

Mental health and spirituality: COVID-19 pandemic

Saúde mental e espiritualidade: contexto pandemia COVID-19

Salud mental y espiritualidad: contexto de pandemia COVID-19

RESUMO

Objetivo: Identificar quais são os impactos da espiritualidade na saúde mental dos indivíduos no contexto da pandemia coronavírus SARS-CoV-2 (covid-19). Método: Trata-se de uma revisão de literatura nacional, utilizando as bases de dados SciELO, Literatura Latino-americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde (Lilacs) e a Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde (BVS), com pesquisas a partir do início da pandemia no Brasil (Março, 2019). Resultados: A espiritualidade promove impactos positivos na saúde mental e no enfrentamento da pandemia do covid-19, sendo a resiliência, esperança, sentido da vida e bem-estar os mais apontados pelos presentes resultados. Os impactos psicológicos (estresse, depressão e ansiedade) causados pela pandemia podem ser amenizados quando há uma frequência de práticas espiritualizadas, promovendo a autoestima, bem-estar e minimização de sentimentos ruins. Conclusão: A espiritualidade exerce influências positivas sobre a saúde física e psíquica das pessoas, e surge como forma de esperança e resiliência em relação à pandemia da covid-19.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Tabagismo; Espiritualidade; Covid-19; Saúde mental.

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to identify the impacts of spirituality on the mental health of individuals in the context of the covid-19 pandemic. Method: This is a national literature review, using SciELO, Literatura Latino-americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde (Lilacs) e a Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde (BVS), with research from the beginning of the pandemic in Brazil (March, 2019). Results: Of the analysed articles, it was found that spirituality promotes positive impacts on mental health and in facing the covid-19 pandemic, with resilience, hope, meaning in life and well-being being the most mentioned by the present results. Psychological impacts (stress, depression and anxiety) caused by the pandemic can be mitigated when there is a frequency of spiritualized practices, promoting self-esteem, well-being and minimizing bad feelings. Conclusion: Spirituality exerts positive influences on people's physical and mental health and emerges as a form of hope and resilience in relation to the covid-19 pandemic.

DESCRIPTORS: Spirituality; Covid-19; Mental health.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Identificar los impactos de la espiritualidad en la salud mental de las personas en el contexto de la pandemia del covid-19. Método: Se trata de una revisión de la literatura nacional, utilizando las bases de datos SciELO, Literatura Latino-americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde (Lilacs) e a Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde (BVS), con investigación desde el inicio de la pandemia en Brasil (Marzo de 2019). Resultados: La espiritualidad promueve impactos positivos en la salud mental y en el pandemia covid-19, siendo la resiliencia, la esperanza, el sentido de vida y el bienestar los más mencionados por los presentes resultados. Los impactos psicológicos (estrés, depresión y ansiedad) provocados por la pandemia pueden ser mitigados cuando hay una frecuencia de prácticas espiritualizadas, promoviendo la autoestima, el bienestar y minimizando los malos sentimientos. Conclusión: La espiritualidad ejerce influencias positivas en la salud física y mental de las personas y emerge como una forma de esperanza y resiliencia en relación a la pandemia del covid-19.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Espiritualidad; COVID-19; Salud mental.

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INTRODUÇÃO

The world faces a global crisis, where daily people need to reinvent themselves, rediscover themselves. Faced with this scenario of the covid-19 pandemic, people live with uncertainty, however, they live as they can, according to their coping resources, one of these resources being spirituality, as it brings hope and strength.¹

The origin of the term spirituality is related to the Latin word spiritus = spirit, which means inspired.² This concept is comprehensive and independent of a religious practice, as it comprises a way of living experiences beyond the palpable and transcending consciousness.²

The human being is only complete when seen in a bio-psycho-spiritual way, and when this look focuses only on his psychophysical, he is no longer seen in his entirety.³ In addition, the human being has an unconscious spirituality and religiosity, the latter, by nature, makes him have a propensity to search for God.³

Mental health is seen through concepts of normality and non-normality, which involve criteria, ideological concepts and thoughts about the ideal in relation to mental health.⁴ Non-normalities are presented through characteristics in thinking, feeling and acting in the individual that are related to the criteria of mental disorders, usually bringing suffering to the same.⁵

In 2015, state seminars were held that generated articles with the objective of debating and establishing directions on the relationship between psychology, secularism with religion and spirituality.⁶ On this tangent, the process of psychotherapy linked to spirituality can help the patient in his clinical process. However, the importance of the therapist being able to deal

with this issue is highlighted⁷, as well as understand the processes that constituted it⁸ and no matter how diverse the definitions of the Sacred are, what is up to the psychotherapist is to delimit these definitions and formulations in the symbolic field of each individual who seeks answers to their existential conflicts in psychotherapy, taking into account that spirituality is part of their development.⁹

With the course of the covid-19 pandemic, people became vulnerable, constantly suffering psychological disturbances, which ends up exceeding the individual's own ability to cope (to different situations).¹⁰ Studies that report the psychological impacts of individuals who contracted covid-19 warn of symptoms such as: Sleep disturbance; depressive symptoms; Anxious symptoms; Symptoms of post-traumatic stress.¹¹ In addition, even people who have not been affected by the virus suffer consequences due to high stress, which can impact the balance of the immune system. In this way, there is an alert for a possible mental health pandemic in the population after the covid-19 pandemic.¹¹

Faced with so many impacts and difficulties in dealing with this great world and life event, the Ministry of Health¹⁰ itself cites religion as one of the styles of coping during the pandemic, and signals that psychological care is fundamental, as it will help people during the pandemic and post-pandemic, avoiding more drastic consequences. Spirituality in individuals who tested positive for the virus presents itself as a way of re-signifying life, as well as a way of having hope in the face of uncertainties.¹² In addition, research, albeit in a very discreet way, has emerged to show this topic as relevant in the field of health.

A cross-sectional study carried out in May 2020, in the form of online data col-

lection, with approximately 500 individuals, aimed to assess the use of spirituality and a cross-sectional study carried out in May 2020, online data collection, with approximately 500 individuals, aimed to evaluate the use of spirituality and religiosity during the covid-19 pandemic, and the consequences of social isolation for mental health. It was possible to verify that there was a high use of spiritual beliefs during the great pandemic crisis, and this use was associated with better results in relation to the mental health of individuals.¹³

To compose the aforementioned finding, a survey was carried out with about 1100 participants, in which it sought to examine the effects of spirituality, knowledge and attitudes regarding anxiety and covid-19. The research can conclude that individuals with a low level of spirituality had increased anxiety compared to those with higher spirituality.¹⁴

The covid-19 pandemic reverberates its impacts on a macro level, reaching several aspects related to spirituality and mental health. One study sought to investigate the relationship between self-perception of COVID-19-related trauma intensity, coping strategies,

psychological distress and (non)religiosity/(non)spirituality, so that people across the (non)religious/(non)spiritual spectrum experience suffering related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found that non-religious participants, especially, seemed less able to engage in emotion-focused adaptive coping strategies than those who did.¹⁵

Finally, on September 29, 2020, the Ministry of Health¹⁶ published preliminary answers on the mental state of Brazilians during covid-19, informing that in this first analysis, data were collected from 17,491 people, and they found that there is a high

level of anxiety (86.5%), post-traumatic stress disorder (45.5%) and depression (16%) at a severe level. Due to the increase in this demand, new CAPS were opened, as well as Therapeutic Residency Services and new beds in a general hospital. Given these data, and the imminent need for health professionals to make use of more resources that may be contributing significantly to improving the mental health of individuals, this research aimed to identify the impacts of spirituality on people's mental health in the context of the covid-19 pandemic.

METHOD

This is a national literature review study, whose objective is to integrate qualitative data regarding the variables of spirituality on mental health and the covid-19 pandemic. This type of research aims to collect information in books, articles and among others, on the subject in question, in order to obtain the results.¹⁷

In May 2021, searches were carried out for articles from the period 2019 to 2021, through the virtual library of Universidade Santo Amaro (UNISA), using the SciELO databases, Virtual Health Library (VHL) Medline and Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (Lilacs), in search of articles that relate the covid-19 pandemic to mental health and spirituality.

The criteria used for the searches were that the articles were in Portuguese and through the following Boolean operators: "COVID-19, mental health and spirituality, COVID - 19 and mental health and COVID-19 and spirituality", locating 19 articles from the SciELO database, 108 from the VHL-LILACS database and 21 from the VHL-Medline, totaling 148 articles, according to flowchart 1 COVID-19. Exclusion criteria were preprint articles, repeated articles and non-Brazilian research.

The next step was to carry out the selection by title, excluding articles that do not show a relationship between COVID-19, mental health and spirituality, reducing from 19 articles to 7 in the SciELO database, from 108 articles to 29 in the VHL-LILACS database and from 21 articles to

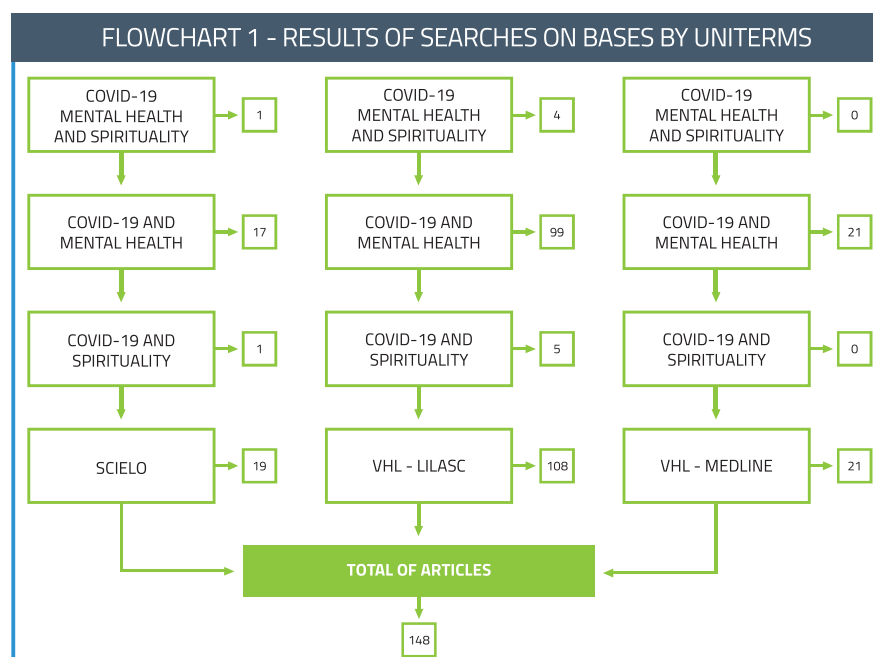
1 in the VHL-MEDLINE database. Subsequently, the selection by the abstract of the articles was carried out, discarding those that did not relate COVID-19 to mental health and spirituality, reducing the number of articles from 7 to 2 in the SciELO database, 29 to 7 by the VHL-LILACS and from 1 to 0 by the VHL-Medline, reaching a total result of 9 articles, according to flowchart 2 COVID-19.

DISCUSSION

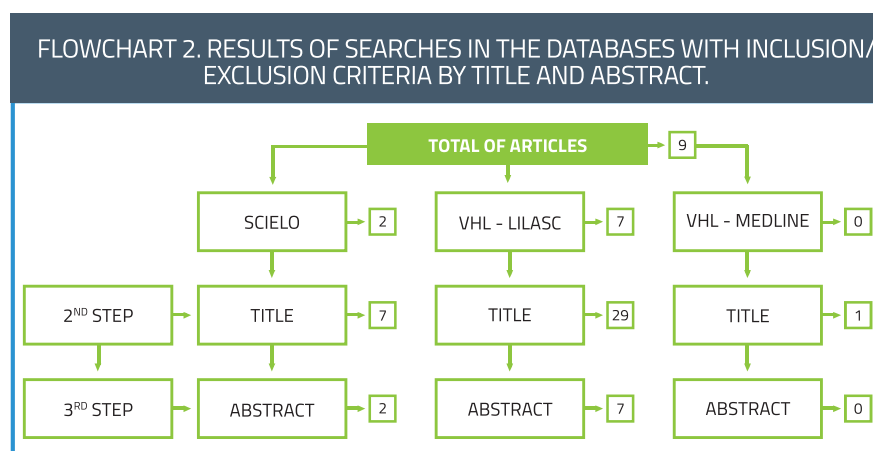
The present research verified as a result

the work of Crepaldi¹⁸ et al, (2020) which highlights the farewell rituals as being essential for the resignification of the bereaved's loss. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, these rites were not possible due to the high degree of contagion of the disease, generating more emotional wear. Spirituality does not emerge as a resolution, but as an aid to this process, helping families in the elaboration of loss.¹⁸

Spirituality is inherent to the human being, and valuing this aspect of patients who contracted covid-19 and their families generates well-being, a sense of life and ba-



Source: SANTOS; SROCUMBACK, 2021



Source: SANTOS; SROCUMBACK, 2021

lance. In addition, looking at patients under palliative care is part of the quality of life for these people, as they also have the right to receive attention in spirituality as it can alleviate suffering.¹⁹

To ratify these findings, Fiocruz²⁰ states that the COVID-19 pandemic brings significant damage to the mental health of those facing the loss, and that is why it is important to use possible spiritual resources, such as virtual contact with religious leaders. In the case of an alternative funeral ritual, online masses and services, virtual declarations and photographs are suggested to assist in the farewell.

Another result of the present review research was the work of Hott²¹ (2020) pointing to studies that show how much the pandemic has negatively impacted people, increasing their risk of developing anxiety, depression and stress disorders. To Hott²¹ (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to get in touch with spirituality, and spirituality is an essential factor to keep fighting for life.²¹ The present result is in agreement with the literature. The pandemic has not only brought problems, but also opportunities to remake oneself, to look beyond oneself, to access spirituality and religiosity, as they are part of some resources that produce hope, strength, individual experiences and with the other, protection and still allows the subject to face reality providing an encounter of meaning.¹

The present review showed that the psychological impacts (stress, depression and anxiety) caused by the pandemic can be mitigated when there is a frequency of spiritualized practices, such as the practice of yoga (holistic/spiritualist practice originating in India).²² Corroborating this finding, it is possible to verify yoga integrating the human being with his body, mind and the spiritual side.²³ This complementary integrative practice reduces the level of stress and anxiety, promoting self-esteem, well-being and minimizing bad feelings.²³

As a result of the present review study, it was verified through nurses' reports about faith, hope, belief in science and altruism as forms of mechanisms for overcoming

Table of Result Articles Selected After Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria and Selection Steps.

Year	Authors	Objective	Method	Results
2020	Crepaldi MA, Schmidt B, Noal DS, Bolze SDA, Gabarra LM.	It aims to organize knowledge about developments related to moments of terminality, death and mourning in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Narrative literature review	Farewell rituals are important for the resignification of the loss of the bereaved and, in moments of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was made difficult due to the high degree of contagion of the disease, generating more emotional wear. Spirituality serves as a resource for resignification and for obtaining resilience for this moment, and should be considered. There is a need to restructure the farewell rituals.
2020	Hott, MCM	Communicate about spirituality, COVID-19, mental and physical health.	Brief communication	The pandemic and the recommended means impact mental health, increase the risks of developing depression, anxiety and stress. Even though spirituality is something personal, it helps in self-knowledge and self-healing, bringing balance and strength to the person. The COVID-19 pandemic can serve as an opportunity to activate spirituality.
2020	Silva MCQS, Vilela ABA, Boery RNSO, Silva RS.	Reflect on the process of dying and death of patients with COVID-19 in the light of spirituality	Reflection	Spirituality is something very important in the process of terminality of COVID-19 to overcome the pain of family members, and this dimension must be safely evaluated in the patient, for better therapeutic assistance.
2020	Corrêa CA, Verlengia R, Ribeiro AGSV, Crip AH.	To evaluate the practice of yoga through the association of levels of anxiety, stress and depression in times of the covid-19 pandemic.	Cross-sectional study	Studies generally point out that yoga (holistic/spiritualist practice originating in India) can be a helper if practiced daily to maintain mental and physical health in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2020	Oliveira EN, Costa MSA, Marques NS, Lomeo RC, Nascimento PIFV, Rodrigues CS, et al.	To report experiences through the elaboration of the Vida em Quarentena extension project, which focuses on ways to help the mental health of nurses fighting COVID-19 on the front line.	Nurses' experience report	The nurses' reports point out as forms of mechanisms to overcome and adapt the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic: faith, hope, belief in science and altruism.

and adapting to the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁴ In addition, another result found pointed out that spirituality and religiosity are used in times of pandemic as health promotion resources. Because they help in moments of pain and better acceptance of the experience, maintaining a critical sense of reality²⁵, beyond the feelings of exhaustion and fears that surround these health professionals.²⁶

To confirm these results, a recent quantitative and cross-sectional survey carried out in Colombia, using 116 nurses working in ICUs with COVID-19 emergencies, stated that, the high level of spiritual well-being in nurses is a strength that helps them to maintain their mental health and improve their ability to cope with the pandemic crisis.²⁷

The mourning of family members of people who are victims of covid-19 becomes complicated and can lead to psychic illness, due to social distancing and the absence of rituals, disfavoring the natural experience of mourning.²⁸ In addition, the result article also verified that the strengthening of spiritualist religious networks is a way to obtain support and emotional support.²⁸ These findings are in agreement with the literature. It is important for professionals in care in this area to address religiosity and spirituality, as rites of passage are celebrations that mark life transitions and that there is no overcoming the loved one without the experience of grief.²⁹

The findings of Positive Psychology can help to reduce the negative effects related to the social isolation that the covid-19 pandemic is causing by promoting self-compassion, creativity, optimism and well-being obtained by means of mindfulness meditation (Buddhist spiritual practice).³⁰ To confirm this result of the present review, Seligman³⁰ (2019), founder of Positive Psychology, found that people who believe in a superior force have more well-being than those who do not, which is in agreement with the literature.³¹

In the face of the covid-19 pandemic, where it is possible to identify collective suffering, spirituality can provide subsidies to believe in better days, facilitate resilience,

2020	Magalhães JRF, Soares CFS, Peixoto TM, Estrela FM, Oliveira ACB, Silva AF, et al.	Obtain science on the social and health implications that harm people who are grieving the death of loved ones by COVID-19.	Narrative review	The mourning of family members of people who are victims of COVID-19 becomes complicated and can lead to psychic illness, due to social distancing and absence of rituals, disfavoring the natural experience of mourning. The strengthening of religious and/or spiritual networks is pointed out as an emotional support strategy.
2020	Zanon C, Dellazzana-Zanon LL, Wechler SM, Fabretti RR, Rocha KN.	Show the research carried out by Positive Psychology and with that, be able to provide the possible means that help mental health and well-being during the social isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Literature review	The findings of Positive Psychology can help in decreasing the negative psychological effects related to social isolation by promoting self-compassion, creativity, optimism and well-being obtained through mindfulness meditation (Buddhist spiritual practice).
2020	Scorsolini-Comin F, Rossato L, Cunha VF, Correia-Zanini MRG, Pillon SC.	Generate questions about how spirituality and religiosity can be used as resources in facing the COVID-19 pandemic.	Theoretical reflection	It is recommended that spirituality and religiosity be used in times of a pandemic as health promotion resources, as they help in moments of pain and better acceptance of the experience, maintaining a critical sense of reality.
2020	Tavares CQ.	Reflection on areas of care in the view of spirituality in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Theoretical reflection	In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, spirituality leads to the sense of hope, to the strength of resilience.

Source: SANTOS; ROCUMBACK, 2021

the ability to reflect and a sense of collective humanity.³² Corroborating this finding, it is known that in the face of global crises, regardless of origin, spirituality can provide resources for the development of collective resilience and the ability to face adverse situations.³³

CONCLUSION

The present research aimed to identify which impacts spirituality can have on the mental health of individuals in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The impacts of spirituality on the mental health of individuals in the context of the pandemic identified in the results ar-

ticles were: better ability to overcome and adapt to the moment, inner strength and resilience. The lack of spirituality or lack of it can disfavor the strengthening of internal resources, as it serves as a resource for resignification and for obtaining resilience for this moment.

As a result, it was also possible to verify that spirituality is closely related to the individual's psychic well-being, as it helps in the prevention and promotion of mental health. In addition, spirituality provides the individual with resources to develop resilience, have hope in the midst of chaos, a sense of life and develop a sense of humanity towards others.

When it comes to the covid-19 pande-

mic, it is observed that this scenario has increased the negative impacts on people's mental health, which can lead them to trigger symptoms or disorder of depression, anxiety and a high level of stress. Among health professionals it is also no different, identifying exhaustion and fears. Thus, the spirituality exercised can help to promote psychological well-being, as it brings hope, comfort and meaning to the moment lived.

It is worth mentioning that although the subject is bio-psycho-socio-spiritual, there is great difficulty for health professionals to recognize the spiritual dimension of the patient, as well as psychologists, as they

The impacts of spirituality on the mental health of individuals in the context of the pandemic identified in the results articles were: better ability to overcome and adapt to the moment, inner strength and resilience.

also face this difficulty, sometimes for not receiving a preparation during graduation. In this way, it is understood that when the subject's spirituality is looked at, it promotes mental health and resources to face diseases and daily problems.

As a suggestion, it is proposed the expansion of research involving the theme at an international level, and expansion of the theme to be worked on in universities, thus being able to prepare the professional to work with the spirituality of the patients, as being another possibility of resource for physical and mental health.

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