

## Transgender Women and Old Age: Social Representations in the Pandemic Context

### Mujeres transexuales y vejez: representaciones sociales en el contexto de la pandemia

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Recibido: 09 de febrero de 2024

Aceptado: 23 de mayo de 2024

#### Abstract

**Background:** In Brazil, transgender people over the age of 60 face high vulnerability and discrimination. **Objective:** The study aimed to identify the social representations (SR) of old age among middle-aged and elderly Brazilian transsexual women. **Method:** This is a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study made up of 20 transsexual women aged 45 or over ( $M = 53.4$ ;  $SD = 5.05$ ). Due to the context of the pandemic, the research was carried out using an online questionnaire for participants from all over Brazil. Two instruments were used for data collection: I) a sociodemographic questionnaire and II) a semi-structured interview. Two pieces of software were used to analyze the data. Initially, the data from the sociodemographic questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS and then the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using IRaMuTeQ using the Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC). **Results:** The results pointed mainly to issues of trans aging, the challenges faced by society, as well as the loneliness of trans women and their respective invisibility. **Conclusion:** From the research, it was possible to conclude that the SRs show that trans old age lacks visibility in society, and there is still a need to change stigmas in relation to ageing.

**Keywords:** Old age LGBT; Vulnerability; Trans Old Age; Social Representations.

#### Resumen

**Antecedentes:** en Brasil, las personas transexuales mayores de 60 años enfrentan alta vulnerabilidad y discriminación. **Objetivo:** el estudio tuvo como objetivo identificar las representaciones sociales (RS) de la vejez entre mujeres transexuales brasileñas de mediana y avanzada edad. **Método:** se trata de un estudio cualitativo, exploratorio y descriptivo, compuesto por 20 mujeres transexuales de 45 años o más ( $M = 53.4$ ;  $DE = 5.05$ ). Debido al contexto de la pandemia, la investigación se realizó por medio de un cuestionario *online* para participantes de todo Brasil. Se utilizaron dos instrumentos para la recogida de datos: I) un cuestionario sociodemográfico y II) una entrevista semiestructurada. Se utilizaron dos programas informáticos para analizar los datos. Inicialmente, los datos del cuestionario sociodemográfico se analizaron con el SPSS y, a continuación, las entrevistas semiestructuradas se analizaron con el IRaMuTeQ utilizando la Clasificación Jerárquica Descendente (DHC). **Resultados:** los resultados apuntaron principalmente a las cuestiones del envejecimiento trans, los desafíos enfrentados por la sociedad, así como la soledad de las mujeres trans y su respectiva invisibilidad. **Conclusión:** a partir de la investigación, fue posible concluir que las RS muestran que la vejez trans carece de visibilidad en la sociedad, y que aún es necesario cambiar los estigmas en relación con el envejecimiento.

**Palabras clave:** vejez LGBT; vulnerabilidad; vejez trans; representaciones sociales.

Para citar este artículo:

Campos, L. P., Alves, M. E. da S., Bezerra, I. E. de L., da Silva Sousa, E. M., Lima Filho, G. de S., de Alcântara, J. G., & Araújo, L. F. (2024). Transgender Women and Old Age: Social Representations in the Pandemic Context. *Liberabit*, 30(1), e798. <https://doi.org/10.24265/liberabit.2024.v30n1.798>

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## Introduction

According by the Statute of the Elderly of Brazil a person is considered elderly when he or she reaches 60 years of age in Brazil. However, the aging process encompasses several factors, such as physical, social and psychological. It involves alterations ranging from the level of mental processes, personality itself, the motivations that the person has and social skills, that is, aging, from the psychological point of view, will depend on factors of a genetic, pathological nature, potentialities individual; with interference from the environment and the sociocultural context (Rocha, 2018).

Currently, Brazil has an increasingly significant contingent of ageing of the population. The country's demographic profile has changed from a predominantly young population in recent years to an increasingly significant contingent of people aged 60 years or older. This aging is a consequence of the reduction in mortality rates and, after a while, the drop-in birth rates, causing significant changes in the age structure of the population (Miranda et al., 2016).

Even with the accelerated growth of population aging (Schneider & Pavin, 2021), the cult of youth is still reinforced, and old age permeated by stereotypes constantly focused on suffering, illness and other functional problems. In addition, in the pandemic context, the elderly people are disproportionately affected, not only through their vulnerability to disease risk, but also through the worsening of suffering related to the aging (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Understanding the negative stereotypes in relation to the elderly people, through the analysis of a smaller cut, the old age of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals (LGBT) reflects in the extension of these negative and prejudiced associations (Pereira et al., 2021). In which, as a negative contribution of stigmas in relation to LGBT old age is in the false idea that old ages are the same: heterosexual, cisgender and that go through the same aging processes (Gomes & De Araújo, 2021).

As highlighted by Sousa et al. (2022), the scenario that the LGBT population faces reflects the historical prejudice that brings with it a series of violence motivated by intolerance. In this way, the invisibility of LGBT aging is a reality present in its social realities, suffering not only from heteronormativity but also from ageism in society. Even with the advancement of public policies aimed at this population, LGBT people are already socially inserted in a context of violence throughout their lives, and in old age, situations that contribute to loneliness and isolation worsen (Crenitte et al., 2019). The literature mentions, it is necessary to reflect on old age from an intersectional perspective, in its various forms of expressions, sexualities and gender identities (De Araújo, 2022; Filho et al., 2022).

In this perspective, in the face of the aging process, there is an even smaller and more vulnerable cut, such as, for example, transfeminine old age, since few reach the age group of 60 years, due to oppression in all directions, in society, family and State (Viana & Lima, 2022). In this way, it is understood that the social exclusions linked to the identity condition of the LGBT affect life and echo in the aging of these people, since advanced age already presents several stigmas that, added to another object of social aversion, influences the social invisibility of these people (Alves & De Araújo, 2020). As an advance, recent data from the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) show a survey on the sexual orientation of Brazilian adults, however, there is still a lack of data on the transgender population in Brazil due to underreporting (Tokarnia, 2022). Thus, nowadays, even with some advances that benefit the trans population, equality is still a distant factor in the Brazilian reality (Sánchez-Fuentes et al., 2021).

In this sense, the transsexual woman is always exposed to marginalization, with physical, psychological and social violence, which occur both at school and in the family, influencing personal and professional development. In addition, violence directed at the trans population acquires other forms

of manifestation, such as structural, symbolic and institutional violence (Salgado, 2021). Thus, this violence is the cause of the low life expectancy of this public, which corresponds to 35 years of age in the Brazilian reality (Prado, 2021).

Based on the latest data from the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (ANTRA), 140 transsexual people were murdered, of which 135 were transvestite and transsexual women and 5 were transsexual men. From this, it is possible to observe that the intersection of being a woman and transsexual in the country presents a greater propensity to vulnerability and discrimination, making it almost impossible to think about a probable aging (Benevides, 2022). Thus, stigmatization, marginalization and LGBTphobia are factors that contribute to negative experiences in the daily life of the Brazilian trans population.

A recent study by Paiva et al. (2023) pointed out that when they seek health services, for example, trans people face numerous obstacles in the form of violence and marginalization, as in the case of disrespect for their social name and/or unpreparedness on the part of professionals. Another investigation by Domingues et al. (2023) showed that transphobia ends up directly influencing the ageing of these people and causes them a feeling of worthlessness caused by exclusion, as well as unique marks and traumas.

Specifically, during the pandemic, an integrative review by Santos et al. (2023) showed that the reality of social vulnerability experienced by trans people has increased. This was due to the need for social isolation, causing anxiogenic and depressive symptoms, intensified financial difficulties and access to gender affirmation procedures, among others. The study also pointed to the need for networked policies for the social protection of these people in order to reduce their vulnerability and suffering.

Given this, the study of Social Representations (SR) opens up countless possibilities for understanding,

analyzing the attribution of these actions according to the contexts in which they are produced, thus justifying their options in the face of the realities that are presented. Thus, it is considered that the representations support the practices that express the representations and lead to their formation. Currently, in a society in motion, in constant transformation, the possibilities of applying the Theory of Social Representation increase (Ferreira, 2016).

In this scenario, from the above, analyzing the situations of vulnerability to which these women are exposed, and the scarcity of studies found on the subject, the relevance and importance for carrying out the research is evident. That said, a broader understanding and study of several aspects that integrate the experiences of Brazilian trans women was necessary, mainly referring to trans old age. Thus, it is important to analyze the SR of middle-aged and older transsexual women about the theme of trans old age, providing an understanding of the experiences and affectations of this population, as well as making it possible to think of practical actions that may favor these women.

Therefore, the study carried out is based on a content analysis of interviews with middle-aged and older transsexual women. The research aims to relate and observe the particularities of the two groups of trans women from their SR, with the intention of leveraging future research about the subject based on the experiences shared by the target audience. Starting from the reflection about the reality of the social group and understanding the vulnerability and invisibility until today, this study aimed to use the research as an object of the possibility of proliferation of discussions about the trans identities experienced in Brazil and the most common challenges of aging. Due to the existing gap in the exploration of the theme related to trans aging, this research is relevant as it is a way of mobilizing for possible elaborations of strategies for improvements in coping with the adversities of LGBT old age.

## Method

### Type of Research

This is a descriptive and exploratory qualitative study using cross-sectional data.

## Participants

A non-probability convenience sampling was used, composed of 20 Brazilian transsexual women, aged 45 years or older. The data from the sociodemographic questionnaire allowed the characterization of the sample participants, as shown in the Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Sociodemographic data of the participants*

Variable		Nº	%
Age Group	45 to 59 years old	13	65
	60 years or older	7	35
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	15	75
	Homosexual	5	25
Marital status	Single	18	90
	Married	1	5
	Civil union	1	5
Income	Up to minimum wage	7	35
	Between 1 and 2 minimum wages	6	30
	Between 2 and 4 minimum wages	5	25
	Above 6 minimum wages	2	10
Lives with	Alone	13	65
	Spouse	2	10
	Friend	3	15
	Family	2	10

## Instruments

For data collection, three instruments were used; the first is a sociodemographic questionnaire with the purpose of obtaining information about age, gender, marital status, color, income, sexual orientation, religion, education, State and, housing conditions. The second is a semi-structured interview that has 2 questions: (1) How do you believe that transsexuality influences your aging process? (2) How do you define trans old age?

## Procedure

The Human Ethics and Research Committee of Federal University (report N.º 4.942.097) approved the study. In this way, the participants had access to the Free and Informed Consent Form, which corresponds to a means of ensuring protection, in addition to clarifying the possible benefits and/or risks of their participation in the research. (Nardelli & Monteiro, 2021).

The COVID-19 Pandemic presented a reorganization of contemporary societies, with the presence of progressive measures of social distancing (Aquino et al., 2020). For this reason, the selection of participants was carried out on the Internet, using social networks (Instagram and WhatsApp). Given the context of the pandemic and the difficulty in accessing the target audience, in view of the low life expectancy of transgender people in Brazil, we had challenges in data collection, since, initially, the intention was to interview only elderly transgender women. However, due to the low number of transsexual women who reach this age group, the research was extended to middle-aged transsexual women, thus making it possible to analyze the SR of transsexual women about trans old age.

### Data analysis

The instrument used for data collection was the online platform Google Forms, where participants initially read the Free and Informed Consent Form, which contained information about the research, the implications of participation, the issue of confidentiality and about participation being completely voluntary and, from that, they agreed to participate. Finally, participants answered open questions, as a way of expanding their perceptions regarding the topic. The average application time was approximately 20 minutes to participate in the research. Some participants demonstrated difficulties, but the researchers provided the necessary clarifications.

In the research, two software were used to carry out the data analysis. Initially, data from the sociodemographic questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS v. 23 with the aim of characterizing the sample. Subsequently, the analysis of information from the semi-structured interview were organized into files and analyzed using IRaMuTeQ (Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires) v. 0.7 and R 4.0.3. Then, the Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC) of the text segments was performed for the acquisition of the classes.

## Results

The general corpus consisted of twenty texts, separated into 23 text segments (TS), with use 23 TS (85.19%) .875 occurrences emerged (forms or words), 371 of which were distinct and 257 with a single occurrence. The analyzed content was classified into four classes: Class 1, with 6 ST (26.09%); Class 2 with 6 ST (26.09%); Class 3 with 4 ST (17.39%); Class 4 with 7 ST (30.43%). These four classes are divided into two branches (A and B) of the total corpus under analysis (see Figure 1).

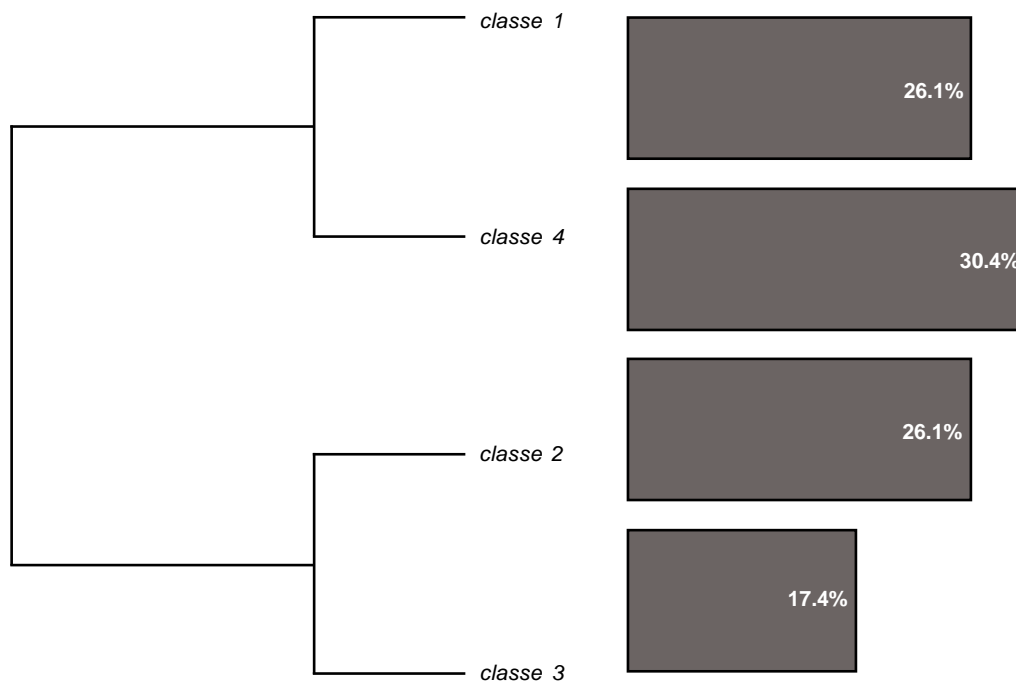
Subcorpus A, «Impacts», composed of Class 1 («Trans aging») and Class 4 («Trans invisibility»), which refers to the perspectives of the participants about trans old age, presents reports of vulnerabilities, such as social exclusion and the act of survival in society. Subcorpus B, «Fight», composed by Class 3 («Loneliness of trans women») and Class 2 («Coping in Society») observes transsexuality as a burden for society, surrounded by prejudices, thus making the arrival in old age trans an achievement.

In order to allow a better visualization of the presented classes, a dendrogram was created with the word of each class determined from the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test. In it, the evocations belonging to each class are emerged. Next, each of the classes presented in the Descending Hierarchical Classification - DHC will be described and illustrated (see Figure 2).

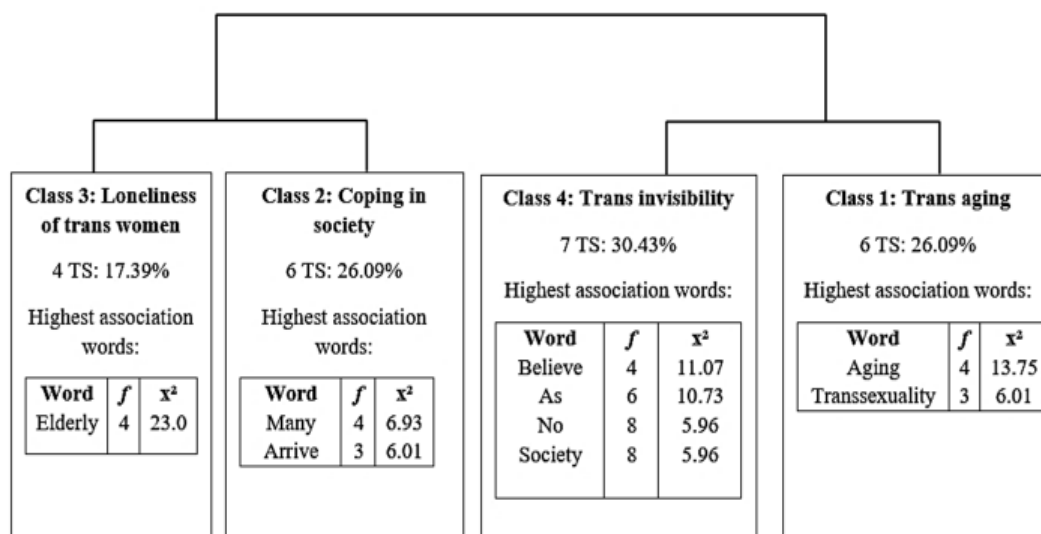
### Class 4- Trans Invisibility

It comprises 30.43% ( $f = 7$  TS) of the total corpus analyzed. This class is composed of words like «Believe» ( $\chi^2 > 11.07$ ); «As» ( $\chi^2 > 10.73$ ); «No» ( $\chi^2 > 5.96$ ) and «Society» ( $\chi^2 > 5.96$ ). In the analysis carried out, it was noticed that the speeches are based on the challenges present in access to basic rights, such as the health system and the labor market, resulting in the escape to sexual service jobs. Also, emphasizing the understanding of the need to change such paradigms in society.

**Figure 1**  
Total corpus of IRaMuTeQ lexicographical analysis



**Figure 2**  
Dendrogram of SR about old age for middle-aged and older Brazilian transgender women



## Class 2- Coping in Society

It comprises 26.09% ( $f = 6$  TS) of the total corpus analyzed. This class is composed of the words «Many» ( $\chi^2 > 6.93$ ) and «Arrive» ( $\chi^2 > 6.01$ ). In the analysis carried out, trans women report the constant struggle of living in a transphobic country and emphasize that reaching old age is an achievement. Some participants point out that growing up in a harmonious family environment changes this negative scenario of the aging process.

## Class 1- Trans Aging

It comprises 26.09% ( $f = 6$  TS) of the total corpus analyzed. This class is composed of words such as «Aging» ( $\chi^2 > 13.72$ ) and «Transsexuality» ( $\chi^2 > 6.01$ ). In the analysis, the narratives about trans aging being surrounded by violent processes stand out, making it noticeable that the representations of trans old age are mostly negative. The study also exposes the influence of transsexuality on mental and physical health.

## Class 3- Loneliness of trans women

It comprises 17.39% ( $f = 4$  TS) of the total corpus analyzed. This class is composed of the word «Elderly» ( $\chi^2 > 23.0$ ). In the analysis, the mentions about the abandonment of transsexuals by the family and society are significant. However, even though transsexuality is associated with loneliness, some participants highlighted the perspective of aging and freedom.

## Discussion

It is important to highlight that the SR paradigm has been used in several studies with the trans population (Pierry, 2023; Silva, 2022). Thus, it is highlighted that SR, as they are socially constructed in a given context, bring with them particularities of those people and places, so that their importance occurs precisely in bringing certain specificities into discussion. Therefore, when dealing with SR about some constructs present in the lives of trans women

with themselves, it was possible to learn directly about how they perceive these facts of life.

The data obtained from the interviews with trans women about old age allowed for common representations of the group of older Brazilian trans women with middle-aged Brazilian trans women. Thus, based on the information obtained through the semi-structured interview questionnaires, it was possible to group the themes into categories, based on the results above. In view of this, the elements found in this analysis are now discussed based on existing conceptions about trans old age.

## Class 4- Trans Invisibility

The trans population presents several vulnerabilities, becoming invisible by society, as a result of experiences of prejudice and discrimination like with transsexual women, affected and deprived of living the identities they assumed for themselves. In this regard, Da Costa (2021) points out that several structuring points of an institutionally and socially fragile community follow the prejudice suffered by LGBT people. As the participants report:

«Like anyone else, we suffer even more stigma and prejudice» (Claudia, 45 years old, white trans woman, formal job).

«I define it as tiring; I am not very willing to live in society» (Roberta, 49 years old, black trans woman, informal job).

With this, Julião and Souza (2022) points out that trans women are susceptible to being victims of violence, a consequence of the combination of the various prejudices and oppressions they face in society. In addition, this population is generally affected by both structural and institutional violence, with a view to deprivation of rights, including economic ones. As the participant says: «*Economically speaking, it influences getting a job; it's more difficult, I'm lucky I have my mother*» (Roberta, 49 years old, black, informal job).

Thus, the difficulties experienced by the trans population at the time of entering the formal labor market are evident, since factors such as prejudice and marginalization of the LGBT population make it difficult to access to work (Silva et al., 2021). As a result of physical and psychological violence, many transsexuals drop out of school as teenagers, because of this, the chances of working in a formal job decrease, resulting in the search for informal alternatives, such as prostitution. As one of the participant reports: *«I don't see influence for myself, but for my friends who are on the street prostituting themselves for a living, I see it as influence» (Kátia, 45 years old, brown trans woman, businesswoman).*

According to Junior et al. (2022) transsexuals do not have their labor rights and are far from acquiring them, since it is not enough to be inserted in the labor market, it is also necessary to ensure dignified treatment, respect, security and social equality and salary in the field of work. In addition, another issue can be observed according to the speech of one of the participants: *«We are even more vulnerable psychosocially, in health and in the treatment of diseases that arise from the indiscriminate use of hormones; trans people getting lost on the streets prostituting themselves, using alcohol and other drugs» (Bianca, 64 years old, brown trans woman, retired).*

Thus, it is evident that the trans population is not only invisible in the professional and educational field, but also in terms of access to the health system. In this context, this population lives in vulnerability according to health care, which is often inadequately exercised or not carried out. This service, based by disrespect for the social name and the unpreparedness of professionals when providing care to this public, means that the medical needs of the trans population are not met. In this way, there are many types of violence suffered by transsexuals in the health system, such as, for example, the lack of knowledge on the part of professionals, the unpreparedness for the practice of reception, as well as the lack of public

policies for the promotion of well-being, taking into account their needs for body modification and the use of hormones (Tolotti et al., 2021).

In Brazil, with regard to transsexual women, the process of self-medication and the ease in obtaining these products is noticeable (Silva et al., 2022). Thus, the practice of hormonal self-medication used by a large majority of the transsexual population can result in serious side effects, requiring the health service (Janini et al., 2022). Therefore, the importance of valuing specific health issues of the trans population is highlighted, since their problems are marked by the lack of adequate care in the health system (Campos et al., 2021). As reported by one participant: *«I believe that transsexuality helps us to recognize the victories of trans people who came before us, not to deny that the needs of trans people need to be thought together with society» (Claudia, 49 years old, white trans woman, formal job).*

In view of this, the challenge of access to health by the trans population is just one part of the diversity of violence suffered daily, with this, the search for inclusion of this population and equity must be constant and collective. Thus, in this class, it was significant to visualize the invisibility of the trans population in society, since surviving and carrying out daily tasks becomes a challenge, due to the suffering caused by prejudice and the lack of public policies to access basic rights. This discussion is emphasized in the speech: *«Transsexuality is seen as a disease and society is not ready to deal with trans old age, we need visibility, respect and dignity» (Bianca, 64 years old, brown trans woman, retired).*

## **Class 2- Coping in Society**

In view of the data from the research participants, it is important to highlight the prejudice experienced by trans women in society, since they live in a transphobic country. That said, growing old as a trans woman in Brazil is an achievement resulting from movements to fight transphobia in the country, which



corresponds to the one that most kills transsexuals in the world (Almeida, 2018). Thus, the existence of these women over 45 years old, in a country where life expectancy is 35 years old, is an achievement for the next generations. As they report:

«It is a victory after surviving so many impositions made by society» (Laerte, 52 years old, white trans woman, beneficiary of the Continuous Cash Benefit program).

«A story of life and learning to get here and be a legend for those who are coming» (Lea, 50 years old, Asian trans woman, informal job).

Given this, it is possible to correlate the highlight in the content of this class in the dendrogram (Figure 2) with the word «arrive». In Brazil, due to the lack of equity policies and the constant violence against trans people, reaching old age in this environment has been unlikely. Corroborating with Salgado's speeches (2021), in relation to the conflicts experienced daily in different ways by trans women, always reported by them full of pain, caused by such discrimination, stigma and repression. These factors are caused by a society that reproduces moral, psychological and physical violence against trans women, impairing their personal development and in various other areas of life, such as affective and professional. Thus, it is possible to identify, according to the content presented, the vulnerability of these women due to the negligence to which they are subjected by the community and the State. These issues can be evidenced in the speeches:

«There are few who arrive, many died in the prime of life, many are murdered, many attempt suicide because they have no one to trust» (Luma, 60 years old, brown trans woman, retired).

«It is living one day after another in the constant presence of this transphobia in everyday life; it's a struggle to use the social name» (Tiffany, 45 years old, black trans woman, informal job).

Furthermore, in addition to the speeches filled with pain and indignation in the face of contemporary society, another important point to be highlighted are the different realities experienced by some trans women, since factors such as proximity to the family and the opportunity to grow up in an environment functional are considered a privilege in such a neglected population. As they mention:

«We learn to use our ability and intelligence, we study and graduate, we know and we have to fight for our rights so that we can age in a healthy way» (Gabriela, 60 years old, white trans woman, retired with informal job).

«It depends on the lifestyle of each one, because I am living my old age with my family, so I can imagine that it is different from the life of those who live in prostitution or other things that society puts them» (Valentina, 65 years old, white trans woman, unemployed).

In view of this, the presented narratives emphasize how different contexts are capable of influencing the aging process of trans women, who, in most cases, experience precarious rights and family exclusion. This means, according to Veroneze (2022), that prejudice and discrimination are factors that hinder access to education and, subsequently, entry into the labor market, thus presenting a series of restrictions to trans women without a support network.

With this, due to social exclusion, many trans women are forced to enter the prostitution market, living with the challenge of living on the streets, highways, brothels, exposed to violence and contact with diseases. As Câmara (2021) points out, trans women are more marginalized because, in addition to their already being socially inferior, they still suffer violence as a result of transphobia, experiencing difficulties in accessing policies that meet their social needs. In this way, due to the difficulty of accessing public services and the formal job market due to the transphobia present in the country, prostitution is a way out for survival in society.

## **Class 1- Trans Aging**

In this class, the aging process stands out, in which the trans population experiences a series of violence, resulting from LGBTphobia present in Brazilian society. Thus, according to Alves et al. (2023), the negative stereotypes of LGBT old age are still very current, since the rules and social norms influence the exclusion of LGBT older people who dream of being free. According to the participants, there are many experiences full of pain:

«The aging process is not the same for everyone, this depends on how older people are, in this case, we go through violent processes» (Érika, 54 years old, black trans woman, informal job).

«It is impossible to imagine aging seeing your sisters dying or having their lives taken away almost daily, transsexuality is a social exclusion and thinking about aging is something surreal» (Rogéria, 46 years old, white trans woman, informal job).

Thus, growing old as a trans person in a cis-heteronormative society is a challenge full of negative experiences related to the aging process. That is, non-cis-heterosexual people grow and develop surrounded by prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, these conditions directly influence the full experience with sexuality, as well as the mental health of this population (Gomes et al., 2020). Thus, the presence of paradigms and negative stigmas of trans women in relation to the aging process is observed, as they point out:

«Trans old age should be a privilege, but it becomes a burden» (Rogéria, 46 years old, white trans woman, informal job).

«For me, trans old age is full of sad experiences» (Jaqueline, 65 years old, white trans woman, retired).

Another point to be highlighted in this category are the particularities present in the life of the person who reaches maturity, since aging itself already involves

weaknesses. By including the influence of transsexuality in this process, this group becomes doubly vulnerable, since some circumstances favor these representations, such as the presence of chronic diseases, lack of respect and loss of family prestige (Minó & De Mello, 2021). Faced with these stigmas present in society about old age related to suffering, functional losses and illness, it is evident in the participants' reports, the emphasis on health as a concern of the trans population, as the participants mention in the following statements:

«Before, most didn't think that the trans population would get to age, that they would only live for drinks and drugs, but time has shown me the ability to take care of our health and prevent us from sexually transmitted diseases» (Gabriela, 60 years old, white trans woman, retired with informal work).

«Transsexuality influences my aging process related to health issues and the present impacts» (Jaqueline, 65 years old, white trans woman, retired).

According to Monteiro et al. (2019) in the health area, the vulnerability of transsexuals can be exemplified by the high rates of violence suffered, the affected mental health and the high incidence of HIV. In addition, discrimination can be considered an obstacle to accessing health care and promotion services. Thus, highlighting the social inequalities in health care in the country.

## **Class 3- Loneliness of trans women**

In this class, the observed contents address the theme of loneliness present in the lives of trans women, in view of the abandonment of the community and the family. According to Rabelo (2021), trans women experience an epistemic loneliness, accompanied by an ontological loneliness. Thus, the speeches presented in the research show that aging for trans women becomes an intersection of oppression and disability, as shown in the speeches:

«Elderly trans people are forgotten by society» (Jacqueline, 61 years old, white trans woman, retired).

«There are so few of us who age that it is impossible to imagine, I notice that they become a burden, because they are people excluded from the family, people without a home, who often have to detransition to access a nursing home» (Lili, 46 years old, white trans woman, informal work).

With this, it is noted that even the participants experiencing different stages of life, the perceptions on the subject address the helplessness of a population already neglected in all stages. At first, for social reasons, the family environment is not always a welcoming space for transgender people. The breaking of feminine and masculine paradigms causes some family members to demonstrate rejection and disapproval, especially when transsexuality is evidenced in childhood and adolescence, as individuals tend to express themselves through playing, clothing, that is, expressing her own sexuality.

That said, the feeling of rejection by family members can generate a feeling of isolation and impotence in an environment where support is expected. Family abandonment is only the beginning of exclusion, which is also present in different areas of society, such as the labor market and academic environments. In a cisheteropatriarchal society, growing old as a transsexual woman encompasses several barriers and prejudices experienced daily. As pointed out in the report of the participant: «*People value youth a lot, they despise the fact that elderly trans women have many vulnerabilities*» (Christine, 61 years old, white trans woman, formal job).

In view of this, it is highlighted through the information of the participant that the process of aging as a trans woman in a society is marked by the cult of youth and beauty, because at all times an aesthetic standard is required as an ideal to be conquered by women generating suffering and vulnerabilities also

linked to transsexuality. According to Monteiro and Rocha (2017), men and women do not experience old age equally, since the gender issue is linked to a social construction that defines roles in society, designated as historical products.

In this way, the loneliness developed in most trans women in different areas of life is generated by prejudice, intolerance, transphobia and conservatism rooted in the country, contributing to the exclusion of these women. By identifying themselves as women, living in a sexist and patriarchal society, trans women also suffer from the consequences and the implications resulting from this sexism (Cavalcante & Sepulveda, 2021). Thus, the sense of loneliness of the trans population and society are totally intertwined, since they are denied not only civil rights, but the recognition of gender identity that denies the existence of trans women, resulting in an illness (Senna, 2021). On the other hand, in this same class, the participants also highlight:

«I am living, and it has been a normal life, I only feel like an elderly person when I am in an establishment that needs identity» (Valentina, 65 years old, white trans woman, unemployed)

«It is difficult, but at the same time it's good, because we allow ourselves to be what we are, regardless of concepts and opinions, it is freedom» (Christine, 61 years old, white trans woman, formal job).

In view of this, it is possible to observe a different perception of old age, since the speeches of these participants relate aging to freedom, deconstructing the paradigms of «elderly» that appear as significant in the dendrogram (Figure 2). In relation to this, it is highlighted that gender identity is a marker of difference that, when articulated with old age, produces meanings, own ways of governing, predisposed, also, to vulnerabilities present in society. These individuals are often exposed to challenge the meanings of masculinity and femininity produced throughout the life process (Silva & Pocahy, 2022).

Based on the results obtained, the inequality experienced by transsexual women is highlighted, constituted by the omission of public policies aimed at assisting and offering basic conditions to the transgender population, causing impacts on the daily lives of these women. Thus, favoring invisibility in society, where they experience negligence in the health system and lack of opportunities in the labor market, where they need to seek other forms of informal job, mostly prostitution. In addition, because of the physical and psychological violence caused by LGBTphobia, the daily struggle of this population stands out.

Faced with this violence resulting from prejudice, these women live a path lacking support, both from society and from the family, causing the loneliness from which most transsexual women suffer, even though some participants represent trans aging as freedom. Thus, the SR of transsexual women who are experiencing aging encompasses aspects of struggle and victory for reaching middle age and old age in such a vulnerable population and with such low life expectancy in the country.

This study allowed the identification of shared ways of thinking about the aging process by characterizing the knowledge of this social groups. Even with the completion of the research, the process for carrying out the study was complicated, in view of the difficulty in obtaining the sample, since the scenario of the COVID/19 pandemic in Brazil was not favorable, which made it difficult to contact with the target audience. Another aspect that delayed the research was the difficulty of finding older trans women, since they are people with a life expectancy of 35 years old in Brazil, one of the consequences of the prejudices suffered by these minority groups.

Thus, from the research it was possible to perceive the challenges and difficulties experienced by middle-aged and older Brazilian trans women, since old age already presents itself with various stigmas and prejudices, when linked to transsexuality, they suffer double vulnerability. In this way, the

reports obtained in the research prove the prejudice that still exists in society, since the SR of trans women about old age portrays the invisibility and abandonment in the daily life of this population.

In the study, the identified SR show that trans old age has no space or visibility in society, and it is still necessary to change stigmas for the possibility of aging. Aspects such as violence, discrimination and prejudice were mentioned as the cause of low life expectancy and so much suffering experienced on a daily basis. In addition, the negative SRs about aging are a consequence of the challenge of achieving longevity, since surviving as a trans woman in the midst of various forms of violence and without the protection of basic rights becomes a frequent struggle.

With that, even in the face of difficulties, the objective of the study was achieved with regard to understanding the experiences of transsexual women and observing the relationships of the SR of middle-aged and older trans women. In view of this, we believe in carrying out new studies to explore a topic that is so little discussed in society, since it is fundamental to have a reflective look at trans old age, considering all the dimensions that surround it, making it necessary to understand even more its meanings and facets.

Thus, based on the collected data, the vulnerability and neglect of transsexual women in the country is highlighted. Through the object of study, the need to operationalize the construction of public policy practices through the new scientific evidence presented here was evidenced, since there are few studies regarding the SR of old age among middle-aged and older Brazilian transsexual women in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

From this, it is possible to think of practical actions that can benefit this population. Thus, a perspective of public policies for the trans population is to reflect about methods of promoting equality in society, such as projects to encourage education, aimed at reducing

school dropouts and, highlighting adequate access to public health through presentation of a protocol for the care of transgender people, with the aim of expanding access to comprehensive health. In addition, it is important to expand project and program that promote training and opportunities for transsexuals in the labor market, since in the research, trans women also reported having difficulties in their professional lives.

### Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### Ethical responsibility

The authors declare that they have complied with all ethical procedures with the use and application of informed consent and after approval by the research ethics committee.

### Authorship Contribution

LPCG: data collection and manuscript writing.

MESA: methodology and final revision of the manuscript.

EMSS: data processing and analysis.

IELB: data processing and analysis.

GSLF: data collection.

JGA: data collection.

LFA: manuscript elaboration design and critical and final revision of the manuscript.

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