



Violência estrutural e as consequências na vida de mulheres com deficiência intelectual Structural violence and the consequences on the lives of women with intellectual disabilities la violencia estructural y sus consecuencias en la vida de las mujeres con discapacidad intelectual

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## **RESUMO**

Objetivo: realizar um estudo de revisão integrativa com enfoque na violência estrutural e as consequências na vida de mulheres com deficiência intelectual. Métodos: revisão integrativa, realizada para avaliar as publicações no campo da violência estrutural entre mulheres com deficiência intelectual de 2016 a 2023 utilizando as bases de dados SCOPUS, Web of Science; Google Scholar e o Portal de periódicos CAPES, utilizando 6 artigos considerados relevantes. Resultados: a pesquisa aponta que mulheres com deficiência intelectual são mais propensas a sofrerem abusos sexuais por parceiro íntimo, e que a falta de informações e a dificuldade no atendimento por parte dos profissionais compromete seus direitos sexuais e reprodutivos. Considerações Finais: assim, revela-se que a violência estrutural afeta mulheres com deficiência intelectual, sendo necessário o fortalecimento das políticas públicas e a qualificação dos profissionais envolvidos.

**DESCRITORES:** Violência estrutural; Violência social; Deficiência intelectual; Mulher.

## **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** To conduct an integrative review study focusing on structural violence and its consequences in the lives of women with intellectual disabilities. **Methods:** an integrative review was carried out to evaluate publications in the field of structural violence among women with intellectual disabilities from 2016 to 2023 using the SCOPUS, Web of Science, Google Scholar and CAPES journals databases, using 6 articles considered relevant. **Results:** The research shows that women with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be sexually abused by an intimate partner, and that the lack of information and difficulty in providing care by professionals compromises their sexual and reproductive rights. **Final considerations:** this reveals that structural violence affects women with intellectual disabilities, and that public policies need to be strengthened and the professionals involved need to be qualified.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Structural violence; Social violence; Intellectual disability; Woman.

## **RESUMEN**

**Objetivo:** realizar un estudio de revisión integradora centrado en la violencia estructural que sufren las mujeres con discapacidad intelectual. **Método:** revisión integradora, realizada para

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evaluar las publicaciones en el campo de la violencia estructural en mujeres con discapacidad intelectual de 2016 a 2023 utilizando las bases de datos SCOPUS, Web of Science; Google Scholar y CAPES Journal Portal, utilizando 6 artículos considerados relevantes. **Resultados:** la investigación señala que las mujeres con discapacidad intelectual son más propensas a sufrir abusos sexuales por parte de sus parejas íntimas, y que la falta de información y la dificultad de atención por parte de los profesionales compromete sus derechos sexuales y reproductivos. **Consideraciones finales:** Así, se revela que la violencia estructural afecta a las mujeres con discapacidad intelectual, requiriendo el fortalecimiento de las políticas públicas y la cualificación de los profesionales involucrados.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Violencia estructural; Violencia social; Discapacidad intelectual; Mujer.

#### INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, around 45.6 million people have some kind of mental or intellectual, motor, hearing or visual disability, of which more than 17.7 million report some kind of disability considered severe. In view of this, more than one billion people in the global population live with some kind of disability. 2

Decree No. 6.949 of 2009 enacted the International Convention on Disability and its Optional Protocol, signed in New York in March 2007, with the aim of promoting, protecting and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human and fundamental rights.<sup>3</sup> In 2011, the Brazilian government launched the Living Without Limits Plan, by Decree No. 7.612 of 2011, with the aim of integrating and promoting strategic intersectoral and integrated actions, consisting of four areas of action: education, accessibility, social inclusion and health care.<sup>4</sup>

Article 2 of the Brazilian inclusion law, Law No. 13.146 of July 6, 2015, states that "a person with a disability is one who has a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with one or more barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". However, a PwD Care Network will be organized into the following components: I - Primary Care; II - Specialized Care in Hearing, Physical, Intellectual, Visual, Ostomy and Multiple Disabilities Rehabilitation.

In this context, the concept of structural violence against women with disabilities is defined as that practiced by action and/or omission in institutions providing public services and can be understood more broadly as the lack of access to services and their poor quality of provision.<sup>7</sup>

Structural violence is a deficiency that is considered avoidable within the framework of fundamental human needs.8 Within this context of extreme social inequality, part of the



population is excluded and therefore does not have access to their rights, making room for the devaluation of life and the trivialization of death, as well as impunity.<sup>9</sup>

The female population therefore faces a number of challenges, including the great need to change paradigms regarding gender discrimination and the inequalities suffered as a result of disability. In this way, disability has come to be seen as an experience of oppression and social imposition.<sup>10</sup>

In educational and clinical circumstances, the diagnostic assessment of people with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) is still a problematic issue for many education professionals and other health professionals. According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), ID refers to a disability that limits intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which involves conceptual, social and practical skills that are fundamental to everyday experiences. <sup>11-12</sup>

It is understood that people with ID generally have difficulties related to social adaptive skills, with problems in social behavior. These skills require the development of verbal and non-verbal language in order to replace critical information and tools that facilitate understanding and analysis of messages in cultural and social environments.<sup>13</sup>

In light of this, the World Health Organization, in its World Report on Disability, <sup>15</sup> refers to the epidemiology of disability, <sup>14</sup> as a way of thinking about the relationships and interactions between health and disability, especially the interrelationship with comorbidities, health problems and environmental factors. <sup>15</sup>

In this respect, it is necessary to identify public health policies in the Unified Health System (SUS) to meet the needs and realities of specific population groups, susceptible due to their economic, social and environmental conditions and the discrimination they face on a daily basis in society, as is the case with women.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, in a recent publication, the Ministry of Health (MoH) highlights the role of health professionals in providing care to women with disabilities. This care must enable women to exercise their autonomy in everyday life, whether it be in sexuality, pregnancy, the lack of physical, communication and attitudinal accessibility in services, or access to assistive technology devices and health equipment.<sup>16</sup>

In view of this, the access difficulties faced by people with disabilities in relation to low investment in health teams makes it difficult for people with disabilities to access services, because in general, there is little investment in raising awareness and providing information about



the differences, specificities and strategies for overcoming disability, making it a functional limitation.<sup>17</sup>

To this end, it is necessary to survey community social and governmental support facilities, as well as continuing education for health and social care professionals, and the creation or expansion of access modalities, integrating the different stages of care.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, in 2009, a survey was carried out in the state of Pernambuco, where 17,391 people were identified, of whom 1,753 had some form of ID, and this was most prevalent in Health Region I (47.9%), which includes the 19 cities of the Metropolitan Region of Recife, plus the island of Fernando de Noronha, and in Health Region II (10.2%), which includes 20 cities in the Zona da Mata Norte. In terms of gender, 53.5% are female and 46.5% male and 95.9% belong to classes C/D/E.<sup>18</sup>

The aim of this study is to carry out an integrative review focusing on structural violence and the consequences for the lives of women with intellectual disabilities. The aim is to provide quality health care in the field of sexual and reproductive health, based on qualified listening and paradigm shifts in relation to the inequalities suffered as a result of disability.

## **METHOD**

This is an exploratory and descriptive study, based on the integrative review method, which will consist of the following stages: 1- Identification of the theme and selection of the research question; 2-Establishment of inclusion/exclusion criteria for articles (sample selection); 3- Definition of the information to be extracted from the selected articles; 4-Analysis of the results; 5- Presentation and discussion of the integrative review.

Stage 1 - The review will be guided by the question: What effects can structural violence have on women with intellectual disabilities? Stage 2 - Search for articles in the literature, from May 20 to June 8, 2023, in the databases SCOPUS, WEB OF SCIENCE, Google Scholar and the CAPES Journals Portal, using the following descriptors: "structural violence", "social violence", "intellectual disability", "woman", using the Boolean operators: AND, OR. Step 3 - International articles were selected, written in English or Spanish, open access, published in full and presenting primary data on structural violence among women with intellectual disabilities, from 2016 to 2023

Inclusion criteria were established: articles in Spanish or English, as long as they answered the central question.

Exclusion criteria: articles that were not open access, unavailability of the article, repeated articles and articles that did not address the research topic.

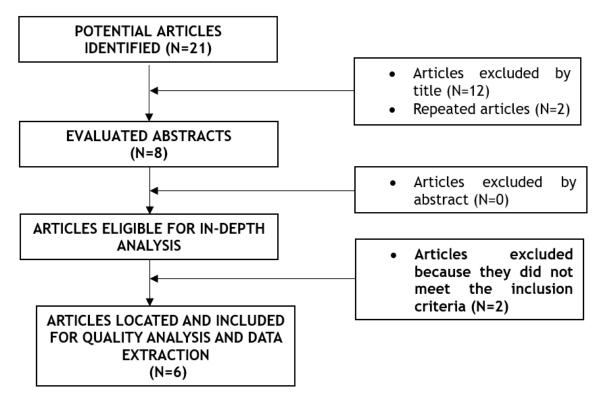


Ethical aspects: as this is a study using only data from secondary sources available for public consultation, it did not require approval from a Research Ethics Committee.

#### **RESULTS**

The methodological procedures adopted in the integrative review revealed a comprehensive and up-to-date synthesis of the existing literature on structural violence among women with intellectual disabilities. A total of 6 relevant studies were included, selected from a search of the aforementioned databases, to better elucidate the research carried out in the flowchart that presents the data collection carried out to reach this corpus.

Flowchart 1 - Data collection



Source: Survey results. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023

The quality analysis and data extraction according to the process of an integrative review was carried out using the instrumentalization method<sup>19</sup> and adapted by the author. This provides an overview of the studies analyzed, identifying patterns, gaps and trends in the literature. We will therefore present six tables summarizing and discussing the articles included in this integrative review.



**Chart 1 -** Presentation of the summary of article number 1, Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023 Source: Survey results. Recife, Brazil, 2023

Research name	Authors and journal	Methodological breakdown	Sample breakdown	Level of evidence
"Put bluntly, they are targeted by the worst creeps society has to offer": Police and professionals' views and actions relating to domestic violence and women with intellectual disabilities.	McCarthy, M.; Bates, C.; Triantafyllo poulos, P.; Hunt, S.; Skillman, K. M. JARID - Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 2018.	Cross-sectional research conducted with 717 police officers and other professionals in a wide variety of locations in the UK. Through an online survey, focused on direct experience, attitudes and responses.  Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS version 21 and free-text responses were coded and analyzed for key themes.	172 police officers and 539 health professionals. 62.2% of the police interviewees were women, and the majority of these 172 police officers were white and British. Most of the health professionals interviewed were also women, 84.8% of whom were white and British.	Level 4
Intervention studied		Results	Recommendations/ conclusions	
Domestic violence experienced by women with intellectual disabilities. Ethical approval was obtained from the Social Assistance Research Ethics Committee (SCREC).		The majority of both professionals and the police believed that women with ID were deliberately the target of violence and abusive men. The interviewees were aware of the complexity of the cases as a result of these women having ID.	needed for both the police and other health professionals who are specifically focused on domestic violence, since it	



Table 2 - Presentation of the summary of article number 2. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023.

Research name	Authors and journal	Methodological breakdown	Sample breakdown	Level of evidence
Out off shadows: Violence against girls and women with disabilities in Portugal	Pinto, Paula Campos. Alter European Journal of Disability Research, 2016.	Methodology and data collection instruments developed and tested by Disability Rights Promotion International (DRPI), which was adapted to suit adolescents aged 12 to 17, using a semistructured questionnaire, through a participatory and emancipatory methodology. A total of 60 interviews were carried out with teenagers and adults with various types of disabilities, in three regions of the country: Lisbon, the North and the South.	gender, age group and level of education. Of the	Level 4
Intervention studied		Results	Recommendatio ns/conclusions	



Violence against girls and women with disabilities in Portugal. Addressing three key points: what forms of violence are most prevalent? How important is this issue in Portugal? How can their right to protection violence from be guaranteed? All types of disability were represented the group: mobility impairment (15 participants); blindness or low vision (12 participants); intellectual disability (10 participants); psychosocial disability (08 participants); hearing loss (09)participants); multiple disability (04 participants).

The data shows a high prevalence of abuse among girls and women with disabilities, including psychological, physical, sexual, financial and social violence. The results are discussed in the light of human rights principles.

More research is needed to better understand how the intersection of disability and gender exposes girls and women with disabilities to an increased risk of abuse and violence, and the forms that such violence can take. In its various forms. violence the experienced bv these women emerged from oppressive social practices, processes and relationships, deeply marked by gender inequalities and disabilities.

Source: Survey results. Recife, Brazil, 2023.

Chart 3 - Presentation of the summary of article number 3. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023

Research name	Authors and journal	Methodological breakdown	Sample breakdown	Level of evidence
A scoping review of measurement of violence against women and disability	Meyer, Sarah R.; Stockl, Heidi; Vorfeld, Cecilia; Kamenov , Kaloyan; García- Moreno, Claudia.	A systematic search was carried out in the following databases: PubMed, PsycINFO Embase, CINAHL, PILOTS, ERIC, Social Work Abstracts, International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, Social Services	The research focused on the intersection between disability and violence. A search of 16 databases resulted in 9,697 articles and a review of the reference lists of existing systematic reviews or other literature reviews or expert	Level 4



Plos one,2022	Abstracts, ProQuest Criminal Justice and Dissertations & Theses Global. As well as structured searches of national statistics and research and gray literature.	contributions produced 202 additional articles.	
Intervention studied	Results	Recommendations/co nclusions	
An extensive literature search, including national statistics, gray literature and published research (DHS and national VAW surveys).	A wide range of quantitative evidence was identified. This resulted in a comprehensive overview of the existing literature, but given the breadth of the scoping review, the picture is of several disparate and distinct bodies of literature.	Several key issues - how and why different vulnerabilities intersect with disability and result in violence victimization, the perceptions and experiences of women with disabilities about violence prevention and response programs, and the role of disability discrimination in driving levels of violence - are not adequately addressed in the quantitative literature.	

Source: Survey results. Recife, Brazil, 2023



Chart 4 - Presentation of the summary of article number 4. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023

Research name	Authors and journal	Methodological breakdown	Sample breakdown	Level of evidence
Sexual health concerns in women with intellectual disabilities: a systematic review in qualitative studies	Matin, Behzad Karami; <i>et al.</i> BMC Public Health, 2021.	A systematic review of relevant qualitative articles was carried out in the PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus and PsycINFO databases from June 2018 to August 2018. With a search strategy according to two main focuses: (1) sexuality; and (2) women with ID.	The searches were limited to articles published from January 2000 to December 2017. Studies on women aged 16 and over were included in this review. Results: In the four databases, the search found 274 unique articles. After three stages of screening (title, abstract and full text), 22 studies were included in the final review.	Level 4
Interven	tion studied	Results	Recommendation s/conclusions	
The sexual health concerns and needs experienced by women with ID.		Difficulty with lack of sexual experience, negative experiences with sexuality, negative attitudes towards sexuality on the part of non-disabled individuals, limited cognitive abilities to understand sexual identity, lack of access to information about sexual health, lack of support from families and caregivers about sexuality.	Women with ID need to receive school sex education adapted to the level of understanding necessary to gain the knowledge for sexual relationships, and to practice safe sex when they choose this option. Families, together with the education and health systems, should provide opportunities for women with ID to	



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	talk about their needs and choices.	
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Source: Survey results. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023

Chart 5 - Presentation of the summary of article number 5. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023

Research name	Authors and journal	Methodological breakdown	Sample breakdown	Level of evidence
Partner violence hospitalization s among adults with intellectual disabilities	Li <i>et al</i> . American Journal of Preventive Medicine,2 023	Retrospective cohort study using the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project National Hospital Sample, 2013-2019.	A total of 1,179,282 hospitalization records were analyzed, identifying cases of 112,565 men and 83,982 women with ID; the analyses were carried out in 2021 and 2022.	Level 3
Intervention studied		Results <sup>2</sup>	Recommendations/con clusions	
Adults with ID were identified using diagnostic codes. A control group without ID was matched in a 1:5 ratio.		Women with ID had a higher risk of hospitalization related to intimate partner violence (RR = 16.44; 95% CI = 12.60, 21.45; p<0.001), the risks remaining robust after adjusting for sociodemographic and hospital characteristics.	ID and female gender increased the risk of hospitalization related to intimate partner violence. This study highlights the need for improved and specialized service provision in health, legal, criminal and other systems to promote safety and healing for people with ID.	

Source: Survey results. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In view of the research's focus on analyzing structural violence and its implications for the integral health of women with ID, only the results obtained with regard to women were considered.



Chart 6 - Presentation of the summary of article number 6. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023

Research name	Authors and journal	Methodological breakdown	Sample breakdown	Level of evidence
The intersectional jeopardy of disability, gender and sexual and reproductive health: experiences and recommenda tions of women and men with disabilities in Northern Uganda.	Mac-Seing, Muriel et al, 2020.  Sexual and reproductive health Matters 2020	Analysis based on intersectionality, through an "instrumental" multiple case study design, defined as the post-conflict Northern region, and the multiple cases include seven health facilities of two different types, private non-profit facilities and public health facilities.	32 women and men with different types of disabilities (physical, sensory and mental) and two discussion groups with 12 people with and without hearing disabilities, as well as with non-participants and non-auditory people, as well as non-participant observations in seven health units.	Level 4
Intervention studied		Results	Recommendations/ Conclusions	
The focus of this study was not to examine the intrinsic organization of health facilities, but rather to use them as a "tool" to develop a better understanding of the perceptions of people with disabilities when they use SRH services.		Disabled people's access to HRH services is shaped by the intersections of gender, disability and violence, and that individuals. Individuals with disabilities have experienced discrimination in both public and private non-profit health facilities.	Intersectionality has revealed blind spots in the implementation of policies and gaps in the use of services. Universal health coverage can be operationalized in actionable measures when its universality is combined with social justice.	

Source: Survey results. Recife, PE, Brazil, 2023



## **DISCUSSION**

Research<sup>20</sup> has shown that women with ID are especially vulnerable to being victims of domestic violence, due to the exploitation of their vulnerability by aggressors. In this way, the research highlights the need for attention and action on the part of the authorities and society to deal with this issue. However, it was revealed that professionals involved in dealing with these cases may have negative and prejudiced views towards women with ID, which compromises the response and adequate treatment of these victims, contributing to the underreporting of cases and the lack of necessary support.

In terms of physical consequences, these women are often the targets of this type of violence, which can result in serious injuries. Their vulnerability can hinder their ability to defend themselves or seek help, increasing the likelihood of repeated episodes of violence. In addition, repeated exposure to violence can lead to the development of anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress and other mental health problems.

Corroborating this perspective, it has been shown<sup>21</sup> that these consequences are intrinsically linked to the perpetuation of the cycle of violence and the limitation of access to adequate support and protection. This study presents alarming data on the violence experienced by girls and women with disabilities, highlighting the consequences of this structural violence due to the lack of training for professionals.

Furthermore, the research<sup>22</sup> examines the measurement of violence against women with disabilities and focuses on the importance of properly understanding and assessing the violence these women face. In addressing the issue of structural violence, the study points out that a lack of training for professionals can result in an inadequate response to the violence experienced by women with disabilities, including a lack of support to deal with the consequences for sexual and reproductive health.

A systematic review<sup>23</sup> identified several common sexual health concerns among women with ID. These include a lack of knowledge about sexual health and contraception: many women with ID have limited access to accurate and comprehensive information about sexual health, resulting in a lack of knowledge about sexual anatomy and physiology, contraceptive methods and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.

An important insight study,<sup>24</sup> on the prevalence and patterns of hospitalizations related to intimate partner violence (IPV) in adults with ID, identified the possibility of omission on the part of health professionals and health systems in general. This highlighted the need for greater



attention and intervention in order to prevent and mitigate domestic violence and its impact on the health and well-being of these individuals.

As for violence by commission, in the context of IPV-related hospitalizations in adults with ID, situations can occur in which health professionals fail to provide adequate care.<sup>20</sup> The lack of training and awareness among health professionals about IPV in people with ID can contribute to the occurrence of these forms of structural violence.

However, with regard to access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, data is presented<sup>25</sup> from Uganda, which has adopted pro-disability legislation to promote the rights of these individuals. Therefore, the sexual and reproductive rights of PwDs continue to be violated and denied. The study identified gaps in the implementation of policies and in the use of health services by people with ID.

Thus, one of the most important professionals in the care of women with ID is the nurse. This professional plays a key role in their holistic approach, identification skills, emotional support, multidisciplinary cooperation and educational activities, playing a significant role in promoting the safety, recovery and well-being of these victims.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study presented showed that structural violence is a problem that involves several dimensions and affects women with ID, leaving deep scars in all aspects, in a population that is considered extremely vulnerable. This is why it is so important and urgent for health professionals to be trained in caring for women with ID, especially in sexual and reproductive education, given the scale and gaps in health care for these individuals.

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