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Federal University of Rio de Janeiro State



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## INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Produção científica sobre a sexualidade de mulheres no climatério: revisão integrativa

Scientific production about the sexuality of women in climacteric: an integrative review

Producción científica acerca de la sexualidad de las mujeres en el climaterio: una revisión

integradora

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** analyzing the scientific production about sexuality in climacteric women. **Method:** an integrative review of bibliometric approach, held through consultation online, advanced and systematic, in the Virtual Health Library, using the technique of meta-searching. **Results:** the authors were linked to 20 institutions, 53,2% were doctors, 61,7% were doctorates. The country with the highest number of authors was Brazil. The issue most discussed was sexual function. Most publications were quantitative, occurred in 2008 and published in Brazilian Portuguese language. The level four of evidence was the most frequent. The Law enforcement of Bradford resulted in three areas of productivity. **Conclusion:** there is a need for more qualitative researches, especially in nursing, and studies with greater power of evidence, as well as more investment in other regions of Brazil. **Descriptors:** Nursing, Climacteric, Sexuality, Bibliometrics.

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** analisar a produção científica publicada sobre a sexualidade de mulheres no climatério. **Método:** revisão integrativa de abordagem bibliométrica realizada através de consulta *online*, avançada e sistemática, na Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde, utilizando-se a técnica da metapesquisa. **Resultados:** os autores estavam vinculados a 20 instituições, 53,2% eram médicos, 61,7% eram doutores. O país com maior número de autores foi o Brasil. O tema mais abordado foi a função sexual. A maioria das publicações era quantitativa, e ocorreram em 2008, e foram publicados no idioma português brasileiro. O nível de evidência mais frequente foi o quarto. A aplicação da lei de Bradford resultou em três zonas de produtividade. **Conclusão:** observou-se a necessidade de mais pesquisas qualitativas, principalmente na área de enfermagem, além de estudos com maior poder de evidência, assim como mais investimentos em outras regiões do Brasil. **Descritores:** Enfermagem, Climatério, Sexualidade, Bibliometria.

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** analizar la producción científica publicada acerca de la sexualidad en las mujeres en el climaterio. **Método:** una revisión integradora de enfoque bibliométrico, que se celebró a través de consultas en línea, avanzadas y sistemáticas, en la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud, utilizando la técnica de meta-búsqueda. **Resultados:** Los autores estaban vinculados a 20 instituciones, 53,2% eran médicos, 61,7% doctorados. El país con el mayor número de autores fue Brasil. El tema más abordado fue la función sexual. La mayoría de las publicaciones era cuantitativa, se produjo en 2008 y se publicó en idioma portugués de Brasil. El nivel de evidencia más frecuente fue el cuatro. La Aplicación de la ley Bradford dio lugar a tres áreas de productividad. **Conclusión:** hay una necesidad de más investigación cualitativa, especialmente en ancianos, y los estudios con un mayor poder de las pruebas, así como una mayor inversión en otras regiones de Brasil. **Descriptor:** Enfermería, Climaterio, Sexualidad, Bibliometría.

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he integrative review is a method of fundamental research in nursing for bringing national contributions in care improvement provided to the patient and its family, as it offers to professionals from various fields of expertise in health rapid access to most relevant results of research that guide appropriate behaviors. However, in Brazil the number of publications that employ this method in the development of research is still lacking.<sup>1</sup>

Nursing Research, currently still has gaps, particularly with regard to being a climacteric period steeped in psychological and physiological, social factors that impact, especially in the life of the woman.<sup>2</sup> Sexuality is a topic that deserves special attention during this period, because historically is built around myths and taboos, and should be considered as a frequent object of study and attention on the part of health professionals.<sup>3</sup>

Research about the sexual life of women in climacteric is constituted as a challenge, considering that the subject is still little explored and involves complex issues relating to sensuality and sexuality, joined the more traditional values, the female image and the aging.<sup>2</sup>

Generally speaking, sexuality can be understood as a form of expression of the deepest aspects of personality, being innate to human beings, but rewritten lifelong showing specificities inherent in each period. It goes beyond the biological component, is no longer restricted to reproduction, and constitutes itself as a source of excitement and pleasure for the human species.<sup>4</sup>

In the climacteric hormonal changes are coupled to biological, psychological, cultural and social changes. These organic amendments on women do not necessarily imply the reduction of pleasure, but can influence on the sexual response.<sup>5</sup>

During this period the woman may be often reduced vaginal lubrication, being necessary an increased sexual stimulation, thinning of vaginal tissues, which can result in dyspareunia, in addition to reduction of part of the adipose tissue of the labia majora and retraction of the labia minora and of the clitoris.<sup>5-6</sup>

These changes of biological order require the woman an upgrading and a better understanding of how her body is working at that stage of life.<sup>7</sup> Often, changes in her sexual experience come to resonate in her relationship with her partner and herself.<sup>3</sup>

However, for some authors, most sexual difficulties are more related to other problems which are reflected in sexual life. On the basis of a society that values youth, for women in the climacteric, tap into middle age can cause deep emotional effects taking often decreased self-esteem.<sup>4-5,8</sup>

It is crucial that the health professional learn more sexual reality of women in climacteric in order to build care strategies aimed at the autonomy of these women in

relation to their bodies and their sexuality. At this stage of life, women, as well as their partners, deserve to be well oriented regarding the organic and behavioral changes that are susceptible, this will facilitate professional health care in the identification of any sexual difficulties and possible therapeutic interventions most appropriate.<sup>2,9-10</sup>

For this reason, it is important undertaking researches involving this issue. Thus, through Bibliometrics it is possible the measurement of the indexes of production and the expansion of scientific knowledge regarding the sexuality of women in climacteric, and thereafter the development of reliable indicators that can serve as a validation processes parameter of any activity.<sup>11</sup> In this context, the objective of this study was to analyzing, through an integrative Bibliometric review, the scientific production published on sexuality of women in climacteric.

## METHOD

The present research consists of an integrative review of the scientific literature, held in September 2013, adopting a Bibliometric approach and seeking to answer the following question: What are the characteristics of the scientific literature published about sexuality of women in climacteric?

To ensuring methodological rigor of the study and the possibility of replication by other researchers in future works, during the execution of this study were established parameters and criteria which will be described below.

At first there were consulted the health sciences descriptors (DeCS) to selecting and defining the keywords that would be used during the search of the Virtual Health Library (VHL). For this quest have been applied the following descriptors: "climacteric" and "sexuality".

For the survey of articles, online consultation was held, advanced and systematic in the VHL, using the technique of meta-search in all databases indexed concomitant way. This search was used as a tool to aid the "AND" Boolean operator, to the intersection of descriptors.

As inclusion criteria studies should be available in its entirety, be original and address the issue of sexuality in the climacteric, as well as having been published in Portuguese, English and Spanish. No timeframe was used or time constraints in order to increase the potential of search.

After framing the articles inclusion criteria there was performed a cross-check of the data for counting only once the repeated studies. Two reviewers undertook the collection of data through a data collection form and critical appraisal of studies. There were selected 46 articles that were analyzed on the basis of its own features and information contained in them.

Subsequently, were read thoroughly in their entirety. The articles were tabulated according to information collected, where it was possible to extract information about the year of their publication; periodical; database; author and their respective area of expertise, titling and link institution; the source location of the study; language; methodology employed; level of evidence; number of references and main approaches discussed by the authors.

For the hierarchical classification of the articles according to the evidence of power, we used the classification developed by researchers in nursing which is based on the categorization method Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) of the United States of America. Therefore, the quality of evidence was recorded as follows: meta-analysis of multiple controlled studies (Level 1); individual study with experimental design (Level 2); study with quasi-experimental design to study without randomization with one group pre and post-test, time series or case-control (Level 3); study with a non-experimental design as correlational and descriptive qualitative research or case studies (Level 4); report cases or data obtained systematically, verifiable quality or program evaluation data (Level 5) and; opinion of respected authorities based on clinical competence or expert opinion committees (Level 6).<sup>12</sup>

The knowledge of these systems of classification of evidence provides subsidies to assist the nurse in critical assessment of results from research and, consequently, in decision-making about the incorporation of evidence into clinical practice.<sup>13</sup>

In order to verifying the absolute productivity of journals, i.e. the distribution of articles in certain area of knowledge in specialized journals, using the Law of Bradford in classic form. According to this law journals there are distributed in areas of productivity so that such zones produce quantities of items with values near or equal. The first areas are considered the core of knowledge on productivity in study, containing more journals published. The last area is regarded as the range of dispersion, containing the smaller journals production.<sup>14</sup>

Bradford law enforcement also makes it possible the knowledge of the value of the multiplier of Bradford (mB), which is the result of dividing the number of journals to a zone by the previous, and the average value of the multiplier of Bradford (value of  $XmB$ ), disregarding the value of the first zone. Thus, the higher the oscillation of the mB between zones, the greater the difference in productivity between journals.<sup>14</sup>

For processing and analysis of data, the same were coded and entered in the statistical program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 for Windows. The variables were subjected to univariate analysis through the distribution of frequencies.

The data were presented in tables, which are distributed in the course of the presentation of the results according to the academic profile of the authors, the authors' institutional and geographic mapping, features of the articles and Law enforcement from Bradford.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When filling out the form, and thorough reading of 46 articles were deleted 27 documents, having as background the presence of the following factors: redundant studies, i.e., present in more than one database (n = 04), non-availability of the full text on the internet (n = 05), not journal article (n = 06), to other types of documents that no articles of the original type (n = 12). Soon, the final sample was composed of 19 articles.<sup>2-4,6,9,15-28</sup>

In table 1, it turns out that most of the authors were doctors 53,2% (n = 25) and that more than half of the authors possessed doctorate 61,7% (n = 29). Date to be registered is 4,3% (n = 2) of authors of publications participants did not have training in the area of health.

Table 1 - Distribution of authors of articles selected by academic training and titling. (n = 47)

Variables	N (%)
<b>Academic Formation</b>	
Physician	25 (53,2)
Nurse	11 (23,4)
Psychologist	6 (12,8)
Physical Educator	2 (4,3)
Statistician	2 (4,3)
Social Worker	1 (2,1)
<b>Title</b>	
Doctor	29 (61,7)
Specialist/Master	5 (10,6)
Specialist	5 (10,6)
Master	4 (8,5)
Post-doc	3 (6,4)
Graduate	1 (2,1)

Source: Research data.

In table 1, it is noticed that according to the geographical and institutional mapping, the authors of the selected articles were linked to 20 different institutions and that the country with the largest number of authors who produced about sexuality of women in climacteric was the Brazil with 80,8% (n = 38) of authors, with emphasis on the Southeast, reaching a total of 57,4% (n = 27) of the authors.

It is still possible to observe that the institution with greater representativeness was the University of São Paulo, with 25,5% (n = 12) of the authors, the State University of Campinas with 14,9% (n = 7) of the authors and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, with 10,6% (n = 5) of the authors. Worth pointing out that the amount of authors linked to these three institutions reaches a total of 48,9% (n = 23) of authors, percentile

whose value is almost half of the total amount of authors. Another relevant factor is that of the 58 participating authors of selected studies, 24,1% (n = 14) did not have ties with higher education institutions, and so with hospitals, societies, City Hall and Board of health.

Table 1 - Distribution of authors by institutions, regions and States. (n = 47)

Country	Region	UF	Institution	N (%)
Brazil	SE	SP	University of São Paulo	12 (25,5)
			State University of Campinas	7 (14,9)
			State Department of Health of São Paulo	2 (4,3)
	RJ	MG	Federal University of Rio de Janeiro	2 (4,3)
			Municipal Maternity Alexandre-Fleming	1 (2,1)
			State University of Rio de Janeiro	1 (2,1)
	CO	MT	Federal University of Juiz de Fora	2 (4,3)
			Federal University of Mato Grosso	1 (2,1)
	NE	RN	Hospital and Maternity Santa Lucia	1 (2,1)
			Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte	5 (10,6)
	S	RS	Federal University of Ceara	1 (2,1)
			University of Caxias do Sul	3 (6,4)
	Cuba	Playa/ Habana		Institute of Medical Sciences of Havana
Faculty Dr Miguel Enríquez				2 (4,3)
University Polyclinic Ana Betancourt				1 (2,1)
Gyneco-Obstetric Teaching Hospital Ramón Gonzalez Coro				1 (2,1)
Gyneco-Obstetric Teaching Hospital of Guanabacoa				1 (2,1)
Cuban society of Gynecology and Obstetrics				1 (2,1)
Polyclinic Jorge Ruiz Ramirez				1 (2,1)
<b>Total</b>			<b>47</b>	

Source: Research data. UF= Federative Unit; SE= Southeast; CO= Midwest; NE= Northeast; S= South; SP= São Paulo; RJ= Rio de Janeiro; MG= Minas Gerais; MT= Mato Grosso; RN= Rio Grande do Norte; CE= Ceara; RS= Rio Grande do Sul.

In table 2, it is observed that the magazine of the Association of Brazilian Medicine presented the largest number of articles on sexuality of women in climacteric. Noting that the 19 articles, the average number of authors was 3.0. With respect to the average of references per article identified an average of 21.8 value.

Table 2 - Distribution of periodicals by number of authors and references per article.

Journals	Article	Author	MA/A	Ref.	MR/A
Brazilian Medicine Association Magazine	5	17	3,4	131	26,2
Brazilian Magazine of Gynecology and Obstetrics	3	13	4,4	83	27,7
Cuban Magazine of Obstetrics and Gynecology	3	7	2,4	49	16,4
Text & Context Nursing	2	7	3,5	44	22,0
Cuban Magazine of Integrative General	2	5	2,5	26	13,0

Medicine					
Nursing School of USP	1	3	3,0	16	16,0
Diagnosis Treatment	1	2	2,0	23	23,0
Latin American Nursing Magazine	1	2	2,0	16	16,0
Brazilian Magazine Mother and Child Health	1	2	2,0	27	27,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>58*</b>	<b>3,0</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>21,8</b>

Source: Research data. n=19. MA/A=Average author/article; Ref.=References; MR/A=Average of references per article; \*=This number occurs due to 11 authors have published two articles in the sample.

The main approaches of each selected study are presented in table 3. Among the topics discussed, the highest frequency was sexual function, being present in 63,2% (n = 12) of articles.

Table 3 - Distribution of the main approaches of the publications. (n = 19)

Themes	N (%)
Sexual function	12 (63,2)
Influence of climacteric symptomatology in sex life	3 (15,8)
Frequency of sexual practice	1 (5,3)
Social representations of sexual life	1 (5,3)
Influence of psychotherapy on sex life	1 (5,3)
Understanding sex life in climacteric	1 (5,3)
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

Source: Research data.

Among the 19 articles, most of them were published in 2008 (21,1%; n = 4). Also receive featured the years 2005, 2006 and 2009 with a percentage of 15,8% (n = 3), 10,5% (n = 2) and 10,5% (n = 2) respectively. The remaining years 1999, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 each published 5,3% (n = 1). Another date to be highlighted is that all articles belong to the database of the Latin American literature and Caribbean Health Sciences (LILACS) and 73,7% (n = 14) of articles were published in Brazilian Portuguese and 26,3% (n = 5) in Spanish.

The most frequent evidence level was four, with 94,7% (n = 18) published studies. Only 5,3% (n = 1) of the studies had evidence level three. It was also found that most of the articles had a quantitative approach with 78,9% (n = 15) of articles, to the detriment of qualitative with 21,1% (n = 4) of manuscripts.

In table 4, it is observed that there are three areas of productivity, the first consisting of three magazines (Brazilian Medicine Association Magazine, Brazilian Magazine of Gynecology and Obstetrics, Cuban Magazine of Obstetrics and Gynecology), which consist of cores production on the theme under study. It turns out that such magazines are responsible for more than half of the articles (57,8%; n = 11) and decreasing profitability exists among the three identified areas. The values of mB range from one zone to another and the value of the XmB is approximate the individual values of mB.

Table 4 - Maximum Division into zones of journals articles productivity, according to the Law of Bradford.

Z	A	ΣA	%A	%ΣA	P	ΣP	%P	%ΣP	mB
01	11	11	57,8	57,8	02	02	25,0	25,0	-
02	04	15	21,1	78,9	02	04	25,0	50,0	1
03	04	19	21,1	100,0	04	08	50,0	100,0	2
									XmB = 1,5

Source: Research data. n = 19. Z= productivity zones; A=articles; ΣA= sum of articles; %A=percentage of the articles; %ΣA= percentage of the sum of articles; P=journals; ΣP= sum of the journals; %P= percentage of journals; %ΣP= percentage of the sum of the journals; mB= multiplier of Bradford; XmB= Average value of the multiplier of Bradford.

In this study there was predominance of physician authors, this result also observed in another study of review.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the titling of the authors, the data recorded in this study also corroborates with literature, in which doctors are the most productive.<sup>30-31</sup> This data can be explained due to the increase in the supply of doctoral courses, since the students of this course are prepared especially for exercising the Magisterium and develop science, being also stimulated the realization of projects and the publication of their results.<sup>31</sup>

In this integrative review most authors possessed linking with public higher education institutions, confirming data found in other researches.<sup>31</sup>

Worth pointing out that the increased frequency of publications has been verified in the Southeast region of Brazil, a result also found in other studies.<sup>31-32</sup> This occurs due to the Brazilian research being linked mainly to the stricto sensu Postgraduate programs. Soon, this data found in this study may be explained by the existence of a greater quantity of Postgraduate programs, scholarships and teachers in the southeast of the country, according to data published by the Coordination for Improvement of Higher Personnel.<sup>33</sup>

Another explanation for this result is financial centralization in the Southeast, generating a greater availability of resources for the development of projects in this region in specific.<sup>34</sup> Another explanatory hypothesis would be that the relationship between the Brazilian scientific production and Postgraduate programs are strengthened by the predominance of authors linked to institutions that have master's and doctoral courses.<sup>33</sup>

The average value of authors per article found in this study did not show significant differences, with an average value equal to three; showing, therefore, standardization of the number of authors allowed by article in journals. However, with regard to the number of references per article, the analysis of this data allowed the knowledge of considerable differences ranging from 13.0 to 27.7 averaging 21.8 of references per article published. However, this quantity tends to decrease, due to the need to reduce the space occupied by each article in journals, considering that the demand for manuscripts submitted is increasing.<sup>35</sup>

The frequency of the thematic approach "sexual function" during the climacteric period in the analyzed sample is given first; by the fact of climacteric understand a process of adaptation, which can initially be tumultuous. This is due to the sudden fluctuations common in hormones that can generate some signs and symptoms, feelings, influencing relations and also in sexuality.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the sexuality of women in climacteric is laden with prejudices and taboos, due to several myths stiffeners idea that, during this period of her life the woman is asexual. One of them is the identification of reproductive function with sexual function. Another would be that the erotic attraction to physical beauty only costs associated with youthfulness. There is still a third myth that considers female sexuality related directly to ovarian hormones, binding to decreased ovarian function with reduced sexual function.<sup>5</sup>

Considering all the implications that surround the sexuality of women in climacteric becomes understanding the great frequency of approaches on the subject of the sexual function of female life natural at this stage.

Regarding language-related characteristics, the Brazilian Portuguese was most present. Regarding the database, this was common to all articles, though these indexed at LILACS. Already the temporality showed that articles in the area of sexuality of women ranged from climatic 1999 to 2013. However, even being a thematic dealt with a considerable period of time, the number of publications on this particular approach can be considered little to a range of 14 years.

The analysis of the methodological approach revealed that most studies were of quantitative character. The power of evidence found most frequently was the four, considered average strength of evidence. As justification could say that greater evidence levels were not found with significant frequency, due to the reason that to execute projects with greater power of evidence requires a longer period of monitoring of the sample, as well as greater demand for financial and human resources.<sup>36</sup>

The identification of the magazine Brazilian Medical Association, Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics and Gynecology and Obstetrics Cuban Magazine as being the nuclei of publication on the theme of sexuality of women in climacteric can consolidate on the following factors: are consolidated magazines, indexed in national and international databases, with good visibility and demand for articles; possess Qualis/CAPES A2, B1 and A1 respectively, attesting to the quality of its contents. Two of these magazines are located in southeastern Brazil, a region with greater support for research<sup>33</sup> Last Longer is owned by city of Habana, located in Cuba.

Despite the effects of similar research in literature and with the object studied in this research have limited possible comparisons, it is possible to understand that profitability down among the three productivity zones identified in the study confirms that few produce far and many produce little, being this one of the principles of the Law of Bradford.<sup>14</sup>

The classical Law of Bradford considers the absolute number of articles produced, to the detriment of certain variables that can interfere with productivity potential of magazines such as: frequency and amount of articles per volume published. Therefore, the present study makes it possible to see which journals are most productive; however, it is not possible to conclude which magazines are the most constant in the publication of the issue in question, being a limiting factor of the study.<sup>37</sup> A second limiting factor of this study is the use of the procedure for inclusion of articles available in full for free virtual databases. In addition to the use of search through the intersection of descriptors as search

strategy for survey articles, considering that manuscripts related to the object of study could not be located.

## CONCLUSION

Of the 19 selected articles most presented quantitative approach being more covered the topic regarding sexual function, based on this, it is observed the existence of a gap as it pertains to productions concerning the subjectivity of the sexuality of women in climacteric, and thus the importance of developing more qualitative research in this area.

However, by means of this study, it was possible to identify a small portion of productions relating to the sexuality of women climacteric, mainly in the area of nursing, considering that most of the publications were written by a doctor, a fact that elucidates the need and the importance of more research on the subject for nurses.

During the climacteric the woman undergoes physiological changes that can have an impact on changes in your sex life, highlighting the importance of these women are well informed and educated about this period. The nurse can take on a fundamental role in the education process, contributing to these women separating fears and taboos that exist in society when she depicts sexuality in the climacteric.

However, on the basis of the findings of this study, it is recommended the production of research with greater power of evidence in this area of knowledge, so that in this way, the performance of nurses both within as under educational outreach is based on materials that more approach of clinical reality.

Also called attention to more investments in other regions of Brazil, which is not only in the Southeast, so others can also benefit from the realization and production of scientific literature, in addition to the chance of qualification to act on their sphere of knowledge, in order to mitigate the imbalance of regional scientific production. However, it is believed that necessary commitment not just of funders, but also of institutions and researchers to strengthen the national survey.

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