

## INVISIBILITY OF RURAL WOMEN WORKERS: SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY IN BRAZIL

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**ABSTRACT.** This exploratory, qualitative, descriptive and bibliographical study is a systematic review of the literature on women work in rural areas, published in scientific articles in Brazil from 2006 to 2016 at the BVS-Psi database, which aimed at describing what these productions exploit in relation to these women. The search terms used were “Trabalhadoras rurais” and “mulheres rurais”, and data were analyzed by content analysis (Bardin, 2011). The main results showed that the participation of rural women in the social manifestations potentialized their achievements, as well evidenced the concerns related to the health of the rural worker, where the researchers reported the physical and psychic consequences resulting from the intensification of rural work parallel to house chores. It can be concluded that only since 2013, the number of publications on this topic has increased, with the researchers from the Southern Brazil publishing most about the subject, which was researched in only 9 of the country's 27 federative units, which shows the invisibility of the rural women workers in the researches in this database, during this period.

**Keywords:** Rural workers; invisibility; rural women.

## INVISIBILIDADE DAS MULHERES TRABALHADORAS RURAIS: AS PRODUÇÕES CIENTÍFICAS DA PSICOLOGIA NO BRASIL

**RESUMO.** Este estudo qualitativo, do tipo exploratório, descritivo e bibliográfico, trata-se de uma revisão sistemática da literatura sobre o trabalho da mulher no meio rural, publicado em artigos científicos no Brasil no período de 2006 a 2016 na base de dados BVS-Psi, objetivando descrever o que estas produções exploram em relação a estas mulheres. Utilizaram-se os termos de busca “trabalhadoras rurais” e “mulheres rurais”, sendo a análise dos dados por conteúdo (Bardin, 2011). Os principais achados destacam que a participação das mulheres rurais nas manifestações sociais potencializaram as suas conquistas, bem como evidenciam as preocupações referentes à saúde da trabalhadora rural, em que os/as pesquisadores/as relatam as consequências psíquicas e físicas resultantes da intensificação do trabalho rural paralelo ao doméstico. Conclui-se que somente desde 2013 o número de publicações acerca do tema tem aumentado, sendo os/as pesquisadores da região Sul do Brasil os/as que mais publicam a temática, que foi pesquisada em somente nove das 27

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unidades federativas do País, o que aponta para uma invisibilidade das mulheres trabalhadoras rurais nas pesquisas publicadas nesta base de dados, neste período.

**Palavras-chave:** Trabalhadoras rurais; invisibilidade; mulheres rurais.

## **INVISIBILIDAD DE LAS MUJERES TRABAJADORAS RURALES: LAS PRODUCCIONES CIENTÍFICAS DE LA PSICOLOGÍA EN BRASIL**

**RESUMEN.** Este estudio cualitativo, del tipo exploratorio, descriptivo y bibliográfico se trata de una revisión sistemática de la literatura sobre el trabajo de la mujer en el medio rural, publicados en artículos científicos en Brasil en el período de 2006 a 2016 en la base de datos BVS-Psi, con el objetivo de describir lo que estas publicaciones explotan en relación a estas mujeres. Se utilizaron los términos de búsqueda "trabajadoras rurales" y "mujeres rurales", siendo el análisis de los datos por contenido (Bardin, 2011). Los principales hallazgos destacan que la participación de las mujeres rurales en las manifestaciones sociales ha potenciado sus logros, así como evidencian las preocupaciones referentes a la salud de la trabajadora rural, donde los / as investigadores / as relatan las consecuencias psíquicas y físicas resultantes de la intensificación del trabajo rural paralelo al hogar. Se concluye que sólo desde 2013 el número de publicaciones sobre el tema ha aumentado, siendo los / as investigadores de la región sur de Brasil los que más publican la temática, que fue investigada en solamente 09 de las 27 unidades federativas del país, lo que apunta a una invisibilidad de las mujeres trabajadoras rurales en las investigaciones publicadas en esta base de datos, en este período.

**Palabras clave:** Trabajadoras rurales; invisibilidad; mujeres rurales.

### **Introduction**

In the world context, since the last century, agriculture has faced many productive changes, influenced by the advances of technologies and the high demand for food production. In Brazil, from the 1990s, this demand also grows and ends up reflecting an increase in productivity in the rural area. According to Portal Brasil (2015), the Brazilian grain harvest 2014/2015 registered 209.5 million tons, reaching a record number in relation to the last agricultural production. The increase was 8.2%, or 15.9 million tons, on 2013/14 production, of 193.62 million tons; from these data, one can observe the high demand existing in rural work today.

In this way, rural labor is responsible for the supply of food from agricultural production. This profession, which is passed on from generation to generation, is presented to the children of rural workers very early. In this work context, there are women, who are inserted in the rural work, where they work in the fields and in the maintenance of the animals, as well as in the domestic work, since often the young girls stay at home doing the household duties while their mothers go out to work in the fields, together with the husbands (Stolf, 2007).

The presence of women in this universe of fieldwork is an indisputable fact, but they remain invisible in many contexts, even if they are planting, harvesting, conserving the soil, protecting crops from pests, collecting fruits and cultivating the desire for lands to work while accounting for domestic work, where they take care of their children, food, the home and the

yard (Lisboa & Lusa, 2010; Sales, 2007). In recent research, it was verified the illness of the rural women workers due to the excess of work that they execute. One of the farmer women interviewed, aged 44, says:

Weeding is very bad, it really hurts the spine. I do not always do this. There are days when the work is lighter, then you can put up with the pain. [...] Cassava is sometimes very bad to pluck out, sometimes it is very stuck and requires a lot of strength" (Barth, Renner, Martins, & Quaresma da Silva, 2016, p. 484).

Public policies in this sector minimally include women, especially in the economic aspect, emphasizing the invisibility of the female gender in productive activities in the field. Government programs for family agriculture that reproduce the social division of labor increasingly contribute to female invisibility and consequently to disregard her as a worker, since her participation as aid omits her right to equal participation in the result of work. This relationship generates injustice, since it ignores its economic contribution to agricultural production and denies its status as a worker (Nascimento, Rodrigues, & Santos, 2013).

Taking into account the role of women in rural work, this article aims to make a systematic review of the national literature of the last ten years (December 2006 to December 2016) in order to describe what scientific productions exploit in relation to women in this professional field.

## Methodological approach

A qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and bibliographic study was carried out based on an analysis of scientific articles found in national databases able to offer reliable and up-to-date scientific articles in the area of Psychology, the Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde Psicologia (BVS-Psi). This database indexes didactic texts, theses, monographs, Index Psi Books, Lillacs, Pepsic, Scielo, providing easy access to national and international journals.

The consultation to the BVS-Psi database took place in January 2017, where articles with the following descriptors: "trabalhadoras rurais" and "mulheres rurais" were listed. Afterwards, a thorough analysis of the studies was carried out aiming at a careful selection of the articles, being used as inclusion criteria: (a) to be a scientific article and related to research, addressing the topic of women in the rural work; (b) to be published in the period from December 2006 to December 2016; (c) the material is made available on a virtual, full and free basis; and (d) to be made available in Portuguese and be conducted in Brazil, even if published internationally. As exclusion criteria, it was decided to exclude items that: (a) were published in thesis, dissertation, book, book chapter, reviews, theoretical articles, experience reports, case studies and systematic reviews or literature reviews; (b) articles repeated in journals indexed in the database; (c) studies conducted outside Brazil and studies outside the period considered. After this initial selection, a careful reading of the complete texts was carried out.

A total of 110 studies were identified. Of these, 83 were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria and 27 were selected. Of these 27 selected, 4 were discarded for repetition and 23 were selected for this study.

According to Bardin (2011), the findings were categorized by the content analysis, through the emergent categories. The analysis of the bibliometric data presents a survey of the number of annual publications on the subject researched and the number of publications

per Brazilian State, taking into account the location of the university of the first author of each study.

From the analysis of the findings, we listed the resulting categories: the actions of women in rural work and the health of rural women.

## Results and discussion

From the descriptor “trabalhadoras rurais”, we selected the articles shown in box 1, below.

### Box 1. Articles selected with the descriptor “trabalhadoras rurais”.

Title of the article	Authors and Year of Publication
Sustainable development from a gender perspective - Brazil, Mexico, and Cuba: women as protagonists in rural areas	LISBOA; LUSA, 2010
Rural women: establishment of new relations and recognition of rights	SALES, 2007
Lifestyle, Mental Health and Gender Conditions in Rural Contexts: A Study within Agraria Reform Settlements of Northeastern Brazil	COSTA; DIMENSTEIN; LEITE, 2014
The pedagogical process of gender struggle within land struggle: the challenge of transforming social practices and relationships.	SCHWENDLER, 2015
Prevalence of digestive signs and symptoms and associated factors among rural workers	CEZAR-VAZ; BONOW; COUTO; GELATI, 2015

The search with the descriptor “mulheres rurais” found the following studies:

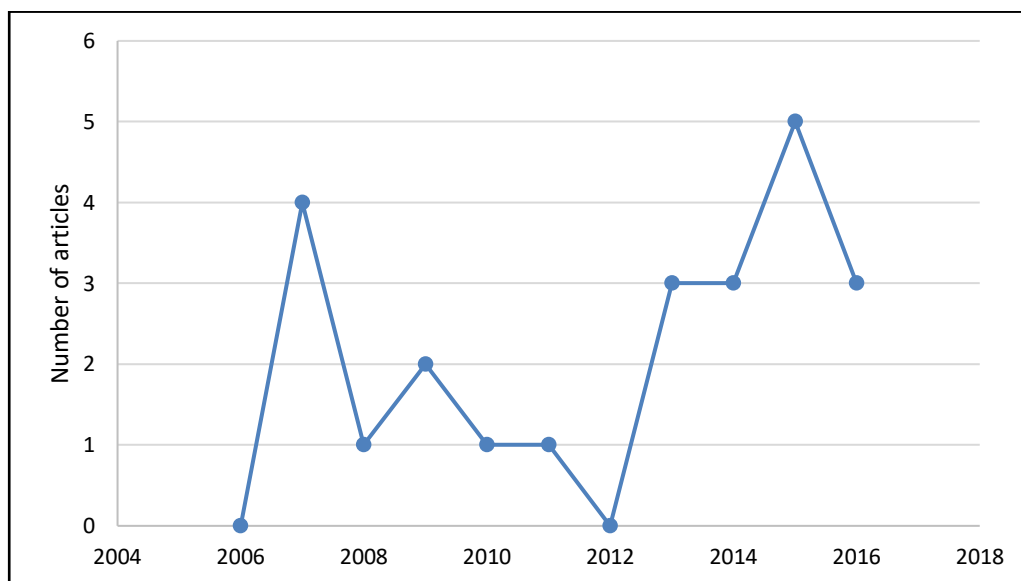
### Box 2. Articles selected with the descriptor “mulheres rurais”.

Title of the article	Authors and Year of Publication
Women in virtual rural coops: reflections on gender and subjectivity	SALVARRO; ESTEVAM; FELIPE, 2014
Women and their chores: how work and health are understood.	EBLING et al., 2015
Differences between genders in technical assistance and rural extension performed by veterinarians: paradigm or prejudice.	FREITAS; ABREU; MESQUITA et al, 2014
Knowledges related to self-care in health among women of the rural area of Southern Brazil	THUM; BORGES; HECK, 2011
Violence against rural women: gender and health actions.	COSTA; LOPES; SOARES, 2015

"The dream of making a living from the land": Amazon settler women as change agents.	NAASE, 2009
Prevalence of metabolic syndrome in a semi-arid rural area in Bahia.	VELASQUEZ-MELÉNDEZ; CÔRREA-OLIVEIRA; PIMENTA, 2007
Limits and Possibilities of Political Activism in a Social Movement of Rural Women	SALVARRO, LAGO; WOLFF, 2014
Ruralness and Women Responsible for Households in the North and Northeast of Brazil	SCOTT, 2007
Self-consumption and food security: family agriculture based on eating knowledge and practices	MENASCHE; MARQUES; ZANETTI, 2008
"Women farmers" and "rural women": gender struggles, political identities and subjectivities	SALVARO; LAGO; & WOLFF, 2013
Development strategies and the expansion of capabilities in a productive group of settled rural women	<i>JUNIOR</i> , 2015
FAO, hunger, and rural women.	PAULILO, 2013
Rural workload: study performed in two rural environments in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.	ROCHA et al, 2016
Diffusion of technology and sexism in the agricultural sciences.	FIÚZA et al, 2009
Diffusion of technology and sexism in the agricultural sciences.	CORDEIRO, SCOTT, 2007
Self-attention in pregnancy for women living in rural area: a ethnographic study.	SAND et al, 2016
Networks for Facing Violence Against Women in the Sertão of Pernambuco.	SCOTT et al, 2016

## Bibliometric analysis

In continuity, graph 1 presents the list of publications per year of articles analyzed for this study.

**Graph 1.** Number of publications per year.

According to graph 1, it can be seen that there were fluctuations in the number of publications on this topic since May 2006. In 2006, there was no record of studies on the subject, in contrast, in 2007, 4 articles were found. From 2008 to 2011, there was a stability, remaining between 1 or 2 publications per year. In 2012, as in 2006, there was no published study on the topic discussed.

As of 2013, there was a greater interest of researchers on the subject, with 3 publications this year. In 2014 and 2015, the number of publications per year continued to grow, increasing one per year, showing an interesting increase in relation to previous years. Thus, in 2014 there were 4 articles on the subject, and in 2015, 5 articles. In 2016, there was publication of 3 scientific articles.

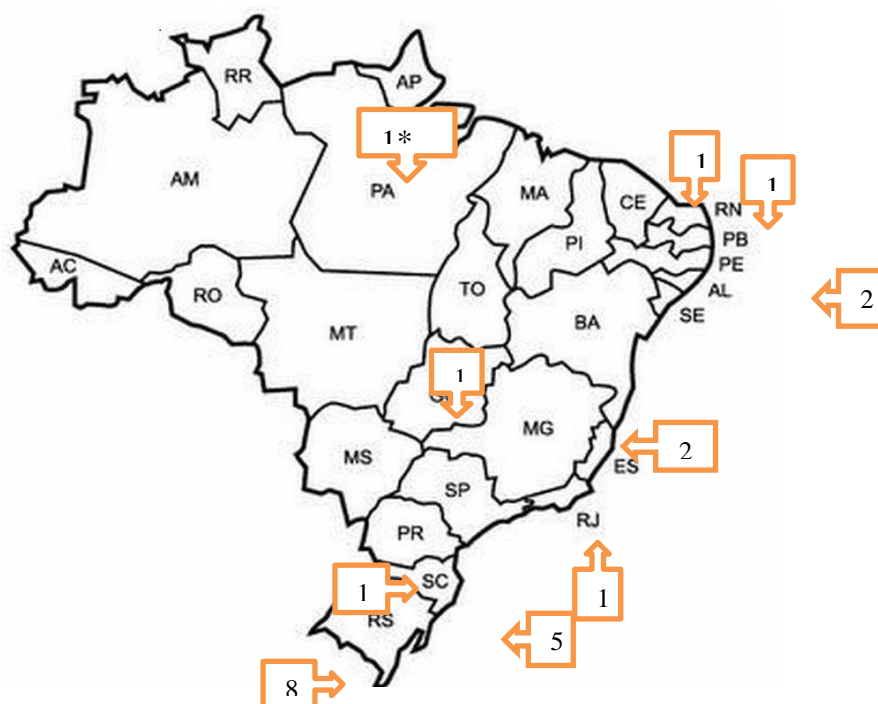
There is an increase in the number of publications in recent years, especially from 2013, making evident the interest of researchers in the rural work of women. It is assumed that the tendency is to increase the number of articles on this theme, since we identified groups of studies researching the theme in several points in Brazil.

Analyzing the number of publications per State, there are discrepancies that deserve attention. The map below illustrates the number of publications between 2006 and 2016 in Brazil.

From this mapping, we can have an overview of the regions that publish the most on the subject, and it is verified that the Southern Brazil has the largest number of researchers interested in the subject. The South region has 14 published articles, 8 from the State of Rio Grande do Sul, 5 from Santa Catarina and one from Paraná. The Southeast region is second in terms of publications per state, totaling three published articles on rural women workers. The publications of the Southeast are divided between the States of Rio de Janeiro, one publication and two from Minas Gerais. The Central-West region contained only one publication, from the State of Goiás. And the others are from the Northeast Region, where the State of Rio Grande do Norte registered one publication and Pernambuco, two. In the

State of Ceará, there was a publication about the theme. As for the Northern Region of Brazil, no publication on the subject was found.

**Figure 1. Illustrative map with the number of publications per State.**



From this mapping, it is possible to observe that researchers who work and research in the Southern Region investigate about women in rural work. This higher index may be associated with the fact that the region has universities interested in developing research based on the demands that arise, or from the very context in which these university academies are.

It should be noted that of the 23 articles selected for the sample by the criteria listed, in 22 of them the professional address of the authors refers to universities of Brazilian states and in one article (Naase, 2009), the researcher works professionally in Germany. It is interesting to note that this author had all her training abroad, but she continued researching on Brazilian women, specifically on rural women workers. This international study is an indicator of the importance of this population, but the mapping of publications also reveals the invisibility of these women who work in the field in most of the states of Brazil, although we have the presence of women in rural work in almost the entire country.

## Analysis and discussion of results

From the analysis of the data found, the following categories emerged: women's actions in rural work and the health of rural women. In continuity, we present the main findings in each category.

## **The actions of women in rural work**

Women living in the rural context have been involved in field work since they were very young, when they go to the plantation area with their parents because they do not have a responsible adult to care for them at home. Thus, very early they end up helping the parents in some tasks, such as carrying water, feeding the animals, or transporting them from one place to another. In this way the work of women in the field begins, although it has not always been recognized (Sales, 2007).

Lisboa and Lusa (2010) emphasize the important role of peasant women, specifically in agricultural production, where women work together with men, performing the same manual labor. However, these authors observed that the machines required for the production of many foods or for farming are manufactured for use by men, so women face difficulties in handling these important tools of rural labor, since they are inadequate to use. This is an example, among many possible, to explain the need for these women to seek for their rights of gender equality and social visibility.

Several studies point out the need to elaborate social policies aimed at rural women workers, looking at this population in the same way that looks at men, rural workers. In view of the work and production of women in the field, where they act very similarly to men, some details differ as women. An example of this difference is their size, and it is necessary to revise the size and structure of the machines, which are fundamental instruments for the production of some foods. The machines are still made for men, which makes it difficult for women to be inserted in their handling, since women are usually smaller, so the machines are very disproportionate to the size of a woman, which complicates their work, injuring them (Lisboa & Lusa, 2010; Sales, 2007; Schwendler, 2015).

The condition of inadequate machinery can be solved and adapted, but this is not the only obstacle encountered by rural women, another problem is the difficulty of workers having access to these machines, as they face little access to financing, inputs, productive services, different from the men who have this much easier access. Women's access to technology is almost insignificant, since agricultural labor technologies are seen as products for the male public (Fiúza et al., 2009; Paulilo, 2013; Lisboa & Lusa, 2010). In this assertion, one perceives a gender inequality that deserves to be widely problematized and discussed.

Fiúza et al (2009) bring to the discussion the reasons for the feminine distancing from these technologies, as well as the lack of knowledge about these machines created to facilitate the rural work, since they are known and discussed within the Universities. They note that women distance from technology is linked to management models that still exist in rural areas, where women are only a complement to this work, that is, they are in a hierarchical condition inferior to men, and hardly a farm manager, for example. Thus, many women end up being restricted to information, technical knowledge, which harms when purchasing, handling and working with agrarian machinery. They also reiterate that the disadvantages in accessing letters of credit in banking branches complements the difficult access to new technologies (Lisboa & Lusa, 2010).

In addition, the rural work of these women is often not considered, as it is seen as an extension of domestic work, as their rural chores can revolve around the household. Another relevant aspect pointed out by Paulilo (2013) is the temporary employment relationship carried out by women in the field, since they end up acting more intensely in the harvest period. This author points out that women report that this job is just another extra help, an extra money that goes into the budget. However, this can be a negative thing for this working



class, since this work often do not legally registered or regularized the service of these workers, in addition to being excessive in these periods, causing exhaustion and/or illness.

Peasant women, besides participating in all the rural work, are present and with fundamental roles in social movements, searching for the rights of the rural working class. However, the recognition of them as rural workers did not always exist, they needed to carry out several rural social movements to have their rights recognized, for example, the retirement right (Salvaro, Estevam, & Felipe, 2014).

The first achievements of the rural women occurred around the 90's, when they gained access to labor-social security rights. At that time, they had to acquire some documents for the regularization of the profession, such as the identity card, CPF, voter title, rural production notepad, work permit and social security for those who were paid. The year of 1991 was marked by the achievement of retirement at age 55 for women, and at 60 for men. In the following year, rural workers reached the right to maternity wages. Until then there were autonomous social movements, or by region, but from 2004, there was the union of all the movements, creating the Farmer Women Movement (MMC), which represents all rural women in Brazil (Salvarro, Lago, & Wolff, 2014).

It is noteworthy that the country is currently experiencing an extremely problematic political moment where social security reform has become a government agenda, and its approval will represent a setback for rural workers. The way in which rural workers, men and women, participate in Social Security is through the collection of 2% when the agricultural product is sold. The change being proposed now, in addition to this 2% payment, each individual in rural areas will have to pay, for 25 years, a monthly ticket equivalent to 5% of the minimum wage, which today would result in something around 47 reais, which in a family of four would mean having to dispose of approximately 200 reais a month, just to fulfill this requirement, in addition to the 2% collection. As the reality of the small farmer does not allow this, this may mean excluding a large part of the rural population, especially women, from the social security system. In addition, the person can only receive benefits such as maternity aid and sickness aid if he/she is up to date with the payment of this ticket, which can easily occur against a lost crop or other intercurrent with the harvest. That is, with this reform, we see serious damage to social rights for rural working women (Weissheimer, 2017).

In a recent published study, Ebling et al. (2015) found that women are now enjoying some achievements, for example, the letter of credit for farmer women. Obtaining this letter of credit denotes the positive result of all the struggles carried out by women in search of their rights and women's emancipation.

Studies also emphasize the insertion of women in the Landless People Movement (MST), where although they occupy secondary roles in view of the fact that men appear in front of the movement, these women nevertheless play an important role in the management of organizations. get involved in the whole movement and go the fight side by side with men. In this way, we observe movements, even if tenuous, of the rural woman, leaving the field of social invisibility and empowering herself, increasing her self-confidence, seeking for more knowledge, and automatically fighting for her rights as well. In addition, the insertion of rural women into social movements, further strengthens it as a woman participant in a society (Naase, 2009; Junior, 2015; Schwendler, 2015).

The empowerment of peasant women, the social struggle, the search for equal rights, are important paths in favor of the transformations of gender relations in the rural context.

But that is not enough. It is also necessary to create laws and public policies that support and encourage these working women (Lisboa & Lusa, 2010; Schwendler, 2015).

Pinto et al. (2013) contribute with a study carried out in the interior of the State of Maranhão, with seven women who are members of the Native Bees Project (PAN). Participants report participating in both the work on the crop and the cleaning and harvesting of honey. In addition, most of these women have control of the family's financial income, as well as control of the crop's investments, expenditures, and household expenditures. It is evident that, in the eyes of these women, working in the field does not interfere with family life, the education of children and the housework, accepting uncritically the triple working day. In general, the study identifies as positive these women as participating in the Project, since it provides a network of social support, where from the meetings, women share their doubts, acquire knowledge and strengthen their social ties. Importantly, what unites these women is the unusual work, the beekeeping.

Another group similar to PAN, is the Pé-da-serra Group, in which a work is carried out with settled women. In this group, women have the opportunity to produce jellies, sweets and preserves derived from the cerrado, which are sold to tourists. Salvaro, Lago & Wolff (2013) states that projects such as this, carried out with rural workers at extra hours, contribute to their empowerment, as well as help the family income and the autonomy of the participants.

However, there are still many women in rural work who are not paid, usually those who work in the family context and grew up doing these activities. In a survey of three women who work in a slaughterhouse, Graf and Coutinho (2010) verified that these women sought this work because they wanted a monthly financial income, which was not the case when working with the family. They chose this profession specifically because of experience with this type of function acquired while assisting their parents in the slaughter of animals for domestic consumption. These same participants report feeling handicapped by having only the experience of working with parents since they were young and having no other registered or paid work experience.

It should be noted a study by Scott (2007), in which the researcher makes a survey of data in the North and Northeast of Brazil and notes that, rural women seem to have more instructions and experiences in home work, since they are still in adolescence, comparing them to men. However, they receive lower remuneration than men for the same work performed. In the study, it is also observed that hardly a woman lives alone in this area, mostly they live with the family. In this study, we noticed a gender inequality in rural work, since women were considered to be of less importance than men.

Another profession linked to the rural extension found as the conquest of the woman was in veterinary care. In a survey carried out in 26 municipalities in the State of Goiás, Freitas and collaborators (2014) verified that the only difference, in the view of the women and men farmers participating in the research, in relation to women and men veterinarians is in relation to physical strength, where the professional man stands out in the view of the interviewees. But, on the other hand, women veterinarians are seen as more organized. In the questions preference for veterinary man or veterinary woman, interpersonal relationship and theoretical knowledge, the research participants did not distinguish between genders. Studies such as this may show that women are gaining areas of activity linked to rural work, which require academic training.

From the search for rights that rural women workers have been doing in the last decade, it is noticed that although the walk is long, they have already acquired some

achievements. Currently, rural women workers are involved in various activities that make them much more present in society and with social recognition of their importance both in the family and in the work of the countryside. Some insertions of rural women, in other activities that contribute to this social recognition, were found in the following studies: work in virtual rural cooperatives, groups for home food production, handicrafts and veterinary work (Thum, Borges, & Heck, 2011; Salvaro, Estevam, & Felipe, 2014; Freitas et al., 2014).

## **The health of rural women**

The rural woman is exposed to risks and vulnerabilities, since she lives and works in a context where much of the work is manual, which wears the worker physically and psychically (Ebling et al., 2015). Moreover, being a work in the field, they are exposed to all the instabilities of nature and meteorology, such as the harsh winters and the intense heat of the summer. There may also be an intensification or overload of work for them, as they often work on the plantations, milking and also the housework, which is configured as a triple working day.

In the study carried out by Costa, Lopes and Soares (2015), in the south of Rio Grande do Sul, violence against rural women appears as naturalized and oppressive in the search for these women's rights. The rural woman appears as submissive to the man, obeying him not to be punished. In addition, gender inequality in rural areas, as well as discriminatory practices and prejudices in relation to the role of women, has been pointed out in this research, suggesting that women are less human than men or inferior, which has consequences for their physical and mental health.

Similarly, Scott et al. (2016) identify the rural environment as a context where women are vulnerable to coping with violence against rural women in the Sertão of the State of Pernambuco. As they find obstacles to enjoy their rights, such as difficulty in denouncing complaints, difficulty in accessing public security organs, inadequate attendance and impediment to the conclusion of complaints in the common police stations.

A study by Rumin, Navarro and Perito (2008) points out that as a consequence of rural work, psychic sufferings arise, but emphasize some physical illnesses that stand out as repetitive strain injuries, bursitis, tendonitis and some injuries in the spine and frequently cramps. These illnesses appear to emerge from an intensification of work in recent years, and an increase in the difficulty of handling instruments due to technology deployment.

In the case of the physical health of rural women, researchers carried out a study with the objective of verifying the prevalence of metabolic syndrome in a community in the interior of the State of Minas Gerais. The results showed that women are more vulnerable than men to this syndrome, since 33.6% of the women participants presented with it, compared to only 7.7% of the men. Thus, the authors point out as a public health problem in the rural area studied, and it is necessary to give greater attention and support to the solution of this problem (Velasquez-Meléndez et al., 2007).

Regarding self-care, Menasche, Marques and Zanetti (2008) observed that the production of food for self-consumption in rural families is significant, with women being responsible for the production and maintenance of these foods. This care for the adequate feeding of the family comes from the ancestors, who produced their own food. Nevertheless, with the increase of industrialized products and the modernization of agriculture with the exposure of food crops to chemical poisons and fertilizers, some changes have already occurred. Caring for planting for self-consumption is considered by the authors as a form of food security and self-care with the family by the women.

In order to know the self-care of rural women workers in a rural community in the municipality of Pelotas, in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, a research was carried out with 11 women participating in a group, where they share the knowledge and use of medicinal plants and the production of handicrafts. This study evidenced that self-care is part of the routine of these women, in addition to the whole family context where they are inserted, in addition the knowledge and habits in relation to health are passed down from generation to generation. The forms of self-care that stand out most in these rural women seem to revolve around the ingestion of teas, which is cited by the participants as a soothing and handicraft production, related by the participants to the equivalent of a therapy, since the workers report to calm them, and increase self-esteem when they practice these crafts. In this research, it was evident the difficulty of the rural workers to get in touch with health professionals since they live in distant places. Information on health care, prevention, psychoeducation is acquired through health agents who visit homes frequently, and by nurses at the health unit, where the monthly meetings of this group are held. Research participants report learning much from each other as well (Thum, Borges, & Heck, 2011).

Checking the fertility attributes for the rural woman, Sand et al. (2016) identify that the participants of the research carried out in Rio Grande do Sul point to pregnancy as a health sign. Participants say that the period is a phase where self-care and self-attention increases significantly, including changing their work habits in this period, for example, reduce physical effort and also alter eating, making it healthier. Although it is sometimes difficult to access health units, they perform prenatal care and seek information provided by the medical category, as they consider it fundamental for the birth of a healthy baby.

In this assertion, this category is mostly based on studies related to the health of the rural women worker, whose health is related to the intensification of work in the field parallel to domestic work. In addition, women working in rural areas have difficulties accessing health care providers because of the location of their home and suffer as a victim of domestic violence, and also have a high index of metabolic syndrome compared to rural men.

This topic was summarized in only 8 studies in a decade, which evidences a shortage of studies on the health of rural workers. It is important to emphasize that these few studies dealt with a number of issues, and the health of these women is only one of them, which hinders a better understanding of the real health situation of this working class.

## **Final considerations**

The objective of this study was to perform a systematic review of the national literature of the last ten years, describing what the scientific productions exploit in relation to women who work in rural areas.

The analysis of the publications per year allowed to observe an increase in the interest of the researchers on the subject only from the year 2013. In addition, there was a greater interest of researchers from the Southern Brazil, predominantly in the States of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, where research groups were focused on the rights of women, the insertion of women in rural work, as well as on feminism and achievements reached through feminist movements.

In relation to the main results of the articles analyzed, there was a high number of publications regarding the movements of rural women in search of their rights as workers. The studies also dealt with the presence of women in social movements, as in the MST

(Landless People Movement) and in the MMC (Farmer Women Movement). The activities carried out by women in the countryside, their invisibility in relation to rural workers, and the search of some to improve their knowledge in the work of the countryside were also presented.

Regarding the rural worker health, there were few studies, indicating a lack of attention of the researchers regarding the health of this population. However, the few studies found can give an overall view of the situation of rural women. The narratives of the physical and psychic sufferings resulting from the intense working day were observed in the publications, as well as some studies that registered rural women suffering from domestic violence and submissive to men. In addition, studies have appeared on the self-care of these women with themselves and with their families.

In general, the studies presented as positive the promotion of reflexive groups that unite women from nearby communities. These groups seem to benefit self-esteem and allow the empowerment of these women. In addition, these group meetings generally revolve around workshops that provide improvements in new techniques and knowledge directed at these women and concomitantly have a therapeutic effect.

It can be concluded that there are few publications on rural working women and that the findings usually remain focused on a specific group, municipality or region, making it difficult to analyze the situation of Brazilian women in a general context. Thus, research on women and their work in rural area at the national level is suggested, and this research is necessary for the different regions of the country, where these studies do not exist.

As an indication for future studies, research with a focus on the field of mental health of rural workers is suggested, in order to deepen understanding about the psychic situation of these women. It also proposes publications on interventions with these rural workers and comparative studies on their current national and international situation.

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