

# The importance of including the topic of violence against women in undergraduate nursing courses

*A importância da inserção da temática violência contra as mulheres na graduação em enfermagem*

*La importancia de incluir el tema de la violencia contra la mujer en la carrera de enfermería*

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to discuss the inclusion of the topic of violence against women in undergraduate nursing courses at public universities in the state of Rio de Janeiro. **Method:** qualitative documentary study focused on a descriptive analysis of the curriculum and program content of the Women's Health academic subjects in undergraduate nursing courses in Rio de Janeiro regarding the presence of this content in nursing training. **Results:** regarding the mandatory academic subjects found in the curriculum, it was evident that there is no explicit content that deals with violence against women in the six universities participating in the study. In the academic programs analyzed, it was noted that, of the twelve mandatory subjects distributed in the universities, only four mention the topic under discussion. **Final considerations:** there is a gap in the academic program regarding this topic. Including violence against women in the nursing program enables future professionals to deal with these situations in an effective and humane way.

**Descriptors:** Universities; Nursing; Women's Health; Violence Against Women.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** discutir a inserção da temática violência contra a mulher nos cursos de bacharelado em enfermagem de universidades públicas do estado do Rio de Janeiro. **Método:** estudo documental de cunho qualitativo, sendo objeto de análise descritiva a ementa e o conteúdo programático das disciplinas de Saúde da Mulher nos cursos de bacharelado em enfermagem no Rio de Janeiro quanto à presença desse conteúdo na formação em enfermagem. **Resultados:** no que se refere às ementas das disciplinas obrigatórias, ficou evidente que não há de forma explícita o conteúdo que trata da violência contra as mulheres nas seis universidades participantes do estudo. Já nos conteúdos programáticos analisados, percebeu-se que, das doze disciplinas obrigatórias distribuídas nas universidades, apenas quatro citam a temática em discussão. **Considerações finais:** há uma lacuna da temática na formação. Incluir a violência contra as mulheres no currículo de enfermagem capacita futuros profissionais a lidar com essas situações de forma eficaz e humanizada.

**Descritores:** Universidades; Enfermagem; Saúde da Mulher; Violência contra as Mulheres.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** discutir la inclusión del tema de violencia contra la mujer en las carreras de licenciatura en enfermería de las universidades públicas del estado de Río de Janeiro. **Método:** estudio documental de carácter cualitativo, con plan de estudios y el contenido de los programas de las asignaturas de Salud de la Mujer en la licenciatura en enfermería de Río de Janeiro como objeto del análisis, para determinar la presencia de ese contenido en la formación de enfermería. **Resultados:** en los programas de las asignaturas obligatorias no hay contenido explícito que trate la violencia contra la mujer en las seis universidades estudiadas. En el contenido de los programas analizados, se observó que, de las doce asignaturas obligatorias distribuidas en las universidades, sólo cuatro mencionan el tema en discusión. **Consideraciones finales:** existe un vacío sobre el tema en la formación. Incluir la violencia contra la mujer en el plan de estudios de enfermería capacita a los futuros profesionales para afrontar esas situaciones de forma eficaz y humana.

**Descriptores:** Universidades; Enfermería; Salud de la Mujer; Violencia contra la Mujer.

## INTRODUCTION

Violence is a complex and multi-faceted social problem that is present in society as a behavior that involves the use of physical force and power between individuals, groups, communities and even against oneself. This practice may result in physical and psychological suffering or even death<sup>1</sup>.

From this perspective, violence against women (VAW) is a serious public health problem and, at the same time, a human rights violation that affects all women regardless of their skin color, race, social class, religion, marital status, level of education or even sexual orientation. This social mechanism causes problems that go beyond physical harm as it creates infinitely greater impacts on women who experience violence, which may vary according to the situation in which they find themselves or have been inserted and, when associated with their intimacy, there is yet another violation of human dignity<sup>2</sup>.

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Worldwide, 6% of women have been victims of abuse or violence caused by people close to them and who were not their partners. The age range between 15 and 24 corresponds to the highest rates of violence perpetrated by intimate partners. In poor countries, 37% of physical and/or sexual violence is inflicted by the partner. Countries in Europe, Central Asia, East and Southeast Asia have the lowest rates, corresponding to 16–23%, 18%, 20% and 21%, respectively. The highest prevalence rates of violence perpetrated by the partner can be found in Oceania, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, experienced by women aged 15 to 49, with percentage values between 33% and 51%<sup>2</sup>.

According to Law No. 11.340 of 2006, known as the Maria da Penha Law, one of the most important in the Brazilian context and a reference in establishing mechanisms to curb domestic and family violence against women, there are five forms of violence: physical, sexual, patrimonial, moral and psychological<sup>3</sup>.

In 2022, in Brazil, 1,437 women were killed simply for being women. Regarding assaults related to domestic violence, there was an increase of 2.9%, totaling 245,713 cases. Threats increased by 7.2%, which is equivalent to 613,529 cases. There was a total of 899,485 calls to 190 (contact number for the Brazilian Military Police), with an average of 102 calls/hour<sup>4</sup>.

In the state of Rio de Janeiro, in 2022, 344 women experienced some type of violence every 24 hours, including 104 cases of threat, 103 cases of intentional bodily injury, 69 cases of insult, seven of stalking and six of damage<sup>5</sup>. In addition, 25,814 cases of intentional bodily injury related to domestic violence were recorded throughout the state<sup>4</sup>.

Patrimonial and psychological violences are often more subtle and less visible than physical violence, making them more difficult to identify and report. Victims may not recognize these forms of violence as such or may not have the appropriate vocabulary to describe them. Both victims and professionals who deal with these cases may not be sufficiently aware or trained to recognize and document these types of violence. Because of this, some studies turn to the qualitative approach in an attempt to guide actions aimed at defending women in this regard<sup>6-8</sup>.

Based on this perspective, the training process of health professionals should contextualize important issues that permeate societal development, and VAW is a reality that they will experience in their daily work context. Thus, it is worth highlighting that nursing care has a fundamental role considering its close contact to women when they need medical service, being the first to provide care in health facilities. The importance of being receptive and offering qualified listening during the entire care process is crucial, from the first contact to potential referrals or a possible return of the woman to the unit, thus being essential to identify VAW situations<sup>9</sup>.

The nursing team, when equipped with scientific knowledge to work in all types of settings, has a prominent role in providing care to women. Therefore, nurses must be prepared to care for those who experience different forms of violence. For this to become a reality in the professional routine, students must receive materials that qualify them to work with these users during their academic training. In this context, it is necessary to consider the National Curricular Guidelines for Undergraduate Nursing Courses, defined both by the National Council of Education and the Board of Higher Education under Resolution CNE/CES No. 3, of November 7, 2001, which sets up the inclusion of fundamental content for undergraduate nursing courses in the Brazilian scenario, establishing a relationship between the family and community contexts, taking into account the health-disease process and epidemiological data<sup>10</sup>.

Given the plurality of curricular programs and possibilities of action in the teaching field, as well as the countless ways of teaching and learning, the aim of this study is to highlight possible gaps in the training process of these professionals, allowing for the discussion of syllabuses and academic program contents on this topic.

Thus, the process of training and qualifying nurses to identify, prevent and address VAW during their academic and professional training is the object of the study and the identified problematics in the Brazilian context, where VAW can be neglected in health facilities for being a difficult topic to address, mainly due to the lack of preparation of professionals, including nurses<sup>9</sup>.

Faced with this situation, nursing care often fails to be provided as recommended by the guidelines because there is a gap in knowledge related to the particularities of gender-based violence against women<sup>9</sup>. Among the reasons for this gap is the lack of academic subjects on this topic in the curricular program of undergraduate nursing courses<sup>11</sup>.

Taking this context into consideration, the objective of the study was to discuss the inclusion of the topic of violence against women in undergraduate nursing courses at public universities in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

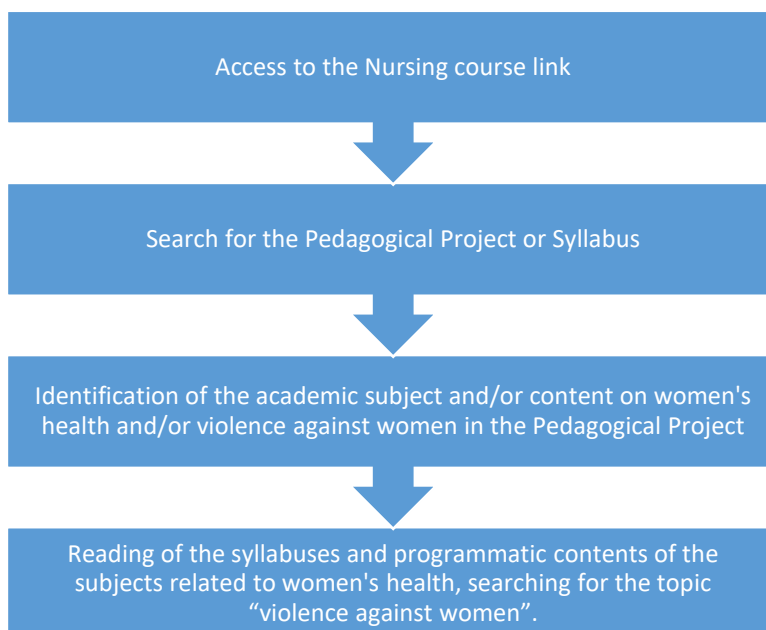
## METHOD

This is a qualitative documentary study focused on a descriptive analysis of the curriculum and program content of the Women's Health academic subjects in Undergraduate Nursing Courses. The study sites were public universities located in the state of Rio de Janeiro. According to the Brazilian Ministry of Education, there are 6 undergraduate nursing courses offered by public universities in the state of Rio de Janeiro<sup>12</sup>.

The justification for restricting data collection to public universities in Rio de Janeiro, even though all higher education institutions ("Instituições de Ensino Superior – IES") follow the same National Curricular Guideline ("Diretriz Curricular Nacional – DCN"), was based on the access to data and its availability on the curricular programs, syllabi and program content of these IES, which can be found on the respective institutional websites, as well as on the representativeness and commitment of these public universities to scientific research.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: being a public university that offered an undergraduate Nursing course, presenting a Course's Pedagogical Project ("Planejamento Pedagógico do Curso – PPC") with a syllabus and/or program content related to Women's Health subjects that could be accessed on the Institutions' websites or by contacting the professors responsible for developing the referred content. To ensure their anonymity, they were designated to by the acronym IES, which stands for Higher Education Institution in Portuguese, followed by the numerical sequence in which the analysis was carried out, ranging from 1 to 6.

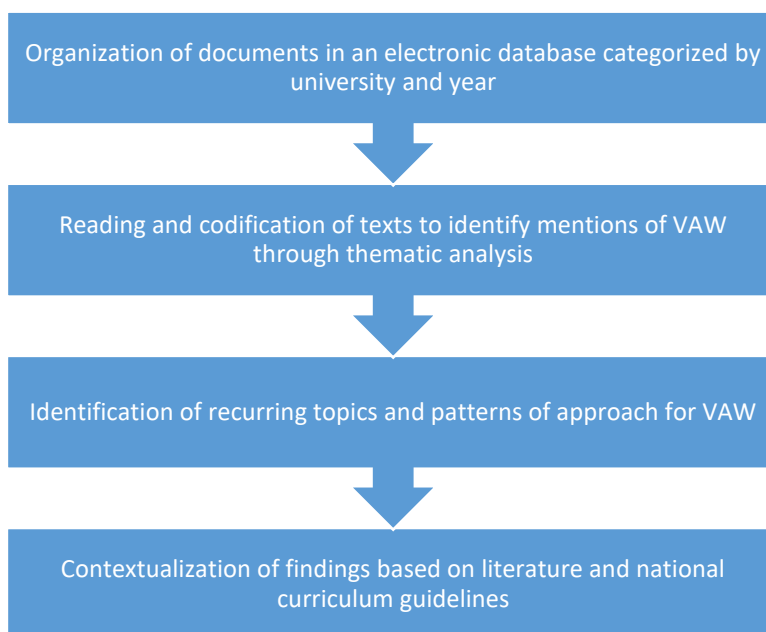
To obtain data, a script was prepared containing information about the Institution, the academic subject(s) on women's health, description of these subjects, semester of the course in which they were offered, theoretical and practical course load, total course load and credits. Data collection took place from December 2022 to February 2023, was carried out by the main researcher and followed the flowchart shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Data collection procedures. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2023.

It is worth noting that, when there was no data related to the pedagogical project or syllabus on the Institution's website, the professor responsible for the subject was contacted by email or through the Institution's website, when possible.

Regarding the methods of data analysis and systematization of results, the steps described in Figure 2 were duly followed.



**Figure 2:** Methods of data analysis and systematization of results. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2023.

Regarding ethical aspects, the documents analyzed can be publicly accessed, are available on the internet and are unrestricted. Therefore, since no human beings were involved, there was no need for the research protocol to be assessed by the Ethics Committees of the institutions involved.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To analyze the inclusion of the “VAW” topic in the syllabuses and program contents of undergraduate nursing courses offered by public universities in Rio de Janeiro, it is necessary to reaffirm that this violence constitutes a form of human rights violation and a social problem that persists over time, manifesting itself through power relations that go beyond the physical aspect, affecting the bodies and minds of women who experience situations of violence. To provide qualified care, it is essential for nurses to understand that knowledge is vital when it comes to caring for these women.

In many countries, the concern about including the topic of VAW in undergraduate curricular programs is also a trend, since it is a globally recognized problem and is also considered a human rights violation. Thus, the UN developed a guide for health schools to promote a women-centered teaching focused on improving quality care<sup>13</sup>. In a study published in the United States, researchers showed that active methodologies such as games are effective for developing students' ability to reflect and act in terms of providing better caring for women who experience violence<sup>14</sup>.

Particularly in this study, at the first contact with the curricular programs, it was verified how they were set up according to each course offered. Each teaching program follows the same line of thought: they are divided into mandatory and optional academic subjects as well as into theoretical and practical, basic and professionalizing cycles.

The results of the syllabus and programmatic contents of the subjects that explored the topic of women's health in undergraduate Nursing courses are shown in Figure 3.

Institution/subject	Syllabus
IES 1	
Women's Health 1	Develop historically contextualized knowledge about Women, Health and Society that underlie a Sensitive Nursing practice, favoring the instrumentalization of Students and Women aimed at guiding them through a path of rapprochement with their bodies, thus contributing to the exercise of citizenship.
Women's Health 2	
Women's Health 3 – Supervised Internship	Develop skills aimed at providing nursing care for women in primary health care to promote health and prevent illnesses from adolescence to menopause.
Women's Health 4 – Supervised Internship	Develop skills and abilities among students so that they can provide comprehensive nursing care to women at the different phases of their life cycle, at secondary and tertiary care levels, and considering their citizenship, sexual and reproductive rights.
IES 2	
Women's Health Nursing III	Attention to women's health; health actions in primary health care network which include gynecological and obstetric nursing care at the different cycles of women's lives, linked to their family and social context.
Women's Health Nursing IV	Study of comprehensive health care for women throughout their life cycles. Systematic nursing actions for women and their families. Obstetric and gynecological nursing care. Sociocultural and epidemiological aspects that include nursing care for women with an emphasis on public health and education policies through critical, reflective thinking and social political commitment.
IES 3	
Women's Nursing Health Care I	Study of historically contextualized knowledge about women, health and society that underlie a sensitive nursing practice and favors the instrumentalization of women on their path of rapprochement with and reappropriation of their bodies for the free exercise of their citizenship, considering the physiological events that affect the female body.
Women's Nursing Health Care II	
IES 4	
Nursing Care in the Attention to Women's Health	Provide undergraduates with a technical-scientific basis aimed at caring for women, covering reproductive and gynecological health content.
Curricular Internship Nursing Care in the Attention to Women's Health	Enable the development of knowledge and skills aimed at caring for women at their different life cycles, from the perspective of sexual and reproductive human rights.
IES 5	
Women's Basic Nursing Health Care	Semiology and semiotics of women's and newborn's health. Comprehensive Women's Health Care Policy (Portuguese Acronym: PAISM): history, concept, principles, basic actions. Sexual and reproductive rights. Maternity hospital: functional structure and organization. Family planning: historical, conceptual and programmatic aspects. Nursing Care for women with gynecological problems, sexually transmitted infections/HIV/AIDS. Prevention and control of cervical-uterine and breast cancer. Prevalent diseases among the female population (from adolescence to old age). Nursing care for women during pregnancy, delivery, birth, puerperium and for newborns at low complexity levels. Assessment of risk factors and emergency situations in the pregnancy-puerperal cycle. Educational health actions aimed at women and their families. Ethical issues applied to the health care of women and newborns.
IES 6	
Obstetrics and Gynecology	High-risk pregnancy; hemocoagulation disorder and shock in obstetrics. Placenta previa; premature placental abruption. Molar pregnancy. Gynecological examination. Nursing consultation, sexually transmitted diseases.

**Figure 3:** Syllabuses of subjects that cover the topic of women's health in undergraduate nursing courses. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2023.

IES 1 offered four subjects. IES 2, 3 and 4 offered two subjects each and IES 5 and 6, one subject. Regarding the offer per academic semester, IES 1 offered its subjects from the sixth to the ninth term, IES 2 in the fifth and seventh semesters, IES 3 in the sixth and seventh, and IES 4 in the sixth and tenth terms of the undergraduate course. IES 5 offered the subject in the fifth term and IES 6 in the fourth term of the undergraduate nursing course.

Next, Figure 4 shows the summarized academic program of the mandatory subjects related to Women's Health.

Institution/subject	Summarized Academic Program
<b>IES 1</b>	
Women's Health 1	Unit 1 – Identify students' representations of women's health. (...). Unit 7 – Understand the specific aspects involving nursing consultation as an action to promote and prevent women's health and as an instrument of political and ideological action (...).
Women's Health 2	Unit 1 – Identify the aspects that set normal pregnancy apart from high-risk pregnancy (...). Unit 6 – Understand the ethical and legal limits of care provided to pregnant women (...).
Women's Health 3 – Supervised Internship	Health Policies in women's care (...) Nursing Consultation as an instrument of ideological action and power (...).
Women's Health 4 – Supervised Internship	Care for women who experience their gestational period with associated obstetric risk factors, in a systematic and comprehensive manner (...). Allow the presence of the partner and family as subjects who are part of gynecological and obstetric care.
<b>IES 2</b>	
Women's Health Nursing III	(...)” Attention to Women's Health in the Postpartum Period. Attention to Women's Health during menopause. Violence against Women and its connection to nursing care. Gender Issues. Paternity. Prenatal Care for men/fathers.
Women's Health Nursing IV	(...) Reception, Risk Classification in Obstetrics and violence against women (...). Breast pathologies and breast cancer. Nursing Care.
<b>IES 3</b>	
Women's Nursing Health Care I	Gender, citizenship, sexual and reproductive rights (...). Education and Health.
Women's Nursing Health Care II	Unit Zero: public policies aimed at women; Unit I: complications in gynecology - syndromic approach focused on STIs/AIDS - violence against women and adolescents - cervical and breast cancer - gynecological surgeries (...).
<b>IES 4</b>	
Nursing Care in the Attention to Women's Health	UNIT I: (...) Anatomy and physiology of the female reproductive system (...). VI: NURSING CARE IN THE PATHOLOGICAL PREGNANCY-PUERPERAL CYCLE 1. Warning signs during pregnancy. 2. Pathological puerperium.
Curricular Internship Nursing Care in the Attention to Women's Health	Practical activities (...) Preparation of a report covering the activities carried out at the institution where internship took place.
<b>IES 5</b>	
Women's Basic Nursing Health Care	Introduction to Women's and Newborn's Health (...) Assessment of abdominal/perineal Healing 7.5. Encouragement of free movement during labor
<b>IES 6</b>	
Obstetrics and Gynecology	(...) Women in situations of violence and nursing care; Gender-based violence and situations of dating violence (...)

**Figure 4:** Summarized academic program of mandatory subjects. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2023.

There are four subjects offered by IES 1, two subjects offered by IES 2, two subjects offered by IES 3 and 4, one subject offered by IES 5 and one by 6.

Figure 5 shows the syllabuses and academic programs of the elective subjects in which the topic of VAW is directly or indirectly mentioned by the participating institutions.

Institution/subject	Syllabus	Academic Program
<b>IES 4</b>		
Emerging Topics in Women's Health	"Women in Contemporary Times" – Contextualizes women in relation to gender and citizenship, health, sexual and reproductive rights, social and institutional violence, maternal mortality, human reproduction, ethics and bioethics in the different nursing care scenarios. Topics about the work of nurses focused on Women's Health.	UNIT I: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH POLICIES - 1. Women's health care programs; 2. Political achievements, rights and duties in women's health. UNIT II: NURSING CARE AIMED AT WOMEN'S HEALTH - 1. Adolescence; 2. Reproductive period; 3. Gynecology; 4. Menopause. UNIT III: WOMEN, THEIR EDUCATION LEVEL AND THE LABOR MARKET - 1. Study of the censuses, inclusion and position of women in the educational scenario and in the labor market. UNIT IV: EMERGING RESEARCH IN WOMEN'S HEALTH - 1. Study and analysis of the most current research studies focused on women's health.
<b>IES 5</b>		
Women's Health Care Policy and Issues	National women's health policy, highlighting its issues. The government model, the rules and guidelines for action, as well as the participation of social movements, especially women's movements in favor of citizenship rights in general and health rights in particular. General and specific aspects focused on the state agenda and women's demands.	Not currently being offered.
<b>IES 6</b>		
Women's Health Care Policy and Issues	National women's health policy, focused on its issues. The government model, the rules and guidelines for action, as well as the participation of social movements, especially women's movements in favor of citizenship rights in general and health rights in particular. General and specific aspects focused on the state agenda and women's demands.	Introduction to the Subject and Distribution of Seminars. Health Policies aimed at Women's Health: historical evolution; gender and health; Health Policy focused on tackling Violence against Women; Child and Adolescent Health Policies; Maternal and Child Health Policies; Preparation for the Seminars; Policies and Programs for Cervical and Breast Cancer control; Seminars. Sexual and Reproductive Health.

**Figure 5:** Syllabuses and academic programs of the Elective Subjects. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2023.

IES 4 offers an elective subject called "Emerging Topics in Women's Health"; in turn, IES 5 and 6, as they are part of the same institution, have "Women's Health Care Policy and Issues" as their only elective subject.

Regarding the syllabuses of the mandatory subjects, it was evident that there is no explicit content that covers VAW in any of the six universities participating in the study; in turn, in the academic programs analyzed, it is noted that, of the 12 mandatory subjects distributed among the mentioned IES, only four of them mention the topic under discussion, with two subjects offered at IES 2, one subject at IES 3 and one subject at IES 6. Therefore, there remain eight subjects that fail to mention VAW, which is equivalent to 66.7% of the total, among the academic programs made available.

However, this does not mean that the subject is not discussed in the classroom. The so-called "hidden curriculum" stands out here, in which there is a relationship between what is experienced and discussed without this subject being added to the formal curriculum<sup>14</sup>. However, it is expected that given the framework suggested by the syllabuses themselves, especially when gender issues and the Brazilian feminist movement are mentioned, there will be the possibility of discussing this problem based on the development of public policies.

As future educators, it is imperative that students understand that violence is a sociopolitical phenomenon that can be tackled with prevention, health promotion, knowledge building, responsibility and the will to transform this social aspect. Therefore, it is essential to study the current teaching set ups, considering social demands<sup>15,16</sup>.



Furthermore, it is imperative to establish a relationship between the realities experienced in society and the content discussed in the classroom. In this regard, it is important to highlight the subject offered at IES 5 and 6, in which the study of “National Policies for Comprehensive Health Care for Women and Nursing Care” and “Historical Evolution of Public Policies aimed at Women’s Health” was explicitly included in the syllabus. This point includes the discussion of the Comprehensive Health Care Program for Women (Portuguese Acronym: PAISM), which was notoriously one of the most important programs in the context of the demands required by the feminist movements traced to the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil, which contributed in a certain way to the issues discussed here, especially those focused on gender issues and their impact on Brazilian women’s health<sup>17</sup>.

It was possible to identify academic subjects that address family, social and political contexts in the teaching-learning process, which can contribute significantly to the development of nursing students' knowledge regarding educational practices in this area. Furthermore, these subjects directly mention the topic of VAW. This is the case of the subjects included in the undergraduate Nursing courses offered at IES 2 and IES 3.

On the other hand, some subjects had syllabuses that covered topics related to women that were exclusively focused on their reproductive and gynecological health, as observed in the subjects offered by IES 4 and IES 6. When pregnancy is discussed, there is an in-depth discussion in the classroom about obstetric violence, which may be useful to encourage students to explore the topic beyond the pregnancy-puerperal period. By only establishing a reductionist view of women in the curriculum, it is not possible to generate the desired impact in breaking the problem in view of its social aspect<sup>17</sup>. Obstetric violence is just one of the points of discussion for the other areas of study focused on violence, but it cannot be the only one.

Still, in relation to the mandatory subjects, the subject offered by IES 5 may be considered the most complete from the biological, social and ethical points of view, as it enhances the performance of future professionals and contributes to their development in the internship field, since it is very difficult for those who do not have experience to deal with semiology-based findings. Similar studies corroborate the task of identifying cases of violence<sup>11</sup> and others state that there is underreporting and little identification of cases, which contributes to the severity of the problem<sup>8</sup>.

VAW is a complex problem that involves stigmas and prejudices that are deeply rooted in society and, even though it is a public health problem, there are numerous barriers and factors that prevent professionals from working on this matter<sup>17</sup>. Regarding the possibilities of discussing VAW in the training process of future nurses in undergraduate courses that are mostly composed of women and considering that they are included in the context of gender inequalities, it is evident that professors may feel some discomfort when addressing such a complex and sensitive topic.

Therefore, to adequately provide care for women, nursing students must be prepared to deal with these aspects, developing a reflective and critical attitude towards the social values and norms that perpetuate VAW<sup>18</sup>. Real potential for improving academic training is created when there is an exclusively objective academic subject.

This is the case of the “Emerging Topics in Women's Health” subject offered by IES 4. In its syllabus, it is evident that the topic of VAW is addressed in association with gender and ethics issues. Thus, perhaps intersectionality is the best way to develop the teaching-learning process, since it involves interrelated aspects such as perspectives of gender, sexuality, race/skin color and social class, for example<sup>19</sup>.

Regarding the teaching of VAW, intersectionality is fundamental because it allows for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences, recognizing that violence does not occur in an isolated manner, but is influenced by a combination of structural and social factors. Part of it refers to the dialogue found in the complexity of life in society, in what is political, in what forms the social framework and in the existing inequalities, therefore being a type of analytical tool<sup>21</sup>.

Given the above, incorporating intersectionality into nursing curricula when addressing VAW means addressing how different forms of discrimination and inequality become intertwined and affect women’s health and well-being. For example, women of different races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses and sexual orientations may experience violence in different ways, facing additional barriers to accessing support and legal services<sup>21,22</sup>.

Another point that can enhance the students' learning process is the use of realistic simulation, since an exclusive academic subject may be useful to contribute to the training process of future nurses and the association with this methodology may be an effective contribution<sup>23</sup>.

The analysis of both the syllabuses and academic programs is permeated by the desire to improve the quality of education in terms of expanding such complex and contemporary topics capable of impacting daily life, as in the case of VAW, which affects women on a local and even global scale. It is essential that Nursing undergraduates be impacted and therefore position themselves ethically and professionally, acting as promoters of women's rights.



In addition to the interdisciplinary nature of the course itself, the VAW approach in the context of health care requires interdisciplinary teamwork. Therefore, it is important that the IES offer students the opportunity to learn together with professionals from different areas such as Law and Social Services, allowing for the exchange of experiences and the development of a more integrated approach based on the perspective of humanized care.

It is evident that nursing will not resolve women's issues unilaterally, therefore, it is important to reflect on the continuity of care so that there is no double violation by those who care for these women. The integration of different professionals reduces the exposure of victims to violence<sup>24</sup>. Some educational tools have proven this - in a simulation of violence developed from a board game, teamwork ensured problem-solving capacity, strengthening interprofessional ties<sup>25</sup>.

Still on the topic of elective academic subjects, it is worth highlighting the "Women's Health Care Policy and Issues" offered by IES 5 and IES 6. Its syllabus states: *"National women's health policy focused on the issues. The government model, the rules and guidelines for action, as well as the participation of social movements, especially women's movements in favor of citizenship rights in general and health rights in particular. General and specific aspects focused on the state agenda and on women's demands"*. It is noticed that there is a concern in providing a current portrait of public policies aimed at this population segment, but there is no direct mention to the issue studied here. Furthermore, as it is an elective subject, not all students will have knowledge of or interest in the matter researched, and we cannot tell if this subject was offered to all academic semesters, although it is included in the current curriculum, as is the case of IES 6.

In a plural society where the fight for women's rights is a key aspect, it is crucial that social issues are included and discussed in Nursing curricula; therefore, the more proposals for improving this scenario are made in educational institutions, the more significant the fight for their rights will be<sup>26</sup>; furthermore, it must be understood that supporting women who suffered abuse is extremely important, as this is not just a legal or police-related problem, but a health issue that negatively affects the lives of women and their families<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, if these professionals fail to have adequate knowledge on the topic, they will end up missing the opportunity to change the reality of these women, which is why the subject must be addressed in undergraduate courses as well as in professional life<sup>28</sup>.

Since the nursing team has a closer contact with the victim, nurses play a key role in caring for abused women; however, not all violence shows physical signs. This is where the greatest difficulties arise, associated with the victim's own personal factors such as education level, culture and religion, for example. Hence the importance of providing training on gender-based violence issues by including VAW in the nursing curriculum and, in this way, expanding students' learning opportunities<sup>29</sup>.

As in the case of Turkey, VAW is also considered a serious problem that must be addressed in nursing undergraduate courses, because in addition to the fact that it is a female-dominated occupation, these professionals are in a privileged position of contact, since when performing anamnesis, they can detect the needs of each patient. The obstacle, however, lies in the lack of training or insufficient training, which includes finding out what type of questions can be useful for meeting the needs of these women based on the approach taken by the nursing team<sup>30</sup>.

Therefore, it is assumed that undergraduate courses are a key element to making the necessary changes because, based on the knowledge achieved during undergraduate programs, there is a need highlighted in the literature that must be fulfilled, and it states that the training of health professionals is essential to support and guide women who suffer various types of violence<sup>29,30</sup>.

Aside from the similarities, just as each institution has its own way of dealing with the issue, we will certainly find differences or gaps, most likely in terms of the training provided to these professionals. However, it is worth highlighting some points of similarity that can contribute to a more linear training of these students, as there is a perceived concern with the topic that goes beyond violence, more focused on issues involving women's struggle for gender equality, the evolution of public policies aimed at women's health, as well as the social aspects that contribute to such training.

The curriculum, being the result of a selection based on the choices made by those who elaborate it, based on national guidelines, would enable this social transformation that stands as the ultimate goal. Considering the context we are experiencing, it must contemplate the real needs of this society, marked by daily cases of femicide.

Regarding the basic curriculum, the National Curricular Guidelines for the Undergraduate Nursing Course have been developed since 2001<sup>10</sup>; these guidelines state what is expected of the graduate/professional regarding their profile, and they also discuss the skills and abilities required, curricular contents, as well as the internship process, complementary activities, course organization and, finally, monitoring and evaluation.

Maintaining dialogue should be the goal, whether among professors or students. Introducing VAW discussions into the classroom is the best way to qualify university students, as there is no difference between what is experienced inside or outside the walls of major educational complexes. It is challenging, but it is a possibility of changing reality since different perceptions lead to better coping skills<sup>31</sup>.

Given the above, in addition to being able to identify cases of violence, it is important that nursing students receive specific training aimed at providing care for women who experience the most varied forms of violence. This includes developing communication and empathy skills, being able to receive and listen to women in a sensitive and respectful manner and being aware of the services and resources available to provide the necessary support. Hence the importance of educational strategies in this regard<sup>8</sup>.

The transformation of a sexist mentality - whose masculinities act in different contexts and treat women as objects in a political situation experienced today that only leads to increasingly obscure, arid and express paths - is achievable, and this aspect must be transformed by recognizing that there is a flaw as an intellectual body. Change will only be achieved through education; there is no other way. Social progress depends on the inclusion of innovative approaches that can promote significant transformations.

This article is not intended to be an ultimate teaching planning guide, but rather to provide a reflection on current educational practices, thus identifying gaps such as those observed in the analysis presented.

### Study limitations

The study has limitations with regards to its generalization, as it focuses on public universities located in a single state. The lack of data on private institutions is also a point to be considered. Furthermore, detailed analysis focused on factors such as total course load, content covered and teaching methods as well as case studies in leading institutions can help identify best practices and propose improvements.

Investigating the perception of students regarding the importance of this topic is also essential to understanding its relevance in their professional training.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The inclusion of the topic of VAW in undergraduate nursing courses has proven to be essential for the training of more qualified and humanized professionals. By addressing this topic comprehensively, undergraduate nursing courses can prepare future nurses to identify, prevent and care for women in situations of violence, thus promoting more welcoming and effective care.

This approach, based on an intersectional perspective, contributes to more complete and responsible training, equipping professionals with the necessary skills to understand the different forms of violence and act with ethics and commitment to women's health and rights.

By investing in the training of professionals who will be dealing with this complex issue, all of society benefits, thus contributing to the construction of a fairer and more equitable future for women.

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Conceptualization, C.D.S. and A.I.S.; methodology, C.D.S., R.C.G.Z. and A.B.A.Q.; validation, C.D.S., A.I.S., R.C.G.Z. and A.B.A.Q.; formal analysis, C.D.S., A.I.S., R.C.G.Z. and A.B.A.Q.; investigation, C.D.S.; resources, C.D.S.; data curation, C.D.S.; manuscript writing, C.D.S.; writing – review and editing, C.D.S., A.I.S., R.C.G.Z. and A.B.A.Q.; visualization, C.D.S., A.I.S., R.C.G.Z. and A.B.A.Q.; supervision, A.I.S., R.C.G.Z. and A.B.A.Q.; project administration, C.D.S. All authors read and agreed with the published version of the manuscript.