this public had the collective involvement, that in the course of the whole process, the elderly person participated as an active being in the teaching-learning procedure, and not as mere spectators, occurring the exchange of knowledge,

contributing to the learning of both parties, researcher and researched.

It is noteworthy that the research has limitations, since it was carried out with a group of elderly people from a closed condominium. Although seeds of transformation with regard to sexuality have been disseminated, it must be taken into account that the first step has been taken, as the theme has a strong character in society, and further interventions are still necessary.

The results expected by the research were obtained, and can be observed by the speeches and evaluations of this experience, which facilitated a better understanding of the elderly person with the worked theme. It is of the utmost importance that the subject is not restricted to this study alone, as it requires further study due to the numerous issues and areas surrounding sexuality.

That this research can serve as a subsidy and contribution to guide new studies, researches, interventions, educational health actions and scientific articles on the subject of sexuality in old age, since it needs to be more in-depth and disseminated in society, always taking into account the demystification and the deconstruction of stereotypes created about the subject in order to better understand the real difficulties experienced by the elderly.

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