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Social representations of violence on the elderly: An injustice and a badness

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Rationale: In contemporary society, ageing is a phenomenon that marks all developed societies. Portugal is one of the most ageing countries in Europe. Analyzing the social representations of violence on the elderly, from the current and past conceptions and daily practices of the elderly allows us to have access to the dominant constructions in society about the social phenomenon that is violence and the way it is socially and individually expressed by its main actors.

Objective: To analyze the social representations of a group of elderly people about violence on the elderly and the reasons why this violence occurs.

Methods: Exploratory and descriptive research with qualitative approach, supported by Theory of Social Representations. It was attended by 237 elderly people aged 65-96 years, from the project "Ageing Safely in Alentejo" from University of Évora. The Free Speech Association technique was used and data were processed through qualitative data analysis software. All the ethical procedures of human research were followed.

Results: In social representations of violence on the elderly the words most evoked by the elderly were injustice, to which are added the mistreatment, badness, bad, lack of respect, sadness, horrible and abandonment. About the reasons that lead to violence on the elderly the words such as lack of respect, lack of education and badness are predominant. These terms refer to the social devaluation of the elderly and their role in today's society, as in the representations about violence.

Conclusions: The social representations of these elderly people about violence and their reasons points to the stereotypes associated with the prevalent ageism in our society, where the social devaluation of the elderly dominates the daily life conceptions and practices.

Biography

Tatiana Mestre holds a degree in Social Education from the University of Algarve and holds a Masters and Postgraduate Diploma in Community Psychogerontology from the Beja Polytechnic Institute and a pre-doctorate in Sociology. At the moment, she's a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Évora. Since 2012, it works directly with the elderly, in various social responses (nursing homes, convalescence institutions, medium and long term). She is currently working as a research assistant on the "Aging with Security in the Alentejo Understanding to Act" (ESACA) project. This project aims to respond to one of the most urgent social problems of Portuguese society and the region of Alentejo - Aging - providing future goods and services that correspond to the needs felt by the elderly and institutions (public and social sector).

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