



Approaching gender equality in Brazilian nursing higher education: a scoping review

Abordagem da igualdade de gênero no ensino superior da enfermagem brasileira: uma revisão de escopo

Aproximación a la igualdad de género en la educación superior de enfermería brasileña: una revisión exploratoria

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To map the scientific literature on approaches to gender equality in nursing higher education in Brazil. **Method:** Scoping review following the Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewer's methodology recommendations for scoping reviews. The guiding question for the review was: What are the approaches to gender equality in nursing higher education in Brazil? The search for articles was conducted in the Embase, Pubmed, Virtual Health Library, Scopus, Web of Science, and Education Resources Information Center databases. **Results:** 127 articles were identified, and 21 duplicate studies were excluded. After reading the title and abstract, 95 studies were excluded. Thus, 11 articles were analyzed in full, and 6 articles comprised the final sample. For better analysis, the articles were grouped into three thematic categories. **Conclusion:** Although the articles selected in this review address gender issues, there is a gap in the topic's presence in scientific publications.

DESCRIPTORS:

Gender Equity; Nursing; Nursing Education; Brazil; Gender Perspective.

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Mapear a produção científica sobre o ensino da igualdade de gênero na Formação Superior da Enfermagem no Brasil. **Método:** Revisão de escopo seguindo as recomendações da metodologia para revisões de escopo do *Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewer's*. A pergunta norteadora da revisão foi: "Quais são as formas como o ensino da igualdade de gênero tem sido abordado na produção científica sobre a Formação Superior da Enfermagem, no Brasil?" A busca dos artigos foi realizada nas bases de dados Embase, Pubmed, Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde, Scopus, *Web of Science* e *Education Resources Information Center*. **Resultados:** Foram identificados 127 artigos, sendo excluídos 21 estudos duplicados. Após leitura de título e resumo, 95 estudos foram excluídos. Dessa forma, 11 artigos foram analisados na íntegra e 6 artigos compuseram a amostra final. Para melhor análise, os artigos foram agrupados em três categorias temáticas. **Conclusão:** Apesar dos artigos selecionados nesta revisão abordarem a temática de gênero, observa-se uma lacuna da presença do tema nas publicações científicas.

DESCRIPTORIOS:

Equidade de Gênero; Enfermagem; Educação em Enfermagem; Brasil; Perspectiva de Gênero.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Mapear la literatura científica sobre los enfoques de la igualdad de género en la educación superior de enfermería en Brasil. **Método:** Revisión exploratoria siguiendo las recomendaciones metodológicas del Instituto Joanna Briggs para revisiones exploratorias. La pregunta guía de la revisión fue: ¿Cuáles son los enfoques de la igualdad de género en la educación superior de enfermería en Brasil? La búsqueda de artículos se realizó en las bases de datos Embase, Pubmed, Biblioteca Virtual de Salud, Scopus, Web of Science y el Centro de Información de Recursos Educativos. **Resultados:** Se identificaron 127 artículos y se excluyeron 21 estudios duplicados. Tras la lectura del título y el resumen, se excluyeron 95 estudios. Por lo tanto, se analizaron 11 artículos en su totalidad, y 6 artículos constituyeron la muestra final. Para un mejor análisis, los artículos se agruparon en tres categorías temáticas. **Conclusión:** Si bien los artículos seleccionados en esta revisión abordan cuestiones de género, existe una brecha en la presencia del tema en las publicaciones científicas.

DESCRIPTORIOS:

Equidad de Género; Enfermería; Educación en Enfermería; Brasil; Perspectiva de Género.

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are currently presented as one of the global pacts focused on overcoming the main development challenges for sustainable growth by 2030. These objectives make up the broader project of the 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015 during the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development⁽¹⁾.

The SDG are global, but broken down into national targets and, in 2018, were adapted to Brazil's priorities by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA). The adaptation to the Brazilian reality, sought to consider the strategies, plans and national policies that could promote the guarantee of sustainable development in the next decade, from the articulation between governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, the media and the UN⁽²⁾.

Among the SDGs, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030 is the fifth goal adopted by all member states of the United Nations (UN). The SDG 5 is composed of 11 targets, which cover various dimensions of gender inequality, including themes such as violence against women (target 5.2), universal access to sexual and reproductive health (target 5.6), ensuring gender equality in access and production of scientific knowledge (target 5.b.2) and the effectiveness of the specific framework for policies to reduce gender inequalities (target 5.c)⁽³⁾.

It is emphasized that the adaptation of SDG 5 goals to the national context demonstrates a strengthening of the problematization of human rights and social inequalities, while recognizing the diversity of the Brazilian population. Thus, it is assumed that gender inequality itself is expressed differently for different groups⁽⁴⁾. In order to minimize this inequality, nursing has a fundamental implication, since this profession, as a science and social practice that privileges care, is historically with potential to lead processes of addressing inequalities⁽⁵⁾.

The concern with gender equality signals for the reduction of social inequalities and highlights a historical paradigm related to the occupation of spaces of freedom and power⁽⁶⁾. In addition, this theme becomes sensitive to nursing, since it is a challenge to be achieved in the profession itself, which faces gender-related obstacles in the weakening of nurses' work. These experience, in everyday work, situations of discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes, which inhibit the opportunities to develop skills, perpetuate the gender wage gap and result in unequal treatment in the health workforce between women and men worldwide⁽⁷⁾.

It is important to deal with this issue in the perspective of the 2030 Agenda, as a way to trigger political and academic actions capable of inducing improvements in the living conditions of populations from different parts of the world and also of the nursing workforce. For the achievement of the goals set for SDG 5, the importance of training and human resources development in health is cited, highlighting in this interim, the application of professional knowledge of nurses in achieving these goals, as well as for the construction of social practices committed to promoting the autonomy of girls and women⁽⁸⁻⁹⁾.

Given the understanding of the importance of Nursing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically the goals related to SDG 5, in this study, it is questioned: "What are the ways in which the teaching of gender equality has been addressed in the scientific production on Nursing Higher Education in Brazil?"

OBJECTIVE

To map the scientific production on the teaching of gender equality in Nursing Higher Education in Brazil.

METHODOLOGY

Type of Study

This is a scoping review developed following the recommendations of the methodology for JBI scope reviews. The guiding question of the review was "What are the ways in which the teaching of gender equality has been addressed in the scientific production on Nursing Higher Education in Brazil?", using the mnemonic Population/Target Audience, Concept and Context (PCC). Thus, the target population/public (P): nursing higher education; concept (C): gender equality and context (C): Brazil were defined for the study.

The scoping review protocol was developed using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guideline, reviewed by two reviewers, and publicly registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) platform, with the following DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/Z7DXM (<https://osf.io/z7dxm/>).

Data Collection

The search process for articles was carried out in August 2024 on the databases Embase, Pubmed, Virtual Health Library (VHL), Scopus (Elsevier), Web of Science (Clarivate) and Education Resources Information Center (Eric). The main controlled terms (DeCS/MeSH descriptors) and free terms (keywords) were identified within the three axes for the research mnemonic: gender equality, nursing higher education and Brazil.

Data selection

The results obtained in the databases were exported to the reference manager Rayyan, for the removal of duplicates, selection and screening of studies, independently by two researchers and, in cases of divergence, by a third researcher, for consensus.

Initially, there was the reading of the title and the summary of the studies, with the inclusion of scientific articles, editorials and research notes published in full; in English, Portuguese or Spanish; about the approach to gender equality in nursing higher education, in the Brazilian context. Duplicate studies, internet texts, abstracts, blogs, grey literature and texts not available in full were excluded. It was adopted the temporal design from 2015 to 2024, in order to find updated approaches on the subject investigated.

Subsequently, the complete reading of the included studies was carried out, considering the selection criteria. To meet the recommendations of JBI and ensure the quality of information, data extraction followed the following criteria: publication data; study objectives; methodological characteristics; teaching strategies identified to approach the theme; main results. The process of

selection of data, also carried out independently, by double or triple conferencing, when necessary, using spreadsheets from the Microsoft Excel program.

After reading all the selected articles in full, a reverse search was performed to verify references that could be added to the research, according to the thematic delimitation, inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study. However, no productions were found that fit the object of the study and, therefore, other publications were not added.

Data analysis

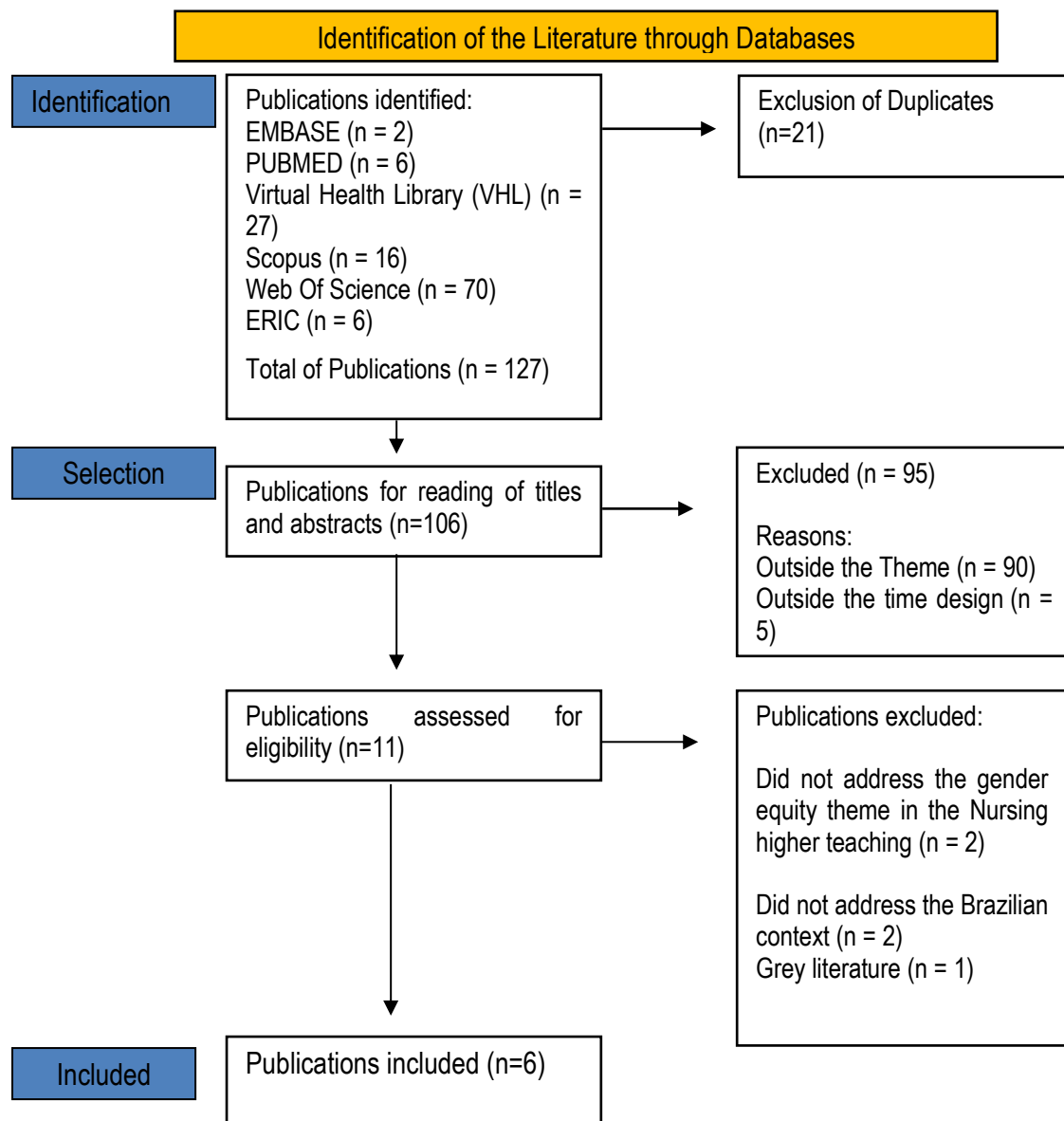
The studies were analyzed in a descriptive way, with grouping of the findings by similarity of the content addressed. Subsequently, we proceeded to the narrative synthesis of the methodological and thematic characteristics listed in the studies.

The analysis of these studies about the teaching of gender equality in nursing higher education in Brazil adopted the concept of teaching strategies defined as experience and educational/ teaching activities guided by a methodological theoretical reference, that considers both the objective and the public of the teaching and learning process⁽¹⁰⁾. Moreover, the notes of the studies were made about the most effective teaching strategies for the approach to gender equality in Nursing Higher Education.

RESULTS

From the search strategy used in the study, 127 potentially eligible articles were identified in the databases, and 21 duplicate studies were excluded. In the eligibility phase, after reading the title and summary, the reviewers excluded 95 studies because they did not meet the review criteria. Thus, 11 articles were read and analyzed in full. After applying the exclusion criteria, 6 articles composed the final sample of the review, according to the flow chart in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR flowchart to select the studies included (2024).



The articles were evaluated in a qualitative way, mainly referring to the pedagogical strategies adopted or indicated for the approach of the theme of gender equality in nursing higher education and in the notes of studies about the subject investigated, and analyzed in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1. Synoptic chart of analysis of included articles.

Article	Journal	Type of study	Pedagogical strategy	Notes
A1	<i>Revista Educação e Linguagens.</i>	Reflection article.	Curriculum and subjects in the field of public health.	To reform the curriculum guidelines for health courses, including nursing, using Giroux's critical pedagogy framework, particularly regarding gender, so that students can develop critical and reflective thinking.
A2	<i>Revista de Enfermagem do Centro-Oeste Mineiro.</i>	Original article.	Required and elective courses.	To integrate, standardize, and interconnect the approach to the topic in nursing education, for integrated care. To deepen the understanding of gender issues. To consider theoretical and practical activities, such as simulations, case studies, nursing care plans, training courses, and extracurricular elective courses, and active learning methodologies such as discussion.
A3	<i>Interface.</i>	Dossier.	Political-Pedagogical Projects; Abrasco Thematic Group; Workshop for the promotion of racial equality from an intersectional perspective.	To expand the approach to gender and race in the guidelines for health courses in the country.
A4	<i>Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem (REBEn).</i>	Original article.	Curricula; Academic center; Obstetrics leagues; Discussion groups; Required course.	To deepen and broaden the debate on gender in nursing education, as well as to apply it transversally, coupled with a decoupling from pedagogical practices that contribute to the consolidation of unequal power relations and stigmatizing gender. To restructure political-pedagogical projects and curricula.
A5	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.	Original article.	Academic center; Obstetrics leagues; Discussion groups; focus on students and the disparity between them.	To improve teaching models and professional training, focusing on new educational philosophies and pedagogical methods, with constant and comprehensive movement towards changing educational paradigms, in order to stimulate critical reflection and strengthen new conceptions for students.
A6	<i>Revisa 2021.</i>	Original article.	Mandatory course; Research and outreach project; Study group, Focus on Gender, Masculinities and Men's Health; Model of an academic outreach project structure; Presentation of technical products – cordel (folk poetry), booklet, blog; Symposium, seminar and debate.	To develop specific disciplines and curricular components for men's health, in order to expand and strengthen qualified nursing training.

For better analysis of the results, the articles were grouped into three thematic categories, listed from the content of the articles included in the review, which are: Invisibility of the promotion of gender equality in nursing training; Importance of experiential teaching methodologies; and Interdisciplinarity and interconnection to approach gender equality in undergraduate nursing.

Invisibility of promoting gender equality in nursing education

In this category, article A1 analyzes the national curricular guidelines of the course in the health area and makes a critique about the presence of the theme only in the curriculum of the courses of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Pharmacy, highlighting the invisibility of the thematic approach in professional training in the health field, especially in a perspective that disregards the social, political and historical complexity of gender relations, limiting its understanding in phenomenological and functionalist approaches. The article proposes an articulation with the radical pedagogy of the author Henry Giroux as a way to reverse this erasure, instigating a critical formation, from the understanding of gender as a social marker of inequality and with potential for transformation of educational practices and action in health⁽¹¹⁾.

Article A2, in turn, analyzed 36 syllabuses of a university in the State of São Paulo, with an approach on gender and sexuality. Of these, 15 were only about gender (41%), 7 were about gender and sexuality (19.4%) and the rest only about sexuality. Of the 15 on gender, 9 were optional (60%) and 6 mandatory (40%). The study identified that in the curriculum of the nursing course of this institution, the theme of gender equality was insufficiently addressed, demonstrating a gap in the training of nurses, in relation to the theme and the formation of egalitarian principles and social transformation. In addition, the study highlights the fragility with which such contents are inserted into the curriculum, often restricted to optional subjects and treated in a punctual and disarticulated way⁽¹²⁾.

In the same context, article A3 mentions only one discipline at the *Universidade Federal do Recôncavo Baiano* (UFRB) that deals with gender equality, being this optional, intersectional with the racial issue. In the article are evaluated Pedagogical Political Projects of several institutions, including the nursing course, with scarcity of the theme in the curriculum⁽¹³⁾. Added to this, the authors defend not only the expansion of advances in the gender issue, but also in the racial issue, both neglected in the country. Thus, it criticizes the invisibility of overlapping vulnerability and highlights the intersectionality of racial and gender inequality.

Article A4 addresses a research conducted at a university in which students cited that the compulsory subjects do not deepen on the theme of gender equality. The study reveals that nursing education remains structured under a traditional, fragmented and technical paradigm, which neglects the social and symbolic aspects of power relations, including gender. The research argues that the theme

needs to be explained in the Political-Pedagogical Projects, with a transversal approach to break with crystallized pedagogical practices and incorporate emancipatory and intersectional perspectives⁽¹⁴⁾.

Expanding the theme of gender equality, article A6 cites the approach through Men's Health and highlights the need for greater educational investment in curricular constructions on the subject. In this case, it addresses the importance of qualifying future nurses to be agents of social transformation, thus reducing gender inequalities. The pedagogical proposal includes active and participatory methodologies, focusing on critical reflection on gender stereotypes, the role of nurses in confronting violence and in deconstructing hegemonic masculinity. The article reinforces that the inclusion of this content in a structured way in the curriculum contributes not only to technical training, but also to the constitution of an ethical and political awareness capable of promoting more equitable care practices sensitive to gender diversity⁽¹⁵⁾.

The Importance of Experiential Teaching Methodologies

Given the scarcity and fragmentation of approaches on gender in health curricula, radical critical pedagogy emerges as a transformative proposal capable of tensioning the traditional model of education. As proposed by article A1 identified in this review, this pedagogy invites students to critically reflect on the limits and silences present in university training, encouraging them to diagnose gaps and propose curricular reformulations that are more inclusive and committed to justice⁽¹¹⁾.

In this perspective, article A6 discusses the innovative actions developed in the curriculum of a nursing undergraduate course to articulate studies of gender and masculinity, from dialogical and emancipatory pedagogical practices. This is a pioneering experiment in the Nursing course of the Noble Faculty of Feira de Santana (BA), which stands out for its critical dimension in health education⁽¹⁴⁾.

This appreciation of experiential methodologies to approach the theme of gender equality in nursing training is also highlighted in articles A4 and A5, which identify greater student engagement with the theme of gender in non-formal spaces, such as academic leagues, student centers and conversation wheels. These studies point out that spaces marked by horizontal and dialogical pedagogical practices demonstrate a greater potential for critical mobilization than compulsory subjects, often guided by expositive and decontextualized methodologies^(5,15).

An interconnection approach to gender equality in undergraduate nursing programs.

The importance of interconnection to approach gender equality in nursing training is addressed in this review by article A4, which addresses the problematization of students about the use of passive methodologies for discussing the subject in specific disciplines⁽⁵⁾. Furthermore, articles A2 and A5 present the need to approach nursing training to the promotion of gender equality, in a transversal way, with the

improvement of practices/didactics to develop professional skills and abilities capable of breaking with gender disparities^(12,15).

The radical and critical pedagogy of Giroux in A1 is adopted to address the importance of the interconnection of the theme of gender equality in nursing training. The study carries out a critique about the inclusion of the theme only in collective health disciplines, without interdisciplinarity, in the positivist and non-reflexive-critical teaching method. The interconnection in nursing training is pointed out as necessary to develop a critical-reflexive analysis on the structural and causal conditions of gender inequalities, in an interdisciplinary way, which contributes to professional performance, based on an integral vision of the human being⁽¹¹⁾.

It is a consensus in all the analyzed publications that the debate on gender equality, along with all the variables and overlaps of social vulnerabilities, is often neglected and little addressed in nursing education. The women's health disciplines, mostly, deal with reproductive health, and little of its context of structural inequalities and socioeconomic and political-economic organization, such as gender equality.

DISCUSSION

Studies on gender and its interface with health in recent years have been expanded with theoretical discussions that have accompanied social and political changes⁽¹⁶⁾. Currently, from a socio-critical perspective, gender is understood as inseparable from other social and structural determinants, which shape health and equity, with the influence of time and space. Thus, gender refers to the construction of femininity from the articulation with other differences and inequalities such as race, social class and age⁽¹⁷⁾.

Regarding the space of higher education in nursing, the scarcity of articles found in Brazil on the theme of gender equality demonstrates a scenario in which actions on the subject are little developed or published, what can be evidenced in this review and discussed in a study that analyzed the presence of the gender theme in the National Curriculum Guidelines for undergraduate health courses, including nursing⁽¹⁸⁾. This study reinforces that the curricular configuration of the current nursing NCG compromises the development of a critical and sensitive professional practice to gender and sexuality issues, which are fundamental for comprehensive health care⁽¹⁸⁾. Thus, it is understood that the absence of a systematic and mandatory approach shows the need for revision of pedagogical guidelines in order to promote training that prepares nurses to act in an ethical, equitable and transformative way.

In this context, it is necessary to expand the discussion of the theme, initiated in the field of human sciences, to the area of health, being a structural theme that impacts the whole society. However, the report published by the Institute for Applied Economic Research on the evaluation of SDG target scenarios highlights that there were obstacles to progress in addressing gender inequality, mainly due to the

Brazilian political scenario (2019-2022), of a conservative nature, and the Covid-19 pandemic, which altered the social situation of the Brazilian population⁽⁴⁾.

In the scenario of higher education in nursing, although some courses have specific disciplines or curricular content on gender, most articles listed in this review point out that such initiatives remain restricted to isolated, optional or punctual actions, there is no effective articulation with the Political Pedagogical Project of the courses, nor with national guidelines that guide the training of nursing professionals from a critical and intersectional perspective^(5,11-15).

It should be emphasized that nursing, as a profession of care, has in its guidelines social responsibility, through the "promotion of healthy lifestyles, reconciling the needs of patients to those of the community, acting as an agent of social transformation"⁽¹⁹⁾. Contributing to the reduction of social inequities in relation to gender would be one of the ways of nurses exercise their role of social transformation. However, from the studies raised in this scope review, it is understood that there is still little approach to tackling social inequalities, specifically on gender inequality and that when it occurs, it is isolated and not transversal in training, which makes it difficult for the student to become aware of the subject⁽²⁰⁻²¹⁾.

In the field of nursing education, the matrix of skills to act on social inequalities is presented in the literature as a strategy to guide teaching for an integrated and holistic approach to address social inequalities. Thus, the proposed matrix has applicability in undergraduate or graduate education of nursing students with the objective of preparing them to intervene on situations, facts, contexts or conditions of inequalities, from the development of 15 skills grouped in the fields of identifying, analyzing, acting and transforming social reality⁽²²⁾.

The approach of teaching about female gender during nursing graduation is also associated with the biological dimension, especially in the reproductive perspective, prenatal and childbirth, in which women's health is often limited to the cytopathological examination, not paying attention to the integrality of women's care and to the discussion of social conditions of inequality attributed to the female gender⁽²⁰⁾.

In an unequal society such as the Brazilian one of the ways for health professionals, including nurses, to deal with and create strategies to address inequalities would be through the incorporation of the intercultural dimension into health practices during their training⁽¹²⁾. This should include the observation of health care practices undertaken individually, considering a culturally sensitive care to social representations attributed to the female gender in our patriarchal society⁽²⁰⁾.

The studies analyzed reinforce that the discussion on gender inequality finds greater resonance when promoted through active and experiential methodologies, which break with the passivity of conventional education. These practices are indicated by allowing the student not only access to content, but the experience of an ethical training, political and sensitive to multiple gender realities, thus promoting

a meaningful and socially committed learning⁽²³⁻²⁴⁾. As stated in the results of this review, it is observed that extracurricular initiatives such as academic leagues, student centers and research and extension groups have been important spaces for resistance and critical training. Such experiences allow the construction of knowledge in a collaborative, dialogical and sensitive way to the multiple dimensions of inequality. With these data, other studies indicate that the use of active methodologies favors the formation of more proactive professionals and with a greater understanding of the content taught, through disciplines that use strategies such as clinical discussions based on cases (collaborative learning), simulations, team-based learning, realistic simulation of clinical skills, dramatizations, group discussions, Team-Based Learning (TBL), tele-simulation, project-based learning, tailor-made teaching, warmups, inverted classes and instruction among colleagues⁽²⁵⁻²⁷⁾.

The analysis of the studies in this review reveals a lack of teacher training to deal with the subject in the classroom. Many teachers demonstrate difficulties in approaching content in a critical, updated and respectful manner to the various expressions of gender identity. This limitation compromises the quality of education and contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes, prejudices and exclusionary practices in the academic environment and, consequently, in the care provided. In addition to the essential teaching on gender, in a transversal way during graduation, it is important that the teacher adopts active methodologies (AM) replacing the traditional model, contributing to the development of critical-reflective competence of the student⁽²³⁾.

Another relevant data found in the articles analyzed refers to regional and institutional disparity regarding the inclusion of gender. The concentration of experiences located in the Southeast and Northeast regions suggests that the debate is not yet equitably diffused in the national territory, which may reflect regional inequalities of investment in research, educational policies and institutional awareness.

Although the articles selected in this review address the issue of gender, there is a gap in the number of publications regarding teaching about gender inequalities, their impacts on health and coping strategies during undergraduate nursing studies - although this review sought to analyze most of the existing literature.

Study Limitations

Some publications may have been omitted with the search strategy used. The review allowed a better understanding of the panorama of scientific publications on the subject investigated, encouraging the discussion of gender equity in the scope of action of nurses as a strategy to achieve goal n. 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Contributions to the Fields of Nursing, Public Health or Policy

This review is believed to contribute to the valorization of the debate on gender in health training and reinforces the urgency of institutional and academic actions that dialogue with the goals proposed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 - Gender Equality.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and analysis of this research, it is evident the need for curricular reformulation in health courses, especially in the Nursing graduation, so that the theme of gender and its intersections of inequalities is addressed in a transversal and continuous way throughout academic training. The systematic absence of this discussion contributes to the reproduction of stigmas and inequalities that directly impact the quality of health care, especially with regard to equity in attending the female population and gender diversity. The qualified insertion of this content in the curriculum, associated with the use of active methodologies and a critical-reflexive posture on the part of teachers, can expand the ability of future professionals to identify, face and transform discriminatory practices still naturalized in the field of health.

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