



Epidemiological profile of sexual violence against women in the domestic environment in Alagoas between 2012-2022

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ABSTRACT

Sexual violence is any sexual act or attempted unwanted act performed by anyone. Considering this premise, the study was justified by the multidisciplinary of the theme and the need for better coping strategies. It aimed to describe the epidemiological profile of sexual violence suffered by women in the domestic environment, in the state of Alagoas, between 2012-2022. It's an epidemiological, exploratory, descriptive study of retrospective analysis based on documents with a quantitative approach of secondary data available in the Notifiable Diseases Information System. Between the period 2012-2022, 3,953 cases of sexual violence against women were reported in Alagoas. Of these, 47.50% corresponded to individuals aged between 10 and 14 years. The year 2022 recorded the highest number, with 799 cases. In 2022, an average of 114.4 cases were registered, showing a growth of 633% in the analyzed period. Race/color indicated that cases are more recurrent in brown women. The main aggressor was the "stepfather", also highlighting female figures, such as mother and stepmother. Therefore, the data reflects the need to implement public policies in the comprehensive care of women's health, in addition to the training of health professionals in the reception of victims of sexual violence.

RESUMO

A violência sexual é qualquer ato sexual ou tentativa de ato não desejado praticado por qualquer pessoa. Considerando essa premissa, o presente estudo justificou-se pela multidisciplinaridade do tema e necessidade de melhores estratégias de enfrentamento. Objetivou descrever o perfil epidemiológico da violência sexual sofrida pela mulher, em ambiente doméstico, no estado de Alagoas, entre 2012-2022. É um estudo epidemiológico, exploratório, descritivo de análise retrospectiva com base documental de abordagem quantitativa de dados secundários disponíveis no Sistema de Informação de Agravos de Notificação. Entre o período de 2012-2022, foram notificados 3.953 casos de violência sexual contra mulheres em Alagoas. Destes, 47,50% corresponderam a indivíduos na faixa etária entre 10 a 14 anos. O ano de 2022 registrou o maior quantitativo, com 799 casos. Em 2022 foi registrada a média de 114,4 casos, apresentando crescimento de 633% no período analisado. A raça/cor apontou que os casos são mais recorrentes em mulheres pardas. O principal agressor foi o "padrasto", destacando, também, figuras femininas, como mãe e madrasta. Destarte, os dados refletem a necessidade da implementação de políticas públicas na atenção integral à saúde da mulher, além da capacitação dos profissionais de saúde no acolhimento à vítima de violência sexual.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article process:
Submitted: 19/10/2023
Approved: 12/01/2024
Published: 29/01/2024



Keywords:
epidemiological Profile,
violence Against Women,
sex Offenses.

Keywords:
perfil Epidemiológico,
violência contra a Mulher,
violência Sexual.

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2010), sexual violence is any sexual act or attempt at an unwanted act, or acts to traffic a person's sexuality, with attitudes such as repression, threats or physical force, carried out by anyone regardless of their relationship with the victim, in any scenario, and is not limited to the home or work environment (Kataguirí; Scatena; Rodrigues; Castro, 2019).

Sexual violence against women expresses the perversity of violence and gender inequality. Treaties and conventions, approved by international rights bodies, state that sexual violence against women is a violation of human rights. Even though it is not the most prevalent type of violence against women, sexual violence has a destructive impact on the victim's life (Trentin *et al.*, 2019).

It is worth highlighting that sexual violence is related to the social gender roles that women and men assume in society, marked by relationships of submission and power. It affects all ages, races, social classes and gender, occurring mainly among young women and adolescents (Kataguirí *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, aggression causes damage that can last a lifetime, and is related to the physical well-being, sexual, reproductive, emotional, mental and social issues of the assaulted women. The consequences of this type of violence include pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), highlighting the transmission of HIV/AIDS (Delziovo; Coelho; d'Orsi; Lindner, 2018).

Worldwide, 7% of women are victims of sexual violence by people other than their intimate partners. When considering sexual violence committed by an intimate partner, the prevalence found in the Americas is 29.8%. Rape is one of the most common forms of sexual violence and affects approximately 1 in 5 women, and 1 in 59 men (Kataguirí *et al.*, 2019).

The global prevalence of rape is estimated at 2 to 5% and an incidence of 12 million victims each year. The lifetime prevalence of rape in women corresponds to approximately 20%. Furthermore, national data indicate a daily average of 21.9 women seeking care in health services due to sexual violence and 14.2 women/day reported as victims of rape (Facuri; Fernandes; Oliveira; Andrade; Azevedo, 2013).

Furthermore, according to Justino *et al.* (2011), when it comes to younger age groups, most cases of sexual abuse occur within the family environment, repeatedly and without physical evidence, leading the victim to experience feelings of shame, fear, anger and humiliation.

In this context, the present study was developed based on the understanding that sexual violence constitutes a broad and complex issue of public health, justice, social assistance, human rights, among others, which needs to be better understood to be adequately addressed. Thus, the research gains relevance, as it allows the expansion of knowledge about the phenomenon, in its multidisciplinary nature, providing support for the development of

strategies to prevent and combat violence in the population. In that way, the study aimed to describe the epidemiological profile of sexual violence suffered by women, in the domestic environment, in the state of Alagoas, between the period of 2012-2022.

Methodological procedures

Type of study

This is an epidemiological, exploratory, descriptive study, with retrospective analysis, based on documents with a quantitative approach with secondary data available in the Notifiable Diseases Information System (SINAN).

Study population

The studied population consisted of women over 10 years old, residents of the state of Alagoas, who suffered sexual violence in the domestic environment between 2012 and 2022.

Data collection

Secondary data were analyzed, obtained from SINAN, made available via the Information Technology Department of the Unified Health System (DATASUS).

The analyzed variables were: female individuals, age group over 10 years old, race/color, aggressor agent in the domestic environment, occurrence in the residence and period of occurrence between 2012 and 2022.

Data analysis

The collected data were tabulated in electronic spreadsheets using Microsoft Excel version 2010® software and analyzed using simple statistics.

As a theoretical contribution to define the term “domestic environment”, the definition adopted in Law No. 11,340 of August 7, 2006 was considered, which provides mechanisms to curb domestic and family violence against women, which in its art. 5th, item I, which considers the domestic environment as a space for permanent coexistence of people, with or without family ties, including those sporadically attached.

Results and Discussion

In the period of 2012-2022, 3.953 cases of sexual violence against women were notified, on the age group of 10 to 60 years old or more, showing an increasing number on every analyzed year, according to table 1. Of these, 47.50% (n=1,878) corresponded to individuals aged between 10 and 14 years old. The variable period of occurrence showed that in 2012, 109 cases were reported, corresponding to 2.75% of the population in the period studied, as shown in table 1. From 2019 onwards, an increase in the number of cases reported

was noted, with 505 (12.77%) cases in 2019, 484 (12.24%) cases in 2020, 708 (17.91%) cases in 2021 and 799 cases in 2022, corresponding to 20.21% of reported cases.

Table 1.

Cases of violence against women in Alagoas, by age group in the period 2012-2022.

Period of occurrence / Age range	10-14	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 or more	Average
2012	31	32	26	11	5	2	2	15,57
2013	30	40	34	13	8	3	1	18,42
2014	41	46	31	28	10	0	1	22,42
2015	48	62	43	12	10	2	1	25,48
2016	84	49	58	16	7	3	2	31,28
2017	132	79	62	43	13	6	5	48,57
2018	126	84	63	32	13	3	6	46,71
2019	240	121	86	30	16	7	5	72,14
2020	293	66	65	25	17	9	9	69,14
2021	416	116	112	40	17	2	3	100,85
2022	437	156	111	47	27	9	12	114,14
Total	1878	851	691	297	143	46	47	

Note: SINAN (2023).

During the period analyzed, it was possible to observe an increasing number of cases of violence against women on average. As the epidemiological data showed, the year 2022 presented an average of 114.4 cases, presenting an average growth of 633% when compared to the period of 2012, in the studied period.

According to Bueno (2021), between the years 2019-2021, there was a 56.3% reduction in cases of violence against women in the state, according to police reports issued by the Civil Police. With this, it is suggested that not every victim of violence in the state of Alagoas seeks public security authorities to report it, implying the need to develop measures to prevent violence against women in the state.

In the study carried out by Kataguirí *et al.* (2019), in the southeast region of Brazil, cases of sexual violence occurred more frequently in children under 19 years of age, with the highest prevalence in the 10-14 age group, in agreement with the present research. Furthermore, according to Viana *et al.* (2022), adolescents aged 10-14 are more vulnerable, as in this age group there is still no complete development and, often, they do not realize that they have suffered violence.

Furthermore, the predominance of cases in this age group may be related to the preference of perpetrators of violence for girls in puberty, a phase in which they develop sexual characteristics (Viana *et al.*, 2022). In a similar way, the study by Miranda *et al.* (2020), points out that girls during adolescence are more susceptible to sexual violence committed in the home environment.

Likewise, as shown in table 2, between the period analyzed, 2,668 cases of sexual violence against women of "brown" race were reported in Alagoas, corresponding to 67.49% of

the reported cases. Furthermore, 13.45% (n=532) occurred in white women and 8.80% (n=348) in black women. In parallel, 1.01% (n=40) consisted of reported cases of sexual violence against women of asian race.

According to Oliveira *et al.* (2018), regardless of age, brown or black women are the most affected by violence, mainly due to the historical contexts in which they are inserted, which generally includes precarious housing and study conditions, corroborating the data found in the present study.

However, these results differ from research by Engel (2020), published by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), which points out that black women are more vulnerable than white women, considering that 4.01% of women Black women claim to have suffered some sexual offense throughout their lives, compared to 3.62% of white women.

Table 2.

Cases of sexual violence against women in Alagoas, according to race, in the female population over 10 years old, between 2012- 2022.

Period of occurrence/ Race	White	Brown	Black	Indigenous	Asian	Ignored
2012	15	75	6	1	1	11
2013	17	81	15	0	1	15
2014	36	93	17	1	3	7
2015	24	126	10	1	2	15
2016	26	151	13	5	1	23
2017	48	237	12	3	1	39
2018	39	235	24	1	4	24
2019	53	321	66	6	2	57
2020	54	329	47	5	6	43
2021	107	472	65	6	9	47
2022	113	548	73	12	10	43
Total	532	2668	348	41	40	324

Note: SINAN (2023).

Among the 2,100 reported cases of sexual violence occurring in the residence, the analysis shows that 68.71% (n=1,443) occurred against brown women, as shown in table 3. Following, among the most affected races are white women, representing 13.57% (n=285), black 9.23% (n=194), asian 1.23% (n=26) and indigenous 1.04% (n=22).

In parallel, according to the 2019 National Health Survey (PNS), the percentage of people declared black who suffered sexual violence was 0.9% (166 thousand), while of brown people it was 0.8% (534 thousand) and white women, 0.7% (503 thousand), throughout Brazil. In 2019, the number of female victims (aged 18 or over) of sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the interview corresponded to 885 thousand women (1.0% of the Brazilian population).

Still according to the PNS of (2019), sexual violence also occurs more frequently in the victims' homes (52.3%), and, again, this number is prevalent among women, as 61.6%

suffered this type of violence at home. Otherwise, according to De Araújo et al. (2014), the greater number of reported cases of sexual violence against brown or black women is related to the increase in the population that declares themselves black or mixed race in recent decades. For Dantas *et al.* (2022), the greater number of victims of mixed race/color in the face of sexual violence, in relation to the others, can be justified by the ethnic-cultural pattern of Brazil.

Table 3.

Cases of sexual violence against women in Alagoas, according to race, in the female population over 10 years old, occurring in the residence between 2012-2022.

Period of occurrence/ Race	White	Brown	Black	Indigenous	Asian	Ignored
2012	6	24	2	0	0	2
2013	4	25	6	0	0	1
2014	17	39	5	0	2	1
2015	8	63	5	0	1	1
2016	14	71	6	2	1	5
2017	21	99	7	3	1	13
2018	24	130	12	1	1	15
2019	28	172	40	5	1	25
2020	31	216	31	2	5	22
2021	67	310	38	4	7	20
2022	65	294	42	5	7	25
Total	285	1443	194	22	26	130

Note: SINAN (2023).

Furthermore, when analyzing the variable of the type of aggressor in the period 2012-2022, described in table 4, it is clear that the stepfather was the main aggressor, representing 43.2% (n= 321) of cases, followed by the father with 28.03% (n=208) and the spouse in 10.51% (n=130). In the study by Kataguirí (2019), in most cases of sexual violence the main aggressor was unknown, followed by a friend/acquaintance, father or stepfather and the boyfriend, respectively.

In the study of Viana *et al.*, (2022), friends or acquaintances of the victim were the main aggressors, even taking into account that the proximity of the aggressor to the victim makes it difficult to identify the violence. Besides, unlike the present research, the data brought by Facuri *et al.* (2013) points out that in the state of São Paulo, most cases of sexual violence are committed by people unknown to the victim.

The study conducted by Moroskoski *et al.*, (2021) revealed an increase in violence against women committed by intimate partners, with the spouse being the main aggressor. Gomes *et al.*, (2012), points out that situations of violence committed by an intimate partner are influenced by the woman's socioeconomic profile, considering that women with a low level of education consider themselves economically dependent on their spouse, having influence in confronting violence practiced by an intimate partner.

Table 4.
Cases of sexual violence against women during the period 2012-2022, in the age group over 10 years old, by type of aggressor.

Period of occurrence / Aggressor	Father	Mother	Brother or Sister	Stepfather	Step- mother	Spouse	Son
2012	0	1	1	4	0	1	0
2013	2	0	0	4	0	2	0
2014	4	1	3	5	0	1	0
2015	6	1	0	7	1	1	1
2016	8	0	2	9	0	5	0
2017	9	2	4	13	1	12	2
2018	8	0	5	22	0	35	0
2019	20	3	4	43	2	16	0
2020	25	2	7	52	2	17	3
2021	48	1	12	81	3	19	2
2022	78	2	13	81	2	21	0
Total	208	13	51	321	11	130	8

Note: SINAN (2023).

When it comes to occurrences at home, table 5 shows that the majority of cases of sexual violence in the age group over 10 years old were committed by the “stepfather”, representing 44.46% (n=285) of the total cases in the period of 2012-2022, followed by “father” with 28.86% (n=185) and spouse in around 17% (n=109) of cases. According to Habizang and his collaborators (2005), approximately 98.8% of cases of sexual violence are committed by people with emotional bonds to the victim.

The study by Justino *et al.*, (2011) shows that, in the context of sexual violence against adolescents, out of every ten rapists, five are the victim's own parents, one is the stepfather, three are uncles and only one is unknown. Similarly, in approximately 57.4% of cases they are committed by the victim's parents and 37.2% by the stepfather or adoptive father (Habigzang *et al.*, 2005). For Furniss (1993), these aggressors have a profile of aggression, mental disorders, alcohol use, religious influence, possessiveness and even a feeling of rigidity towards the victim's upbringing.

Likewise, it is worth highlighting that intra-family sexual abuse confronts social taboos relating to harmonious family life, respect and paternal and maternal love. Therefore, it is necessary to give visibility to the issue, in order to recognize the problem so that coping measures can be adopted. In this sense, Viana (2022) addresses that omission, absence of witnesses and family or third party complicity (friends, neighbors), who generally want to avoid scandals, constitute common obstacles to reporting violence, making it repetitive and increasingly more serious.

Table 5.

Cases of sexual violence against women during the period 2012-2022, in the age group over 10 years old, by type of aggressor, occurring in the residence.

Period of occurrence / Aggressor	Father	Mother	Brother or Sister	Stepfather	Step- mother	Spouse	Son
2012	0	0	1	4	0	1	0
2013	0	2	0	4	0	2	0
2014	0	4	3	3	0	1	0
2015	0	6	0	5	0	0	0
2016	0	8	2	9	0	3	0
2017	2	8	3	13	1	8	2
2018	0	7	5	21	0	33	0
2019	1	20	3	39	2	16	0
2020	2	24	5	48	2	13	3
2021	1	42	6	71	3	16	2
2022	1	64	11	68	1	16	0
TOTAL	7	185	39	285	9	109	7

Note: SINAN (2023).

An important fact verified in the present study was the increasing number of cases of sexual violence caused by women, especially mothers and stepmothers, highlighting the period between 2019 and 2022. Although these are cases that occur less frequently than sexual violence in which aggressors are men, it is necessary to address this issue, which is little debated in the literature.

According to Bravin *et al.* (2019), the topic of sexual violence committed by women is still little known and if the violence is perpetrated by the mother, even less is known. In this context, the number of mothers who sexually assaulted their children tends to be unknown, probably because maternal sexual violence is very difficult to identify, as it is hidden in the untouchable myth of motherhood as something good and holy. Added to this are gender prejudices, shaping beliefs that map the role of women and men, in dichotomized domains.

It is also worth highlighting that in view of the study carried out, it was possible to observe an increase in cases of sexual violence against women occurring in the residence between the years 2020-2022, which as a hypothesis, suggests the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, as social isolation, taken as a measure to break the chain of transmission of the disease, contributed to the permanence of both victims and aggressors in the home environment.

In this aspect, according to the WHO, staying at home makes women vulnerable to intimate partner violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sharing the home with a guy with an aggressive profile who imposes his will, disrespecting female individuality, makes many women vulnerable to marital rape, as men with an aggressive and sexist profile find the moment opportune to impose power and their desires, subjugating partners to a place of

subalternity, in order to attack them, forcing them to maintain unwanted sexual relations (Gomes *et al.*,2021).

According to Andrade (2022), around 17 million women suffered physical, psychological or sexual violence in 2020. According to this study, this group of women had their income reduced or lost their job, with the majority being black and young women, corroborating with the data from this research.

Final considerations

The epidemiological profile of women victims of sexual violence in the state of Alagoas corresponds mainly to women aged between 10 and 14 years old, of the brown race, with a higher number of cases reported in 2022. The male figure was identified as the main aggressor, represented by the “father” and “spouse” as the main aggressors.

These data reflect the need to implement public policies in comprehensive care for women's health in the state of Alagoas, as well as the training of health professionals in receptioning women who are victims of sexual violence and encouraging the notification of cases, based on the information sheet of the Disease Notification System.

Furthermore, when considering the multidisciplinary nature of the theme, which, in addition to health, also addresses the areas of justice, social assistance, human rights, the need to implement effectively the existing public policies to combat sexual violence against women becomes even more evident.

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