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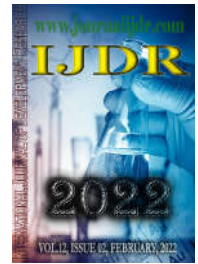
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USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS BY AGING PEOPLE: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of online social networks by aging people has been increasing worldwide. This study aimed to know what has been published in the national literature about the use of online social networks by the elderly in Brazil. An integrative literature review of the last ten years (2009-2019) was carried out. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, two articles were selected. It was found that the scientific production related to the theme is quite scarce. The results showed that the main networks used by the participants were: Whatsapp, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat and LinkedIn. In addition, it was found that online social networks are an important tool in contributing to a healthy aging process, improving the quality of life of people in the aging process.

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INTRODUCTION

Social relationships are an essential feature of human nature (Antonucci, Ajrouch, & Manalel, 2017; Chepe & Adammat, 2015; Antonucci, Ajrouch, & Birditt, 2014). Over time, it is observed that the forms of social relations have undergone several changes: letter writing, telegraphs, landlines, cell phones, social media; directly influenced by technological advances (Antonucci, Ajrouch, & Manalel, 2017). This evolution has been transforming the experiences of social relationships, promoting new ways of interpersonal contacts in all age groups, especially among people in maturity and the elderly (Antonucci, Ajrouch, & Manalel, 2017). The entire world is undergoing a change in the age pyramid, as life expectancy has increased and birth expectancy has decreased, making the elderly population the largest stratum of the population. According to the last census carried out in Brazil, 54 million Brazilians are in the age group over 50 years, and it is estimated that by 2050, 43% of the Brazilian population will be in this age range (IBGE, 2018). Although online social networks were not designed specifically for older people (Wasserman, Grande, Machado, & Behar, 2012), it is precisely this population that has been increasing worldwide in relation to the use of these technological resources (Ferreira & Teixeira, 2017). According to the Digital in 2018 report, published by the online services Hootsuite and We Are Social, of all the inhabitants of the world, more

than four billion of the population (53%) make use of the internet and about 3.2 billion (42%) use online social networks (<https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018> accessed on November 20, 2018). In line with this report, Brazil is the third country where users, aged between 16 and 64, spend more time online, spending an average of 9 hours and 14 minutes a day on the internet, second only to Thailand (9:38 am) and Philippines (9:24 am). The aforementioned survey also found that on Facebook alone, the number of users aged 65 and over increased by almost 20% in 2017. Such information is in line with a survey carried out by the IBGE (2018), which pointed out that the use of Social media is the main purpose of anyone who connects to the internet. Data from the IBGE (2018) point to an increase of 10 million new Brazilian internet users in 2017, of which 23% were people aged 60 or over. With the growth in the use of online social networks by people over 50 years of age, several studies have been carried out around the world, pointing out that the use of these technological resources influences the reduction of social isolation in the elderly, promoting greater autonomy, improving social support, of them, the quality of life and the cognitive condition (Chen & Schulz, 2016; Schломann, Seifert, Zank, Wopen, & Rietz, 2020; Czajka, Boot, Charness, Rogers, & Sharit, 2018; Cotten, 2017). Despite the increase in research on this topic, the scientific production that involves the interface between online social networks and aging is still scarce and constitutes a field of investigation to be unveiled. Therefore, the present study aimed to

know what has been published in the national literature regarding the use of online social networks by people of maturity and elderly people in Brazil, through an integrative literature review.

METHODS

This is an integrative review study of the national scientific literature, understood as a methodological strategy that enables a detailed and critical analysis of scientific production on a given topic (Mendes, Silveira & Galvão, 2008). According to the authors, this method, in addition to synthesizing the study of art on a specific issue, also indicates gaps in knowledge that need to be complemented through new studies. Therefore, the integrative review begins with a question to be answered. For this study, the guiding question was: What has been published in the national scientific literature about the use of online social networks by aging people?

Table 1. Characteristics of published studies on the use of online social networks and aging

Title	Authors	Professional Specialties	Periodical	Year of Publication	Study Region
O uso de redes sociais virtuais pelos idosos	Ferreira, M.C. Teixeira, K.M.D.	Administration Domestic Economy	Estudos interdisciplinares sobre o envelhecimento	2017	Southeastern Brazil
Redes sociais e geratividade: a experiência do programa idosos on-line	Carvalho, G.M. Tarallo, R.S. Batistoni, S.S.T. Cachioni, M.	Gerontology Gerontology Psychology Psychology	Estudos interdisciplinares sobre o envelhecimento	2014	Southeastern Brazil

The procedures adopted in this review followed the steps proposed by Mendes, Silveira and Galvão (2008), namely: 1st) Identification of the research topic or question; 2nd) Establishment of inclusion/exclusion criteria for studies; 3rd) Categorization of studies; 4th) Evaluation of the chosen studies; 5th) Data interpretation; 6th) Presentation of the review. A systematic search was carried out in the following index bases: Scielo, Virtual Health Library (VHL), Pepsic and Capes Periodicals. The Health Science Descriptors (DeCS) used were: Online Social Networks AND aging, Online Social Networks AND elderly, Online Social Networks AND seniors, as well as their English variants. It is worth noting that only the combined descriptors were used, aiming at better efficiency and transparency in the literature search. The search for articles took place in a single day. The criteria for the inclusion of studies were: (a) indexed articles; (b) national production; (c) published in the period from 2009 to 2019; (d) studies that contemplate the population in question and the theme addressed in this research. The delimitation of the established time interval is justified not only by the search for recent publications, but also by the evolution of online social networks in the last decade. The requirement of indexed articles was considered adequate, since they are submitted to a peer review, guaranteeing greater quality and rigor, important characteristics for the validation of scientific knowledge. Articles published before 2009 were excluded from this research; articles that were not peer-reviewed; articles not available in full; studies that were not carried out in Brazil; research in which the topic of online social networks was not covered; and research that has not been conducted with aging people.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After inserting the descriptors in the databases used, 97 articles were found, 13 in the BVS, 03 in Scielo, none in Pepsic and 81 in the Capes Periodicals. Then, the inclusion/exclusion criteria were applied, leaving only 02 articles, both found in the BVS. The main characteristics of the articles analyzed were grouped in Table 1, which gathers information about the title of the articles, authors, professional expertise of the authors, published journal and year of publication, in addition to the Brazilian region in which the research was carried out. It is observed that despite the search for articles having delimited a period of ten years (2009-2019), only two articles were found in this time interval, one published in 2014 and another in 2017, both in the same journal. This result reveals a wide scarcity in

the national scientific literature, especially with regard to the aging population, since research indicates that although there is a progression on studies that address the use of online social networks, these are mainly focused on the youth population (Ferreira, 2017; Ross, 2009).

Another reflection that can be made about this gap in knowledge is the fact that there are more publications that focus on the use of new information and communication technologies, and not particularly on the use of online social networks (Ferreira, 2017). However, it has been found that the use of these networks enables the social inclusion of this age group, promoting active aging, contributing to the quality of life of the oldest-old, reducing the feeling of social isolation, in addition to facilitating family and peer communication (Chepe & Adammat, 2015; Wasserman et al., 2012), which further justifies the need and importance of a greater number of studies in this area.

It appears that the most recent selected article (2017) was published by two authors, and the second article (2014) was published by four authors, that is, all female, in line with the literature, which shows that participation women in science has been growing, being influenced by the universalization of education and advances in science and technology in recent decades (Grossi, Borja, Lopes & Andalécio, 2016). On the other hand, the professional categories of the authors: Administration (1), Home Economics (1), Gerontology (2) and Psychology (2), also indicate that this female presence tends to focus on some specific areas of knowledge, or "female ghettos" (Felício, 2010), revealing a dichotomization in science and technology (Silva & Ribeiro, 2014; Melo, Lastres & Marques, 2004). The geographic region in which the studies were carried out is also an important data to be highlighted. Both articles were developed in the Southeast region of Brazil (MG e SP), traditional stronghold of concentration of scientific research activities (Sidone, Haddad e Mena-Chalco, 2016). According to the literature, there is a spatial heterogeneity of scientific production in Brazil, where this regional inequality is intrinsically related to the marked disparities in the distribution of scientific and technological resources. In this sense, not only the lack of studies in the area of the use of online social networks and aging is highlighted, but also the lack of democratization and decentralization of Brazilian scientific knowledge.

Regarding the method adopted in the selected articles, it was found that the article published by Ferreira and Teixeira (2017) this was an exploratory study with a qualitative nature, using the snowball sampling technique and aimed to identify and understand the main motivations that lead the elderly to adopt the use of virtual social networks; while the article published by Carvalho et al (2014) made use of a qualitative and quantitative approach, where the research participants were elderly people who were part of the Idoso on-line project, and the objective was to identify the possible impacts and repercussions of the elderly participants of Module III of this project, as well as to observe the indicators of generativity in old age. The average number of participants in the two studies was 20 elderly people, most of whom were female. as they claim Carvalho et al (2014), this finding reflects the process of feminization of old age, being influenced by the lower mortality rate among women when compared to the male population, as well as better health care on their part. Regarding the age and education of the study participants, the research developed by Ferreira and Teixeira (2017) involved elderly

people aged between 60 and 83 years, where 10 of the 21 participants had completed higher education or postgraduate studies. The research developed by Carvalho et al (2014) worked with participants between 56 and 85 years of age, where most participants had at most completed elementary school. This characterization of the participants indicates a heterogeneity in the aging process, demonstrating that online social networks have become a tool accessible to all the variability of Brazilian society, with more or less age, more or less education. Carvalho et al (2014) researched in addition to the use of online social networks by the elderly, also the use of the internet and computer. Ferreira and Teixeira (2017) focused on the use of virtual social networks. According to data found by Carvalho et al (2014), 95% of the elderly participants in your research used a computer, this same percentage also had a computer at home; and 80% of the participants had an internet connection at home. Such data are in line with the literature (Chepe & Adamatt, 2015), indicating that despite the use of smartphones being increasing throughout the world population, the computer is an important tool for the elderly, since the screen dimensions are more favorable for these people. (Ferreira & Teixeira, 2017), which tend to have a decrease in visual acuity at the expense of the aging process. Still on the research developed by Carvalho et al (2014), the main motivations of these elderly people for using the internet were: news (19%), research (17%), entertainment (10%), education (10%), sports (10%), political information (9%), social networking sites (9%), others (which includes email) (7%), chat rooms such as chats/MSN (5%), and shopping (4%). Regarding the use of online social networks, Ferreira and Teixeira (2017) concluded that the main networks used by the participants were: Whatsapp, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat and LinkedIn.

According to the authors, in addition to facilitating communication, the elderly justified their preference for using Whatsapp because it is an easy-to-use application. Participants in this study also reported that the resources they use most on social networks are instant messages, photos and videos, sharing on the Facebook wall and participation in groups. Carvalho et al. (2014) observed that the respondents of their study stated that Facebook was a positive tool for building friendship bonds. The research carried out by Ferreira and Teixeira (2017) also found that participants used online social networks daily, with a time spent ranging between 30 minutes and 5 hours. And among the factors that influenced the use of online social networks, the main one was the fact of improving communication with family members and relatives. Since the elderly generally have more time available, social networks emerge as a tool to facilitate the approximation of family and friends (Chepe & Adamatt, 2015). Regarding the studies analyzed, positive correlations were found between the use of online social networks by the elderly and greater social interaction (family and friends), expansion of the network of contacts and expansion of forms of communication, as well as greater sharing of information and the possibility of maintain family and friendship ties despite the distance. In this sense, it is clear that online social networks are an important instrument in contributing to a healthy aging process.

CONCLUSION

The integrative literature review allowed us to understand how the use of online social networks by aging people is being little investigated in the national scientific literature. The results showed the scarcity of studies on the subject, as only two publications were identified in the period of a decade. Considering it is such a current topic, being part of people's daily lives, understanding the impact of the use of online social networks in the daily life of the individual is extremely relevant, especially with regard to the aging population, since it is known that it is the fastest growing social stratum in Brazil and in the world, as well as the group that has expanded the most among users of social networks. The literature review pointed out that the most used applications by aging online social network users are Whatsapp, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat and LinkedIn. The use of these networks has expanded their forms of communication and interaction; improved contact with friends and

family, even the most distant ones; allowed the construction of new bonds of friendship and greater sharing of information. It was observed that the studies were carried out only in the Southeast Region of Brazil, in this sense, there is a need to encompass different cultures, given the extent of the Brazilian territory and the cultural diversity existing in it, as well as considering the influence of this diversity in the process of aging, which is not univocal. After the review, it is emphasized that the selection of these articles does not fully present the state of the art on the subject, it is a specific cut, drawn from the selection of productions indexed to the bases Periodicals Capes, BVS, Scielo and Pepsic, supported by the designated descriptors. The insertion of foreign articles, indexed in databases that retrieve international productions, will foster a better understanding of the phenomenon worldwide. As the objective of this review was to know the national panorama, studies carried out outside Brazil were not included. However, the relevance of including international production for future studies is highlighted.

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