

Resumen

La sexualidad en la vejez es poco estudiada, incluso tratada como tabú (Rozendo y Alvez, 2015). Se cree que las personas mayores son asexuales; no tienen deseo ni relaciones sexuales (Walz, 2002). Sin embargo, muchos adultos siguen siendo sexualmente activos y esto conserva su bienestar psicológico y físico (Trudel et al., 2000). Se define sexualidad como “capacidad de obtener placer de diversas formas de actividad y comportamiento sexual, especialmente relaciones sexuales” (APA, s.f.). El bienestar psicológico es una característica fundamental de la salud mental, y se puede definir como una felicidad hedónica y eudaimónica, y la resiliencia (Tang et al., 2019). El objetivo general del presente estudio es verificar cómo la conducta sexual y sus variables influye sobre el bienestar psicológico en la vejez. Se realizó una búsqueda en las bases de datos PsycArticles, Web of science y Pubmed, de la literatura científica publicada entre 2015 y 2022, con las palabras clave de interés (adulto mayor, bienestar psicológico, conducta sexual, sexualidad, vejez). Siguiendo los criterios de inclusión y exclusión (PRISMA, Moher et al., 2009), se encontraron 2507 artículos en total. En total, 8 artículos han sido incluidos en la revisión narrativa. Los resultados muestran los beneficios de la sexualidad sobre el bienestar psicológico en la vejez. Asimismo, se evaluó cómo las disfunciones sexuales, la satisfacción vital y la calidad de la relación de pareja influyen sobre la conducta sexual. En general, ser sexualmente activo en la vejez y tener relaciones sexuales con mayor frecuencia, influye positivamente sobre el bienestar psicológico. Las limitaciones debido a problemáticas sexuales pueden solventarse por medios diferentes al coito tradicional. Por tanto, esta revisión narrativa confirma la relación entre la sexualidad y el bienestar psicológico en la vejez, rompiendo el mito de que el campo de estudio debe limitarse a la juventud.

Palabras clave: adulto mayor, bienestar psicológico, conducta sexual, sexualidad, vejez.

Abstract

Sexuality in old age is little studied, even treated as taboo (Rozendo and Alvez, 2015). Older people are believed to be asexual; they have no sexual desire or relationships (Walz, 2002). However, many adults remain sexually active and this preserves their psychological and physical well-being (Trudel et al., 2000). Sexuality is defined as "the capacity to derive pleasure from various forms of sexual activity and behavior, especially sexual intercourse" (APA, n.d.). Psychological well-being is a fundamental characteristic of mental health, and can be defined as hedonic and eudaimonic happiness and resilience (Tang et al., 2019). The general objective of the present study is to verify how sexual behavior and its variables influence psychological well-being in old age. A search was conducted in the databases PsycArticles, Web of science and Pubmed, of the scientific literature published between 2015 and 2022, with the keywords of interest (older adult, psychological well-being, sexual behavior, sexuality, old age). Following the inclusion and exclusion criteria (PRISMA, Moher et al., 2009), 2507 articles were found in total. In total, 8 articles have been included in the narrative review. The results show the benefits of sexuality on psychological well-being in old age. Also, how sexual

dysfunctions, life satisfaction and quality of the couple relationship influence sexual behavior was evaluated. In general, being sexually active in old age and having sex more frequently has a positive influence on psychological well-being. Limitations due to sexual problems can be solved by means other than traditional intercourse. Therefore, this narrative review confirms the relationship between sexuality and psychological well-being in old age, breaking the myth that the field of study should be limited to youth.

Key Words: ageing, older adults, psychological well-being, sexuality, sexual behavior.

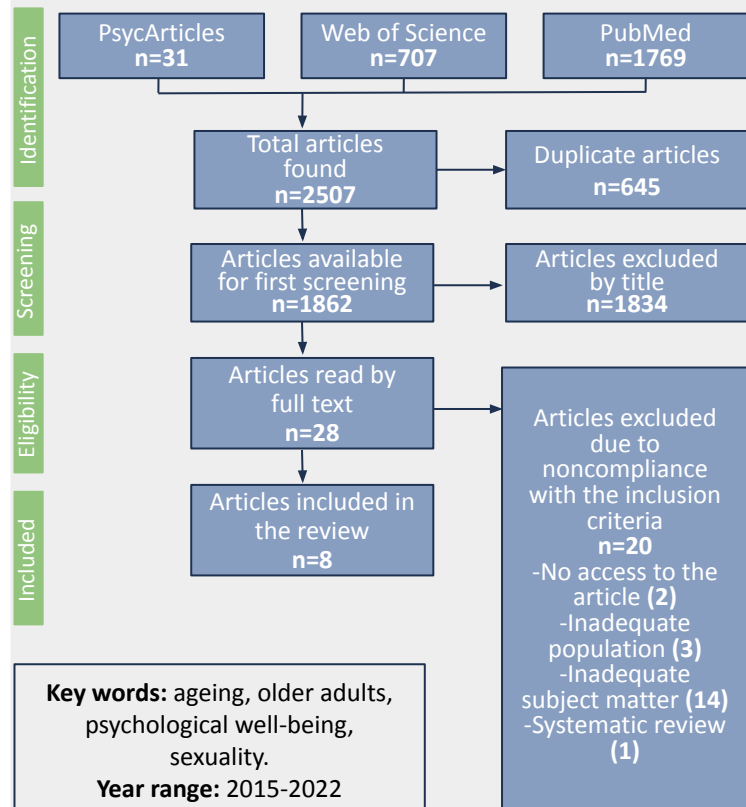
INTRODUCTION

There is a social belief that older people are **asexual** or do not have sexual desire or sexual relationships (Walz, 2002). However, many adults remain sexually **active** and these sexual experiences have been associated with the preservation of **psychological** and physical well-being (Trudel et al., 2000). **Sexuality** is defined as "the capacity to derive pleasure from various forms of sexual activity and behaviour, especially sexual intercourse" (APA, n.d.). Whereas, psychological **well-being** is a fundamental characteristic of mental health, and can be defined as hedonic and eudaimonic happiness, as well as resilience. (Tang et al., 2019). Adults who express their sexuality through sexual intercourse regularly have been shown to have reduced physical and mental health problems (Edward & Booth, 2012) and are more likely to have better **quality** of intimate relationships, fewer depressive **symptoms** and higher **self-esteem** (Brody, 2010; Choi et al., 2011). Furthermore, given the high prevalence of sexual **dysfunction** in older age (Lindau et al., 2007), it is interesting to identify the effectiveness of methods that can address this limitation.

OBJECTIVE

- To confirm that **sexuality** in older adults is positively related to psychological **well-being**.
- To identify the **variables** that influence the **sexual behavior** in old age.

METHODOLOGY (PRISMA, Moher et al., 2009)



RESULTS

Authors	Variables	Participants	Method	Main Findings
Freak-Poli et al. (2017)	Psychological well-being Sexuality	N=2374 (M=75 years old)	CES-D; CSASS; self-report	Levels of well-being are positively correlated with levels of sexual behaviour.
Hinchliff et al. (2018)	Well-being Sexual difficulties	N=1084 (M=67.5 years old) n=680 women n=404 men	SRA-Q	Absence of sex due to sexual dysfunction increased levels of sadness.
Jackson et al. (2018)	Psychological well-being Sexuality	N=5831 (M=64.8 years old) n=2614 women n=3217 men	CASP-19; CES-D; SWLS; self-report	Decreased sexual desire and activity is associated with more depressive symptoms and lower quality of life.
Lee et al. (2016)	Psychological well-being Sexuality	N=4296 (>50 years old)	CASP-19; CES-D; SRA-Q; SWLS	Infrequent or absent sexual behaviour and the presence of sexual difficulties are associated with lower levels of well-being.
Liu et al. (2019)	Well-being Oral sex	N=1768 (50-90 years old) n=884 couples	CES-D; NSHAP, self-report	Receiving oral sex improves levels of well-being in different patterns for men and women.
Silva et al. (2021)	Psychological well-being Sexuality	N=45 (M=73.8 years old)	ASESE; ESAS-Br	Sadness and anxiety scores correlate negatively with the sexual and affective dimension.
Taylor & Alan (2015)	Psychological well-being Sexuality Life quality	N=133 (M=74 years old) n=62 women n=71 men	SBS; WHOQOL-BREF	Increased frequency of sexual intercourse is associated with higher quality of life and psychological wellbeing
Zhang & Liu (2020)	Psychological well-being Sexuality	N=1911 (M=57-85 years old)	CES-D; NSHAP; self-report	Being sexually active, having satisfying and frequent sex, and having a good relationship with a partner are associated with higher levels of well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

➤ There is **sexual desire** and **activity** in old age, increased frequency and quality of sexual behaviour increases psychological **well-being**.

➤ The presence of **sexual dysfunction** and sexual **incapacitation** are associated with lower levels of well-being. It can lead to depressive symptoms.

➤ Sexual intercourse is not always necessary. **Self pleasure** and **oral sex** solves sexual limitations due to sexual dysfunction.

➤ Greater **life satisfaction** is associated with higher levels of sexual behaviour.

➤ The study of **sexuality** in the **elderly** population deserves greater **attention**, due to the **benefits** that sex can have on the elderly and to **demystify** this group. The cessation of sexual activity is not a fact that is linked to the chronological age of the subjects, but a variable **circumstance** that will depend on individual factors.

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