CHILD ABUSE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE INTENSITY OF PAIN, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION IN WOMEN WITH FIBROMYALGIA

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BACKGROUND

Fibromyalgia (FM) is characterized by widespread chronic musculoskeletal pain and affects 2.5% of the national population, commonly affecting more females at a ratio of 9:1. Although it presents an uncertain pathophysiology, studies reveal that physical and emotional trauma, such as childhood abuse, can be triggers for individuals susceptible to the development of FM and mood disorder.

METHODS

This is a cross-sectional observational study conducted in a public secondary care service. Female patients diagnosed with fibromyalgia according to the criteria of the American College of Rheumatology are included. The instruments used were the childhood trauma questionnaire (QUESI), the numerical scale for pain intensity, the revised fibromyalgia impact questionnaire (FIQR) and the hospital anxiety and depression scale, all validated for the Brazilian context (Research Ethics Committee Approval No. 4.034.273 from 18 May 2020).

RESULTS

Eighty-two consecutive patients were evaluated, with an average age of 57 years, ranging from 36 to 72 years, being 63.4% married, with low education (43.9%) and without their own income (30.5%). As for the history of abuse and neglect in childhood, all patients suffered some type of violence. Most of them reported physical (85.4%), emotional violence (89.0%) emotional negligence (89.0%), with sexual violence being the least present, reported by 35% of the women interviewed. A higher frequency of anxiety was observed among patients who suffered sexual abuse in childhood ($p = 0.022$) and patients who suffered physical neglect had greater functional limitation assessed through the FIQR ($p = 0.023$) and pain intensity ($p = 0.034$) when compared to those who did not go through this type of deprivation. Finally, there was a moderate correlation between the total score of the questionnaire on injuries in childhood (QUESI) and the anxiety scale ($r = 0.433$, $p < 0.0001$), and a weak correlation between the total score of the QUESI and the FIQR ($r = 3.12$, $p = 0.005$).

CONCLUSION

All patients with fibromyalgia suffered violence in childhood, with neglect and emotional abuse being the most common. It was observed that women subjected to sexual abuse in childhood had higher levels of anxiety and women who suffered physical neglect showed greater pain intensity and greater functional limitation. Finally, a positive correlation was observed between childhood trauma, anxiety, and functional limitation.

KEYWORDS

Child maltreatment, Fibromyalgia, Anxiety, Depression.