Gender norms among “Landless” youth: evidence for the social practice of nursing

Normas de género entre jovens “Sem Terra”: evidências para a prática social de enfermagem
Normas de género entre jóvenes “Sin Tierra”: evidencias para la práctica social de enfermería

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ABSTRACT
Objective: Analyzing the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of youth from the Landless Rural Workers’ Movement in Brazil (MST) regarding the prevalence ratio being in accordance with gender norms. Method: A cross-sectional study conducted during a Journey of Agroecology carried out in the State of Paraná with young people (15 to 29 years) of both genders. Data collection was conducted through questionnaires. Data analysis compared variables regarding gender norms with sociodemographic variables, and a Prevalence Ratio (PR) was calculated with a confidence interval (CI) set at 95% in order to determine this relationship. Results: The study sample was comprised of 147 young people. A higher prevalence was found in accordance with gender norms (PR with CI at 95%) among women compared to men, and that sociodemographic characteristics (lower education level, those living in occupation camps, who do not have white skin and with religious belief) were social indicators for such positioning among both genders. Conclusion: The byproduct of a patriarchal gender system has led more young girls to internalization and a reaffirmation of gender norms, highlighting an important field for social nursing practices in order to contribute to the transformation of this reality.

DESCRIPTORS
Gender Identity; Gender and Health; Rural Health; Nursing Care; Public Health Nursing.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender norms are understood as a set of requirements, beliefs and social rules that determine behaviors, actions in everyday life and in exercising and expressing sexuality. It is under this regulatory and prescriptive context for masculinity or femininity which gender norms operate, formulating stereotypes and gender roles which determine simplified and unequal representations, as well as selective images and patterns to life and relationships between men and women(1).

The product of inequalities and gender norms triggers serious consequences for women’s health during their life cycle in the field of sexual and reproductive health, in the perpetuation of violence, and in accessing the job market and education worlds(2). However, because such inequalities are reproduced and/or supported by cultural and social processes, the impacts on the well-being and lives of these people will vary according to the setting in which they operate, and also possibly affecting men.

The set of economic, social, cultural, political and environmental aspects that makes up the social determinants for the health of rural populations is marked by several health indicators that demonstrate greater social inequality and vulnerabilities when compared to urban areas(3-5). It can also be pointed out that the burden of patriarchal conceptions of being a young rural woman culturally represents a situation of inferiority in the social hierarchy(6). Gender norms in rural areas, as well as in MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – Landless Rural Workers Movement) settlements and (occupation) camps support the stereotypes, roles and gender inequalities with more intensity, promoting negative impacts on the well-being and health of this population(7).

With actions deployed by the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women(8) and the promotion of the National Policy for Comprehensive Health of Settlement Camps and Forest Populations (Política Nacional de Saúde Integral das Populações do Campo e da Floresta)(9), Brazil has been engaged in fighting iniquities that affect the health of settlement populations, in particular those from gender inequalities. However, significant impacts in terms of equality, comprehensiveness, universality in health and gender violence are not fully consolidated(9).

Considering this scenario, it can be understood that social nursing practices directed at the transformation of this context contribute to sustainable and equitable development(10-11), ensuring direct impacts on health indicators. Specifically considering the gender category, understanding how these “norms” are maintained in communities of the Landless Rural Workers Movement in Brazil (MST) would be a possibility to accurately and adequately target care actions and health promotion.

From this perspective, Nursing advances on an important gap existing in the acting profession, as acting guided by social practice means overcoming technical and operational dimensions resulting from the direct application of biotechnological knowledge, beyond the traditional knowledge and institutionalized practices(12). Thus, the present study aims at analyzing the relationship between sociodemographic characteristics of MST youths regarding the prevalence ratio for being in accordance with gender norms.

METHOD

This is a cross-sectional study supported by the theory of gender category(1,13), developed during the XIV Journey of Agroecology, carried out in the municipality of Irati, Paraná state, in July 2015. As inclusion criteria, MST youths of both genders of the state of Paraná were considered, aged between 15 and 29 years, and who freely consented to participate in the study after signing the terms of assent (under 18 years of age) and consent, and who gave a response rate higher than 40% of the questionnaire.

The study was composed of a non-probabilistic random sample of youths who responded positively to the invitation from the investigator to participate in the study. The young people were invited to participate in the study during the event in between the breaks in the activities schedule. Two hundred and ten (210) youths responded to the data collection instrument; however, 63 had to be excluded according to the exclusion criteria; 29 of the participants responded to less than 40% of the questions; 24 did not sign the consent or assent form; and 10 young people did not live in the state of Paraná. Therefore, the sample of the study consisted of 147 young people.

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey instrument (IMAGENS) Survey Questionnaires was used for data collection(14), and specifically its third section, which addresses “the attitudes about relationships between men and women”. Seeking to prove the content validity and the construct validity of the questionnaire regarding social and cultural particularities of the MST youth, a Face validity(15) evaluation was conducted with 12 young leaders of the Landless Rural Workers Movement in the state of Paraná during the first stage (02/15) of the MST Youth State School in Paraná.

At this moment, adequacies regarding language and sociodemographic characteristics had to be included. The draft version of the questionnaire was submitted to a pre-test, with 48 young individuals during the second stage (04/15) of the MST Youth State School in Paraná.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 sociodemographic variables: gender, age, sexual orientation, education level, religion, marital status, with whom they reside, where they reside, skin color/race, employment, and monthly income; and 13 on gender norms. An evaluation of the variables on gender norms consisted of categories composed of a Likert scale, with 5 degrees of agreement where: 1 to 2 – I agree; 3 to 4 – I disagree and; 5 – No opinion. Due to the limited number of cases, “No opinion” answers were considered as losses. In order to study the relationship between gender norms and sociodemographic variables, a Chi-square independence proof was carried out with statistical significance at $p \leq 0.05$.

If the relationship was not statistically significant, variables were not considered for the next analysis. Thus, the rest
of the analyses were performed with 9 of the 13 variables for gender norms and five of the sociodemographic variables, as will be presented in this study. An analysis comparing gender norms in relation to sociodemographic variables was subsequently performed to verify the prevalence among the participants of being in agreement with the gender norms. Such an assessment was carried out between women and men, men in relation to men, as well as women in relation to other women. In order to measure this relationship, the Prevalence Ratio (PR) was estimated with the Confidence Interval (CI) at 95%.

The study fully complies with Resolution CNS 466/12 and was evaluated by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Universidade Federal de São Paulo, with favorable opinion number 1.052.036/2015. Data analysis was performed using the programs Excel, Epidat 3.1 and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0.

RESULTS

One hundred forty seven (147) young people participated in the study. Table 1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants, in which 51.7% were men and 48.3% were women. A statistically significant difference was observed only for monthly income between men and women in the category from R$789.00 to R$1,575.00 (p=0.001).

Table 2 points out that women are generally more in agreement with gender norms than men (p<0.005), especially among those with lower education level, non-white skin, those with a religious belief, living without their parents/guardians and in (occupation) camps/settlements.

According to Table 2, only the gender norm related to gender equality for expressing their sexuality are men more in agreement than women, especially: those who have lower education levels (80.6%), those who live with their parents/guardians (75.0%) and in occupation camps (77.1%). The biggest difference between young individuals of both genders lies in the fact that the woman are considered as being the main person responsible for the family, and women were more in agreement with this norm than men. The most noticeable differences in magnitude for the agreement in relation to gender norms are observed between those who live without their parents/guardians [59.3% women and 21.4% men (p = 0.004)], in settlements [55.2% women and 14.7% men (p=0.001)], do not have white skin [60.0% women and 28.6% men (p=0.006)], with lower education levels [63.9% women and 37.1% men (p=0.02)] and with religious belief [63.0% women and 26.8% men (p=0.000)].

Table 1 – Sociodemographic characterization of the study participants – Paraná, Brazil, 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N 147</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious belief</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin color</td>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stable union</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>Lower education level*</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher education level**</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (group)</td>
<td>15 – 19</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 29</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with</td>
<td>With parents or guardians</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Without parents or guardians</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of residence</td>
<td>Occupation camps***</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Settlements**** or other forms*****</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal working bond</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly income</td>
<td>More than R$1,576.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R$789.00 to R$1,575.00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Up to R$788.00</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: N – total number of participants. n – number of participants who responded to the variable. * Inferior or equivalent to incomplete secondary education. ** Secondary or higher education. *** Families that are still waiting for rights to the land. A period marked by the precariousness of housing conditions, tension (risk of expropriation) and high collectivity of the subjects. **** Families who have received the rights to the land. Dilution of the collectivity can be noticed in some areas due to individual concerns such as the productivity of the land and the distance between the housing due to the geographical distance of the lots. ***** “Other forms” included young people living in MST training centers, or those working in the State Department. Source: Elaborated by the authors.
Table 3 shows the agreement prevalence of one gender over the other. We found that women have a higher prevalence according to gender norms compared to men, except for the agreement that there is equality for expressing sexuality on a daily basis, in which there is a greater prevalence of disagreement among women who live in occupation camps (PR=0.62, CI=0.40-0.97).

The major difference in the prevalence between both genders according to gender norms is that the woman is considered to be the main person responsible for the relationship and the prosperity of the family, with a higher difference between those living in settlements PR=2.46 (1.48-4.10), and women are more in accordance with such standards than men. The same is true for the rule that there is equality for socializing and fun on a regular basis, among those who live in settlements PR=3.13 (CI=1.10-8.93), and always in the sense that women agree more than men.

Table 4 shows that among men the agreement with the gender norm that affirms that male infidelity is somewhat acceptable is higher among men with lower education levels (PR=2.25, CI=1.52-3.34). While the norm regarding equality for expressing sexuality has greater agreement among men living in occupation camps (PR=1.69, CI=0.94-3.04) and with lower education levels (PR=2.13, CI=1.04-4.38). Regarding equality for socialization and fun, men with religious belief (PR=1.40, CI=1.03-1.92) show greater agreement. However, men living in occupation camps are less likely to be in agreement with the norm “control over circulation of girls in public spaces is stricter” (PR=0.58, CI=0.37-0.92).
With regard to the agreement among women on gender norms, Table 5 shows that those with lower education levels have a lower prevalence of being in agreement with the norm “control over the circulation of girls in public spaces is stricter” (PR=0.67, CI=0.48-0.93). On the other hand, agreement regarding the norm that women are the ones responsible for preventing pregnancy is higher among women with lower education levels (PR=2.27, CI=1.55-3.33) and non-white women (PR=1.74, CI=1.19-2.56). Similarly, women with lower education levels are also more in agreement with the gender norm that men are responsible for using the condom (PR=1.75, CI=1.04-2.95) and also that girls should be more reserved (PR=1.71, CI=1.02-2.88).
DISCUSSION

The results show a higher prevalence for women being in agreement with gender norms in relation to the men participating in this research. Female subordination is structured by a patriarchal gender regime, which has internalized the reproduction of conservative thoughts, norms and actions in young people to which they are subjected[3,7]. In addition, sociodemographic characteristics that express inequalities such as lower education level, living in occupation camps, having non-white skin and also the influence of a religious belief were social indicators for more agreement with gender norms.

This means that even though the MST is a progressive social movement and that they ideologically fight for the construction of a new subject through equality opposing capital social power, social class determinants and a deep-rooted patriarchal gender regime are the main factors that have imputed reaffirmations to agreement on gender roles, stereotypes and inequalities among the investigated youth.

Yet, it should be pointed out that this patriarchal gender system is not exclusive to the MST[7]; its population experiences ways of life in the rural context, historically marked by this gender order[3,6]. We must also consider that class inequalities present in the social condition of women interact in this context, and that they inevitably determine gender relations and social control in capitalist society, which underlies unequal power relations[3,13].

Nevertheless, as a product of a social, historical, and cultural construction, these gender norms in the investigated MST occupation camps and settlements are being interpreted and internalized by “men” and “women” individually, although with a greater impact on women. Such norms are more evident in occupation camps when compared to settlements, and they may be sustaining gender inequalities in social and occupational positions, power status, access to resources and services, and health-related behaviors[2,7].

Young women with lower education levels in comparison to those with higher education levels presented higher prevalence of agreement with gender norms regarding the roles of men and women in contraception and prevention of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and AIDS, since they claim that the use of the condom is a man’s responsibility, and birth control is the woman’s[9]. The study shows that the higher the education level, the greater the emancipation process and the empowerment of young women to position themselves in disagreement with gender norms.

Therefore, if the very fact of being formally educated already contributes to the emancipatory processes, we believe that the inclusion of sexual education as transversal content in all curricular components would guarantee even more freedom, respect, equality, breaking of taboos and prejudices, good practices, autonomy and democracy on affective sexual and gender issues[10]. In contribution to this context, social nursing practices guided by actions of education in health promotion along with methodological framework of Popular Education in Health have been shown to be an important tool for promotion of affective-sexual and reproductive health, well-being and gender dialogue between men and women[17].

There is greater agreement on gender norms that reaffirm stereotypes among young women, such as women’s responsibility for family unity, or that girls should maintain good behavior to ensure “good morals”. Such a positioning may be a result of the participants not being aware of the patriarchal order present in the society that they live in, or by understanding such processes as natural to biological sex[1,13].

It is important to point out men’s higher prevalence of agreement that there is equality in relation to women. Among regimes of patriarchal genres, men do not perceive their condition of superiority[13], which leads to “difficulties” in recognizing gender inequalities[3-4]. However, this higher perception of equality is not exclusive to men from rural areas, as 58% of urban men in Brazil also agree that there is high gender equity[10].

Considering the 33 years of history of the MST, we emphasize that the Movement was and still is the possibility for many women to break free from various forms of oppression and to affirm themselves as working women, fighting for land, for the agrarian reform and for social transformation. In contrast, according to this study for the women living in the investigated occupation camps and settlements, these premises have not yet become fully materialized, even after the implementation of Public Policies with specific guidelines towards rural women[5,8], and the sum of the struggles and demands of the women in the MST in their own life space or those articulated by the Sector of Gender and Collectives of Women, at state and national levels.
CONCLUSÃO

O estudo analisou a relação entre as características sociodemográficas dos jovens do MST e as reuniões de autoorganização, com o objetivo de estabelecer a prevalência dessas características. No entanto, o estudo não foi capaz de estabelecer uma relação causal, devido a sua natureza transversal. Ainda assim, foi possível alcançar os objetivos propostos.

Os resultados indicam que as características sociodemográficas mais prevalentes entre os jovens do MST são a menor escolarização, a residência em acampamento, a pele não branca e a crença religiosa. A prevalência dessas características pode estar relacionada com a socialização dos jovens na comunidade rural e a influência do regime de gênero patriarcal.

O estudo evidencia a necessidade de intervenções sociais e educativas para promover a igualdade de gênero e o empoderamento das mulheres. É importante desenvolver práticas sociais que atendem às necessidades das jovens do MST, contribuindo para a transformação da realidade.

A implementação de ações socio-políticas que expressem responsabilidade e participação política é fundamental para o desenvolvimento de um pensamento crítico e reflexivo. É necessário que as práticas sociais sejam adaptadas e direcionadas para atender às necessidades específicas dos jovens do MST, visando à promoção de direitos e participação nas decisões coletivas.

RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Analisar a relação entre as características sociodemográficas de jovens do MST e o envolvimento em ações de autoorganização.

**Método:** Estudo transversal, realizado durante uma Jornada de Agroecologia sediada no Estado do Paraná, com jovens (15 a 29 anos) de ambos os sexos. A amostra foi composta por 147 jovens. Observou-se maior prevalência para o acordo com as normas de gênero (RP) entre as mulheres em relação aos homens, e que características sociodemográficas (menor escolarização, morando em acampamento, pele não branca e crença religiosa) foram indicadores sociais para tal posicionamento entre ambos os sexos.

**Resultados:** A amostra do estudo foi composta por 147 jovens. Observou-se maior prevalência para o acordo com as normas de gênero (RP) entre as mulheres em relação aos homens, e que características sociodemográficas (menor escolarização, morando em acampamento, pele não branca e crença religiosa) foram indicadores sociais para tal posicionamento entre ambos os sexos.

**Conclusão:** O subproduto de um regime de gênero patriarcal tem levado mais as jovens ao interiorização e à reafirmação das normas de gênero, evidenciando um importante campo de atuação para as práticas sociais de enfermagem, com vistas a contribuir para a transformação desta realidade.
**Resultados:** La muestra del estudio estuvo compuesta de 147 jóvenes. Se observó mayor prevalencia para la conformidad con las normas de género (RP con IC a los 95%) entre las mujeres en relación a los hombres y que las características demográficas (menor escolarización, de piel no blanca y con creencia religiosa) fueron indicadores sociales para dicha postura entre ambos sexos.

**Conclusión:** El subproducto de un régimen de género patriarcal está llevando cada vez más a las jóvenes a la interiorización y la reafirmación de las normas de género, evidenciando un importante campo de actuación para las prácticas sociales de enfermería, con vistas a contribuir a la transformación de esa realidad.

**DESCRIPTORES**
Identidad de Género; Género y Salud; Salud Rural; Atención de Enfermería; Enfermería en Salud Pública.

**REFERENCES**


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