

## **Elderly Dwellers of Urban and Rural Areas and the Access to the Education: The Case of the Rio Pardo Valley**

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### **Abstract**

*The population aging is a global phenomenon, which affects the human as well as the family, the community and the society. This is a normal and dynamic process that involves losses on biological plan, socio affective and politic, what can demand some vulnerability differentiated by gender, age, social class, breed, geographic region, between others. Therefore, this article has the objective to reflect about some issues of this contemporary phenomenon, that is the problematic of little schooling of the elderly dwellers of urban and rural areas on the cities that compose the Rio Pardo Valley/RS, fact that interfere on the life quality of the people. The information presented is results of the synthesizing and analyzing of secondary data obtained from census 2000 and 2010 of IBGE. The data show the little schooling of the elderly, where majority has just Elementary School incomplete, for both rural and urban area.*

**Key Words:** Population aging; Education; Gender; Urban and rural areas.

### **1. Introduction**

Brazil is a country that is on the phase of age structure shift of its population, where there are an increasing number of older people and a shrinking number of children and adolescents. Under the demographic point of view, population aging is primarily a result of two factors, one is the strong decrease in the fertility rate (which dropped from 6.2 children per woman in 1960 to 1.8 children in 2012) and the other is the reduction of the infant mortality (which went from 121% in 1960 to 15.7% in 2012). These changes were driven by changes in the fields: social, educational, cultural and health. And while the increase of longevity is an achievement of the social field and health, also presents a challenge to social and economic demands. So, to think about the education process is important when studying aging. (DOLL; RAMOS; BAUES, 2015; BUAES, 2004). The aging can be considered as a long and continuous biopsychosocial process, which produces mutual transactions between the biological organism, the person and the environmental context. Therefore, aging is related to the close relation with what the person does and what he possesses.

Then, the behavioral health and physical adjustment depends on multiple factors, among which are: to have access to and participate actively in a good medical care, to have a good psychosocial support and live with more quality. Education is a factor that still presents many peculiarities when it comes to the elderly, as there are a large portion of this population on school age, they had left to study to work on plantations, look after the house and the brothers and many could not afford and did not had access to schools. We should consider that the return of the seniors to the school benches comprises the principle of human dignity, and to observe the activity development according to their realities and as a being worthy of respect to their life conditions. (CUNHA; MAIOLI, 2015). In Brazil, the population's education level is still considered low, despite the significant improvement in recent years of education rates in the country. Researches show that almost half of the Brazilian population does not have the complete elementary school, and with regard to the elderly these data are even more alarming.

Today, it is clear that many people drop out of school or even do not have access to education, noticeable fact mainly in rural areas. (DOMINGOS; MARTINS, 2008). And as well remind us the authors Scortegagna and Oliveira (2010), even that education is considered a fundamental right, the Brazilian legislation "[...] Includes early childhood education, elementary school, high school, college school, vocational and adult education, but when thinks of the elderly, they are dislocated" (p. 63). Learning is a continuous process from birth to death of the humans, which influences in its constitution as a subject. And under this assumption, we think about the coping of seniors and how they can stimulate latent capabilities and also trigger overcoming mechanisms and resolution of adverse situations experienced in their daily lives. Therefore, it is known that education can operate in the process of resilience of the elderly, implementing and consolidating intrinsic capabilities to the individual, contributing to overcome the difficulties inherent in the educational act. (DOLL; RAMOS; BAUES, 2015).

In this context, education should enable the development of the subject not only in terms of knowledge, but also in aspects: physical, intellectual, emotional, social, artistic, spiritual and ethical, so that is promoted an awareness of their rights by stimulating their vocational spirit and the elderly's ability to integrate into society as citizens. Moreover, education plays an important role in the stimulation of intergenerational relationships, increased self-esteem, avoiding social isolation, promoting health and improving the quality of life of older people. (MARINHO, 2007). This work, in this perspective that education is vital at all stages, aims to analyze the schooling of the elderly and their home situation, in other words, residence in urban or rural areas. To do so, it sought to systematize and analyze secondary data from the municipalities that make up the area covered by the Regional Development Council (COREDE) of Vale do Rio Pardo, located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS), Brazil.

## ***2. Developing the Study: Brief Observations on Methodology***

The data were obtained from the demographic censuses of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) for the periods 2000 to 2010 and organized by the municipality to form the region of Vale do Rio Pardo, separating the environment urban from the rural. It should be noted that the data analyzed correspond to a sample of the elderly population of the Vale do Rio Pardo and not to the universe of the elderly population of each city. The Vale do Rio Pardo is located in the central-eastern region of Rio Grande do Sul state, being composed of 23 cities: Arroio do Tigre, Boqueirão do Leão, Candelária, Encruzilhada do Sul, Estrela Velha, General Câmara, Herveiras, Ibarama, Lagoa Bonita do Sul, Mato Leitão, Pantano Grande, Passa Sete, Passo do Sobrado, Rio Pardo, Santa Cruz do Sul, Segredo, Sinimbu, Sobradinho, Tunas, Vale do Sol, Vale Verde, Venâncio Aires e Vera Cruz. Therefore, it was decided in this study by presentation of data from the cities that stood out among the rest, related to the education level of the elderly.

Importantly, the IBGE used a different methodology for the classification of educational levels in the population censuses of 2000 and 2010. The data referred to 2000 were classified as: illiterate; Incomplete Elementary School - 1st to 3rd grade; Incomplete Elementary School - 4th to 7th grade; Completed Elementary School; Completed High School; Degree - Graduation; Degree (Master). While, in 2010, the data were divided into: Without Education or Incomplete Elementary School; Elementary school complete or Incomplete High School; higher education complete or incomplete high school; Graduation complete. For this reason, the data presented in each census will be different in some aspects: the first is that in the 2000 census higher education is divided into undergraduate and master's, and this classification is not included in census 2010. The second aspect refers to the census of 2010 that display data related to elderly population without any instruction, level that in the 2000 census was classified as Illiterate, being computed the data along with the incomplete elementary school.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

For understanding the access to education by examining the level of education of elderly residents in the Vale do Rio Pardo, it is necessary to characterize the population of these municipalities. The region's population consists of 418,141 habitants; of which 60.120 have 60 or more, representing 14.37% of the total population. (IBGE, 2010). The cities of the region with the highest percentage of elderly, according to data from demographic censuses of 2000 and 2010 are respectively: Vale Verde (14,91% and 18,54%), Sinimbu (14,63 and 17,18%), General Câmara (14,07% and 17,91%), Passo do Sobrado (13,79% and 15,62%), Candelária (13,29% and 16,07%), Encruzilhada do Sul (13,28 and 15,98%) and Mato Leitão (12,7% and 15,75%). These data demonstrate the importance and the need for studies on the elderly population that is growing significantly in recent years. The systematized and analyzed data on the level of education of elderly dwellers in the Vale do Rio Pardo and their relationship with their home situation, show the low level of education of the elderly, as can be seen in the table 1 (Attachment 1).

It is noticed that from the year 2000 the majority of older people, both in urban and rural, had incomplete elementary school, representing 8.4% of the elderly. This result expresses the difficulty of access to education and makes you think about the implications of low education in the lives of seniors. Because, according to Cachioni and Falcon (2009), the relationship between successful aging and education show the risks of social exclusion, produced by limited schooling of these seniors when they were children and / or adolescents. As shown in Table 2 (Attachment 2), it is observed that in the census of 2010 the elderly are still concentrated in lower educational level, ie without instruction or elementary school Incomplete, totaling 13.4% of the elderly in this condition. But there is an increase compared to the year 2000 on the elementary school complete or high school complete, where in 2010 the elderly account for 1.28%. In the 2000 census, seniors with elementary school complete were only 0.4%. This shows a small change in demand for education of this population. Inequality between urban and rural areas is observed in various school levels, and no doubt this is an important factor to think about, because illiteracy is not a simple inheritance from the past; on the contrary, it remains also being produced nowadays. And this makes us think that society is not being able to alphabetize all individuals, not even the new generation. (DAMASCENO; BESERRA, 2004).

In Brazil and in Rio Grande do Sul, related to the environment in which seniors live and their level of education, as can be seen in Table 3(Attachment), the schooling rates in the RS are higher than in Brazil, both in rural as in urban. In Brazil, the elderly who have elementary school complete in the year 2000 amounted to 77.,675 (0.91%) urban dwellers and 32.025 (0.03%) in rural areas. In RS there are 62.938 elderly (1.10%) in urban and 4.999 (0.09%) in rural areas. This difference was also noted in the Vale do Rio Pardo, where the largest number of elderly with elementary school complete was in urban areas, with 1,333 (0.33%) elderly to 295 (0.07%) in rural areas, and the highest number is of elderly women (773 to 0.19%) living in this area. Therefore, it realizes that the challenges that it imposes in Brazilian society involve: literacy and education of adults and illiterate elderly and/or with insufficient schooling; education for leisure; and investment in education stressing the importance of prejudices break toward old age. (CACHIONI; FALCÃO, 2009). Brazil is a country where there are still many inequalities in gender, ethnicity and class. Thus, Brazilian reality shows that, at the same time, there are people with privileged access to material and spiritual goods, as well as opportunities in health and education, while there are other people who live in situations of deprivation and disadvantage. (PEREIRA, 2005).

The urban elderly population with elementary school complete or high school incomplete on Vale do Rio Pardo corresponds to 1.03% (3,777), of which 0.43% (1,609) are men and 0.59% (2,169) are women. The rural elderly population with Elementary School Complete or High School Incomplete on Vale do Rio Pardo is much lower, with 0.25% (916), where 0.11% (453) were men and 0.12% (466) are women. (CENSO, 2010). There is still quite disinterest in rural education and this reflects the pressure limit of the rural social movements on the government. And while acknowledging that the rural school is limited and precarious, scholars consider that this institution plays a key role in the universal knowledge for the rural population, having to have their socio-pedagogical function and curricular content redefined to, in fact, meet the real interests of groups social that it is intended. (DAMASCENO; BESERRA, 2004). The elderly population is increasingly evident, not only with regard to their numerical growth, but also by the demands which proposes the present society in improving the standard of living of the elderly. Thus, it can be said that in recent years are occurring a greater social visibility of the needs of the elderly population, and among them, access to education is an important issue. (CACHIONI; FALCÃO, 2009).

The levels of education in rural areas are not very different in relation to gender, because it is perceived that there is a similar percentage in both. Where, the level without instruction or with elementary school incomplete in 2010 in Vale Rio Pardo 3.05% (11.178) are men and 3,33% (12.216) are women. In RS 1,34% (125.504) are men and 1,34% (125.011) are women and in Brazil 1,01% (1.631.301) are men and 0,91% (1.460.714) are women. In elementary school complete or high school Incomplete from Vale do Rio Pardo 0,12% (453) are men and 0,12% (466) are women, in RS 0,07% (6.836) are men and 0,06% (6.098) are women, and Brazil 0,03% (50.025) are men and 0,03% (40.943) are women. At the highest levels, as high school complete or higher school incomplete, the numbers are also similar, with no discrepancy because at the VRP 0,06% (223) were men and 0,04% (174) are women, in RS 0,03 % (2.441) are men and 0,03% (2.512) are women, and Brazil 0,02% (28.957) are men and 0,01% (29.143) are women. (CENSO, 2010). Now, in the urban environment, in the high school complete level or higher school incomplete is perceived a higher schooling among women, both in the state and in the country. You can see a big difference when the related indicator is the medium where he lives, and the elderly with high school, living in the countryside in the VRP, represent only 0,02% of the population. On VRP is 0,38% (1.428) men and 0,45% (1.658) women, in the RS 0,66% (61.716) are men and 0,82% (76.400) are women, and the percentage in the country corresponds to 0,55% (878.686) of men and 0,67% (1.089.355) are women. (CENSO, 2010).

A significant difference that if found on Vale do Rio Pardo is the level of schooling of people with high school in relation to the environment where they live, where the urban environment has a significantly higher number, 1.189 (0,29%) to 101 (0,02%) in rural areas. (CENSO, 2000). Cities as Boqueirão do Leão, Candelária, Estância Velha, General Câmara, Herveiras, Ibarama, Mato Leitão, Passa Sete, Passo do Sobrado, Santa Cruz do Sul, Segredo, Sinimbu, Sobradinho, Tunas, Vale do Sol and Vera Cruz, do not have any senior with high school, computed on data from IBGE sample. It is known that education provides the individual better quality of life, as it enables the development of the potential of individuals and instrumentalizes for the exercise of citizenship. Thus, access to education is fundamental to the formation of citizens with critical consciousness and engaged to the society. (CAMARGOS et al., 2003). Rural schools in Brazil were built later than the urban schools, and they had not the state support necessary for developing. In the history of Brazilian education is possible identify a neglect of the ruling elites with regard to public education, especially in relation to rural schools. Because of the state's neglect about rural schools, communities themselves have organized to create schools and ensure the education of their children, with the support of church organizations and social movements. This is one factor that explains why there are high rates of elderly people with elementary school incomplete.

The education as its main objective should provide knowledge, citizenship and cultural continuity, because is in these learning spaces that individuals are faced with the most diversified forms of production processes, heterogeneous cultures, different people, with values and own aspirations. (JUNIOR; NETO, 2011). In recent decades we can see that the difficulty of access to high school and to higher school is changing. With regard to seniors with educational level: Undergraduate and Master (CENSO, 2000), it is noticeable that the highest number of elderly is in urban areas on Vale do Rio Pardo (802 - 0,19%), with 415 (0,10%) men and 388 (0,09%) women, and in the rural area are 35 elderly (percentage not significant - 0,00%). In Brazil, the largest number of elderly who have this level is also found in urban areas and are 521.195 (0,61%), with 309.938 (0,33%) men and 211.256 (0,24%) women. In the RS, there is the same reality, because in urban areas the number of older people with this educational index is 40.114 (0,70%) to only 836 (0,01%) in rural areas, and men are in more number than women, with 22.274 (0,40%) to 17.840 (0,31%) women, respectively. It can be seen an increase in the schooling, especially in urban centers, but there is still an inequality in relation to gender.

According to Caldart et al. (2006) the relationship of gender and the social role they play depends, among other things, of the way society organizes itself to produce and reproduce their own existence. The way in which power relations are exercised explains the cultures that are instituted and how society thinks about it. Where the forms of representation of the differences between men and women socially produced are not natural and can be changed because they are constructed and reconstructed in social practices. Then we are engaged in gender relations, where the construction of female and male identity is a historical and socio-cultural process permeated by social relations of class. The urban elderly population with higher education complete (CENSO, 2010) of Vale do Rio Pardo corresponds to 0,66% (2.423), of which 0,29% (1.092) are men and 0,36% (1.330) are women. The cities with the highest rates of this educational level are Sobradinho (137 - 1,1%), followed by Santa Cruz do Sul (1.140 - 1,09%), Encruzilhada do Sul (223 - 1,05%), Rio Pardo (237 - 0,73%), General Câmara (47 - 0,62%) e Venâncio Aires (363 - 0,62%).

The RS's population corresponds to 103.592 (1, 11%), and 48.132 (0,52%) were men and 55.431 (0,59%) are female. Brazil's population corresponds to 1.396.041 (0, 86%), and 696.632 (0,43%) are men and 699.409 (0,43%) are women. In the 2010 census there is a difference about the indexes that link higher schooling of the elderly at the state level and higher percentage of women with higher education. The rural elderly population with higher school complete on Vale do Rio Pardo corresponds to 134 (0,03%), from which 45 (0,01%) are man and 110 (0,02%) are women. The cities with the highest rates of this educational level are: Vale do Sol (15 - 0,16%), followed by Venâncio Aires (57 - 0,1%), Segredo (5 - 0,09%), Vale Verde (2 - 0,08%), Passo do Sobrado (4 - 0,07%), General Câmara (5 - 0,06%) and Pantano Grande (5 - 0,06%). The rural elderly population in the RS with Higher Education complete corresponds to 2.536 (0,03%), and 1.172 (0,01%) are men and 1.364 (0,02%) are women, and the rural elderly population of Brazil corresponds to 24.816 (0,02%), and 13.182 (0,01%) are men and 11.633 (0,01%) are women. In the country, is perceived similar levels to those of the studied region, being the only difference the highest number of women with higher education on Vale do Rio Pardo in the rural environment, which draws attention. Currently, much is said on the issue of gender and in the schooling level differences, and according to data from the IBGE's demographic censuses of 2000 and 2010 we see that many changes have occurred with regard to gender *versus* schooling.

In 2000, women were more numerous in the lower levels of education, such as elementary school Incomplete, being 5,26% of elderly women to 3,63% elderly men, and in elementary school complete with 0,22% for women to 0,18% men. In high school was 0,17% men, to 0,14% women, and with graduation was 0,10% men, to 0,09% women. The educational level - Master's and Doctorate presents an interesting data, in which women were in higher number, being 0,01% for an insignificant percentage of men. In 2010, was not identified any educational level in which women were outnumbered, because the without instruction or elementary school incomplete are 7,67% women to 6,13% of men, with elementary school complete or high school incomplete there are 0,52% women to 0,23% men, that is, the number of women is more than twice the number of men, signifying a major achievement for women, who very recently restricted their activities to domestic life, to home activities. In high school complete or higher education incomplete there is 0,08% of women to 0,03% of men, confirming once again that the number of women is higher than men and in this case, almost three times higher. In the last educational level, the graduation complete, there are the same number of women and men, both with 0.05% of the elderly in this condition.

Interestingly, in 2000, the data collected show that even when the number of elderly men was higher than women's, educational levels: high school and graduation, this difference was very small, 0,03% and 0,01% respectively, meaning that even that women were minority, it was not a large discrepancy. Unlike, if you look at the numbers placed in 2010, we found that the number of elderly women nearly doubled compared to men. There are at least two explanations for the numbers presented: one hypothesis is that women, when they reach the third age, unbound from tasks such as housekeeping, children and husband, they found more time to devote to their own interests, to activities, such as the resumption of their studies. Another possibility could be that women being more long-lived, end up being more present in several sectors, including education. We should also consider that there was an improvement with regard to access to education for the Brazilian population, both for men and for women, in rural and urban areas, with a fall in the illiteracy rate and an increase in years of study, approaching at times the number of women and men. (HEREDIA, 2006).

Occurred changes about the educational plan in rurality, which aimed to secure the man in the field, influencing the development of a variety of educational programs directed at rural areas. Creating a space for building and developing public policies that was directed to the population, in order to contribute to fostering an enabling environment for the affirmation of a culture of rights and respect for differences. Regarding the right of the institution to education in rural areas, it is known that there is the preparation of the LDB 9.394 / 96 and the Operational Guidelines for Basic Education in Rural Schools, by Resolution CNE / CEB No. 1, of December 03, 2002. (LIRA; MELO, 2010). To occur the education for the elderly, there needs to be dialogue, and do not just think of literate programs, but include it in heterogeneous classes aimed at law enforcement. It takes more, it is necessary to work with awareness and appropriation of concepts, of the rights and contexts experienced today by seniors. (OLIVEIRA, 2012). The elderly population living in rural areas is growing, as well as in urban areas, however, we realize that the differences are in the aspects relating to education in these areas, as in urban areas this is facilitated through the creation of actions and programs for the elderly, including in universities, with access incentives, without vestibular, discounts and universities opened for the Elderly. And how will be for those living in small rural cities?

#### 4. Final Considerations

Through the data obtained it was observed that in 2000 and 2010 the number of seniors who had their high school complete and living in urban areas was higher than those living in rural areas. As the population that today is considered elderly were of school age in the 40 and 50, where the educational offer was very limited, end up having a large percentage of seniors with only the elementary school incomplete, both in the 2000 census as the 2010. Thus, it is seen that elderly people in rural areas are still outnumbered, with lower schooling rates, due to lack of access to education that also influence the phenomenon of migration to urban areas. Every day more, the population search for opportunities to study and work in urban areas. The neglect of the fulfillment of educational legislation ends up reflecting the statistics of all time: the same elderly that is placed the edge of education today for lack of interest in investments in this portion of the population, is the same young guy that once had not access to education, so, which is perpetuated is the neglect of education. One who did not study for lack of conditions in its infancy, youth, will still not studying, because now is old and the old people in this country, at best, retires.

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## 6. Attachment

### 1) Table 1: Education level of the elderly and their household situation (rural and urban) in Vale do Rio Pardo.

2000	TOTAL RURAL	%	TOTAL URBAN	%
Illiterates and Incomplete elementary school	14.838	3,73	18.582	4,67
Elementary school complete	295	0,07	1.333	0,33
High school complete	101	0,02	1.189	0,29
Higher Education (Graduate and Masters)	35	0	802	0,19

Source: Data organized by the authors from the IBGE 2000.

### 2) Table 2: Education level of the elderly and their household situation (rural and urban) in Vale do Rio Pardo.

2010	TOTAL RURAL	%	TOTAL URBAN	%
Without instruction or Incomplete elementary school	23.052	6,29	25.666	7
Elementary school complete or High school incomplete	916	0,25	3.777	1,03
High school complete or higher school incomplete	397	0,1	3.089	0,84
Higher school complete	134	0,03	2.423	0,66

Source: Data organized by the authors from the IBGE 2010.

### 3) Table 3: Education level of the elderly and their household situation (rural and urban) in Brazil and RS

	TOTAL URBAN	%	TOTAL RURAL	%
Brazil - illiterate and Elementary school incomplete	6.058.980	7,1%	1.118.932	1,29%
Brazil – Elementary school complete	773.675	0,91%	32.025	0,03%
Brazil – High school complete	814.731	0,96%	20.268	0,03%
Brazil – Higher school (Degree and masters)	521.195	0,61%	9.448	0,02%
RS - illiterate and Elementary school incomplete.	511.262	8,95%	167.169	2,93%
RS - Elementary school complete	62.938	1,10%	4.999	0,09%
RS- High school complete	54.099	0,95%	2.067	0,04%
RS - Higher school (Degree and masters)	40.114	0,7%	836	0,01%

Source: Population Census 2000 (IBGE).