

Aging: a case study on universities of the third age in Brazil and Portugal**Envelhecer: um estudo de caso sobre as universidades da terceira idade no Brasil e Portugal****Envejecimiento: un estudio de caso sobre universidades de la tercera edad en Brasil y Portugal****Received: 15/06/2019****Approved: 02/05/2020****Published: 01/08/2020****Marta Regina Farinelli¹****Nanci Soares²**

This is a documentary and case study carried out between 2016 and 2017, referring to Third Age Universities with the goal of describing university programs aimed at the elderly in Brazil and Portugal, with a focus on health literacy. The dialectic approach was used to analyze the documents found. Four universities from each country were considered for the study. It was found that the programs of these institutions have similarities and that, in Brazil, they are more linked to higher education and research institutions and, in Portugal, more to public and private social initiatives. The activities carried out contribute to active aging, social participation and improved quality of life. These programs are designed and provide social responses to the demands of mature people. The space is relevant to improve the level of literacy for the health of the elderly and can be an effective strategy for lifestyle changes and health promotion.

Descriptors: Health literacy; Health education; Aging.

Este é um estudo documental e de caso, realizado entre 2016 e 2017, referente as Universidades de Terceira Idade, e tem como objetivo descrever os programas de universidade direcionadas a pessoa idosa no Brasil e Portugal, com foco na literacia para a saúde. Utilizou-se da abordagem dialética como análise dos documentos encontrados. Considerou-se parte do estudo quatro universidades de cada país. Verificou-se que os programas das referidas instituições tem similitudes e que no Brasil são mais ligados a instituições de ensino superior e de pesquisa e em Portugal mais a iniciativas sociais pública e privadas. As atividades desenvolvidas contribuem para o envelhecimento ativo, a participação social e a melhoria da qualidade de vida. São programas delineados e dão respostas sociais a demandas da pessoa madura. O espaço é relevante para melhorar o nível de literacia para a saúde do idoso e idosa e pode ser uma estratégia efetiva para mudanças de estilo de vida e promoção da saúde.

Descritores: Alfabetização em saúde; Educação em saúde; Envelhecimento.

Este es un estudio documental y de caso, realizado entre 2016 y 2017, referente a las Universidades de la Tercera Edad, y tiene como objetivo describir los programas universitarios dirigidos a los ancianos en Brasil y Portugal, con un enfoque en la alfabetización en salud. Se utilizó el enfoque dialéctico como análisis de los documentos encontrados. Se consideraron cuatro universidades en cada país como parte del estudio. Se comprobó que los programas de estas instituciones tienen similitudes y que en Brasil están más vinculados a las instituciones de enseñanza superior e investigación y en Portugal más a las iniciativas sociales públicas y privadas. Las actividades desarrolladas contribuyen al envejecimiento activo, la participación social y la mejora de la calidad de vida. Son programas diseñados y proporcionan respuestas sociales a las demandas de la persona madura. El espacio es pertinente para mejorar el nivel de alfabetización en salud de los ancianos y puede ser una estrategia eficaz para los cambios de estilo de vida y la promoción de la salud

Descritores: Alfabetización en salud; Educación en salud; Envejecimiento.

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INTRODUCTION

Aging is a natural process of human life, and has been the subject of studies in the most diverse areas of knowledge. Commonly, this growth results from declining fertility, advancing life expectancy, decreasing mortality, improving basic sanitation conditions, public health, biotechnological advances and medical knowledge¹.

Improvement in life conditions and quality of life are always divergent points of discussions and studies, however, it is necessary to recognize progress, with regard to living longer and continuing the search for means and strategies to live more and better.

With the rapid growth of the elderly population, societal demands arise at the same speed and proportion, therefore, it is necessary to implement effective public policies to meet the new needs of this population segment^{2,3}.

World Health Organization (WHO) data estimates that, by 2050, the world population will have two billion elderly people. Thus, there is a narrowing of the base of the age pyramid and a widening of its top, which causes inversion of this pyramid, with a double aging³. The aging process occurred more slowly and gradually in central countries like Portugal, which made it possible to better adapt to the new configurations of the demographic scenario³.

It is urgent to understand in all aspects of what it is to be elderly in the current situation and in the very near future. It is also important to understand that old age is a process inherent to the human condition, and what it will mean for life in society.

It is necessary to go beyond the dimension given by capitalism, when considering the elderly only as an unproductive individual, outside the means of production and, consequently, one that no longer offers conditions for obtaining profit, showing their social exclusion⁴.

The elderly person is a subject of law, but the materiality of policies, in their daily lives, is characterized by being a place of non-law, of non-citizenship. Legislation needs to be put into effect with concrete actions and according to the real needs that make it possible to face the new reality to which this age group is exposed, in a society that values what is productive⁵. The old worker, on losing their use value for capital, reaches a dehumanizing stage, that is, they are superfluous for capital and dead weight in the industrial reserve army⁶.

The worker who has been exploited throughout their life who has been in the work market, and who has suffered from alienation and disrespect for their basic social rights, will probably live, in old age, the consequences a lifetime of precarious working conditions. For elderly people, age is, in this context, another factor of worsening social inequality⁷.

In this perspective, it is necessary to carry out public actions and policies in addition to assistance, prejudice and discrimination with these subjects of law. It is urgent to implement policies that consider the aging process, that is, the constitution of life and not old age itself⁸.

It is necessary to recognize that aging is not a homogeneous process. It is necessary to understand that each person experiences this stage of life differently: with a particular history, structural factors (class, gender, ethnicity) related to it, such as health, education, socioeconomic and cultural conditions⁹. And that, conceptions of old age as the result of a social and temporal construction, carried out within societies with their own values and principles, are encompassed by multifaceted, multidirectional and contradictory actions^{7,10}.

There is much to be done by and for the elderly population in Brazil and Portugal, whose measures and policies adopted are not effective in the measure of demands and interests of this population segment^{3,5}.

The demand for responses in the social, psychological, cultural, and other areas, stimulates the emergence of universities and spaces for the elderly to live together. Universities contribute to the formation of the new age identity, especially for those people who do not need to work to survive and/or for those who are out of work, said to be productive for capital.

Universities destined to this population segment offer intellectual, physical, cultural,

artistic, health and leisure activities, among others, whose main purpose is to work on social isolation, which is revealed through organization of capitalist society, and is manifested, during the worker's aging process, through social "deprotections"¹¹.

In universities open to the third age, participants will be able to maintain a prestigious position; distancing itself from a negative old age image, and highlighting the various potentialities and autonomy¹².

Thus, it is questioned in this work: what do universities open to the third age contribute to health promotion? Recognizing the importance of people developing skills and competencies to promote their quality of life and healthy lifestyles on a daily basis, one of the possibilities arises from access to information and knowledge, and Universities Open to the Third Age are conducive spaces for this takes effect.

The object of this investigation was the Universities Open to the Third Age (U3A) as a space for strengthening the health of the elderly, and health literacy (HL) as a strategy that can enable health promotion.

It starts with the concept of health literacy in the Portuguese-speaking context, which is related to awareness of the learning person and acting in the development of their abilities to deal with health information, namely, with regard to their access, understanding, interpretation, evaluation, application and use in different situations and throughout the life cycle^{13,14}.

Awareness is considered a contribution to enhance the ability to learn and interpret reality. Literacy is a strong argument for the adoption of emancipatory behavior for the person in the face of social and economic determinations, highlighting their critical capacity¹⁵. And, for these reasons, this investigation is justified.

Thus, this study aims to describe university programs aimed at the elderly in Brazil and Portugal, with a focus on health literacy.

METHOD

This is documentary research and a case study¹⁶ carried out from 2016 to 2017 in Universities Open to the Third Age in Brazil and Portugal, with a dialectical approach as an analysis of data of documents. Such an approach made it possible to consider historicity, totality, contradiction and mediation for the critical analysis of the theoretical framework articulated to the data of the documents apprehended and researched¹⁷.

Universities Open to the Third Age and Senior Universities as they are called in Brazil and Portugal, respectively, were the *locus* of the investigation, having health literacy as a guideline for health promotion strategy.

The trajectory of the bibliographic survey comprised the necessary combination for apprehending and treating the concrete conditions of health literacy in the elderly. The documentary analysis, confronted the findings, through contextualized information, with investment in the selection and apprehension of data with scientific rigor.

The Southeast region was prioritized by the number of institutions. The inclusion criteria in Brazil for the case study were public universities: federal and state universities; and to obtain a representative unit for each state in that region, two other federal and state universities that had programs of this nature aimed at the elderly, who first responded to the formal contact, made material available for analysis, in the period of October and November of 2016.

An online survey was carried out on the Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação - MEC*) portal to verify the list of state and federal universities in that region, totaling 19 federal and six state universities.

We searched online, which ones had programs/universities aimed at the elderly. Then, a standard email was sent to all of them, to invite their coordinators to answer a short questionnaire and make it available, if necessary, material alluding to the dynamics of the

University of the Third Age program, such as: name, objectives, type of project, year of foundation, number of participants, criteria for insertion, developed curriculum and extracurricular activities, support received, program focus, sources of financial resources, faculty members, financial investment to be made by the participants, among others.

In Portugal, the criteria were based on: Universities from different communities in Portugal (rural, semi-rural, urban and autonomous region - island); that were associated with the Association Network of Senior Universities of Portugal (*Associação Rede de Universidades Seniores de Portugal - RUTIS*). The choice of universities for the elderly affiliated to the RUTIS network (305 members) was due to the fact that they had the support/partnership of the City Council (prefectures) and, therefore, were more accessible in relation to the financial investment to be spent by/the participant.

The case study focused on the 04 universities which first responded to the formal contact and sent material for analysis, as well as granting a visit, in the period from October to November of 2016.

Thus, a survey was carried out on the list of members of the RUTIS network provided by its team. Then, a standard e-mail was sent to all members, inviting their coordinators' invitation to answer a questionnaire, and offering other materials referring to the dynamics of the University's program and granting an on-site visit to understand physical structure, dynamics of universities for the elderly, in which activities with participants are carried out.

A study¹⁸ showed that universities for the elderly have similar characteristics, with regard to their constitution, objectives, pedagogical proposals, activities developed. Thus, we opted for the case study in some units in each country.

The documents were obtained by filling out a questionnaire, registering on social media (such as Facebook and university websites), other legal and specific documents of each university, disclosure brochures, commemorative inserts and murals.

A skeletal design (a schema) was also used to facilitate exposure of the organizational structure of universities for the elderly in Brazil and Portugal. As this is a documentary and case study, the present investigation did not require the approval of the Research Ethics Committee.

RESULTS

Four (04) institutions were considered in Brazil and four (04) in Portugal. Figure 1 shows relevant aspects learned in the organizational structure of the ICUs studied in Brazil and Portugal.

Figure 1. Organizational Structure of Universities Open to Seniors. Brazil and Portugal, 2017.

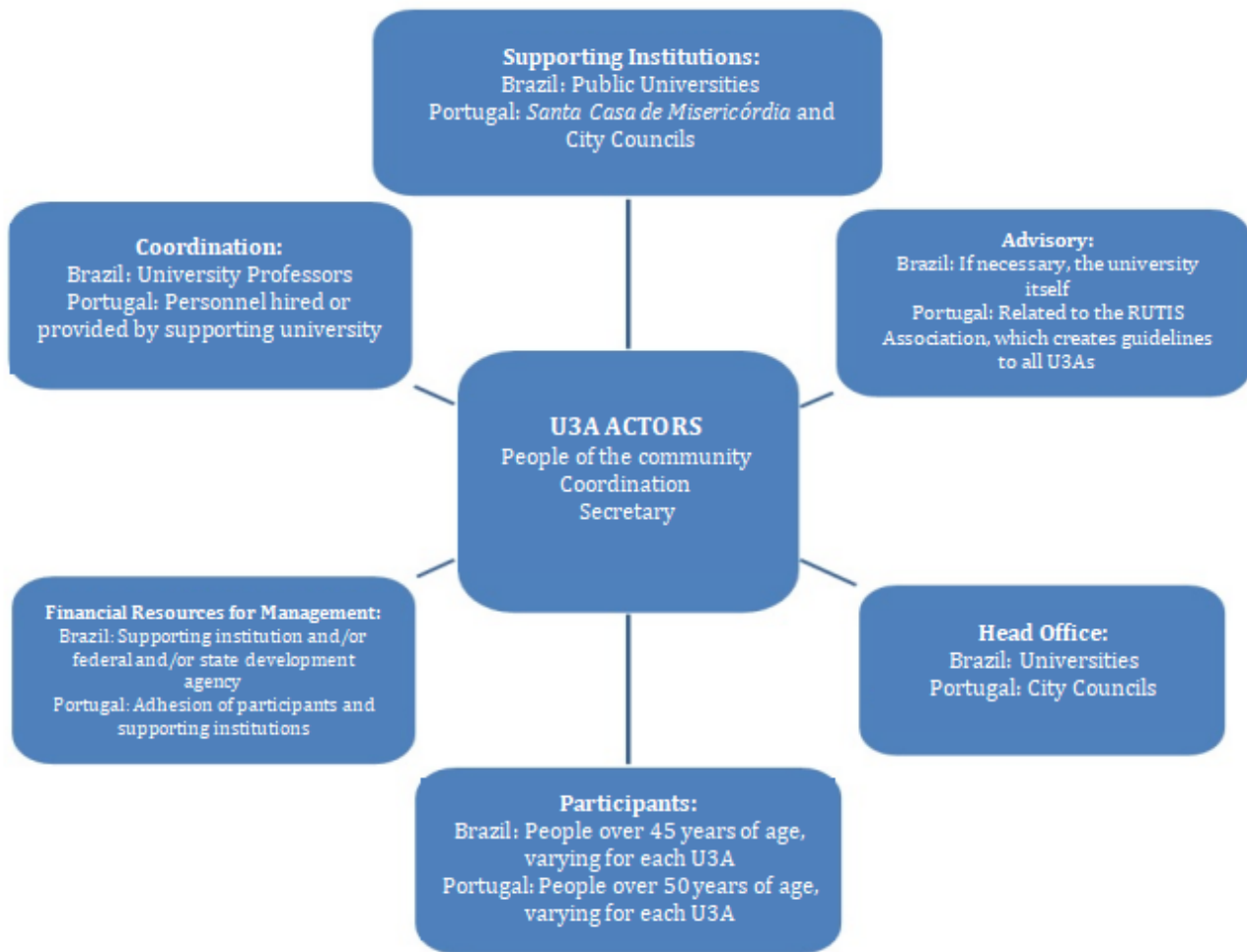


Table 1 shows the characteristics of the universities considered in Brazil.

Table 1. Universities Open to the Third Age. Brazil, 2017.

Identification	Objectives	Synthesis of the dynamics of universities
UNESP - Franca - SP* Universidade Aberta a Terceira Idade (UNATI)	Expand acquisition of knowledge, stimulate social coexistence and understanding of rights, through work aimed at emancipation and construction of citizenship by its users, promoting active aging. Provide autonomy for the elderly.	Year of foundation: 1993 Adherence criteria for participation: be 45 years old or more, know how to read and write. UNATI de Franca is linked to the Dean of University Extension and Culture and was institutionalized by ordinance 191 of May 7, 2001. This unifies all units that have a local nucleus in operation geared towards the Elderly. Activities: mostly developed during the day, have a socio-educational character and courses, lectures with contemporary themes, human and social rights, policies for the care of the elderly, citizenship, health, workshops on active aging, yoga, biodance among others, thematic events, commemorative parties, cultural and leisure trips previously established. The themes to be discussed are chosen based on the reality presented at the institution, and the demand of participants a dynamic and dialectical way. Activities are taught by professionals from various areas of knowledge on a voluntary and collaborative basis. Professors from various departments at UNESP campus in Franca contribute to the implementation of actions. UNATI

		<p>stands out as an internship space for undergraduates of the Social Service Course, enabling them to invest in research and extension activities related to aging and old age; and Study and Research Group: Aging, Public Policies and Society</p> <p>Number of participants: 100 to 200 people registered;</p> <p>Resources: from FUNDUNESP (Foundation for the Development of Unesp) and the Institutional Development Plan of Unesp, state/federal development agencies through the presentation of projects.</p>
<p>UFTM - Uberaba - MG Universidade Aberta à Terceira Idade (UATI)</p>	<p>Carry out work with people who have reached maturity to provide the necessary means for the exercise of full citizenship, through socio-educational, assistance and cultural activities, which develop habits and attitudes for a satisfactory social interaction, in order to awaken creativity, affectivity, physical, motor and cognitive autonomy; guarantee enjoyment of rights to health, culture, leisure and a better quality of life.</p> <p>Involve the University in an interdisciplinary way in the issue of aging, opening the field of action teaching and research.</p>	<p>Year of foundation: 2010</p> <p>Adherence criteria for participation: be 55 years old or more, know how to read and write.</p> <p>UATI is linked to the UFTM Extension Dean's Office;</p> <p>Activities: mostly developed during the day. They offer courses aimed at comprehensive health care for the elderly and, among subjects, use of mobile phone applications, social media, traffic education, pilates, nursing, English, physical therapy, nutrition, physical exercises, geography, makeup, social rights, quality of life, among others. Cultural activities are held in the city of Uberaba. The topics to be discussed are usually established in conversation circles held by participants. Activities are taught by professional categories from various areas of knowledge on a voluntary and collaborative basis. Professors from various departments of UFTM contribute to the implementation of actions. UATI offers internship space for undergraduate students from different Health, Social Sciences and Humanities Courses; professors and students are inserted in groups of studies and research that focus on aging and old age.</p> <p>Number of participants: 100 people</p> <p>Resources: from state/federal funding agencies upon presentation of projects.</p>
<p>UERJ - RJ*** Universidade Aberta a Terceira Idade (UNATI)</p>	<p>Contribute to improvement of physical, mental and social health levels of the elderly, using existing possibilities in the university institution.</p> <p>Promote studies, debates, research and assistance to the elderly population.</p> <p>Assist government agencies in formulating specific policies for the age group over 60.</p> <p>Provide consultancy and services to governmental and non-governmental bodies in matters involving the elderly.</p> <p>Contribute to raising levels of physical, mental and social health of older people, using resources and alternatives available at the University.</p> <p>Promote courses for the elderly to update their knowledge and integrate them into contemporary</p>	<p>Year of foundation: 1993 as the nucleus of the UERJ Extension and Culture Sub-Rectory. It was formally constituted as a program linked to the Institute of Social Medicine. Initiatives to care for the aging population have been taken since the 1980s, with a care program tailored to the health needs of the elderly, through an Elderly Health Promotion Center at Pedro Ernesto University Hospital, linked the UERJ.</p> <p>Membership criteria: people aged 60 or over.</p> <p>Activities: in four axes that teaching, research and extension actions can be identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activities for the elderly with health services, socio-cultural and educational activities and social integration/insertion; 2. Activities for undergraduate students, professionals and non-interested public with: training, qualification, updating, specialization of human resources; continuing education and preparation of caregivers for the elderly 3. Production of knowledge, it is aimed at researchers and students of graduate courses with: production of research; documentation center;

	<p>society. Provide medical, legal and physical assistance to the elderly population. Offer the elderly population a Unit of excellence, making UnATI/UERJ a public health institution and, equally, sociotherapy, community services, research and gerontological actions in general. Train professionals from various areas of knowledge to deal with problems of the elderly population. Promote comparative analyzes between studies on old age carried out in Brazil and in different countries. Hold seminars, publications, documents and any other modalities that make information and studies developed by the Program publicly available.</p>	<p>portal and publication and dissemination of the researchers' production. 4. Prioritizes public awareness and is concerned with the program's visibility. It is aimed at external audiences and opinion makers with extension activities; Volunteer program; communication and dissemination activities; participation in the formulation of policies aimed at the elderly population. 125 courses and other activities per semester are offered in areas of health education; art and culture; general knowledge and foreign languages; specific knowledge about the elderly. Workshops, public singing, dance, visual arts exhibitions, parties, dances, among others are organized in partnership with other academic units of the universities. The activities are taught by a faculty composed of more than 50 professors, some belonging to the teaching staff of UERJ, who share their workload with the unit of origin and UnATI/UERJ, and others are service provision contracts. Number of participants: approximately 1,200 people per semester who participate in Courses and cultural activities. Financial resources: from partnerships and agreements with national public, private and international institutions, in addition to other state and federal development agencies.</p>
<p>UFES – ES**** Universidade Aberta a Pessoa Idosa (UNAPI)</p>	<p>Contribute to the strengthening of citizenship of the elderly as a subject of rights, inserted in a political, economic and socio-cultural context of contemporary society, through continuing education, in a process of exchange between the subjects involved (elderly, facilitators, interns, extension workers and coordination).</p>	<p>Year of foundation: 1996 as a University Extension project coordinated by the Center for Studies on Aging and Advice to the Elderly, linked to the Department of Social Service Adherence criteria: people aged 60 or over Activities: mostly developed during the day. They offer education for aging; health, body and movement; organization and social participation; senior dance; mobilization and cultural activities; thematic workshops as memories; theater, crochet, dance, physical education. Spanish course and teaching of foreign languages. They are taught by the faculty, undergraduate and graduate students and volunteers, including using the expertise of UNAPI participants. UNATI's space is also relevant for conducting research on aging, linked to the referred group of studies and research. Number of participants: approximately 150 people and many of them have been at UNAPI for more than 10 years.</p>

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Table 2 shows the characteristics of the universities considered in Portugal.

Table 2. Universities Open to the Third Age. Portugal, 2016.

Identification	Objectives	Synthesis of the dynamics of universities
<p>USAL - Universidade Sênior de Almeirim</p>	<p>To offer participants a socially organized living space adapted to their age groups, so that they can live according to their personality and social relationship; Provide participants with knowledge that can be shared, valued and expanded; Develop activities for and by participants; Disseminate and preserve history, culture, traditions and values; Create meeting spaces in the community, which become incentives and incentives to a spirit of coexistence and human and social solidarity; Foster and support social volunteering.</p>	<p>Year of foundation: 2000, linked to the Senior Association of Almeirim (<i>Associação Sênior dde Almeirim - ASA</i>) and is installed in a headquarters provided by the Almeirim City Council and also held in other areas of the community. Membership criteria for participation: people aged 50 or over; know how to read and write and the payment of a membership fee of 12 euros per month. If the person cannot afford this investment, their membership is granted upon authorization from the ASA board. Activities: mostly developed during the day, they offer courses, workshops and cultural and artistic activities: languages and literature: Portuguese I and II; Portuguese literature; English, Italian; sociology; history and art history; psychology; citizenship; computer health; reiki; laughter yoga; macrobiotic; plastic and decorative arts (painting on fabric in oil, floral arts, <i>arraiolos</i>, decorative art; embroidery. Physical care: (zumba; water aerobics; swimming, tennis; walking) and artistic activities (traditional dances; ballroom dances; <i>tuna</i>; choir) and theater) commemorative parties, cultural and leisure trips, previously established and are offered by professional categories from various areas of knowledge on a voluntary and collaborative basis, hired and/or by the participants as a way of valuing the potential of each one. Number of participants: 100 to 120 people Resources: from participants' membership fees and a monthly subsidy from the Almeirim City Council. It should be noted that cultural trips are subsidized by the participants themselves, as well as the material used in different courses. It has internal regulations in accordance with the rules of the RUTIS network. They also participate in general culture meetings and contests promoted by the RUTIS network.</p>
<p>UTIS - Universidade da Terceira Idade de Santarém</p>	<p>UTIS is a social response, and its primary objective is to promote active, healthy and successful aging; Provide social and cultural updating of people, strengthening their social participation and the exercise of active citizenship.</p>	<p>Year of foundation: 2004 and it is the result of a partnership between the Municipality of Santarém, the Parish Council of Marvila and the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Santarém and operates at the Casa de Portugal and Camões provided by the Municipality of Santarém. Membership criteria for participation: people aged 50 or over; know how to read and write and a membership fee of 15 euros per month. If the person cannot afford this investment, their membership is granted upon authorization from the UTIS board. Activities: mostly developed during the day, they offer subjects such as Portuguese and African languages and literature; Introduction to computers; internet and social networks; drawing; history; art history and geography; anthropology; safety engineering law; sociology of religions; personal development; Cheers; environmental education; organic farming; swimming; current world; internet and social networks; social gerontology; meditation; arts (painting, knitting; traditional embroidery; parchment arts; <i>arraiolos</i>; photography; theater); dance, <i>tuna</i>; choir; viola; ukulele; Argentine dance/tango among others) celebratory parties, cultural</p>

		<p>and leisure trips previously established. The activities are taught by professional categories from various areas of knowledge on a voluntary, hired and collaborative basis and/or by the participants as a way of valuing the potential of each one.</p> <p>Number of participants: 100 to 120 people</p> <p>Resources: come from participation fee and monthly subsidies from partners mentioned above. It should be noted that cultural trips are subsidized by participants themselves, as well as the material used in different courses. It has internal regulations in accordance with the RUTIs network rules. They participate in general culture meetings and contests promoted by the RUTIs network.</p>
<p>UTIL- Universidade da Terceira Idade de Lumiar - Lisboa*</p>	<p>Encourage participation and organization of the senior population in cultural, citizenship, teaching and leisure activities.</p> <p>Disseminate history, sciences, traditions, solidarity, the arts, tolerance, places and other socio-cultural phenomena.</p> <p>To be a pole of information and dissemination of services, duties and rights of seniors.</p> <p>Develop interpersonal and social relationships between different generations.</p> <p>Encourage research and investigation.</p>	<p>Year of foundation: 2006 by the Lumiar Parish Council, which provides logistical and administrative support to UTIL.</p> <p>Membership criteria for participation: 55 years or older; resident in Lumiar and pay a fee of 60 euros per year; for residents outside Lumiar, the fee is 80 euros.</p> <p>Activities: mostly developed during the day, offering 50 subjects (theoretical, practical and physical) developed mostly during the day. Lectures, Colloquiums, Cultural Visits, Workshops and Thematic Parties: history: of Portugal, of art, of European integration, of modern political thought; cinema and culture, the east, music; from Egypt; mathematics; Computer sciences; mathematics; political systems; economic issues, civil and criminal law; Portuguese economy; personal development and the challenges of seniority; social gerontology; philosophy; regional women's dances; creative workshops; chi kung; viola and ukulele; chess; nutrition; sociology; psychogerontology; languages: English, French, Italian, German; mythology; decorative art; painting on silk, canvas or fabric; gymnastics, health literacy; creative writing; active and happy aging, among others. commemorative parties, cultural and leisure trips previously established. The activities are carried out by professional categories from various areas of knowledge on a voluntary basis (46 volunteers) or hired by the Parish referred to and/or by the participants as a way of valuing the potential of each.</p> <p>Number of participants: 350 people</p> <p>Resources: come from participant's membership fees and monthly subsidies from Freguesia do Lumiar. It should be noted that cultural trips are subsidized by the participants themselves, as well as the material used in different courses. It has internal regulations in accordance with the RUTIs network rules. They participate in general culture meetings and contests promoted by the RUTIs network.</p>
<p>USF - Universidade Sênior de Funchal</p>	<p>Provide a space for valuing senior people;</p> <p>Encourage active role in society;</p> <p>Create a meeting point for culture, learning and conviviality, through the creation of cultural and educational activities;</p> <p>Stimulate creativity;</p>	<p>Year of foundation: 2007 by the Funchal City Council, in partnership with the University of Madeira and other community spaces where activities are developed.</p> <p>Participation criteria: 50 years or more and pay a membership fee of 60 euros per quarter. This value is for school supplies, insurance for participants, scheduled activities, such as parties, entrance to museums, study visits and transportation.</p> <p>Activities: mostly developed during the day, they are changed every year to motivate participation and are</p>

	<p>Promote the exchange of knowledge between generations; contribute to the personal and social enrichment of the elderly; Maintaining the web of social relationships in the community</p>	<p>structured in large areas: communication - approach and knowledge (English, French, culture and information technology); creativity- culture and knowledge (natural heritage, built heritage, creative and plastic arts; singing, citizenship, philosophy, photography); well-being - body (water aerobics, yoga, nature discovery tours); archipelago of ideas and knowledge (health and life lectures, study visits). The activities are carried out by professional categories from various areas of knowledge on a voluntary basis, workers from the Municipality of Funchal and professors from the University of Madeira, Number of participants: 150 registered and on average 100 active. Resources: participation fees (20 euros per month) and the Funchal City Council. It should be noted that all didactic material, tours, parties are included in this fee. It has internal regulations in accordance with the RUTIs network rules.</p>
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*there are several universities for the elderly that serve the elderly in Lisbon and are located in parishes, which are sub-municipalities. This University of the Third Age is located in the parish of Lumiar, north of Lisbon.

DISCUSSION

Organizational structure

Universities Open to the Third Age (U3As) in Brazil, are linked to public universities, whose coordination is related to research groups or extension projects, coordinated by professors and do not have a membership fee. Financial, material and human support comes from the universities and/or federal and state development agencies themselves. Because they have their autonomy, the form of administration is specific to each reality.

In Portugal, the majority of universities for the elderly are linked to private institutions of social solidarity (Associations, *Santa Casa de Misericórdia*, among others) and City Councils.

Mainly supported by the RUTIS Network (*Associação Rede de Universidades da Terceira Idade*), created in 2005 as a Private Institution of Social Solidarity (*Instituição Particular de Solidariedade Social - IPSS*) and of basic public utility to the community and the elderly. It is an institution of national and international scope, based in the community of Almeirim. The social importance of RUTIs and Senior Universities was officially recognized by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 76/201619.

All Portuguese universities surveyed have material, financial support and hired teachers (when necessary), City Councils, volunteering and participation fees, which vary from five to approximately 20 euros per month. They are administered by a coordinator and by the guidelines established by RUTIs.

As there are participation rates, university programs for the elderly in Portugal are subject to various criticisms. And among them, it is noteworthy that the elderly population that participate in these institutions belong, mainly, to medium and high social positions, which leads to the criticism that they are selective and elitist¹¹.

Universities for the Brazilian elderly are linked to groups of studies and research from universities, in university or cultural extension. Universities for the elderly in Brazil/Portugal are also a field of research, for undergraduate students of the most varied courses, as well as for graduate students.

The conception of a micro-university in which teaching, research and extension is combined, encourages the creation of innovative alternatives between knowledge production, training, human resources improvement and service provision¹⁸.

Objectives

It is noticed that the universities have objectives consistent with the proposal of the first University of the Third Age, idealized by Pierre Vellas (the Université du Troisième Âge -

UTA) in 1973 in France, which was to remove the elderly person from isolation, promote their health, stimulate their interest in life and modify their image before society. This French model of university has expanded to different locations in the world²⁰, and has intensified from the global discussions on aging and recommendations structured in the Vienna Plan of 1982 and other subsequent world meetings organized by the UN¹¹.

Universities for the elderly in Brazil and Portugal fulfill the objectives of promoting social interaction, creating opportunities for active aging and participation in society. In addition to the educational and training project, universities are also a health project, with the purpose of contributing to improving the quality of life, and preventing isolation and social exclusion³.

Creation in Brazil and Portugal

In Brazil, the programs were created due to the visibility achieved by old age in the 1990s, having seen the foundation year of universities/programs participating in this study. These institutions are spread across the country, in public and private institutions^{18,21}. The expansion is also due to legal mechanisms that reinforced concerns about old age, after the period of social re-democratization and incorporation in the Federal Constitution of 1988. Some laws have been implemented in an attempt to meet the new needs of the world trend and national urgency: aging²¹.

Legal documents²², such as Law No. 8,842/1994, which provides for the National Policy for the Elderly, and Law No. 10,741/2003, for the Statute for the Elderly, have repercussions in legal and political terms and bring permanent education as an agenda. However, they are not carried out, due to different factors, such as prejudice against old age and denial of society in relation to this phase of life, which contribute to the difficulty of thinking and implementing policies for this group. There are still people who think that there are investments in childhood and spending in old age²¹.

In Portugal, even if recognizing that the current Portuguese social security system represents a historical evolution of social rights, some Portuguese authors, when analyzing the social reach of the system, consider the same insufficient, in that it has not ensured all people elderly women a minimally dignified quality of life according to citizenship rights⁴.

Also in Portugal, the expansion took place from the 1990s, with a high concentration of these institutions on the coast and in the north of Portugal, however the first Universities Open to the Elderly were created in the late 1970s and 1980s¹¹. With the creation of RUTIs in 2005, the number of universities for elderly people in Portugal has intensified.

Insertion of participants and professors

Although the historical characteristics, social, economic, cultural and political reality in each country and in each region are different, social responses are so imperative for the strengthening of the person in the aging process, in the right to education, coexistence, leisure, culture, preservation of its identity, its independence and autonomy, that some studied programs admit participants from 45 years of age as is the case of UNATI/UNESP, Franca, in the state of São Paulo.

The average age for enrollment in universities for the elderly people surveyed in Brazil and Portugal is 53 years. In both countries, in their policies and legal documents from both countries, they follow the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), in which the elderly person is 60 years old or more for developing countries like Brazil, and 65 years old or more in developed countries like Portugal¹.

Thus, age and the aging process have dimensions and meanings that go beyond chronological age, or legal recommendations. Aging with autonomy and independence, having an active role in society, good physical and psychological health is a challenge for contemporary societies, in which the concept of age is multidimensional and is not a good measure for human development^{10,23}.

Courses and other modalities give priority to fulfillment and pleasure as determinants in its functioning. This issue is strengthened in the absence of formal prerequisites for participants who register: it is enough to know how to read and write. There are no formal assessments, exams, written papers, and others.

Most classes and other activities are taught by the teaching staff of the support institutions, by volunteers or hired persons, if the program has financial resources for such an option, and by the participants themselves. This last category is very common in Portugal.

It is an educational space that recognizes acquisition of knowledge, but also socialization of knowledge and experiences of the participants themselves. There is evidence that the interactive and participatory character, which is established in the education of mature adults and the elderly, contributes so that the teacher, in addition to teaching, also learns what the student has built in their life trajectory, and the student learns new content to stay updated in a world that remains in constant change and transformation²⁴.

Activities being developed

The activities developed by universities are carried out, mostly, during the day, which privileges access to culture, to education of certain groups of people who are not included, or need or were unable to remain in the world of work due to determinations present in the daily lives of different social groups²⁵.

In Brazil, social coexistence has not been established, based on the principles of civility and equality among citizens. Brazilian society was structured under the judgment of slavery, power and patrimonial command, which has always destined privileges for a small portion of the population, while a large population is deprived of essential and basic goods of human existence, contrary to the character of a society entitled and recognized as democratic⁴.

The university programs propose actions according to local demands of each community and, regardless of realities, whether Brazilian or Portuguese, health, social, socio-cultural and psychological aspects of aging are worked on in the most varied subjects, with the central objective of to allow conditions for participants to perceive and understand this stage of life, the passage of time.

The demand of the elderly person to carry out new activities has increased and arouses the interest of the population¹⁸. The activities developed at the researched universities offer a range of different themes and different approaches that meet the reasons why participants seek and remain in these programs.

Studies carried out in Brazil and Portugal indicate that the reasons for participating in universities are: a) search for knowledge and desire to study as access to a world of growth, innovation and new horizons. Access to education, as a right of the elderly person and citizenship, becomes the entry door for this subject in a world of possibilities and goes beyond the limits of formal and regular education; b) expand social bonds, that is, find people who are also in this stage of life, to be part of a group. Expanding social network becomes relevant, due to the loss of friends and companions, or social isolation^{26,27}. Social relationships are essential in promoting and maintaining physical and mental health of the elderly²⁸; c) occupying free time: the involvement of the elderly in activities considered pleasurable has been investigated as an important marker of well-being and life satisfaction^{18,26,27}; d) obtain quality of life: the participants have access to information about life habits that can be applied in practice and are beneficial to a healthy aging process^{18,26} and e) commitments to generativity: desire to know more to help their family members²⁷.

Based on documentary data and visits to universities in Brazil and Portugal, the activities developed are part of a broad process of quality of life, promoting health, psychological and social well-being and social participation of the elderly; health projects related to health promotion and lifestyle changes are carried out in a fragmented, restricted and punctual manner. And as for health literacy as the focus of this study, the Open University

for the Elderly of the Universidade Federal of Espírito Santo presents a course on health literacy (HL).

Educational interventions aimed at health promotion do not only provide apprehension of knowledge about health as indicated by the documents, and others informed by participants, but that people can beyond understanding information, evaluate, manage and invest towards development of personal skills that can motivate them to improve results in terms of personal health and to make changes in socioeconomic determinations in health^{13,14}.

Improving HL levels refers to the idea that each person, by appropriating the information and knowledge about promoting their health and preventing disease, can transform them into instruments to promote health care, changes in lifestyle and quality of life. HL is a critical reconstruction in that it also considers research on health determinations in the reality of each society and people^{14,29}.

HL assumes importance when it comes to the elderly population, since it presents greater vulnerability in terms of health, and lower levels of literacy, when compared to younger age groups, with a rapid decline after 55 years of age³⁰.

HL focuses on learning resulting from educational health strategies, and assesses the effectiveness of education, as well as the impact of the content learned and used in practice by each person, its applicability (decision making) in activities of daily living. It can be a strategy for health promotion and provides the empowerment of the elderly, although it is little used as a methodology for self-management of health³⁰.

CONCLUSION

The Universities of the Third Age in Brazil and Portugal, with their regional particularities, are programs that are well designed and have a large number of elderly participants. It effectively fulfills its role, albeit limited, in providing social responses to demands of mature people, with regard to expanding cultural knowledge and access to scientific knowledge, active aging, better understanding of the world and its roots.

The programs enable participants, through their diversified activities, to expand their networks of social and affective relationships, with the purpose of constituting new attitudes towards family, friends and the world. It can be a space for the exercise of autonomy and freedom, with independence. However, activities involving health are limited and punctual and insufficient for lifestyle changes and health promotion. The university open to the third age is a relevant space to improve literacy levels for the health of the mature and elderly adult and can be an effective strategy for lifestyle changes and health promotion.

The present study is limited and suggests elaboration of new works that consider a greater number of participating programs in Brazil and Portugal, with themes that rescue contributions of each activity developed, as well as increase research to know the level of health literacy in elderly people in Brazil and Portugal, with a view to expanding the discussion of health promotion with this population segment.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Marta Regina Farinelli contributed with the outlining, analysis of data, writing and revision. **Nanci Soares** worked on the orientation, analysis of data and writing.

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