

GENERATIONAL CONFLICT AS A MOTIVATION FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER PEOPLE IN BRAZIL



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ABSTRACT

Violence against the elderly has among its main reasons generational conflicts, resulting from divergences between people from different generations, with different social, cultural and economic values. This study aims to analyze aspects of violence against the elderly motivated by generational conflict. This is a cross-sectional, analytical study, with data on notifications of interpersonal and self-inflicted violence from the Diseases and Notification Information System, in 2019, in Brazil. Poisson regression analyses were performed, with robust variance, to estimate the crude and adjusted Prevalence Ratio (PR), with a 95% Confidence Interval (95%CI) between violence motivated by generational conflict and the victim's sociodemographic profile, types of violence, ties/kinship with the aggressor, and suspicion of alcohol use by the aggressor. The significance level was set at 5%. There are records of 23,698 notifications for violence against people aged 60 to 120 years, 24.3% of which were motivated by generational conflicts. This motivation was lower in prevalence for elderly people with secondary education (PR = 0.967) when compared to those with or without complete primary education; and was associated with physical (PR = 1.069), psychological (PR = 1.066) and financial (PR = 1.064) violence. An association was also observed with the aggressors children (PR = 1.089) and with suspected alcohol use (PR = 1.055). A lower prevalence of violence due to generational conflicts was found among

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adult aggressors (PR = 0.847) and elderly people (PR = 0.900) compared to those up to 19 years of age. Violence motivated by generational conflicts against the elderly was perpetrated more frequently by children, followed by suspected alcohol users and children/adolescents. The high occurrence of violence associated with generational conflict suggests the need to break this public health problem. Generational conflicts are subject to modification, and it is considered that health education in the family environment could contribute to the promotion of peaceful coexistence between different generations, children/adolescents and the elderly.

Keywords: Elderly Person. Violence. Notification of Abuse. Family Conflict.

INTRODUCTION

The aging process, due to the increase in the population's life expectancy and decrease in birth rates, has generated, especially in health, challenges in the organization of the service for the correct care of the elderly. The increase in the number of individuals at this stage of life is a worldwide reality. It is estimated that by 2060, in Brazil, 25% of the inhabitants will be people over 60 years old. With this change, illnesses and modes of relationship emerged, leading to conflicts and situations of violence (Miranda; Mendes; Silva, 2016; Rissardo; Career, 2018; Alarcon *et al.*, 2021).

Violence against the elderly is defined as an isolated or repeated act, in which it causes physical damage or anguish to the victim through physical, psychological, moral action, negligence or abandonment. It is a public health problem, which requires multifactorial intervention, due to its complexity at the individual or collective level. Environmental factors, stress, and interpersonal relationship problems have intensified, reflecting the significant increase in cases of violence in several countries in recent years (Armitage; Nellums, 2020; Chang; Levy, 2021; Porter *et al.*, 2021; Benbow *et al.*, 2022).

At the international level, India, in 2020, reported a 100% increase in complaints related to violence against the elderly. In the United States of America (USA), an increase of 83.6% was identified between the years 2016 and 2020, estimating that one in five people is a victim of violence. France, in turn, reported a 32% to 36% increase in cases between 2020 and 2021; Argentina and the United Kingdom with a 25% increase in cases in the same period (Boserup; Mckenney; Elkbuli, 2020; Van Gelder *et al.*, 2020; Vora *et al.*, 2020).

In Brazil, the notification rates of interpersonal violence against the elderly, in the period from 2011 to 2021, increased by 170.1% compared to previous years (Atlas da violência, 2023). Among the main reasons that led the aggressor to violate the public in question, generational conflicts stand out, which relate to a problem arising from divergences between people of different generations, with different social, cultural and economic values (Mascarenhas *et al.*, 2012; Rocha *et al.*, 2018).

Human experience alone leads to the existence of conflicts. This phenomenon is presented as a factor that promotes changes, including beneficial ones, in the sense of social balance, in which subjects discuss different angles of certain situations of daily life (Killen; Nucci, 1995). These divergences are accentuated in the family context, especially in the transition to youth as a result of changes in psychic and biological development,

requiring behavioral adjustments between both parties (parents and children). A new conformation of power takes place from this moment on, in which children desire greater autonomy in decisions and parental authority decreases. Often this change of "roles" is seen by parents as a threat to the family organization (Sher-Censor; Park; Coltrane, 2011).

Each cycle of life presents challenges that determine the way of being and the strengths and vulnerabilities of individuals and their support network. With regard to the elderly, the challenges are presented as physiological changes, alterations due to social distancing, difficulties in relationships between different generations. From them new functions are born and significant interpersonal conflicts arise (Rabelo; Neri, 2016).

Generational conflict was considered an important motivator for violence against the elderly (Mascarenhas *et al.*, 2012; Rocha *et al.*, 2018), however, there is a lack of literature in the health area on this topic. Thus, this study aims to analyze aspects of violence against the elderly motivated by generational conflict.

METHODOLOGY

This is a cross-sectional, analytical study, using data from notifications of interpersonal and self-inflicted violence from the Information System for Diseases and Notification (SINAN). Data were extracted from the *Tabnet application* of the Department of Informatics of the Unified Health System, Ministry of Health, Brazil. They refer to the records made in 2019, and at the time of the search, October 2022, the most recent, available and revised data was available.

All notifications of violence against the elderly in the SINAN in Brazil were included in the study, and an individual aged 60 years or older was considered an elderly person according to the Brazilian legislation, the Statute of the Elderly Person (Brasil, 2003). The data analyzed are in the public domain, without the approval of the Research Ethics Committee (CEP). All information is anonymous.

Sociodemographic characteristics were considered by the following variables: (a) sex/gender: female, male; (b) race/color/ethnicity: white, black, yellow, brown, indigenous; (c) marital status: single, married/stable union, widowed and separated; (d) age grouped according to the literature (Camarano, 2004; Hazra; Gulliford, 2017) in: 60 - 79 years 'non-long-lived'; 80 years or more 'long-lived'; (e) education: 1st to 4th grade incomplete of Elementary School (EF), 4th grade complete of EF, 5th to 8th grade incomplete grade of EF, complete elementary school, incomplete high school, complete high school, incomplete

higher education, complete higher education. The types of violence investigated were: physical, psychological, financial, negligence and abandonment. The profile of the aggressor was also analyzed: Son (yes/no); unknown (yes/no); caregiver (yes/no); suspected alcohol use (yes/no); and the life cycle of the aggressor (children/adolescents – zero to 19 years old, adults – 20 to 59 years old, and elderly people – 60 years old or older).

Regarding the reasons that led the aggressor to commit violence, the variables studied were: sexism; homophobia/lesbophobia/biphobia/transphobia; racism; religious intolerance; xenophobia; generational conflict; homelessness, disability, others. Poisson regression analyses were performed, with robust variance, to estimate the crude and adjusted Prevalence Ratio (PR), with a 95% Confidence Interval (95%CI), of the dependent variable motivation for violence, which was categorized into generational conflict and other reasons, with independent variables related to the victim's profile, types of violence, affective bonds between the aggressor and the victim, the age groups of the aggressors and the suspicion of alcohol use by the same.

For this analysis, the following variables were categorized: race/color/ethnicity (white and non-white); education (complete elementary school or not, complete high school or not, and complete higher education or not); and marital status (without a partner and with a partner). The categorization of the race/color/ethnicity variable with reference to the white color was based on the higher frequency found for the 'white' category (50.5%). All variables that were $p \leq 0.20$ in the bivariate analysis were considered in the multiple analysis to calculate the adjusted PR. The significance level of $p \leq 0.05$ was considered in the multiple analysis.

Data organization and statistical analysis were performed using the IBM SPSS software, version 22.0 for *Windows*. The description of the results was presented in absolute and percentage values, and crude and adjusted PR, with the respective 95%CI.

3 RESULTS

In Brazil, 23,698 notifications of violence against elderly people aged 60 to 120 were registered in 2019, with 56.9% of cases for women. Elderly white people had the highest number (50.5%) of all reported cases. Regarding marital status, 43.3% of the victims were married or in a stable union. The data showed a lower level of education for 34.5% of the reported cases (1st to 4th grade incomplete of Elementary School). Regarding the bond

between the aggressor and the victim, most cases of violence are committed by the children (38.0%). Alcohol use by the aggressor was suspected in 34.9% of the cases, and the majority (61.4%) of the aggressors were aged between 20 and 59 years (Table 1).

Table 1. Elderly people who are victims of violence and characteristics of the aggressors. Brazil, 2019.

Victim profile	N	%
Sex*		
Female	13.474	56,9
Male	10.222	43,1
Race/color/ethnicity*		
White	11.106	50,5
Black	1.786	8,0
Yellow	211	1,0
Brown	8.726	39,7
Indigenous	726	0,8
Marital status*		
Single	3.099	17,9
Married/common-law partnership	7.505	43,3
Widower	4.637	26,8
Separate	2.085	12,0
Age (years)		
60-79	19.369	81,7
80 and over	4,329	18,3
Schooling*		
Incomplete 1st to 4th grade of EF**	3.884	34,5
Complete 4th grade of EF**	1.505	13,4
Incomplete 5th to 8th grade of EF**	1.861	16,5
Complete Elementary School	1.304	11,6
Incomplete high school	540	4,8
Complete high school	1.447	12,9
Incomplete higher education	150	1,3
Complete higher education	558	5,0
Characteristics of the aggressor	N	%
Child*		
Yes	4.905	38,0
No	7.992	62,0
Unknown*		
Yes	1.259	9,8
No	11.629	90,2
Caregiver*		
Yes	244	1,9
No	12.626	98,1
Suspected alcohol use *		
Yes	3.362	34,9
No	6.271	65,1
Life cycle (years)*		
0-19	484	2,6
20-59	11.810	63,8
60 or more	6.207	33,5

*Data loss; **EF: Elementary School

Physical violence stands out in the findings of this study, affecting 55.6% of the elderly, followed by negligence (28.0%) and psychological violence (27.2%). Generational conflict motivated the act of violence for 3,884 elderly people, representing 24.3% of the registered cases, followed by sexism 9.3% (n = 1,243), and homelessness 3.1% (n = 408), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Type of violence against the elderly and motivation for violence. Brazil, 2019

Type of violence	N	%
Physical Violence *		
Yes	4.905	38,0
No	7.992	62,0
Psychological*		
Yes	1.259	9,8
No	11.629	90,2
Financial*		
Yes	244	1,9
No	12.626	98,1
Neglect/abandonment *		
Yes	3.362	34,9
No	6.271	65,1
Reason for the violence*		
Sexism	1.243	9,3
Homophobia/lesbophobia/biphobia/tran	45	0,3
sphobia	13	0,1
Racism	31	0,2
Religious Intolerance	09	0,1
Xenophobia	3.242	24,3
Generational Conflict	408	3,1
Homelessness	284	2,2
Deficiency	8.054	60,4
Other reasons **		

*Data loss; **The SINAN database does not describe these other reasons

The analysis between generational conflict as a motivator of violence and the sociodemographic profile of the elderly person shows that there is no significant difference for women and men; for the age group of 60 to 79 years and 80 or over; and for marital status without or with a stable partner, all with $p > 0.05$. Although there was a higher percentage (26.8%) of violence due to generational conflict among white elderly people when compared to non-whites (21.5%), with a significant difference in the bivariate analysis, this difference was not maintained in the multiple analysis. Regarding education, elderly people with the lowest level of education (complete elementary school or not) were associated with violence due to generational conflict, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Poisson regression between violence due to generational conflict and sociodemographic profile of the elderly. Brazil, 2019

Victim profile	Generational conflict		PR(95%CI)* gross	p	PR (95%CI)* Adjusted	p
	Yes N(%)	No N(%)				
Sex						
Female	1.913(24,5)	5.898(75,5)	1,00			
Male	1.359(24,1)	4.188(75,9)	0,998(0,989-1,006)	0,594	--	--
Race/color/ethnicity						
White	1.733(26,8)	4.736(73,2)	1,00			
Non-White	1.359(21,5)	4.967(78,5)	0,970(0,962-0,978)	<0.001	--	--
Age						
60-79	2.367(24,3)	8.228(75,7)	1,00			
80 or more	605 (24,6)	1.859(75,4)	1,002(0,991-1,012)	0,768	--	--
Marital status						
No companion	1.594(26,7)	4.385(73,3)	1,00			
With stable companion	1.152(25,2)	3.425(74,8)	0,991(0,982-1,001)	0,084	--	--
Schooling						
Complete elementary school or not	1.457(27,1)	3.914(72,9)	1,00		1,00	1,00
Complete high school or not	292(23,9)	930(76,1)	0,964(0,943-0,986)	0,001	0,967(0,943-0,991)	0,006
Completed higher education or not	91(20,7)	348(79,3)	0,982(0,958-1,007)	0,165	0,988(0,961-1,015)	0,381

*PR = Prevalence Ratio. 95%CI = 95% Confidence Interval.

Violence motivated by generational conflict had a higher prevalence for notifications of physical aggression against the elderly (PR = 1.069); psychological violence (PR = 1.066) and in cases involving financial violence (PR = 1.064), with statistical significance. Violence due to neglect/abandonment did not remain associated with generational conflict in the multiple analysis, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Poisson regression between violence due to generational conflict and the type of violence suffered by the elderly. Brazil, 2019

Type of violence	Generational conflict Yes N(%)	No N(%)	RP (95%CI)* gross	p	PR (95%CI)* adjusted	p
Physical Violence						
No	1.036(17,6)	4.844(82,4)	1,00		1,00	
Yes	2.175(29,5)	5.190(70,5)	1,069(1,062-1,079)	< 0.001	1,069(1,060-1,078)	< 0.001
Psychological						
No	1.984(20,7)	7.620(79,3)	1,00		1,00	
Yes	1.215(33,9)	2.366(66,1)	1,079(1,068-1,091)	< 0.001	1,066(1,054-1,077)	< 0.001
Financial						
No	2.862(21,8)	9.414(76,6)	1,00		1,00	
Yes	318(2,4)	533(63,5)	1,081(1,059-1,102)	< 0.001	1,064(1,042-1,086)	< 0.001
Neglect/abandonment						
No	2.561(27,0)	6.934(73,0)	1,00		--	
Yes	631(17,1)	3.062(82,9)	0,946(0,938-0,954)	< 0.001	--	--

*PR = Prevalence Ratio. 95%CI = 95% Confidence Interval.

Violence against older people motivated by generational conflict was associated with the affective bond condition 'children' (PR = 1.089) and suspicion of alcohol use by the aggressor (PR = 1.055). A lower prevalence was observed for adult aggressors (PR = 0.847) and elderly people (PR = 0.900) when compared to children and adolescents up to 19 years old, and also for unknown aggressors (PR = 0.883), all with statistical significance. The aggressors caregivers were not associated with violence motivated by generational conflict against older people (Table 5).

Table 5. Poisson regression between violence due to generational conflict and characteristics of the aggressor. Brazil, 2019

Aggressor	Generational conflict		RP (95%CI)* gross	p	RP (95%CI)* adjusted	p
	Yes N(%)	No N(%)				
Child						
No	1.605(20,1)	6.387(49,5)	1,00		1,00	
Yes	1.566(31,9)	3.339(68,1)	1,070(1,060-1,079)	< 0.001	1,089 (1,075-1,115)	< 0.001
Unknown						
No	3.001(25,8)	8.628(74,2)	1,00		1,00	
Yes	153(12,2)	1.106(87,8)	0,927(0,917-0,937)	< 0.001	0,883 (0,855-0,912)	< 0.001
Caregiver						
No	3.078(24,4)	9.548(75,6)	1,00		--	--
Yes	73(29,9)	171(70,1)	1,033(0,998-1,068)	0,065		
Suspected alcohol use						
No	1.549(24,7)	4.722(75,3)	1,00		1,00	
Yes	1.028(30,6)	2.334(69,4)	1,035(1,024-1,046)	< 0.001	1,055 (1,034-1,075)	< 0.001
Life cycle						
0-19	106(36,1)	188(63,9)	1,00		1,00	
20-59	2.301(29,0)	5.628(71,0)	0,824(0,779-0,872)	< 0.001	0,847(0,795-0,904)	< 0.001
60 or more	550(16,7)	2.742(83,3)	0,884(0,870-0,899)	< 0.001	0,900(0,880-0,919)	< 0.001

*PR = Prevalence Ratio. 95%CI = 95% Confidence Interval.

DISCUSSION

The study presents the profile of the elderly people notified as victims of violence, the profile of the aggressors, the types and motivations of violence. The victims, for the most part, are women, white, married/in a stable union, with a low level of education, and aged between 60-79 years. Among the aggressors, the children and those suspected of alcohol use stand out. Physical violence had a higher number of notifications, with the reason 'generational conflict' being associated with physical, psychological and financial violence; elderly people with less education; child/adolescent aggressors; children and suspected alcohol use.

Generational conflicts have intensified in recent years as a result of the need for the elderly to confine themselves to family life (Ranzani *et al.*, 2023). This aspect draws attention to the results expressed in this study, with data from 2019, in which generational conflicts were presented as an important motivator of violence against the elderly. These results are in line with what was presented in 2020 and 2021, in Brazil, in which the

generational conflict stands out as a result of the friction between different generations (Ranzani *et al.*, 2023). As well as in a study carried out in São Paulo (SP), in which 11.2% of the violence reported in the state was motivated by this (Silva; Hymn; Fernandes, 2022).

In the present study, the greater involvement of violence among women is highlighted. However, violence motivated by generational conflict was not associated with the victim's gender. The highest incidence of violence against women is in accordance with a study carried out in Espírito Santo, Brazil, in which in the period from 2011 to 2018 women accounted for 58.9% of notifications of violence. In the context of the victim, an elderly woman, according to the literature, over the years, the injuries tend to arise due to their fragility, dependence, and vulnerability (Leite *et al.*, 2023).

'Non-long-lived' older adults had a higher number of reported cases of violence, consistent with the literature (Alves *et al.*, 2020; Drotning *et al.*, 2023). And as a probable justification for the lower frequency of notifications for the 'long-lived' group, it is found that advancing age increases the difficulty of access to health services, as a result of the weakened support network, resulting in underreporting of this condition among them (Alves *et al.*, 2020; Drotning *et al.*, 2023). However, violence motivated by generational conflict was not associated with the age group of the elderly, suggesting that it occurs, indistinctly, between long-lived and non-long-lived people.

Violence motivated by generational conflict affects both white and non-white older adults, with no significant association. Regarding this 'color/race' characteristic, the Atlas of Violence in Brazil shows that more non-black people make up the elderly population, suggesting that the black population has difficulty reaching the elderly phase (Atlas of violence, 2023); This may explain, in part, the small percentage of black people notified in the present study.

Although this study presents a small number of notifications of violence for black older people, a higher mortality rate from aggression stands out, about 41% higher than for non-blacks, in 2021, in Brazil. That same year, the country recorded a rate of 16.6 deaths from aggression per 100 thousand inhabitants for blacks, and 9 per 100 thousand for non-blacks (Atlas da violência, 2023).

The fact of having or not having a stable partner did not present a difference in the notification of violence motivated by generational conflict; the probable hypothesis is based on the difficulty of the spouses to act in defense of the victim, since they are usually elderly and therefore would also be exposed to generational conflicts, and to other types of

violence, as presented in this study. with a large portion of the victims married/stable union. In addition to violence due to generational conflict, the spouse often practices acts of violence, as they have information that can result in psychological or moral suffering (Jetelina; Knell; Molsberry, 2021). In contradiction, the lack of a spouse and social relationships among the elderly could contribute to the risk of violence by triggering a feeling of isolation, which impacts the individual's mental health (Soares *et al.*, 2023).

The low level of education (1st to 4th grade of incomplete elementary school) stood out among the elderly victims and was associated with the notification of violence motivated by generational conflict. This result is in line with the literature, low education is associated with the probability of the elderly person suffering violence, due to the difficulty in accessing information on conflict prevention and resolution (Pedroso; Duarte Júnior; Oliveira, 2021; Silva *et al.*, 2023) in addition to those related to differences between generations.

Regarding the types of violence, physical violence stands out. This type of violence is still the most recurrent against the elderly and other vulnerable groups such as women, corroborating findings in the state of Bahia and at the national level (Santos; Gonçalves, 2019; Soares; Guimarães; Bonfada, 2021). It is the most frequently reported, because aggression is due to the use of bodily force, and is easy to identify in comparison with other types of violence (Wanderbroock; Moré, 2013). The results of the present study suggest that generational conflict can trigger physical aggression, since these conditions remained associated.

Generational conflict was also associated with psychological violence, considered as verbal or gestural aggression, which causes emotional suffering, affliction and anguish in the elderly. Data found in the Northeast of Brazil identified a prevalence of 13.3% of psychological violence (Paraíba; Silva, 2015), a lower value than that found in this survey, with a frequency of 27.2% among all notifications. Psychological violence is difficult to detect, and consequently there is underreporting of cases. Another aspect of underreporting is related to family ties, requiring a careful look from the services in their identification (Pampolim; Leite, 2020).

As with physical and psychological violence, financial violence was also associated with generational conflict. This type of violence occurs when people misappropriate material goods and resources, compromising monthly income, without authorization, manipulating and/or threatening as a form of coercion. A study conducted in São Paulo,

between 2016 and 2017, identified 346 police incidents for this type of abuse (Alarcon *et al.*, 2020).

Neglect/abandonment is highlighted in this study, being in second place among all types of violence, although it does not present an association with violence motivated by generational conflict. The support network that is not very present in life contributes to negligence, refusal or omission of necessary care for the elderly, who for biological reasons are vulnerable. Related research shows that the family, caregivers, and the State are the main responsible for this type of violence (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2017; Castro; Rissardo; Career, 2018; Antequera *et al.*, 2020).

Regarding the characteristics of the aggressor and the bond/degree of familiarity with the victim, in this study it was verified that children were associated with violence motivated by generational conflicts against the elderly. The results are similar to other studies with elderly people in which the aggressor is most often a member of the family, with the victim's children standing out (Bolsoni *et al.*, 2016; Lopes *et al.*, 2018). Often, the elderly person has difficulty in manifesting violence due to the bond with the aggressor, insisting on defending and justifying the attitudes committed and hindering the close relationship established there (Pedroso; Duarte Júnior; Oliveira, 2021), which can lead to underreporting of cases, especially those motivated by generational conflicts.

The suspicion of alcohol use by the aggressors was associated with violence motivated by generational conflicts. People who abuse alcohol belong to families with a greater susceptibility to violence. The use of alcohol/drugs increases the risk of maltreatment, with a 50% increase in aggression (Silva; Dias, 2016; Pedroso; Duarte Júnior; Oliveira, 2021), including those motivated by generational conflict, as demonstrated in the results of the present study.

With regard to aggressors in different life cycles, in the present study children/adolescents had a higher frequency of violence motivated by generational conflicts against the elderly, when compared to adult aggressors. This result is based on the literature, as social, cultural and economic values among people of different age groups were considered the main factors that generate conflicts between generations (Silva; Hymn; Fernandes, 2022).

Regarding the limitations of this study, the factors inherent to research with secondary data, subject to underreporting of violence against the elderly, are pointed out, in addition to the lack of completeness of some information in the public domain database.

From this perspective, the need for permanent education about the correct completion of the compulsory notification form for interpersonal and self-inflicted violence against the elderly is highlighted, since it is from the database that the reality of the panorama of violence in Brazil is outlined.

CONCLUSION

Generational conflicts represented an important motivator of violence against older people, being associated with physical, psychological and financial types of violence. An association was also observed with aggressors who were the children of the victims, people up to 19 years of age, and aggressors suspected of using alcohol. Older people with a lower level of education were more affected by violence motivated by generational conflicts.

The high occurrence of violence against the elderly associated with generational conflict suggests the need to break this public health problem. Generational conflicts are subject to change, and it is considered that health education in the family environment could contribute to the promotion of peaceful coexistence between different generations, especially among children/adolescents and the elderly.

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