

Women's Health In The Collective Context: Historical Perspectives, Equity, And Guarantees

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Abstract:

Women's health in Brazil encompasses physical, emotional, and social aspects, with challenges persisting despite significant progress. This article explores historical perspectives and contemporary issues in women's health, aiming to stimulate discussions about reformulating specific public policies. Brazil's women's health history reflects inequalities and feminist struggles. In the 1970s, the feminist movement increased visibility, leading to demands for inclusive health services. The 1983 creation of the Comprehensive Women's Health Care Program marked progress, yet challenges like infrastructure and professional shortages persisted. Access to health services remains a challenge, particularly in rural and low-income areas. Women encounter obstacles, including insufficient infrastructure and a lack of trained professionals. Ensuring access to women-specific services and information is crucial for promoting health and preventing diseases. Violence against women, a pervasive issue, significantly affects physical and mental health. Brazil's response includes the Maria da Penha Law, yet challenges persist. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated domestic violence, emphasizing the urgent need for collective efforts to protect women. Reproductive health, a fundamental right, involves family planning, prenatal care, and disease prevention. Despite progress, challenges like inadequate sexual education persist, requiring more effective solutions. Preventing and treating breast and cervical cancers are vital. Despite improvements, challenges like awareness and access remain, necessitating continuous investment in health policies and education. Brazil faces mental health challenges for women, influenced by gender inequality, domestic violence, and societal pressures. Stigma around seeking help exacerbates the issue, highlighting the need for comprehensive mental health measures. Addressing women's health demands strengthening healthcare systems, promoting awareness, and combatting violence and stigma. Investments in research and education, coupled with collective efforts from governments and organizations, are essential for achieving equitable access to quality healthcare and fostering a fairer, healthier society for all women.

Keywords: women health; public health; health equity.

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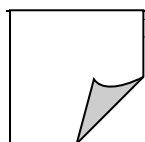
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I. Introduction

Women's health in Brazil encompasses a range of issues related to the physical, emotional, and social well-being of women. Despite significant progress in recent decades, there are still challenges to overcome in ensuring equitable and quality health for all women in the country. This article, theoretically, explores some aspects of Women's Health in Brazil, in its multi-concepts, aiming to stimulate a discussion regarding the reformulation of specific Public Policies on this subject.

II. Methods

In the context of an academic essay on Women's health, in Brazil, methodology plays a crucial role in the analysis and understanding of these health conditions. A robust methodological approach may involve the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the complex relationships between social determinants and health. This may include the analysis of demographic and epidemiological data to identify patterns of disease incidence and prevalence in different social groups, as well as qualitative studies that explore the experiences and perceptions of affected communities. Additionally, participatory and collaborative research with marginalized individuals and groups may be essential for understanding the social and cultural contexts



that shape health disparities. By adopting a comprehensive and inclusive methodological approach, researchers can significantly contribute to the identification of effective policies and interventions that address the social roots of diseases and promote health equity in Brazil.

As it is an essay, the authors chose to present the bibliographic references (which informed the discussion) only at the end of the text.

III. Results And Discussion

Historical Aspects

Women's health in Brazil has a history marked by inequalities and feminist struggles. For many years, women faced difficulties in accessing adequate health services, primarily due to the invisibility of women's specific health needs. In the early 20th century, women's health was primarily related to reproductive health, focusing on birth control and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. However, health actions for women were scarce and often restricted to maternal issues, such as childbirth assistance.

It was in the 1970s, with the feminist movement gaining strength, that women's health began to gain greater visibility. During this period, organizations and women's groups emerged, questioning traditional medical practices and demanding more inclusive health services centered on women's specific needs. Many of these demands were related to the right to safe abortion, access to contraceptive methods, and the fight against obstetric violence.

In the 1970s, an important milestone in women's health in Brazil occurred with the creation of the Comprehensive Women's Health Care Program (PAISM) in 1983. This program aimed to offer specific health services for women, including prenatal care, humanized childbirth, family planning, and prevention and treatment of gynecological diseases. PAISM represented a significant advance in women's health care, although it still faced challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and a lack of trained professionals.

In the following years, women's health in Brazil continued to evolve with the creation of public policies focused on maternal health and the reduction of maternal mortality. Access to safe abortion, however, remains a controversial and hotly debated topic in the country.

From the 2000s, the Ministry of Health expanded the scope of women's health care, incorporating actions for the prevention and treatment of diseases not only related to the reproductive system but also other diseases affecting women, such as breast and cervical cancer. Screening programs for breast and cervical cancer were also established, aiming at early detection of these diseases.

Access To Health

One of the main challenges faced by Brazilian women is access to health services. Many women live in rural areas or low-income communities where access to hospitals, clinics, and healthcare professionals is limited. This hinders early diagnosis and treatment of diseases, as well as affecting access to services such as contraception, family planning, and prenatal care.

Women's access to health in Brazil is a complex issue that involves various aspects, from service access and quality of care to health education, prevention, and the confrontation of gender-based violence, among others. Although significant progress has been made in recent years, challenges and inequalities still exist.

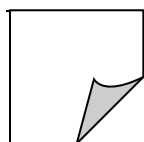
One of the main setbacks faced by women is access to quality health services. Although the Unified Health System (SUS) aims to guarantee universal and comprehensive access to health, women often encounter obstacles in obtaining adequate and specialized care. This is partly due to the lack of trained professionals, especially in rural and peripheral areas, and the lack of appropriate infrastructure and equipment.

Another important issue is ensuring access to health services specifically for women, such as monitoring the reproductive cycle, prevention and treatment of gynecological diseases, prenatal care, humanized childbirth, and sexual and reproductive health. These services are essential for promoting health and preventing diseases, and access to them should be ensured for all women, regardless of their social class, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure that women have access to information and health education, empowering them to take care of their own health and make informed decisions about their bodies and lives. Health policies should include health promotion actions specifically targeting women, aiming at disease prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Another significant setback concerns the prevention and confrontation of gender-based violence. Women are more vulnerable to various types of violence, such as domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment. It is essential that health services are prepared to identify, welcome, and support women victims of violence, ensuring their access to adequate care, protection, and psychosocial assistance.

In summary, while there have been advances in women's access to health in Brazil, challenges still need to be overcome. It is necessary to ensure universal and equal access to health services, both in terms of



infrastructure and trained professionals. Additionally, it is crucial to guarantee the provision of services and information specific to women's needs, as well as addressing and preventing gender-based violence. Only then will it be possible to ensure the full health and well-being of women in the country.

Violence Against Women

Another issue to highlight is violence against women, which significantly affects the physical and emotional health of women. Brazil has one of the highest rates of domestic violence and femicide, putting women at constant risk. This violence has direct impacts on women's mental and physical health, causing trauma, injuries, and even death.

In recent years, violence against women has been widely discussed and increasingly evident in society. This form of violence encompasses physical, psychological, and sexual assaults, as well as femicide, which is the murder of women in the context of gender-based violence.

Despite significant advances in terms of women's rights over the decades, this form of violence remains a frightening and persistent reality. Reports and statistics show that violence against women occurs in all countries, regardless of economic development, cultural or educational levels, and affects women of all ages, ethnicities, and social classes.

Violence against women is rooted in gender inequalities and social norms that perpetuate the idea of male superiority and female inferiority. These norms can also be reinforced by factors such as a culture of machismo, wage inequality, lack of access to adequate education and healthcare, among others.

Fortunately, in recent years, the issue has gained more visibility and attention both from civil society and governments. Awareness campaigns, social movements, and stricter laws have been implemented in various countries to combat this violence and protect women.

In Brazil, for example, the Maria da Penha Law, enacted in 2006, is one of the most efficient and comprehensive legislations in combating violence against women. Additionally, various government agencies and civil society organizations have undertaken prevention actions and support for victims.

Despite progress, there is still a long way to go to eradicate this problem. It is essential to continue educating and raising awareness among the population about women's rights and the devastating consequences of gender-based violence. It is also necessary to strengthen policies to protect victims, providing proper support to battered women and investing in prevention and rehabilitation programs for perpetrators.

Violence against women is a serious problem that affects society as a whole. Combating this violence is a collective responsibility and requires joint actions from all sectors of society to build a more equal, just, and safe future for women.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a alarming increase in cases of violence against women worldwide. Social isolation and restriction measures imposed to contain the virus's spread created a conducive environment for the rise of domestic and gender-based violence.

With the closure of schools, remote work, and reduced opportunities to leave home, women found themselves in closer contact with their aggressors, often locked at home for extended periods. This resulted in a significant increase in episodes of domestic violence, including physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.

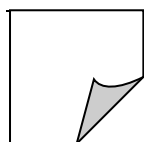
Furthermore, the economic crisis caused by the pandemic also worsened the living conditions of many families, increasing stress and tensions within households. This situation can lead to an escalation of violence, as the perpetrator may use lack of resources or unemployment as justification to exert power and control over the woman.

Another concerning factor is the difficulty women face in reporting violence during the pandemic. Social isolation has made it more complex to access support networks, such as victim support centers and specialized police stations. Moreover, the lack of privacy at home due to the constant presence of the aggressor can hinder women from seeking help.

The consequences of violence against women during the pandemic are devastating. Victims suffer not only physical harm but also severe psychological effects, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, violence can directly impact women's health, increasing the risk of infection by the virus or preventing access to necessary medical resources.

It is crucial for governments and institutions to take urgent measures to address this crisis. Authorities must ensure that support and protection services for women remain open during the pandemic and that awareness campaigns on the issue are conducted. Furthermore, community involvement is essential to identify and report cases of violence, as well as to promote gender education from an early age to prevent future violence.

Violence against women is a violation of human rights and must be treated as an urgent and prioritized issue, both during the COVID-19 pandemic and in any other context. It is necessary to create a safe and violence-free environment for women to fully exercise their rights and live a dignified life.



Reproductive Health

Reproductive health is also a relevant topic in women's health. Access to contraceptive methods, such as birth control pills and condoms, is crucial for women to control their fertility and make informed reproductive choices. Additionally, access to quality prenatal care is crucial for a healthy pregnancy and to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality.

Reproductive health is a fundamental right of women that involves various aspects related to their physical, mental, and social well-being. In Brazil, this right is guaranteed by laws and public policies aimed at promoting gender equality and universal access to health services related to reproductive health.

One of the main aspects of reproductive health in Brazil is access to family planning. This includes access to modern and effective contraceptive methods, as well as adequate sexual education. The goal is to provide women with the right to decide freely on the quantity and spacing of their children, as well as to prevent unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

Additionally, reproductive health in Brazil involves access to quality prenatal services to ensure a healthy pregnancy and reduce risks for both the woman and the fetus. This includes regular medical check-ups, laboratory tests, ultrasounds, and specific care for women with pre-existing health conditions.

Another important aspect is ensuring access to assistance during childbirth, with the option to choose between natural childbirth or cesarean section, respecting the woman's preferences and medical recommendations. It is crucial that women are treated with dignity, respect, and have access to necessary information to make informed decisions about their own bodies and health.

Furthermore, reproductive health also encompasses the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, postpartum care, prevention and combating of obstetric violence, as well as access to reproductive health in the context of adolescence, taking into account the specific needs of this age group.

Although Brazil has made progress in policies related to reproductive health in recent years, there are still challenges to be addressed. Issues such as lack of information and adequate sexual education, difficulty accessing health services in remote areas, and the persistence of discriminatory and violent practices against women are issues that need to be more effectively addressed.

Prevention And Treatment Of Breast And Cervical Cancers

Regarding women's health in Brazil, another pillar that must be highlighted is the prevention and treatment of breast and cervical cancer. Mammography and the Pap smear test are essential for the early diagnosis of these diseases, which are the leading causes of cancer deaths among women in the country. However, many women still face barriers to undergo these tests, either due to lack of access, lack of awareness of the importance of prevention, or cultural issues.

Breast and cervical cancers are two of the leading causes of cancer death in women in Brazil. Both have high incidence rates and represent a serious public health problem.

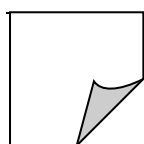
Breast cancer is the most common type among Brazilian women, accounting for about 30% of new cancer cases each year. Despite increased awareness and early detection, many cases are still diagnosed at advanced stages, complicating treatment and reducing the chances of cure. Access to mammograms and clinical breast exams is essential for the early detection of this type of cancer.

Cervical cancer is the third most common malignant neoplasm among Brazilian women, being the leading cause of cancer death among women in some regions of the country. This type of cancer is directly associated with human papillomavirus (HPV) infection and can be prevented with vaccination and regular Pap smear testing. However, despite health guidelines recommending regular Pap smears, many women still lack access to this prevention.

Regarding women's rights to the prevention and treatment of these cancers, Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS) provides coverage for breast and cervical cancer screening and treatment. The Ministry of Health implemented the National Program for Breast Cancer Control and the National Program for Cervical Cancer Screening, seeking to increase access to preventive exams, promote early detection, and improve the treatment of these diseases.

Furthermore, Law No. 12,732/2012 ensures free treatment and comprehensive access to cancer patients in SUS. This law guarantees the start of treatment within a maximum of 60 days from the diagnosis. It is also important to note that the 30-Day Law (Law No. 12,732/2012) ensures free and timely care for breast cancer patients.

However, even with advances in the prevention and treatment of breast and cervical cancer, there are still challenges in accessing health policies and raising awareness among women about the importance of prevention and early diagnosis. Continuous investment in expanding and strengthening health policies for these diseases, as well as greater dissemination and awareness of the importance of prevention and access to exams, is essential.



Women's Mental Health In Brazil

Mental health has become a prominent issue in Brazil and worldwide, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the realm of mental health, depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders significantly impact Brazilian women. Socioeconomic factors, gender-based violence, the dual burden of work, and societal pressures contribute to the high prevalence of these issues. However, there is still a stigma surrounding seeking psychological help, hindering access to appropriate treatments.

Women face numerous challenges related to mental health in Brazil, tied to factors such as gender inequality, domestic violence, the dual burden of work, motherhood, and limited access to mental health services. Gender inequality is a central issue affecting the mental health of women in Brazil. Brazilian society remains patriarchal, resulting in gender-based violence, discrimination, sexism, and harmful stereotypes. These factors have a significant impact on women's mental health, leading to high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders.

Domestic violence is also a serious concern in Brazil and affects women's mental health. Many women face physical, sexual, and psychological violence in their relationships, leading to trauma and post-traumatic stress disorders. Moreover, the lack of adequate support for women experiencing domestic violence can further worsen their mental health.

The dual burden of work is another challenge faced by women in Brazil. Many women work outside the home and are also responsible for household chores and family care. This excessive workload can lead to high levels of stress and burnout, negatively affecting mental health.

Motherhood is also a significant factor impacting the mental health of women in Brazil. Many women face societal pressures and expectations related to motherhood, experiencing anxiety, postpartum depression, and other related conditions.

The mental health system in Brazil is underdeveloped, and many women lack access to proper care. The shortage of specialized professionals, lack of funding, and insufficient information contribute to this situation.

It is crucial for Brazil to take measures to improve women's mental health. This includes promoting gender equality, raising awareness about domestic violence, and implementing policies to ensure adequate and accessible treatment for mental health issues. Investments in research and prevention programs are necessary to enhance understanding and treatment of specific mental health challenges faced by women.

IV. Conclusion

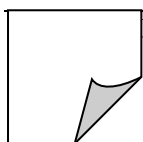
In conclusion, addressing the complex landscape of women's health requires strengthening the healthcare system, ensuring equitable access to services, improving the quality of care, promoting prevention and awareness initiatives, and combating gender-based violence and mental health stigma. Significant investments in medical research and the development of innovative technologies are needed to advance the diagnosis and treatment of diseases affecting women, such as breast cancer, endometriosis, and postpartum depression. Health education should be promoted from puberty within the school context, encouraging the adoption of healthy habits and awareness of women's reproductive and sexual rights. This includes access to safe and effective contraceptive methods, as well as the right to make informed choices about motherhood and family planning.

However, it is crucial to recognize that promoting women's health goes beyond the formal healthcare system. It is essential to address gender inequalities that influence access to healthcare, such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of autonomy. Therefore, it is imperative that governments, non-governmental organizations, and society as a whole come together in a collective effort to promote women's health.

Only in this way will it be possible to ensure that all women have equal access to quality healthcare services, without discrimination or stigma, resulting in a healthier, fairer, and more equitable society for everyone.

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