

The protective measure for institutional care of children and adolescents from the perspective of national studies

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THEMATIC ARTICLE

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Abstract *This article aims to analyze the national scientific production on protective measures aimed at institutional care for at-risk children and adolescents in Brazil. By carrying out an integrative review, we seek to reflect on the main trends, themes, institutional actors, methodologies, and objectives of studies on the aforementioned measure and to analyze how the conditions and the right to health are presented and articulated in these references. Six thematic units were identified in the collection: Perceptions and roles of different actors in institutional reception processes; Processes of autonomy, dismissal, and causes of institutional care; Legislative aspects, evaluation of services, and identification of profiles; Family and community coexistence; Education and professional training; and Physical and mental health of sheltered children and adolescents. In Brazil, specifically, few studies investigate the concepts of the children and adolescents placed in shelters concerning protective measure processes or access to education. The link between poverty and institutionalization appears prominently and the scarcity of activities aimed primarily at family reintegration is evident. A large number of surveys point to the difficulties in implementing legislation.*

Key words *Institutional care, Protective measures, Children, Adolescents*

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Introduction

The present study seeks to analyze the national scientific production about protective measures aimed at institutional care for at-risk children and adolescents in Brazil. Through an integrative review, this study reflects on the main trends, themes, institutional actors, methodologies and objectives of the studies regarding those measures, as well as analyzes how specific conditions and the right to health appear and interact in this scientific production.

According to the Statute of Children and Adolescents (*Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* – ECA)¹, institutional care, as a protective measure, should be exceptional and provisory, working as a transition strategy for family reintegration or for placement within a foster family, and should not constitute deprivation of freedom².

According to the ECA ordinance, institutional care services must structure the care they provide according to some principles: exceptionality and provisional character of the removal from the family environment; preservation and fortification of family and community connections; guaranteed access, respect to diversity, and non-discrimination; providing of personalized and individualized care; guaranteed freedom of religion and beliefs; and respect for the autonomy of the children, adolescents, and youths³.

Scholars from different areas have been discussing the ill effects resulting from maintaining children and adolescents in shelters, where collective measures prevail in detriment of individualities, and poor investment in education is rampant^{4,5,6}. According to Assis et al.⁷, there is a lack of studies concerning institutional care, in Brazil and worldwide, examining their structure and the quality of the services they provide.

The several questions mentioned so far were the impetus behind conducting this study, which recognizes that the implementation of protective measures is directly related to the production of knowledge on the theme. Examining the scientific production about institutional care, with the purpose of establishing the status of scientific research on the theme, can subsidize discussions regarding the system of protection of children and adolescents' rights, and the practices involving this system. This also enables us to identify the knowledge gaps and themes that are absent and require more investigative effort.

The present study focused on two key-questions: (i) What is the status of scientific research

concerning preventive measures aimed at institutional care for children and adolescents (reoccurring themes and those that are seldom present; manners of approaching; most prevalent disciplinary and theoretical references)? and (ii) How do the conditions and the right to healthcare appear and interact?

Methodology

This study is an integrative literature review about protective measures aimed at institutional care for children and adolescents. Integrative reviews help to conduct critical analyses in relation to knowledge production regarding questions, objectives, and objects of study, shedding light on possible contradictions, erasure, and reasons for the prevalence of specific research themes and agendas^{8,9}. Bibliographic research was conducted in July 2022, applying a search strategy with descriptors in the Portuguese and English languages in the following databanks: Virtual Health Library (*Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde* – BVS), Scopus, Web of Science and PubMed. In total, 541 articles were collected.

The Mendeley software (<https://www.mendeley.com>) was used to optimize the filtering of the database and the check for duplicates. The articles in Portuguese, English, and Spanish which appeared as available and accessible were read in full. Only articles that had Brazil as the country of reference, published between 2010 and 2022, were selected, while those without a full version available were excluded. After reading the abstracts, the articles that were directly related to the theme of protective measures aimed at institutional care for children and adolescents were maintained, considering that studies focusing only on children, but not considering adolescents, were excluded, as were those lacking a specific discussion on institutional care (Figure 1).

The 81 studies selected in this study originated a data matrix organized according to the following information: author, year, title, objective, methodology, participants, main result, and area of knowledge. Next, the abstracts were read, aiming at identifying themes and core statements present in those productions. The articles were organized based on the definitions of thematic analysis, applying the codifications of unity, theme, and content¹⁰. Six nuclear thematic units were identified in the collection (Chart 1).

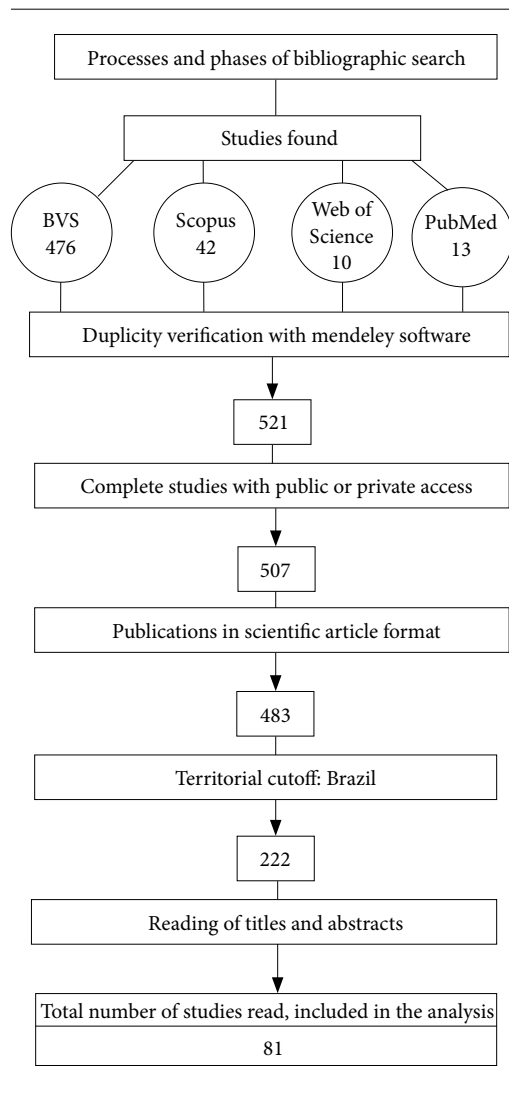


Figure 1. Process of bibliographic selection.

Source: Authors.

Results

Most of the studies analyzed were in the area of Psychology, 58 of 81 studies, and employed empirical methodology of a qualitative nature, in other words, they prioritized the act of listening to the subjects present in the many processes of the care services, although they bring some quantitative aspects as well.

Perceptions, roles, and profiles of different actors in the process of institutional care

Of the 44 articles in this axis, 17 are dedicated to understanding the perceptions and possible representations by the professionals and interns who work in shelter institutions, regarding different processes, actors, and functions related to protective measures for institutional care.

Some negative views stand out about the processes related to institutional care as well as references to contradictions between what is supposed to happen and what in fact happens^{11,12,17}, resulting in the occurrence of episodes of violence by the sheltered individuals⁶ indicating a future of the institutionalization of poverty¹⁸.

In terms of the perceptions and representations of the sheltered individuals, 12 studies were identified. It is evident that it is possible to have a healthy development of autonomy and the presence of positive expectations regarding the resolution of care contexts, as well as the perception of the institutions as places of protection^{9,31}, even though the studies did not further develop the definition of what those positive aspects are. Those results, however, were extremely punctual and diluted when considering that, in institutional shelters, authoritarian and vertical standpoints prevail^{38,39}, resulting in difficulties to preserve and develop identity, and representing an evident example of conservative morality in relation to sexuality^{8,15,32,34,35,39}.

The perceptions of family/guardians also appear as a focus of the studies, which show evident suffering in the face of separation, with fragilization of family connections motivated by the protective measures, as well as difficulties in identifying with the care service.

The construction of negative social images occurs more often in families with institutionalized children and adolescents⁴⁶, as well as in those who are placed in shelters, who are perceived as the only ones to blame for social vulnerability, or seen as individuals of dubious character and related to criminality.

Regarding the profile of the individuals in shelters, studies demonstrate that they are mostly male^{48,50,51}; multiple episodes of institutional care are predominant^{48,50}; and that there are no significant patterns regarding age groups. Most of the studies identified delays in education^{48-51,53}. The main causes of application of protective measures

Chart 1. Thematic units, number of articles, description, identification, and methodology used.

Thematic unit	Description	References	Objectives	Methodology
Perceptions, roles, and profiles of the different actors in the process of institutional care. N = 44	Scientific production about the different roles, perceptions and representations of different subjects and groups, whether institutional or not, regarding institutional care.	Scopinho e Rossi ¹¹ , 2017; Costa ¹² <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Felix ¹³ <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Silva e Arpini ¹⁴ , 2013a; Brito ¹⁵ <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Halpern ¹⁶ <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Carvalho ¹⁷ <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Furlan e Sousa ¹⁸ , 2014; Silva e Arpini ¹⁹ , 2013b; Siqueira ²⁰ <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Souza ²¹ <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Vasconcelos ²² <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Giroto e Amador ²³ , 2018; Scott ²⁴ <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Gomes e Levy ²⁵ , 2019; Silva ²⁶ <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Moreira E Paiva ²⁷ , 2015; Carlos ²⁸ <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Rodrigues ²⁹ <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Carlos ³⁰ <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Miura ³¹ <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Franceschini e Weschenfelder ³² , 2021; Brito ³³ <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Uziel e Berzins ³⁴ , 2012; Rodrigues ³⁵ <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Bonfatti e Granato ³⁶ , 2021; Paludo ³⁷ <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Marzol ³⁸ <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Somer ³⁹ <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Rocha ⁴⁰ <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Lima ⁴¹ <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Líbio e Zacharia S ⁴² , 2017; Carvalho e Stengel ⁴³ , 2018; Cruz ⁴⁴ <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Wendt ⁴⁵ <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Zappe ⁴⁶ <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Wendt ⁴⁷ <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Fukuda ⁴⁸ <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Gontijo ⁴⁹ <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Acioli ⁵⁰ <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Couto e Rizzini ⁵¹ , 2021; Penso ⁵² <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Heumann e Cavalcante ⁵³ , 2018.	Understand the perceptions and possible representations by the professionals who work in shelters, regarding different processes, actors and functions related to the protective measures; understand the perception of sheltered individuals regarding violence and violation of rights they have suffered, identity issues, and matters related to sexuality and self-esteem, emotional experiences in given contexts, relationships and attributions of professionals involved in care and education issues; understand the social image attributed to children and adolescents in a shelter scenario, as well as the image attributed to families/guardians and to the shelter institutions themselves; and identify, present, and describe the socio-family profile of children and adolescents in a situation of instances of multiple shelters.	Qualitative empirical studies; studies of a theoretical nature.
Processes of autonomy, causes of institutional care, and release. N = 18	Studies which discuss the circumstances and contexts which result in the employment of a protective measure and the strategies and possibilities of releasing children and adolescents from the shelters, as well as the relationships between the contexts of releasing and the processes of investment in autonomy for the sheltered individuals	Ianelli ⁵⁴ <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Silva e Arpini ⁵⁵ , 2013; Rosa ⁵⁶ <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Almeida e Morais ⁵⁷ , 2016; Figueiró e Campos ⁵⁸ , 2013; Cassarino-Perez ⁵⁹ <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Cassarino-Perez ⁶⁰ <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Borges e Scorsolini-Comin ⁶¹ , 2020; Espíndola ⁶² <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Hueb ⁶³ , 2016; Fernandes ⁶⁴ , 2017; Martellet E Siqueira ⁶⁵ , 2014; Gross e Tamarozzi ⁶⁶ , 2020; Ramos e Filho ⁶⁷ , 2019; Crestani e Rocha ⁶⁸ , 2018; Boesmans e Martins ⁶⁹ , 2016; Aparecida e Ferreira ⁷⁰ , 2016; Mastroianni ⁷¹ <i>et al.</i> , 2018.	Follow-up and analyze the contexts of the release of children and adolescents sheltered in institutions, in the form of reintegration/reinsertion in the family, or by reaching adult age, or by way of placement of children and adolescents in foster families; investigate the processes of investing in the autonomy of children and adolescents; and analyze the reasons for the institutionalization of children and adolescents.	Qualitative empirical studies; studies based on secondary data; studies of a theoretical nature.

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Chart 1. Thematic units, number of articles, description, identification, and methodology used.

Thematic unit	Description	References	Objectives	Methodology
Legal aspects and evaluation of the services. N = 09	Scientific production which analyzes the protective measures aimed at institutional care and their processes, the situation of conformity of the referred measures in relation to their legal aspects, considering the construction and the historical contexts of those legal instruments.	Miranda ⁷² , 2017; Oliveira e Brito ⁷³ , 2015; Oliveira e Schwartz ⁷⁴ , 2013; Guedes e Scarcelli ⁷⁵ , 2014; Fonseca ⁷⁶ <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Oliveira ⁷⁷ <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Malfitano e Silva ⁷⁸ , 2014; Parra ⁷⁹ <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Acioli ⁸⁰ <i>et al.</i> , 2018b.	Analyze the conformity of the services, and of the scientific production when faced with legal aspects and assessments of different services of institutional care.	Qualitative empirical studies; studies based on secondary data; studies of a theoretical nature.
Family and community life. N = 01	Articles dedicated to the understanding of the fundamental rights of those who are sheltered, to have family and community life.	Moreira ⁸¹ , 2014.	Understand the right to family life under the scope of Socio-Historical Psychology.	Qualitative empirical study.
Education and professional training. N = 03	Scientific articles investigating the access and the right to education and other issues that involve schooling and education; investments in strategies of professional training; and insertion in the job market.	Silva ⁸² <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Leal e Alberto ⁸³ , 2020; Leal e Alberto ⁸⁴ , 2021.	Compare social abilities, behavioral issues, and school performance of children and adolescents, with and without a history of institutional care, and to analyze the relationship between education, professional training, and institutional care.	Qualitative empirical studies.
Physical and mental health of sheltered children and adolescents. N = 06	Studies analyzing processes, events, and rights of the physical and mental conditions of the children and adolescents in shelters.	Fernandes e Oliveira-Monteiro ⁸⁵ , 2016; Álvares ⁸⁶ <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Miura ⁸⁷ <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Oliveira ⁸⁸ <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Penna ⁸⁹ <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Filho ⁹⁰ <i>et al.</i> , 2016	Investigate the mental health conditions of children/ adolescents in shelters, related to the practices and processes of the institutional services, and the process of medicalization of those; analyze sexual behavior and its resulting impacts on the sexual health of institutionalized individuals, and impacts of institutionalization on physical and psychological health.	Qualitative empirical studies.

Source: Authors.

are negligence, homelessness, violence, poor care, abandonment, poor socioeconomic conditions of the family, and use of alcohol and drugs by the parents or guardians⁴⁸⁻⁵².

Autonomy processes, reasons for admission into institutional shelters and for their release

Of the 18 studies in this unit, most refer to follow-ups and analyses of the contexts of the

release of children and adolescents from shelter institutions. When approaching the theme of family reintegration, such processes are analyzed from the point of view of the new National Adoption Law and search for the implementation of public policies aimed at the guarantee of rights for children and adolescents^{14,54}. They also analyze the expectations of the sheltered individuals when faced with their return to the family⁵⁷ and the follow-up of former sheltered individuals that are in the process of reintegration⁵⁶.

Scientific production indicates precarity in terms of investments in reintegration. The actions of family support aimed at reintegration require the articulation of policies that consider specific regional and populational aspects^{54,55}. Although the former sheltered individuals report having good connections and positive feelings regarding family members, and regardless of the efforts of the technical staff of the institutions, effective family reinsertion is compromised by material shortcomings, given that participation in programs that provide some kind of income to the child/adolescent, such as the “Young Apprentice” program, is indicated as an important factor in making reinsertion effective^{56,57}.

In terms of releases and processes related to reaching adult age, the study discusses the role of the shelters and of the entire care network in guaranteeing the rights and preparing the institutionalized individuals for the transition into adult life⁵⁸⁻⁶⁰. The authors point out the lack of preparation to deal with the issues of adult life due to the insufficient investment in developing the autonomy of the institutionalized individual and the lack of conformity between the plans and desires of those subjects and the limited options offered by the network. Processes of investing in autonomy appear as important strategies. Two studies approach the question through more specific investigation, conducting data collection on indicators of prosocial behavior among sheltered adolescents⁶⁴ and seeking to understand the process of bonding, demonstrating the importance of investing in empathy and sharing as part of the institutional routine. The preparation of children and adolescents for placement in a foster family is approached by the authors in one of the integrated reviews⁶³, which also investigated the interest in adopting children that are considered to be too old⁶¹, as well as the effectiveness of the adoption process at the national level in this context⁴.

The studies show that key questions have not been addressed, such as the need to delve into ethnic-racial issues in connection with the ex-

tensive institutionalization times of children and adolescents; likewise, there is a lack of studies regarding the placement of handicapped children and teenagers in foster families^{61,63}.

Regarding the causes for the institutionalization of children/adolescents, the scientific studies are emphatic in terms of relating those causes to family poverty, and definitions such as “at risk” and “vulnerable” are often used to justify government intervention in poor families⁶⁶⁻⁷¹.

Those studies, only a few of which show more criticism, are evidence that institutional care can be a manner of biopolitical intervention⁶⁸. The services function through a double confinement system: confinement of bodies, locked up in institutions, and of subjectivity, which is sequestered, criminalized, punished, and kept from reaching its potential^{66,68}. Moreover, the use of alcohol and/or drugs by the parents/guardians appear as an important event in terms of factors which result in the children being placed in shelters⁷¹.

In this area, scientific production based on empirical and qualitative methodology is the majority, amounting to eight studies; there were also six studies of theoretical nature and four studies based on secondary data.

Legal aspects and evaluation of the services

Among the studies that analyze the conformity of institutional care services to policies and legislation, one can see an interest in discussing the historical evolution, the configuration, and the current execution of the services and observance of norms^{72,73}. One can also see that some studies seek to establish relationships between the policies, and the institutional practices and daily routine of the many different professionals. These relationships are considered expeditious and successful^{74,75} in terms of meeting the standards predicted by policies⁷⁶. The organization of a policy of care for the population is also an element that strengthens the protective function of the family⁷⁷.

Some authors have mentioned that even public policies that are powerful and well-designed face difficulties in terms of implementation⁷². The current context in which services are provided has issues in relation to aspects considered as basic, such as separating siblings when placed in shelters, institutions that restrict their services to specific age groups, disconnection of the protection network, a significant number of children from the countryside being sheltered in capital cities, a lack of family support and difficulties to

ensure the right to have a family and a community life^{73,74}.

It is also important to highlight issues such as the importance of questioning the attributions of roles and directives, the adequation of facilities, the training of personnel, and the need to have a greater presence of the government in the creation of effective policies⁷⁵⁻⁷⁷.

The review studies, about institutional care services and their legal aspects, consider the publication of the ECA as a starting point, and primarily investigate the effects of institutionalization on children and adolescents⁷⁸⁻⁷⁹. The main results indicate the impossibility of a reliable interpretation of the referred phenomenon due to the scarcity of scientific studies on the theme, thus demonstrating that institutional care requires significant support from public policies, taking into consideration that possible negative impacts of institutionalization can be extensive and potentially as damaging as the situations which resulted in the need for such a measure.

The studies aimed at evaluating services seek to analyze the structure and the processes of institutional care. One study conducted in the city of Recife indicated that only a small portion of the services were inadequate, while most of them were considered acceptable⁸⁰. The study evaluated the structure and the process of institutional care for the protection of children/adolescents who suffered with abandonment and/or violence, by applying a questionnaire for the people who worked in those services. The study also included a qualitative analysis with members of the judiciary and executive branches.

Family and community life

Measures of institutional care can be effective in protecting children and adolescents in situations of personal and social risk; however, there are serious difficulties in the sense of restoring family connections, especially due to the shared belief in the ideal model of family⁸¹. According to Moreira⁸¹, those families are seen as fragile from a symbolic point of view, in terms of material conditions: in most cases, families are female, single-parent, in a context marked by the imaginary ideal of nuclear, conjugal, and heterosexual families. Hence, other family configurations are seen as “unstructured”. The author emphasizes that shelter institutions provide services to the child or adolescent, but not to the family, and even though the network has many psychosocial services, they are, nonetheless, considerably disconnected.

Education and professional training

Three of the studies investigated the issue of education and professional training for institutionalized children and adolescents. One study indicates that behavior issues impact academic performance in the areas of reading and writing of institutionalized children and adolescents, who are further hampered by prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes towards them. Those attitudes favor exclusion practices, which compromise the rights of the subjects and reinforce the belief in the inability of building new and promising scenarios⁸².

Silva⁸² et al. discuss the importance of an inclusive attitude towards children and adolescents in the context of education by offering educational practices that respect differences and boost equity. The significant educational delay of institutionalized children/adolescents, and the lack of clarity by the educators regarding the actual meaning of professional education, result in children and adolescents who will enter the job market with inadequate qualifications, which is one of the main problems in this area^{83,84}.

Leal and Alberto⁸⁴ indicate the need to investigate the articulation between policies of professional training and of protective measures aimed at shelters for children and adolescents, enabling the construction of life projects and favoring the subsequent insertion of those individuals in the job market.

Mental and physical health of sheltered children and adolescents

The issue of physical and mental health of children and adolescents subjected to protective measures of institutional care was approached by 6 of the 81 studies. In relation to mental health, psychological problems were found by one of the studies through evaluations conducted with 61 adolescents in shelters, who showed indifference regarding the adversities and complexities of their life and their condition as an institutionalized individual, thereby indicating the presence of emotional problems and the discontinuity of psychological investment in the struggle against the situation of vulnerability that results from being away from people with whom they have affective ties. In one of the adolescents interviewed, suicide idealization was noticed⁸⁵.

One study sought to investigate the incidence of depressive symptoms in sheltered children and adolescents, and identified that 35% of the

23 participants reached a percentile considered to be clinically significant, while another 35% showed a similar percentile. The results suggest that being institutionalized for longer than two years, having a record of multiple periods of institutionalization, having no personal affective relationships during the process of institutional care, not having siblings in the institution, and being institutionalized after seven years of age, are issues directly connected to the development of such symptoms⁸⁶.

Another study sought to understand the emotional experiences of intra-family violence suffered by adolescent mothers in institutional care, the main results of which showed multiple situations that cause significant psychological suffering: adolescent pregnancy, conflicts with family routine, running away from home, and situations in which adolescent mothers abandon their babies after birth. It is assumed that intra-family violence made the adolescent mothers incapable of symbolizing, elaborating, and re-signifying the psychological suffering related to these experiences⁸⁷.

One of the studies analyzed the medicalization of children and adolescents as a *modus operandi* of institutions. The study shows that, in detriment of care measures that value teamwork and the preservation of the rights of children and adolescents, services resort to measures that favor control and surveillance, and place those individuals in a situations of need, abnormality, and potential danger⁸⁸.

Penna⁸⁹ *et al.* describes the sexual attitudes and behaviors of adolescents in shelters, and analyzes the repercussions of such attitudes on their sexual health. As a general result, the study verified that, after institutional care, there was an increase in the use of condoms and a greater perception of sexual vulnerability by those adolescents, leading to the possible assumption that institutional care improved the sexual health of adolescents.

Finally, one study investigated the impacts of institutionalization on the physical and psychological health of children and adolescents, and found that removing a children from an institution and transferring them to a different place of care may lead to a reduction of psychopathological risks and promote better social, emotional, and cognitive development. It is crucial, therefore, to invest in care services that are prescribed by different policies on the issue in order to reduce possible deficits in the development of institutionalized children and adolescents⁹⁰.

Discussion

There are a high number of studies aimed at the perceptions and different actors of the process of institutional care – nearly half of the 81 studies – and even more impacting is the fact that among those, there is a prevalence of studies concerned with the work and the perceptions of those who work at the shelter services.

In Brazil, few studies delve into the concepts of children and adolescents, even though some studies indicate that, for the shelters to allow for a healthy development, there is a need for investment in the reformulation and evaluation of the institutions, since countless structural and processual flaws are noticeable in Brazilian institutions⁸⁰. Silva and Montserrat⁹¹ mentioned the evident lack of data about populations of children and teenagers undergoing protective measures, showing the invisibility to which those subjects are submitted.

A high number of studies show the difficulties regarding the implementation of legislations and norms aimed at the guarantee of the rights of children and adolescents, and reveal the lack of knowledge, by the professionals, about their roles and specific attributions, going against what was discussed by Masha and Botha⁹², who identified a system of institutional care which contributes to the perpetuation of the violation of rights, as well as negligence due to the gap between what is done and what is prescribed.

By ensuring family and community life, the ECA recognizes the importance of family in education and socialization during childhood and adolescence, highlighting the relevance of the preservation of such connections⁹³, although there is still a lack of activities and proposals that specifically aim to improve connections and investments in family integration, as shown in this integrative review, although national legislation supports the priority character of such actions and reinforces the exceptionality and briefness of protective measures for institutional care¹.

The relationship between poverty and the institutionalization of children and adolescents is a theme that stands out, especially in studies which make up the thematic axis of the causes of institutional care. Such data is also corroborated by the articles investigating the profile of those who are sheltered, revealing a contradictory protection logic, as mentioned by Rizzini⁹⁴, which puts children and adolescents within the scope of legal actions, assistance, and police measures due to their condition of poverty. The institutional

micro-practices clearly influence and update the processes of discrimination against the poor at the level of policies of protection of children and adolescents⁹⁵.

It is of utmost importance to establish a difference in relation to the studies on education and professional training. Access to education, which is a basic right, appears even less in the current review, given that, of the three studies concerning education, two refer to professional training. However, it is important to mention that both actions are strategic, considering the social reality of the families involved and the need to develop autonomy. Access to education provides the individual with a chance for self-construction and expands possibilities, thereby constituting an opportunity of growth as a citizen and of development of self-esteem⁹⁶.

The use of alcohol and other drugs is indicated as the main factor generating violence in affective relationships, and is a key issue in episodes of the violation of the rights of children and adolescents, whether by them or by their guardians; the consequence of this issue is the removal from family life⁹⁷.

Although questions such as the use of alcohol and other drugs appear in many studies as a hurdle to the reduction of the need for shelters and for the promotion of family reintegration, none of the studies – and we are not considering here only those in the thematic axis of health – ventures into deeper reflection on health issues, causes of institutionalization, and the possible release of children and adolescents submitted to such measures.

Family and community life, access to education, and access to healthcare are fundamental rights of children and adolescents, and appear in nearly every study; however, it is important to

note that it appears more commonly as a peripheral issue, as a consequence of investigations that have other specific objectives, rather than occupying a central place in discussions.

Final considerations

This integrative review shows that, given the large number of studies focused on the perception and actions of different actors who are part of the processes of institutional care, especially professionals, advances in legislation and regulations are not reflected in the execution of the aforementioned protective measures, and that, in view of this, efforts regarding the production of knowledge tend to focus on services and professionals, leaving aside the experiences of children and adolescents in shelters and the impacts that they suffer, directly, on their general development and, primarily, health conditions, even if it is admitted that there is a certain level of correlation between the two issues.

The protective measure continues with the tutelary nature of actions aimed at the supposed protection of poor children and adolescents in the face of risk situations that have their roots in political, economic, and social problems. It is necessary to consider the violations, when understanding the complexity of this context, which are being imposed in the name of protection, used as a mask. The analysis of access and health conditions, one of the main objectives of this text, proved to rarely be present and with limited investigations in the references collected in this integrative review. Likewise, there is also a lack of studies concerning the rights to family and community coexistence and education.

Collaborations

R Brandão participated in all of the phases of the production of the article. S Deslandes and P Constantino contributed to the analysis and revision of the text.

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