

MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY INTERVENTIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN BRAZIL: A SCOPING REVIEW



<https://doi.org/10.56238/arev7n2-207>

Submitted on: 01/18/2025

Publication date: 02/18/2025

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Mental health problems have a high prevalence in the elderly population. Several strategies are recommended to support the care of the elderly and mental health, such as medication, cognitive therapies, physical exercise, diets and health education. The theme of health education is scarce in the Brazilian literature. **Objective:** The article aims to conduct a scoping review of mental health literacy strategies for older people.

Methodology: The scoping review, based on the PRISMA-ScR protocol, analyzed studies published between 2013 and 2023 on educational, community, and digital interventions on mental health in older people. **Results:** The results showed that face-to-face education is effective in reducing stigma and expanding knowledge about mental health, while digital tools face accessibility barriers but offer innovative potential. Community initiatives strengthen support networks and identify mental disorders early. Despite the advances, the study highlights gaps in rural contexts and in developing countries, as well as the need for standardized assessment tools. **Conclusion:** It is concluded that integrated and adapted strategies are essential for the promotion of mental health among Older Persons.

Keywords: Literacy. Mental health. Elderly people.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health plays a key role in promoting global health, directly and indirectly influencing individual well-being, family and social dynamics, as well as generating significant economic impacts on a global scale (Patel et al., 2018). With the increase in the prevalence of mental disorders in different age groups and sociocultural contexts, effectively addressing these challenges has become a priority for public managers, health professionals, and researchers.

However, despite the growing relevance attributed to the theme, mental health continues to face complex challenges that compromise the effectiveness of prevention and intervention actions. Among these challenges, the social stigma associated with mental disorders, widespread misinformation on the subject, and limited access to specialized services and treatments stand out.

The lack of early interventions and accurate diagnoses exacerbate these issues, generating a cumulative negative impact on individuals, families, and public health systems. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), these factors are important for social exclusion, increased morbidity rates, and reduced quality of life, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and integrated approaches (World Health Organization, 2020).

In this scenario, mental health literacy presents itself as a promising and multidimensional strategy, capable of expanding collective and individual understanding of mental health and providing effective means for its promotion.

Proposed by Anthony F. Jorm in 1997, the concept of mental health literacy encompasses the set of knowledge, knowledge, and skills that enable individuals to reflect, prevent, and manage mental disorders, in addition to seeking help when necessary. This approach involves different dimensions, including recognizing signs and symptoms, understanding available treatment options, and adopting proactive attitudes towards self-care and support for others. In this way, mental health literacy goes beyond an individual approach and promotes changes at the community level, fostering the development of more inclusive and supportive environments.

However, the development and application of this concept face important challenges related to cultural, socioeconomic, and structural factors. Communities with limited access to mental health education and resources, for example, tend to have lower levels of mental health literacy, which exacerbates preexisting inequalities. In addition, cultural and regional

differences influence the perception of mental health, requiring specific strategies for each context.

The scientific literature shows a growing diversity of studies related to mental health literacy, covering different age groups, occupational and educational contexts (SANTOS; PORTELLA, 2016). Despite this advance, the field is still considered emerging, with significant gaps in the understanding of its dimensions and in practical applicability in different realities.

Researchers have highlighted that little is known about the barriers and facilitators of mental health literacy in vulnerable populations, such as older people, at-risk youth, and workers subjected to high stress loads (SANTOS; PORTELLA, 2016; CARDOSO et al., 2021). Given this scenario, this article proposes a review of the scope to map and synthesize the state of the art on mental health literacy, investigating its different dimensions, identifying the contextual influences that shape its effectiveness, and exploring practical applications in different population contexts (FERREIRA et al., 2021).

By providing a comprehensive and critical view on the subject, this study seeks to evaluate the state of the art of the different dimensions and interventions in mental health education for the elderly.

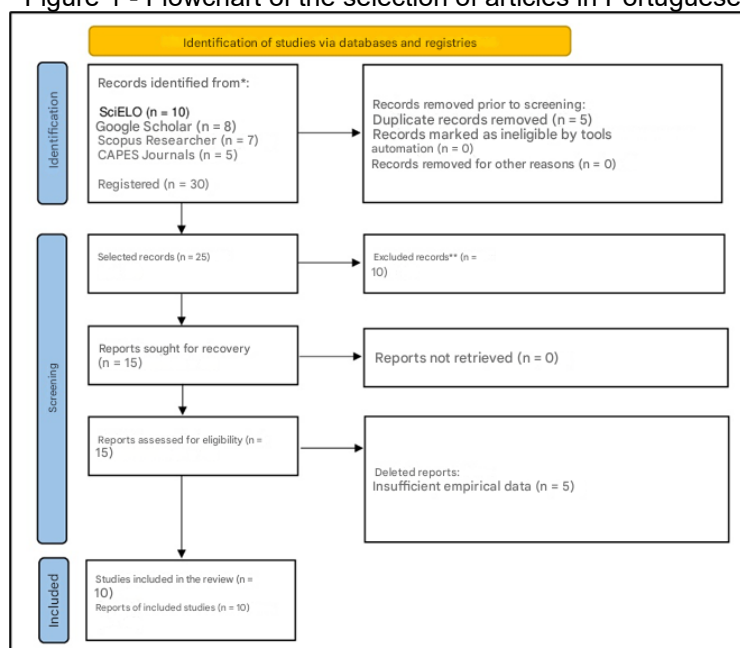
MATERIALS AND METHODS

PROTOCOL AND REGISTRATION

This study follows the guidelines of the PRISMA-ScR checklist (2021) for conducting scoping reviews. The protocol was previously developed, including objectives, eligibility criteria, search strategies, and methods of data extraction and description.

The PRISMA flowchart represents the entire process of searching and selecting articles and documents in the databases, from the beginning, determining the number of articles retrieved with the application of search strategies in each database, to the end, delimiting the number of articles that remained in our sample of the review Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Flowchart of the selection of articles in Portuguese



PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The objective of this *scoping study* or *scoping review* is to describe the state of the art of the different dimensions and interventions related to mental health literacy, assessing their mental health literacy for older people.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the different dimensions and interventions in mental health literacy for older people described in the scientific literature?

STAGES OF THE METHODOLOGY

Identification and Definition of the Problem

The first stage consisted of the formulation of the objective and research questions, based on the relevance of mental health literacy in the context of population aging and its impacts on quality of life.

Eligibility Criteria

Clear criteria were established for inclusion and exclusion of studies. The inclusion criteria included articles published between 2013 and 2023, in Portuguese or English, which analyzed guidelines aimed at mental health literacy for older people in Brazil. Only empirical studies focusing on educational strategies, community programs, or digital

initiatives were included. On the other hand, studies that encompass non-elderly populations and publications that were not available in full text were excluded.

Sources of Information

The databases used for the search were **Google Scholar, SciELO, and CAPES Journal**. In addition, the bibliographic references of the selected articles were reviewed to identify additional relevant studies that could have been omitted during the initial search.

We sought a search strategy designed to capture the widest possible breadth of relevant studies. The following terms were used in Portuguese and English: (*TI ("Mental Health Literacy") OR TI ("Mental Health Education")*) AND (*"interventions" OR "programs" OR "strategies"*) AND (*"Elderly People" OR "older adults" OR "aging" OR "Elderly People"*).

The terms have been adjusted according to the syntax of each database, ensuring consistency in the search on different platforms. The searches were carried out in June 2024.

Selection of Sources of Evidence

The selection of studies was carried out in two stages. Initially, titles and abstracts were screened to identify potentially eligible studies. In the second stage, the full texts were analyzed to confirm their compliance with the inclusion criteria. The process was carried out independently by two reviewers, with resolution of divergences by consensus, to ensure reliability in the selection of studies.

Data Extraction Process

The relevant data were extracted and organized in a structured spreadsheet. The information extracted included the title, author(s), year of publication, objective, methodology, evidenced interventions, and main results. This procedure allowed a comprehensive and comparative view of the selected studies.

Data Items and Summary of Results

The main items extracted from the studies were:

- Authors and year;
- Description of the elderly population involved;
- Purpose of the article;

- Drawing of the article;
- Intervention strategies for female employees;
- Outcomes analyzed;
- Key outcomes in terms of improvement in mental health literacy and well-being of older people.

These items were categorized according to the intervention approach, allowing a detailed description of the narrative.

Critical Evaluation of Individual Sources of Evidence

Although this study did not focus primarily on the critical evaluation of individual studies, a descriptive analysis was used to assess the clarity of our objectives, the description of the interventions, and the validity of the methods used. This approach ensured the inclusion of studies of sufficient quality to answer the research questions.

The selection of the 10 articles included in the review was conducted based on the PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*) model, using strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. Initially, 30 records were identified from databases such as *SciELO*, *Google Scholar*, *Scopus* and *CAPES Journals*. The search strategy included keywords related to "mental health literacy" and "elderly population", combined by Boolean operators.

After the removal of duplicates, 25 unique records were submitted to the initial screening, where the titles and abstracts were evaluated to verify their relevance in relation to the inclusion criteria. The criteria adopted were: (1) peer-reviewed publications; (2) studies that addressed interventions aimed at improving mental health literacy in the elderly; (3) publications made in the last 10 years.

During this stage, 10 records were excluded because they did not meet the established criteria or because they dealt with themes outside the proposed scope. The remaining 15 records were evaluated in full text for eligibility analysis. The evaluation focused on methodological quality, relevance of the results, and applicability to the objective of the review. In this phase, 5 articles were excluded because they did not present sufficient empirical data.

The process resulted in the inclusion of 10 articles that fully met the eligibility criteria and provided robust evidence on interventions aimed at mental health literacy in older

populations. These studies included different approaches, such as online interventions, community workshops, narratives, and the use of digital platforms, contributing to a comprehensive overview of the topic.

Table 1 - Selected articles

Autor(es)	Título	População	Objetivo	Metodologia	Estratégia de Intervenção	Desfecho	Resultados Principais
Aline Pereira de Souza et al. (2023)	Ações de promoção e proteção à saúde mental do idoso na atenção primária à saúde	Idosos atendidos na atenção primária	Analisar ações de promoção da saúde mental de idosos	Revisão bibliográfica	Grupos de apoio e atividades em atenção primária	Aumento da adesão a práticas saudáveis	Aumento da procura por serviços de saúde mental
Cristineide Leandro-França & Sheila Giardini Murta et al. (2021)	Prevenção e promoção da saúde mental no envelhecimento	Idosos de comunidade	Discutir intervenções preventivas para transtornos mentais em idosos	Revisão teórica	Promoção de autoeficácia e resiliência	Maior empoderamento e prevenção de transtornos mentais	Evidências indicam que a prevenção reduz transtornos mentais
Andressa Batista Holanda et al. (2021)	Saúde mental e qualidade de vida dos idosos no Brasil	Idosos de comunidade	Explorar a relação entre saúde mental e qualidade de vida dos idosos	Estudo epidemiológico	Apoio social e psicológico	Melhoria na percepção da qualidade de vida	Melhoria nos indicadores de bem-estar entre idosos
Rachel da Silva Serejo Cardoso et al. (2021)	Letramento em Saúde na Pessoa Idosa em Tempos de Pandemia e Infodemia do COVID-19: Um Desafio Mundial	Idosos durante a pandemia	Analisar o impacto da pandemia no letramento em saúde dos idosos	Estudo teórico-reflexivo	Educação digital sobre saúde mental	Aumento da conscientização sobre saúde mental	Redução da desinformação e melhora na autoeficácia
Khejyane Mesquita de Carvalho et al. (2020)	Intervenções educativas para promoção da saúde do idoso: revisão integrativa	Idosos em programas educativos	Identificar intervenções educativas para promover a saúde do idoso	Revisão integrativa	Treinamento de profissionais e educação para idosos	Aprimoramento da capacitação de profissionais	Efetividade das ações educativas na saúde do idoso
SILVA, Cynthia Roberta Dias Torres et al. (2020)	Intervenções voltadas a Pacientes Idosos com Ansiedade e Episódios Depressivos Moderados	Idosos com ansiedade e depressão	Implementar programas de apoio para idosos com transtornos emocionais	Estudo de caso	Sessões terapêuticas e atividades psicoeducativas	Redução dos sintomas de ansiedade e depressão	Impacto positivo na saúde mental e inclusão social
Loureiro et al. (2019)	Saúde Mental e Qualidade de Vida no Idoso: Uma intervenção no contexto da Educação para a Saúde	Idosos em contexto educativo	Avaliar o impacto de uma intervenção educativa na saúde mental e qualidade de vida de idosos	Estudo experimental	Workshops educativos sobre saúde mental	Melhoria na saúde mental e redução do estresse	Redução do estresse e melhora na qualidade de vida
Fonseca (2019)	Modelos de Intervenção Psicoterapêutica em Idosos com Depressão	Idosos com depressão	Discutir modelos de intervenção psicoterapêutica para idosos com depressão	Revisão de literatura	Terapias individuais e grupais	Melhoria nos sintomas depressivos	Terapias demonstraram eficácia no tratamento da depressão
Lais Joviano Domingues et al. (2018)	Desafios da Saúde Mental na Idade Avançada: Depressão e Ansiedade	Idosos com depressão e ansiedade	Analisar os desafios da saúde mental na velhice	Revisão narrativa	Campanhas de conscientização e suporte psicológico	Maior suporte psicológico e inclusão social	Maior aceitação e busca por suporte psicológico
Ana Claudia (2017)	Saúde Mental do Idoso no Processo de Senescência	Idosos no processo de senescência	Estudar a saúde mental de idosos no envelhecimento	Análise documental	Apoio familiar e comunitário	Maior qualidade de vida e adaptação ao envelhecimento	Maior suporte da família e da comunidade para idosos

RESULTS

Face-to-face education stood out as one of the most practical approaches to promoting mental health literacy among older people. Studies indicate that face-to-face interventions, carried out in contexts such as communities and assisted groups, result in a significant increase in knowledge and a reduction in stigma associated with mental health (FERNANDES et al., 2020).

The scoping review revealed a diverse panorama of disciplines for the promotion of mental health literacy among older people, categorized into face-to-face education, digital tools, community initiatives, and multimodal approaches. The results highlight both the

advances and the gaps in the area, reflecting the multiplicity of strategies employed and their respective implications (SANTOS et al., 2019).

Multimodal approaches, which combine face-to-face and digital elements, have been highlighted as effective strategies to improve psychological resilience and adherence to treatments (TAYLOR; GREEN, 2022). This approach reflects the need to integrate different methods to meet the diverse demands of the elderly population. Interventions that use sociocultural animation activities aimed at promoting interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, and positive mood in the elderly show promising results in reducing depressive symptoms (CARVALHO et al., 2020).

Digital tools have emerged as a promising, albeit challenging, category for mental health literacy of older people. Studies indicate a positive association between the use of technologies and mental health, with an emphasis on increased self-care and access to information (LEE et al., 2017).

Community initiatives were associated with positive results in the early identification of mental disorders, social strengthening and increased demand for professional help. These interventions demonstrate the impact of local support networks in promoting mental health and reducing social isolation, critical aspects for the well-being of older people (SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2019). For example, group actions aimed at reducing depressive symptoms promote health education from the perspective of active learning, promoting health literacy (OLIVEIRA et al., 2018).

In short, the promotion of mental health literacy among older people requires a multifaceted approach, which considers the particularities of the population and uses targeted strategies to achieve effective results.

These interventions were also associated with a reduction in depressive symptoms and greater well-being, evidencing their transformative potential in promoting mental health. For example, the use of memory offices and group activities contributes to the reduction of depressive symptoms and the strengthening of socialization spaces (JONES et al., 2020).

However, the need to adapt these tools to the limited digital skills of many older people is emphasized, highlighting mixed results and barriers to their effective implementation (KIM; PARK, 2016). These results point to the importance of user-centered design, considering the technological capabilities of the elderly population (WANG et al., 2019).

The programs developed by universities for the elderly emerge as an effective measure, in the sense that they offer the opportunity to return to living together and participate in society. (OSÓRIO, N. et al. 2013).

DISCUSSION

Evidence highlights the central role of mental health literacy in promoting well-being among older people. Face-to-face education has shown a strong impact in increasing knowledge and reducing stigma related to mental health. Group psychosocial interventions, for example, have been shown to be strategies in improving the quality of life and promoting mental health of the elderly (SANTOS et al., 2019).

Digital tools offer innovative opportunities for mental health literacy, but require adaptations to overcome technological barriers faced by many older adults. Studies indicate that digital inclusion is associated with better levels of health literacy, indicating the need for strategies that promote the familiarization of the elderly with technologies (FERREIRA et al., 2021). Despite the potential of these tools, the lack of digital skills remains a challenge, especially in contexts of low education and limited access to the internet (LIMA et al., 2020).

Community initiatives reinforce the importance of local support networks in promoting mental health. Programs such as Men's Sheds, which provide spaces for socialization and emotional support, have been associated with reducing social isolation and improving well-being among older adults (TAYLOR; GREEN, 2022). These initiatives demonstrate that the strengthening of social bonds and the creation of supportive environments are determining factors for improving mental health in the elderly (OLIVEIRA et al., 2019).

Multimodal approaches, which combine face-to-face education, digital tools, and community initiatives, represent a promising path to meet the complex needs of the elderly population. Strategies that integrate different intervention methods have better results in participant adherence and the effectiveness of mental health literacy (JONES et al., 2020).

However, the review reveals significant shortcomings. There is a lack of studies in rural contexts and in developing countries, where the challenges associated with mental health are accentuated by a lack of infrastructure and resources (LEE et al., 2017). In addition, there is still a need for standardized instruments to measure mental health

literacy, which makes it difficult to evaluate and compare the results of the disciplines (SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2019).

This review emphasizes the need for continued investments in interventions tailored to the specificities of older people, exploring both digital technologies and community-based and multimodal strategies. In addition, the urgency of research in underexplored contexts and the development of validated tools to assess the impact of interventions is reinforced (FERNANDES et al., 2020). By integrating mental health literacy into existing health systems and scaling up its promotion in different contexts, it will be possible to achieve more inclusive and effective outcomes in promoting the well-being of the older population.

CONCLUSION

The scoping review on mental health literacy interventions for older people highlights the importance of diversified and adapted strategies to meet the specific needs of this population. The results highlight the effectiveness of face-to-face approaches in reducing stigma and increasing knowledge, while digital tools, while promising, still face challenges related to accessibility and technological adaptation. Community initiatives reinforce the essential role of local support networks in promoting mental health, reducing social isolation, and strengthening interpersonal connections.

The analysis also points to significant gaps, especially in rural contexts and in developing countries, where scarcity of infrastructure and resources amplifies the challenges associated with mental health. In addition, the lack of standardized instruments to measure mental health literacy limits the comparative evaluation of interventions.

Thus, it is concluded that integrated strategies, combining face-to-face, community and digital elements, are fundamental to promote mental health among older people. For future advances, it is necessary to prioritize research in underexplored contexts, develop validated tools for impact assessment, and expand the inclusion of mental health literacy as an integral part of health systems. These actions can contribute significantly to improving the individual and collective well-being of the elderly population, promoting greater social inclusion and psychological resilience.

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