

DEPRESSION AND WOMEN'S LIFE CYCLE: COMPARATIVE PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS IN WOMEN ALONG THE LIFE CYCLE IN A PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY SAMPLE

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This study aims to analyze the differences in depressive symptomatology in women in different age groups along the life cycle and the influence of sociodemographic variables in a Portuguese community sample. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Scale-CES-D (Radloff, 1977), and a Questionnaire including questions concerning sociodemographic variables, general health variables and women health variables, as well as interpersonal stress factors were mailed to a sample of 1480 subjects. A phone line was available and local papers asked for collaboration. 360 women aged between 18 and 65 answered it. Severe depressive symptoms were reported by 24,4% of women. Women living in rural areas showed significant higher rates of depressive symptomatology (CES-D mean score=27.2, DP=14.9) than women living in urban areas ($x=19.4$, DP= 12.5) ($t=3,1$; $p= 0.002$). It wasn't found a statistically significant difference between age groups and prevalence of depressive symptomatology. Nevertheless, Menopause was found to be highly related with high levels of depressive symptomatology, and menopausal women have shown a CES-D mean score significantly higher than non-menopausal women ($t=2.7$; $p=0.006$). Higher prevalence of depressive symptomatology was associated with low income, low educational level and marital status (divorced and widowed). It's possible to assume that is not the age group but the stage of the reproductive women life cycle that seems to be associated with higher prevalence of depressive symptomatology. Given the high levels of severe depressive symptomatology in women found, we argue that preventing depression in women should be a priority and reducing depressive symptomatology should be targeted for research and prevention efforts.