



ISSN: 2230-9926

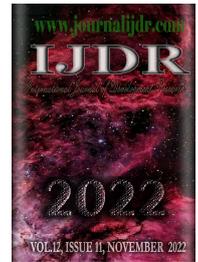
Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

IJDR

International Journal of Development Research

Vol. 12, Issue, 11, pp. 60175-60178, November, 2022

<https://doi.org/10.37118/ijdr.25754.11.2022>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

MODERNITY/COLONIALITY: A LOOK AT HUMAN AGING

***¹Juliana Mara Nespolo, ¹Maria de Lourdes Bernartt, ¹Rodrigo Bordin, ¹Suelyn Maria Longhi de Oliveira, ¹Claudineia Lucion Savi, ²Danielle Bordin, ³Haydee Padilla and ⁴Guilherme Mocelin**

¹Postgraduate Program in Regional Development (PPGDR), Federal Technological University of Paraná (UTFPR), Paraná, Brazil; ²Nursing Department, State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG), Ponta Grossa, Paraná, Brazil; ³World Health Organization. Postgraduate Program in Regional Development. Federal Technological University of Paraná. Pato Branco, Paraná, Brazil; ⁴Postgraduate Program in Health Promotion. Santa Cruz university. Santa Cruz do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 17th September, 2022
Received in revised form
26th September, 2022
Accepted 14th October, 2022
Published online 30th November, 2022

Key Words:

Modernity, Aging,
Protagonism.

*Corresponding author:

Juliana Mara Nespolo,

ABSTRACT

The whole world is aging and life expectancy is increasing. The modification of man and the achievement of a longer life, despite being announced as an important fact for humanity, comes up against the obstacles of prejudice and exclusion of the elderly. With this, it is necessary to understand the place of the elderly in modernity and the difficulty of the elderly person's protagonism in an excluding capitalist society. Modernity has contributed to longevity, but the socioeconomic standards imposed by it, end up rendering the capabilities of the elderly invisibility. From a descriptive and exploratory research, with a bibliographic review, the study sought to reflect on aging, with a view to deconstructing and decolonizing the excluding character that old age acquired with modernity and the capitalist system.

Copyright©2022, Juliana Mara Nespolo et al. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Juliana Mara Nespolo, Maria de Lourdes Bernartt, Rodrigo Bordin, Suelyn Maria Longhi de Oliveira, Claudineia Lucion Savi, Danielle Bordin, Haydee Padilla and Guilherme Mocelin. "Modernity/coloniality: a look at human aging", *International Journal of Development Research*, 12, (11), 60175-60178.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of population aging is one of the great challenges to today's societies and has been widely discussed in the last decade. Every day, there is an increasing concern with questions about aging and this is especially due to the exponential growth of this population segment. The number and proportion of elderly people in the population is increasing. Demographic studies point to a gradual decrease in the birth rate and an increase in life expectancy, causing inversions in the age pyramid and this means that in the coming decades in many countries there will be more adults and elderly people than children and young people. The significant increase in the elderly population in the world and in Brazil is notorious. Data from the United Nations Population Fund report (UNFPA, 2011) show that the number of people over 60 years of age in the world will increase by 200 million in the coming years, surpassing the 1 billion mark of elderly people worldwide. Thus, it is estimated that in 2050 the elderly population will be 2 billion people or 20% of the world population.

In the Brazilian scenario, the population is aging too much. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the elderly population will triple in Brazil by the year 2040, reaching approximately 30% (thirty percent) of the Brazilian population. This rapid growth of the elderly population in Brazil highlights the need to carry out studies aimed at population aging and a greater emphasis on this field of knowledge, to provide elements that allow a greater understanding of this phenomenon, longevity and the social consequences, political and economic effects that changes in age structure provoke in society. The aging of an individual is a natural and irreversible process. However, even being natural, understanding its singularities is very important, because aging is a biopsychosocial, multidimensional, complex and heterogeneous process. In order to understand aging, one cannot deny the need to analyze all the factors that influence this process. With the aging of the population, the sciences, especially medical science, turn to understand this phenomenon, to try to give answers to society. Medicine has sought solutions to the problems that old age can cause. Still, using artificial interventions in the bodies, such as drugs, medicines and therapies, they bring the discourse of prolonging life.

However, even if advances in science allow an increase in life expectancy, it does not mean that the more years lived are with quality of life. Being old is a challenge of modern life, it is a period of vulnerability, but it is necessary to break with the labeling brought by the capitalist system that the elderly person is unproductive and excluded from society and to think about the possibilities that exist and those that do not exist, but that can be created to ensure active aging (BEAUVOIR, 2018). For this to occur, changes in the social structure are necessary, with greater appreciation of the human being as a person, “this radical appreciation of the individual will contribute to the quantitative renewal of the human species, serving as a foundation for a new civilization” (SANTOS, 2015). Prejudice and denial of old age are very evident aspects of the sociocultural image of aging, which end up hindering the role of the elderly in society. In this context, it is necessary to deconstruct this prejudice and invisibility towards the elderly in a society that values consumption issues, production capacity and understands the elderly as non-productive and non-contributory in the economy and society, that is, it is necessary to decolonize the excluding character that old age has acquired in modern society and with the capitalist system and to give visibility to the importance and protagonism of the elderly in contemporary society. For this, the work is structured in four sections. The work was developed and presented in four sections. The first presents the introductory notes, outlining the objective. The second, the methodology adopted. The third, the results and discussions. And, the fourth section, brings the final considerations of the study.

METHODOS

In the light of the outlined objective, this study was built from a descriptive and exploratory research, with a bibliographic survey (YIN, 2016), regarding human aging, with a view to deconstructing the excluding character that old age has acquired with modernity and with the capitalist system

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the justification of expanding its territories, European colonialism employed capitalist power throughout the world, consolidating modernity and coloniality as a universal standard. “Coloniality is one of the constitutive and specific elements of the world pattern of capitalist power” (QUIJANO, 2010). The current condition of society is the historical reflection of hegemonic social, political, economic and cultural patterns, called modernity, responsible for the politicization and hierarchy of the dominant and dominated system. This system of domination “to be able/to know/to be”, emerged in the forms of social organization, especially in the political, economic and cultural spheres. In this sense, the coloniality process proved “(...) to be more lasting and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established” (QUIJANO, 2005). Modernity is a disturbing phenomenon for the social sciences and the subject of studies carried out by several authors, from the classics to the contemporaries, who bring and understand modernity in different ways. Anthony Giddens approaches modernity with a cultural and epistemological emphasis. For the author, modernity refers to a style, a way of life and social organization that emerged in Europe from the 17th century onwards. Modernity is the product of the rationalization process that took place in the West since the 18th century, a process that profoundly impacted all dimensions of life in society (GIDDENS, 1991). For Giddens, modernity has established itself as a sociological problem, it influences and radically alters everyday social life, in a way that affects the most intimate aspects of people. Among universal and personal influences, new mechanisms of self-identity emerge, shaped by the institutions of modernity and which, in turn, are also shaped by them (GIDDENS, 1991). Ulrich Beck distinguishes modernity into two distinct periods. The first he brings as the first modernity or simple modernization, in which social relations are essentially understood in the territorial sense and control is exercised by the use of reason. And the second modernity is the reflexive one, which, according to Beck, is characterized by five interconnected processes, namely: globalization, individualization,

the gender revolution, underemployment and global risks (BECK, 1999). Still, this author defines reflexive modernization as a creative (self) destruction for an entire era, referring to industrial society (BECK, 2012). It is in modernity/coloniality that, through the formation of the bourgeois class, the capitalist economic process emerges. Giddens points to capitalism as one of the basic institutional dimensions of modernity, in which there is capital accumulation in the context of work and competitive product markets (GIDDENS, 1991). In this way, it can be said that there is a link between modernity and the capitalist economy, since “with modern industry, shaped by the alliance of science with technology, there was a transformation of the world of nature in ways unimaginable to previous generations” (GIDDENS, 1991). Regarding to capitalism, sociologist Anibal Quijano asserts that it is the model of power relations in modernity, “colonial/modern Eurocentric capitalism was the worldwide distribution of work around the coloniality of power” (QUIJANO, 2010). Bruno Latour approaches modernity by relating it to space and time. Still, according to him, the plurality of thinkers implies the dispute of the varied meanings of modernity. Thus, Still, all definitions point, in one way or another, to the passage of time. Through the adjective modern, we indicate a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution of time. When the words “modern”, “modernization”, “Modernity” appear, we define, by contrast, an archaic and stable past. Furthermore, the word is always placed in the midst of controversy, in a fight where there are winners and losers, the Ancients and the Moderns. “Modern”, therefore, is twice asymmetric: it marks a break in the regular passage of time; marks a fight in which there are winners and losers. If today there are so many contemporaries who hesitate to use this adjective, if we qualify it through prepositions, it is because we feel less secure in maintaining this double asymmetry: we can no longer mark the irreversible arrow of time or award a prize to the winners (LATOURE, 1994). Throughout history, societies have undergone profound transformations, changing the way they see, think and act to the detriment of the place and space they occupy. Modernity, in turn, intended to show the civilized European and break with the discourse of histories, beliefs, local sciences and hegemonically organize the totality of time and space, imposing a universal standard, silencing cultures, knowledge, groups and subjects, causing an epistemicide. In this vision, the image of the civilized European emerges as the great protagonist of this auspicious moment that is modernity (QUIJANO, 2005).

From modernity and the consolidation of capitalism, with the appreciation of Eurocentric science, the knowledge and wisdom of the elderly were lost and, in a way, making science a universal standard of knowledge, made the wisdom of the elderly invisible as an experience of life. In this sense, the author Marcos Ferreira de Paula was exquisite with the understanding that:

Modernity brings the near impossibility of any wisdom, even in old age. In modernity, something disturbing occurs in the field of knowledge. The entry into the scene of scientific knowledge will determine a separation that did not exist before: the separation between knowledge and erudition, on the one hand, and wisdom, on the other, which will now occupy a much smaller place in the cultural universe (DE PAULA, 2016, p. 269). This model of capitalist economy employs the legacy of profit and productivity, makes productivism a compulsive posture in relation to work. With that, the one who is not productive and does not contribute with profitability to the accumulation of wealth, does not serve, has no value. In this context, based on the premise that for modernity the elderly are the unproductive workers, who do not bring profitability, what would their value be, in this system of capitalist economy?. Thus, it is important to reflect on the marks that modernity, through European colonialism, left on society and that even today, the Western and scientific standard of reason, causes the subordination of wisdom, identity and the role of the elderly. “In Modernity, the elderly are placed in a level of social denial, where they start to live the wills and desires imposed by those around them” (FRAIMAN, 2004). Modernity, as coloniality and a typically European and capitalist phenomenon, hides people, groups of people and, while denying the

value and experience of the elderly, makes them a marginalized category, without value in society, especially when “the different forms of social experience, different realities, histories, memories, cultures, traditions and knowledge that exist concurrently in the world” (MIGNOLO, 2016) are denied. According to Le Breton, modern western society values youth, vitality, seduction and work, to the point of rejecting everything that does not match these values. For the author, in modern Western societies, aging in the modern West means becoming dependent, gradually losing autonomy and space in the labor market and also in social spaces (LE BRETON, 2011).

Simone de Beauvoir, philosopher and writer, was one of the first researchers to write about old age and human aging in contemporary societies. By not colluding with social injustices, the author sought in her works to demonstrate her dissatisfaction with the way the elderly were treated throughout history and civilizations, especially after the exploitation and marginalization caused by the economic system configured as capitalist/industrial. In the book “A velhice” the author makes a historical survey of the perception of old age throughout history and concludes that this category has always suffered from the discriminatory process, which with the arrival of advanced years, ceased to be productive men. The old man – with some exceptions – doesn't do anything anymore. It is defined by an axis, not by a praxis. Time leads him to an end – death – which is not his end, which was not established by a project. And that is why the old man appears to individuals as a “strange species”, in which they do not recognize themselves. I said that old age inspires a biological repugnance; out of a kind of self-defense, we cast it away from us; but this exclusion is only possible because the principled complicity with every enterprise no longer counts as a case of old age (BEAUVOIR, 2018). As the elderly person ceases to be productive, in the light of the capitalist model, they lose their social role, making old age a process of social construction. In short, society labels the elderly as a differentiated being:

Finally, society assigns the old man his place and his role, taking into account his individual idiosyncrasy: his impotence, his experience; conversely, the individual is conditioned by the practical and ideological attitude of society towards him. It is not enough, therefore, to describe in an analytical way the different aspects of old age: each one of them reacts on all the others and is affected by them; it is in the indefinite movement of this circularity that it is necessary to grasp it (BEAUVOIR, 2018). Being old is a challenge of modern life, it is a period of vulnerability, but it is necessary to break with the labeling brought by the capitalist system that the elderly person is unproductive and excluded from society and to think about the possibilities that exist and those that do not exist, but that can be created to ensure active aging (BEAUVOIR, 2018). The capitalist production model, dominated by economic expansion and profitability, permeates social inequality and the exclusion of people and everything that does not contribute to the progress of this model. In this sense, it is necessary to give visibility that the elderly person is also inserted in this economic model and what is noticed is the increasingly evident emergence of showing the role of the elderly. In this sense, we dare to say that the role of the elderly person is related to movements and participation in the struggle for common goals and only with the feeling of belonging will these people become protagonists of their history. To understand the protagonism of something, one must have as a reference who the actors involved are, how they become political subjects, what sociopolitical forces they express, what is the project of society they are building or embracing, what political culture underlies their discourses and practices, what networks they create and articulate, what are their relationships with larger sociopolitical groups, etc. (GOHN, 2005). The protagonism that is intended to be addressed is that referring to the active subject in the construction of its history and in the liberating conception of aged citizens. For this, it is necessary to give visibility that the aging of the population can emerge possibilities in the capitalist social scenario. Elderly people add a lot of wisdom and added to their immeasurable life experience, they become a solid basis for development, knowledge, and culture. The elderly also play a leading role in the financial support of Brazilian families. According to the

results of the 2011 National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), 96.3% of elderly men and 86.6% of elderly women had some income. Brazilian elderly people moved R\$ 28.5 billion, which represented 19.4% of the income of all Brazilians and 64.5% of the income of the households where they live. Social security plays an important role in the financial role of the elderly, covering 76.2% of the elderly population. According to the PNAD (2011), 57.6% of men's income and 53.9% of women's income came from retirement. Much of the income contribution of the elderly comes from work. In 2011, among men, 39.8% worked and among women, 16.4%. Income from work contributed 36.7% of men's income and 13.4% of women's income. In addition to the income that work brings, it represents autonomy and social integration of the elderly (IPEA, 2012). For many people, the beginning of old age does not represent the end of the working period. Many of them continue in the activity in which they gained experience, seek a new job or start a business. In addition to keeping the elderly physically, mentally and socially active, work is increasingly becoming a source of wealth. The increasingly longer permanence of the elderly in the labor market is due to the increase in life expectancy, advances in medicine, improved quality of life, the need for self-support, reduced income after retirement and the increase in the cost of living (MENDES, 2016).

This phenomenon has led this age group of the population to provide the job market with experienced and highly qualified professionals. The professional's ability to adapt is decisive for success in remaining in the market. The most successful are those with the ability to migrate their skills and competences from activities that required strength and speed to those activities in which experience, credibility, strategic vision, leadership, good communication, flexibility and good relationships are required. However, access to the formal labor market is not always easy, either because of the lack of preparation in the labor market to receive the elderly or because of simple prejudice, leading the elderly to create their own business, often driven by the need to supplement their income. In 2013, the elderly represented 12.4% of the total number of Brazilian entrepreneurs and the number of businesses created and managed by people in the elderly was increasing. Necessity and opportunity are the main motivations for entrepreneurship. The need to have an alternative income leads to business creation, in general, without proper preparation and informal. There are those businesses, however, created from the identification of an opportunity, the desire for independence at work and to maintain or increase income. This type of venture has a greater chance of success, contributing to economic development and it is in this type of entrepreneurship that the experience of the elderly can be decisive, since the data show that the survival rate of new businesses increases with the age of the owner (MENDES, 2016). Nowadays, with the gradual visibility around aging, it is possible to perceive that the elderly person has a strong presence in the family environment, they contribute to the economy, participate and are more active in society, participate in councils and fight for their rights, experience greater autonomy and, with that, there has been an emphasis on a greater role in the aging process and also in public policies.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at reflecting on aging, with a view to deconstructing the excluding character that old age acquired in modernity with the capitalist system. Debating aging is to give visibility to the discussion about this social group that historically suffered and still suffer from exclusion, discrimination and prejudice. In fact, the ideological discourse of aging is still present as a process of loss, unproductivity and worthless. Therefore, it is necessary to break with the homogenization of old age and the oppressive silence conditioned by the capitalist mode and encourage the elderly people's view of belonging as a social class of the capitalist system, unassisted by public policies. Faced with the growing number of the elderly population and the expectations of increasing even more, we need to reorganize ourselves as a society to be a nation of elderly people. Therefore, it is essential to reflect on the social place given to the elderly in modernity. Aging signals a new phase in the life of the

individual, which, while it can be stimulated as an opportunity to carry out projects and new possibilities for personal fulfillment, is also negative, and can be a period of losses, withdrawals and social exclusion. Nowadays, the new values and social behaviors adopted by youth and adults, end up forgetting to recognize the past contributions and that the elderly dominate knowledge, experiences and an unquestionable wisdom. These new patterns do not consider that the changes indicate that population aging will be increasingly ascendant, a fact that will make the social structure change even more. We need to change the way of thinking and become aware of this new reality that aging is a natural and irreversible process and it is important to analyze the economic, political and social changes generated by this demographic transition. So, it is very important for the State, the government and civil society to be aware of this new demographic reality, so that, based on real studies, it is possible to point out public policies that really have an effect, so that there are these much-needed transformations, to that this restructuring of life in society can welcome the elderly. As a human development, we must consider old age not as an isolated stage of life and that historical, social, economic, cultural and political relationships are part of the baggage of the aging process. With the study, we also observed that subjective, cultural and social factors, discrimination, exclusion, lack of public policies aimed at the elderly and social inequalities undermine the role of the elderly. This study allowed us to see, look at old age and understand that it is necessary to talk about it, understand that aging is a natural, irreversible process, which is the future of humanity and break with fear and negative stigmas that surround the aging process. We also realize that old age and human aging have subjective and social images that are still marked by cultural conjunctures of modernity. Therefore, there is a need to develop more research involving the context related to aging, so that in this way, we can understand the place of the elderly in capitalist society, which makes the elderly more aware of their place and what to do. for the elderly to feel belonging to this society that excludes so much.

REFERENCES

- ALMEIDA, V. L. V. de. Modernidade e velhice. In: Revista Serviço Social & Sociedade. São Paulo: Cortez. Ano XXIV, n.75, p. 35-54. Edição Especial 2003.
- BEAUVOIR, S. de. A Velhice. 2ª edição. Tradução Maria Helena Franco Martins. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2018.
- BECK, U.. O que é globalização? Equívocos de globalismo - Respostas à globalização. São Paulo: Editora Paz e Terra, 1999.
- BECK, U.A reinvenção da política: rumo a uma teoria da modernização reflexiva. Em A. Giddens, U. Beck & S. Lash (Eds.), Modernização reflexiva: política, tradição e estética na ordem social moderna (Pp 11-71). Tradução de Magda Lopes. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade Estadual Unesp, 2012.
- DEBERT, Guita G.A reinvenção da velhice: socialização e processos de reprivatização do envelhecimento. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo/ FAPESP, 1999.
- DE PAULA, M. F.Os idosos do nosso tempo e a impossibilidade da sabedoria no capitalismo atual. Serviço Social & Sociedade, São Paulo, n. 126, p. 262-280, jun. 2016.
- FRAIMAN, A. P. Coisas da idade. Coleção Plenitude – Volume II. Alexa Cultural, São Paulo, 2004.
- GIDDENS, A. As consequências da Modernidade. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 1991.
- GIDDENS, A. Para além da esquerda e da direita: o futuro da política radical. São Paulo: Unesp, 1996.
- GOHN, M. da G.O protagonismo da sociedade civil – movimentos sociais, ONGs redes solidárias. São Paulo: Cortez, 2005.
- IPEA. Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada. Tendências Demográficas mostradas pela PNAD 2011. Comunicados IPEA. n. 157. Ipea, 2012.
- LATOURETTE, B. Jamais fomos modernos: ensaios de antropologia simétrica. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 1994.
- LE BRETON, David. Antropologia do corpo e modernidade. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2011.
- MENDES, M. dos S. A. Empreendedorismo na terceira idade. 2016. 40 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Economia Doméstica) - Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Viçosa. 2016.
- MIGNOLO, W. Os esplendores e as misérias da “ciência”: colonialidade, geopolítica do conhecimento e pluri-versalidade epistêmica. In: SANTOS, B. de S. Conhecimento prudente para uma vida decente. São Paulo: Cortez, 2006.
- MIGNOLO, W. Colonialidade: o lado mais escuro da modernidade. Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais, v. 32, n. 94, jun. 2016.
- MIGNOLO, W. Desafios decoloniais hoje. Epistemologias do Sul, Foz do Iguaçu – PR, p. 12-32, 2017.
- OMS. Organização Mundial de Saúde. Envelhecimento ativo: uma política de saúde. 2005. Disponível em: http://bvsms.saude.gov.br/bvs/publicacoes/envelhecimento_ativo.pdf.
- QUIJANO, A. Colonialidade do poder, Eurocentrismo e América Latina En libro: A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perspectivas latino-americanas. Edgardo Landier (Org.). Colección Sur Sur, CLACSO, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2005.
- QUIJANO, A. Colonialidade do poder e classificação social. In: SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa; MENESES, Maria Paula (orgs.). Epistemologias do Sul. São Paulo: Cortez, 2010. p. 73-118.
- SANTOS, B. de S.A gramática do tempo: para uma nova cultura política. 3 ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2010.
- SANTOS, M. Por uma outra globalização: do pensamento único à consciência universal. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2015.
- YIN, R. K. Pesquisa qualitativa: do início ao fim. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2016.
