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### **ABSTRACT**

Spirituality is a relevant field for science and a body of research shows its health benefits. In turn,

spiritism presents itself as a theoretical-practical doctrine that can positively influence mental health. This narrative-integrative review carried out a search aiming at the scientific knowledge produced in the interface between spiritism and mental health. It was seen that, currently, institutional research centers, such as the Center for Research in Spirituality and Health (NUPES) and the Health, Spirituality and Religiosity Program (ProSER) are dedicated to this theme, in addition to areas of psychology, such as transpersonal and the anomalistic. It was also demonstrated that the spiritist proposal of “intimate reform” has a therapeutic inclination for the mind, with benefits evidenced in research on some specific spiritist activities, such as mediumistic meetings, passes and the study of the gospel and doctrine. In parallel, mediumship has been extensively researched, demonstrating itself as a legitimate human phenomenon, not invented, still to be better understood.

**Keywords:** Spiritism, Spirituality, Mental health, Knowledge, Science.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Currently, spirituality represents an area of research in focus, since the spiritual dimension is among the most important factors in structuring human experience, beliefs, values, patterns of behavior and disease. A large literary base shows that spiritual beliefs and practices, when exercised in balance with other aspects of life, are linked to health and well-being, which reinforces the use of these instruments by modern medicine, even with the current difficult situation of teaching "spirituality and health" in medical schools (LOTUFO NETO; LOTUFO JR; Martins, 2009) (BONELLI, 2016; DALGALARRONDO, 2006, 2007a; DILMAGHANI, 2018; Koenig, 2007; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2007, 2009a; VITORINO et al., 2018) (LUCCHETTI et al., 2023) .

Defining spirituality is important to differentiate it from religion and religious practice (religiosity), although this can be a complex task since there are numerous different concepts for this term. . Therefore, for the purposes of this research, we opted for a more traditional concept, which understands spirituality as the inherent search of each person for a meaning and purpose of life,

symbolizing an innate, particular and fully cognitive human aspect, which can transcend to transpersonal experiences, which go beyond the ordinary structures of consciousness. (PAUL VICTOR; TRESCHUK, 2020) (KOENIG, 2012) (WEIL, 1989)

Spirituality does not present formal rules or dogmas, being a rather unique activity of the being itself, while in religion or in the practice of religiosity there is the presence of an institution that generates a set of beliefs and rituals external to the individual. Therefore, research involving spirituality has a greater focus on the individual himself and his psychic experience, while research that deals with religion must, mandatorily, consider the characteristics of the institutions involved. Despite this differentiation, much of the research on this theme merges the two concepts into a single structure, known as Religiosity/Spirituality (R/E). (KOENIG, 2007) (PAUL VICTOR; TRESCHUK, 2020) (ALMINHANA; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2009; CURCIO; LUCCHETTI; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2016; RANSOME, 2020)

Figure 1 - Aspects related to spirituality and health.



Source: Prepared by the author (2023).

Religion and spirituality are factors of health or illness, depending on the way the being engages with these issues. It is known, for example, that religion can be positive for health when practiced in a self-determined way, with freedom over the autonomy of the individual, as well as helps in the formation of resilience. In addition, religion and spirituality represent important focuses of study regarding violence, especially self-inflicted violence. A large base of research studies the relationship between spirituality and suicide and its aspects, given the relevance of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and suicide itself as public health guidelines. Regarding interpersonal violence, research shows that religion and spirituality can serve as a protective factor, but this topic of study is scarce compared to others, despite the alarming numbers in Brazil and in the world. (MELO et al., 2015) (SCHWALM et al., 2022) (LAWRENCE; OQUENDO; STANLEY, 2016; VITORINO et al., 2018) (GONÇALVES et al., 2022a, 2022b) (CERQUEIRA et al., 2019; SOUTO et al., 2017)

Thus, by proposing the study of the theme of Kardec's spiritism, mental health and the production of scientific knowledge, we sought to allow a more equitable reflection, considering the number of studies in relation to the theme. Therefore, this study describes contexts related to the fields of research in spirituality and the impacts of Spiritist doctrine and therapy on mental health.

## 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study consists of a review narrative-integrative waves Field and theoretical studies freely available in virtual libraries were included. Narrative review consists of choosing a theme; analysis in the bibliography; Capture of articles, reading and critical appreciation and finally writing of the work. The choice for this type of study was due to the possibility of incorporating different aspects of the same theme (APPOLINÁRIO, 2006; BOSI M.L.M., 2012; Garcia, 2014; GIL, 2008).

On the other hand, the integrative review is a modality of literature review study that allows the adjustment of different types of research, whether primary or secondary, consisting of six distinct phases (FROM SOUSA; FIRMINO; MARQUES-VIEIRA; SEVERINO *et al.*, 2018; GIL, 2008):

- 1) Identification of the theme and selection of the hypothesis or research question for the elaboration of the integrative review;
- 2) Establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies/sampling or literature research;
- 3) Definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies / categorization of the studies;
- 4) Evaluation of the studies included in the integrative review;
- 5) Interpretation of the results and,
- 6) Presentation of the review / synthesis of knowledge.

Initially, the following research questions were defined: *what are the contexts of research in spirituality and what are the impacts of Spiritist doctrine and therapy on mental health today?* Subsequently, after the elaboration of the question, the keywords that could capture the articles

referring to the theme were identified: "spiritism", "spirituality", "religiosity/spirituality" and "mental health", with their respective translations in English.

The articles were located in the PubMed and Google scholar databases, published in English, Spanish or Portuguese. The contexts of interest were any uses, in any context, related to Spiritist doctrine and therapeutics in mental health. The titles and abstracts, when available, of the articles located in the search were read and critically evaluated to identify those eligible for the research. Next, the data that would compose the integrative-narrative review were collected, which were organized into topics.

In the final phase, the codification and dialogue of the various authors on the theme were carried out, in order to expose the general vision of the object of study, through a composition arranged according to the subsidies that influenced the return of the question of this research. In the aspect of the results of this review, narrative summaries were erected, being a method of scientific writing.

### **3 RESULTS**

#### **3.1 FIELDS OF RESEARCH IN SPIRITUALITY**

Brazil is an important producer of research that addresses the relationship between spirituality and mental health, despite the methodological adversities and the absence of financial gains from this object. At the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), there is a study center that relates issues of mental health and spirituality; this is the Center for Research in Spirituality and Health (NUPES), coordinated by the researcher Moreira-Almeida. This nucleus represents an important pole of study on this theme, with national and international publications, such as the work " (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2007, 2009a, 2013) *Science of Life After Death*". Similarly, at the University of São Paulo (USP), there is the Health, Spirituality and Religiosity Program (ProSER), coordinated by the researcher Leão, with relevant works on the subject. (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA; COAST; RABBIT, 2022a) (LEO; LOTUFO NETO, 2007)

Associated with the centers of academic studies, some areas of psychology in Brazil are leaning towards studies about spirituality, such as Transpersonal and Anomalistic. Transpersonal refers to: "A branch of psychology specializing in the study of states of consciousness, deals more specifically with the 'Cosmic Experience' or so-called 'Higher' or 'Enlarged' state of consciousness." For Tart (1972 (WEIL, 1989) *apud* CARDEÑA; LYNN; KRIPPNER, 2013) , an 'altered or enlarged state of consciousness' (EAC) means: 'a qualitative alteration in the overall pattern of mental functioning, so that the experiencer feels that his consciousness is operating in a radically different way from normal'.

Many of the consciousness-altering transpersonal experiences have spiritual contents. In a study on the perceptions of individuals in transpersonal experiences, the following were identified:

sense of transcendence, connection with the cosmos, contact with divinity, feeling of fullness, feeling of belonging to a spiritual reality, feeling of belonging to a higher plane, among others. Within the experiences studied by the transpersonal, some pictures of mental disturbances are understood as processes of opening of consciousness in which the ordinary conscious receives content from a spiritual unconscious, leading to a transient disorganization. Such experiences are called spiritual emergencies, and although they manifest themselves with psychic suffering, they are not essentially pathological. According to the researchers, if these experiences are properly treated as difficult stages of a personal development process, they "can result in spontaneous cures of various emotional and psychosomatic disorders, in favorable personality changes, [...] and evolution towards a 'higher consciousness'". However, contrary to this view, psychiatry has a tendency to label these experiences as pathological because of their similarity to psychotic symptoms seen in schizophrenia. (MARTINS; ZANGARI, 2012) (COARSE; COARSE, 1997) (COARSE; GROF, 1997, p. 23) (WAPNICK et al., 1978)

Some differentiators between healthy transpersonal experiences and psychiatric disorders were evidenced in research: absence of psychological suffering; absence of social and occupational damage; the experience is short-lived and occurs episodically; there is a critical attitude about the objective reality of the experience; there is compatibility of the experience with some cultural or religious group; absence of comorbidities; the experience is controlled; the experience generates growth staff; The experience is geared toward others. These differentiators are not absolute, but they enable a less "pathologizing" perception of these experiences. (JUNIOR MENEZES; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2009)

On Anomalistics, the term "anomaly" originates in the work of Kuhn and refers to phenomena that could not be explained by so-called "normal" science. Anomalistics develops through the study of anomalous phenomena or experiences, which are unusual mental experiences that deviate from commonly accepted explanations (2013) (KUHN, 2013) (CARDEÑA; LYNN; KRIPPNER, 2013) and do not fit into any established scientific concept. They can be categorized as follows: hallucinatory (non-pathological) experiences, synesthesia, lucid dreaming, out-of-body experiences, psi-related experiences (telepathy, psychokinesis, clairvoyance, precognition), alien abduction experiences, past life experiences, near-death experiences, anomalous healing experiences, and mystical experience. These experiences are distinguished from mental pathologies, since they often present without traces of psychic suffering or cognitive and functional impairments. The anomalies signal gaps in knowledge about psychic functioning, however, science and psychology demonstrate a certain neglect of this type of experience. (CHIBENI; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2007) (CARDEÑA;

LYNN; KRIPPNER, 2013) (CHIBENI; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2007) (MARTINS; ZANGARI, 2012)

There is an approximation of the studies of anomalistics with phenomena recognized in the sphere of spirituality. Many of these experiences serve as evidence for the survival of the afterlife, such as near-death experiences, extracorporeal projection (out-of-body), psi-related (mediumship), and past-life (reincarnation). However, in order for Anomalistics to expand as a productive line of research and to better understand the relationship of these experiences with spirituality, methodological guidelines are necessary, such as: (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA; COAST; RABBIT, 2022b) avoiding a prejudiced approach and "pathologization", exhaustive review of the existing literature, using criteria of normality and pathology, investigating different populations, development of appropriate instruments, caution in the terms used and in the causal links established, avoid interpretations, consider the role of culture, and evaluate the reliability and validity of reports. (WILLIAMS; LOTUFO NETO, 2003; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA; COAST; RABBIT, 2022c)

### 3.2 RESEARCH IN MENTAL HEALTH AND SPIRITUALITY

Studies have shown benefits of active and positively structured spirituality in different instances of mental health. This importance given to the interaction between religious institutions, spirituality and health care is recognized by the health sciences in general, including with the aim of further strengthening these ties. In Bhutan, for example, the importance of spirituality in the treatment of Common Mental Disorders has been highlighted. Spirituality can protect the individual against self-inflicted violence, both for suicide attempts and for the suicidal act itself. The importance of religious support for moments of crisis with risk of suicide is also evidenced. (IDLER et al., 2019) (SITHEY et al., 2018) (LAWRENCE; OQUENDO; STANLEY, 2016) (MANDHOUIJ et al., 2016) (BAZLEY; PAKENHAM; WATSON, 2019; NORKO et al., 2017)

Meta-analyses demonstrate the additional benefits of spirituality and religious practices on the reduction of clinical symptoms, anxiety, depression, quality of life, and on the association between physical health and quality of life. (COUNTED; POSSAMAI; MEADE, 2018) (GONÇALVES et al., 2015) (BURR; KOENIG, 2019; STEARNS et al., 2018) (PANZINI et al., 2017) (GONÇALVES et al., 2017; MELO et al., 2015; PERES et al., 2018)

In Brazil, the positive effect of spirituality for various psychiatric disorders has been established, in the care of patients with Bipolar Affective Disorder (BAD), in the prevention of suicide in adolescents, among other topics. Teens also benefit in their overall health from spirituality. In the geriatric population, the positive effect of spirituality is well established, as well as in the care of cancer and the mental disorders involved and in palliative care. Evidence also shows benefits of spirituality

in the treatment of addiction and, more recently, the relevance of spirituality in the context of the covid-19 pandemic has already begun to be studied. (LUCCHETTI; KOENIG; LUCCHETTI, 2021) (STROPPA et al., 2018; STROPPA; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2009) (IBRAHIM et al., 2019) (DANKULINCOVA VESELSKA et al., 2018) (LUCCHETTI et al., 2018) (BOVERO et al., 2019) (MATHEW-GEEVARUGHESE; CORZO; FIGURACION, 2019) (BERALDO et al., 2019) (TAVARES, 2020)

Although the vast majority of data are favorable to spirituality as a protective factor against self-inflicted violence, some studies do not evidence this relationship in certain samples, just as there is still controversy in the data on spirituality and self-harm behavior. (PLÖDERL; KUNRATH; FARTACEK, 2020) (SANSONE; WIEDERMAN, 2015)

Between the field of psychiatry and spirituality there has always been some tension, even with strong evidence of the (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2007) relationship between spiritual well-being and better mental health. National studies reveal that among psychiatrists, more than half (55.5%) do not address this topic with their patients, either for fear of exceeding their role as physicians (30.2%) or for "lack of training" (22.3%). (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2009b) (MENEGATTI-CHEQUINI et al., 2016) However, there are already established guidelines on the subject: (1) Religious and spiritual well-being is important for mental health; (2) Research and empirical evidence reveal that healthy faith and distorted or unhealthy faith have distinct effects on mental health; (3) Psychiatrists should respect the spiritual and religious beliefs and practices of their patients; (4) Religious and spiritual beliefs and practices are important aspects of psychiatry in its human aspect. It is also known the importance of spirituality for health professionals in their personal and professional lives, including their education. (JAKOVLJEVIC, 2017a) (ROGERS et al., 2019)

In the field of psychology and psychotherapy, there is considerable evidence of the benefits promoted by healthy spirituality. In one meta-analysis, psychotherapy associated with an intervention in Religiosity/Spirituality (R/E) resulted in improved psychological functioning and greater spiritual well-being. Studies on personality models and spirituality have shown that high religiosity is associated with low psychoticism and high agreeableness and conscientiousness, and may even represent a new personality factor, different from the current ones, not yet considered by science. More recent research on spirituality and personality demonstrated that men were more likely to declare themselves as "religious" or "non-religious," while women declared themselves more as "religious and spiritual." For both sexes, those with more "spiritual" component had more positive personality traits, such as agreeableness, extraversion, and low neuroticism. (CAPTARI et al., 2018) (ALMINHANA; MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2009) (LACE et al., 2020)

Public health is another scientific field that has sought to study and understand the relationship between mental health and spirituality, as in the debate on fluid therapy as a rationality in health, in the epistemological discussion between psychiatry and spiritism, and in the production of knowledge about psychic assistance for psychosis, depression and dissociation through the prism of spiritism. (ERBERELI, 2013) (SALES; LINHARES, 2022b) (SALES; LINHARES, 2022a, 2022c)

Once it is evidenced that spiritual well-being helps in mental health, it becomes necessary to advance research on the subject in two aspects: to better identify the relationship between spirituality and health in spiritualized but not religious people, and to seek more causal inference between these two aspects at the individual and collective level. Collectively fostering a positive and autonomous spirituality and focusing efforts on the fight against pathological religiosity is as important to global public health as combating radicalism, malign nationalism, violent extremism and terrorism. (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2010) (RANSOME, 2020) (JAKOVLJEVIC, 2017b; JAKOVLJEVIC et al., 2019)

### 3.3 IMPACT OF THE SPIRITIST DOCTRINE ON MENTAL HEALTH: EMPIRICAL AND SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING

Spiritism is of French origin and has a scientific, philosophical and religious stamp based on the theoretical principles organized by Kardec in the nineteenth century. The arrival of spiritism in Brazil took place still in the nineteenth century, in order to defend a rational, adogmatic and non-institutional Christian faith, having as a consequence to this vision a sociocultural resistance to the time. By undergoing an organizational improvement, the Spiritist movement was integrated into a unique project, creating, in Brazil, the foundation of the Brazilian Spiritist Federation (FEB) in 1884, responsible for the regiment and guidelines of the state Spiritist federations and Spiritist Houses in general. (2008a) (LEWGOY, 2008) (NARCIANDI, 2018) (FERNANDES, 2008) (ABOVE, 2017)

It is worth mentioning that, in Brazil, the Spiritist movement presented a remarkable development, resulting in a Brazilian model of exercise of the Spiritist doctrine that is already exported to other countries and cultures, suffering a transnationalization. In addition, spiritism supports Brazilian culture in several aspects, primarily when it comes to education, anthropology and health, considering in this the areas of psychology and psychiatry. (LEWGOY, 2008) (ISAIA, 2017) (BACCETTO, 2019) (JABERT; Facchinetti, 2011; PEREIRA NETO; AMARO, 2012)

The Spiritist doctrine is based on a set of knowledge that leverages the intellectual and moral human improvement. Therefore, this doctrine is of Christian roots, however, it has its own ideas, divergent from other Christian religious lines. This controversy is based on the fact that, for spiritism,



the human being is an immortal spirit, coming from his creation; a reincarnating being that goes through several existences in different physical bodies; and an evolutionary being, with a tendency to intellectual and moral evolution. Faced with this, in order for the being to reach a state of completeness and happiness, he must cultivate intellectual and moral learning, attending to Christian principles and devoting himself to the practice of charity. (KARDEC, 2008a)

The performance of the Spiritist doctrine has a therapeutic inclination in all its activities, because its objective is that the individual concentrates efforts for a change of mind and behaviors, from an educational self-work based, mainly, on Christianity. In consonance, the FEB states that the Spiritist Houses represent a place of mental renewal, constituting a kind of school where one can learn, improve and help others through work within the area, which would have a salutary effect on the mental health of the individual involved. (KARDEC, 2013) (BRAZILIAN SPIRITIST FEDERATION, 2017)

Due to its alleged positive influence on the psyche, there is a long-standing relationship of spiritism with psychology, psychiatry and other psychic sciences, evidencing a clash with the materialist view on this subject. Spiritism and its studies on expressive psychic phenomena in the sociocultural sector make psychologists and psychiatrists interested in researching the Spiritist doctrine and its influence on its adherents. (ISAIAH, 2020) (WILLIAMS; ODA; DALGALARRONDO, 2007)

### **3.3.1 Spiritist therapeutics and related research**

The Brazilian Spiritist Federation (FEB) is supported by the National Federative Council, the federation's unification and organization body, responsible for the Work Plan (2018-2022) and the Orientation to the Spiritist Center. When it comes to the Guidelines to the Spiritist Center, there are guidelines that support the work to be carried out by the house, these being: Public Lectures, Systematized Study of the Spiritist Doctrine, Spiritual Service, Study and Education of Mediumship, Spiritist Evangelization, Mediumistic Meetings, Social Assistance and Promotion Service, Dissemination of the Spiritist Doctrine, Administrative Activities and Unification Activities of the Spiritist Movement. Excluding the dissemination and administrative functions (the last three), the remainder has a potential therapeutic function (FIGURE 2). (BRAZILIAN SPIRITIST FEDERATION, 2017) (BRAZILIAN SPIRITIST FEDERATION, 2006)

Figure 2 - Activities of a Spiritist Center (FEB, 2006).

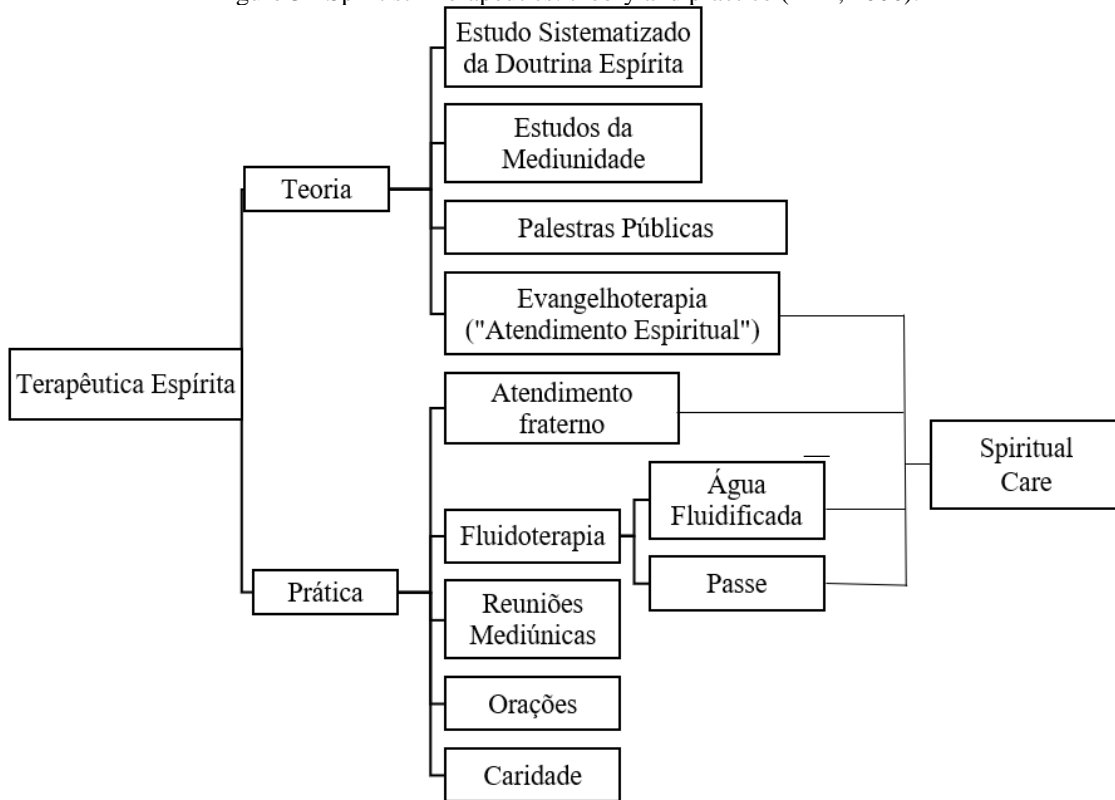
<b>ATIVIDADES CASA ESPÍRITA</b>	PALESTRAS PÚBLICAS
	ESTUDO SISTEMATIZADO DA DOCTRINA ESPÍRITA
	ATENDIMENTO ESPIRITUAL
	ESTUDO E EDUCAÇÃO DA MEDIUNIDADE
	EVANGELIZAÇÃO ESPÍRITA - INFÂNCIA E JUVENTUDE
	REUNIÕES MEDIÚNICAS
	SERVIÇO DE ASSISTÊNCIA E PROMOÇÃO SOCIAL
	DIVULGAÇÃO DA DOCTRINA ESPÍRITA
	ATIVIDADES ADMINISTRATIVAS
	ATIVIDADES DE UNIFICAÇÃO DO MOVIMENTO ESPÍRITA

Source: Prepared by the author (2023).

Based on the Spiritist doctrine, every individual is supported by the principle of self-responsibility, that is, he is responsible for his ideas, his actions and his transformations. Given this, the Spiritist therapy converges ascension of the consciousness of the individual, through his own effort and using his inner understanding, as well as the probable positive changes resulting from reflections on himself, an act so called "intimate reform". Therefore, the (KARDEC, 2008a) **intimate Spiritist reform** envisions a personal work of self-improvement. In similarity, the psychic sciences present evidence that self-directed psychological work can improve mental health, for example, in improving depression and self-esteem, in developing compassion, and in self-management tools. (RICHARDSON; BARKHAM, 2020) (MILLS et al., 2020) (BIBER; ELLIS, 2019; INWOOD; FERRARI, 2018) (BEENTJES et al., 2020)

In the development of intimate reform, spiritism advocates a system of study (theory) and work (practice). In addition, an invitation is made for Spiritists and Spiritist house goes to become workers (volunteers). The purpose of this invitation is for this worker to support other regulars in their activities, so that these activities are no longer just theoretical and also become practical (FIGURE 3). (BRAZILIAN SPIRITIST FEDERATION, 2006)

Figure 3 - Spiritist Therapeutics: theory and practice (FEB, 2006).



Source: Prepared by the author (2023).

It is worth mentioning that the theoretical activities of the Spiritist doctrine are part of the process of educational formation directed to intimate reform. This educational training is carried out in the Spiritual Service (ATE), where the gospel of Christ is studied according to spiritism; in the Systematic Study of the Spiritist Doctrine (ESDE), in which the doctrine codified by Kardec is studied; in the Studies of Mediumship, in which mediums (people with alleged ability to communicate with spirits) are educated and trained in their mediumistic skills; and in Public Lectures, in which the listener can learn a specific topic related to doctrine. (BRAZILIAN SPIRITIST FEDERATION, 2017) The Spiritual Service is the main activity of the Spiritist House and serves as a "gateway" for the newcomers and for those who are in greater psychic suffering. It encompasses three activities: Gospeltherapy, Fraternal Care and Fluid Therapy. Of these, Gospeltherapy corresponds to the theoretical activity, which is the study of the gospel, being recognized by the general name of Spiritual Care.

These theoretical study meetings are also configured as social meetings, moments in which people interact, socialize spontaneously, using readings, group dynamics and reflective dialogue, helping in the formation of bonds of relationship and support network. Taking into account only the socialization of groups, without analysis of spiritual issues, research indicates that social relations and community coexistence favor good improvements in mental health, as well as the importance of

social supports as a health instrument. In contrast, both isolation and loneliness become negative factors, bringing worsening results, such as stress (CASTILLO et al., 2019; TOUGH; SIEGRIST; FEKETE, 2017) (WANG et al., 2018) (CAMPAIGN), depression and cardiovascular disease, and suicide. (COURTIN; KNAPP, 2017) (CALATI et al., 2019)

It is worth affirming, once again, that the practical activities of Spiritist therapy include activities in which the frequenter of the house is involved in the accomplishment of something. In the case of Spiritual Care, in addition to Gospeltherapy, Fraternal Care is also performed, in which the attendee is attended in a particular way, willing to speak his demands, his afflictions. It is a moment of total integration between informing oneself and communicating one's experiences, doubts and inquiries. In the Fraternal Care, the particularities of those assisted are worked by the spiritist look, in a perspective of assistance that resembles the traditional psychotherapy.

Fluid Therapy, which is also part of Spiritual Care, concerns the energetic emanations on the individual, which is represented by the Pass and the Fluidized Water. The Spiritist Pass corresponds to the subtle energetic emanation, an action through good thoughts and channeled through the hands, which are positioned above the body of people in similarity with the magnetic treatments. Currently, in Brazil, there are two techniques that have treatment corresponding to the Pass, which are: reiki and the technique of laying on of hands. In the case of reiki, in recent research, there is already positive evidence in the use of the treatment for mental health. These two therapies are also part of the National Program of Integrative and Complementary Practices (PNPIC), approved in an ordinance for use in the Unified Health System (SUS). In similarity to the same process of the Pass, the Fluidized Water also stands out, with the use of a portion of water that serves as a vehicle for the energetic emanations. Compared to the "holy water" of Catholicism, in which a portion of water is blessed by the priest, it is interpreted that there are salutary properties in the Fluidized Water. (DE SOUZA CAVALCANTE et al., 2016) (DEMIR DOGAN, 2018; MANGIONE; SWENGROS; ANDERSON, 2017) (FERRAZ et al., 2019) (BRAZILIAN SPIRITIST FEDERATION, 2006)

According to the scientific literature, most studies related to Spiritist therapy focus on the study on the Pass. From research linked to the culture of bacteria, it was realized that the Pass was able to inhibit bacterial growth. In terms of a paired and controlled Brazilian study, carried out in hospitalized patients who received the Spiritist Pass, a reduction in the parameters of anxiety, depression and muscle tension was observed. In a parallel study, cardiac patients, who underwent the Pass, showed reduced anxiety, thus improving their muscle tension and oxygen saturation and, consequently, a sense of well-being. Associated with these cited studies, one more becomes significant when it comes to HIV/AIDS patients in hospital treatment. These were submitted to the Pass, presenting improvements regarding the side effects of the treatment, mainly in the improvement of muscle tension, which

resulted in a feeling of well-being. (LUCCHETTI et al., 2013) (SHEEP; MARTIN; EARTH, 2016) (CARNEIRO et al., 2017) (CARNEIRO et al., 2019)

In another national study, volunteers were randomly divided into two groups: the test group underwent the Pass, and the control group did not. At the end of the study, a significant reduction in anxiety parameters was observed in the test group when compared to the control group. In a controlled, randomized and triple-blind study, 120 women with osteoarthritis of the knee were divided into three groups: Spiritist Pass, laying on of hands without spiritual component and control group without intervention. There was improvement in the Spiritist Pass group in relation to joint stiffness, functional capacity, as well as improvement in secondary data of anxiety, depression, mobility and quality of life, when compared to the other groups. (SHEEP; MARTIN; EARTH, 2016) (ZACARON et al., 2018)

The Mediumistic Meeting is another Spiritist practice in which works of spiritual guidance and mediumistic disobsession are carried out, that is, the interruption of spiritual obsession. Mediumship deals with the alleged ability to communicate with spirits, while the spiritual obsession corresponds to the action of a disembodied spirit that energetically involves another being, in this case incarnate, preventing the brain of this one from transmitting with balance or clarity its thoughts. The deobsession corresponds to a moment of meeting in which people endowed with mediumship seek to suspend the bad influence supposedly provoked by a spirit on the individuals in assistance. (KARDEC, 2007) (MENEZES, 2010)

In a national study, paired and controlled, of intervention with Mediumistic Meetings (spiritual practices, in the study) for people with cognitive disabilities, a considerable improvement in the parameters of well-being for the test group was noted. In a descriptive study with patients with depression and submitted to spiritist therapy through "spiritual healing" sessions, which included educational lectures, deobsession, pass and fraternal care, the remission of symptoms was observed. (LEO; LOTUFO NETO, 2007) (LUCCHETTI et al., 2015a) In psychology, the work of Roger Woolger, creator of the Deep Memory Process (DMP), is similar to that of deobsession, which is performed a treatment for what Woolger calls the "attached spirit," with potential capacity for symptomatic relief. (1994) (WOOLGER, 1994)

The exercise of Prayers is another activity established by spiritism, which takes place in the Spiritist Houses or at home. In the latter case, the term Gospel of the home is used. It is worth mentioning how important it is for spiritism the practice of Prayer, because it means a process of active spirituality, a time when the individual concentrates to receive good vibrations, purifying the mind and harmonizing thoughts and feelings. Recent studies show that prayer is a valuable resource for improving health, to the point of helping with psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety, as well as improving quality of life. However, evidence shows that a good effect of prayer on mental

health depends on the perceived relationship with God, underscoring the value of spirituality (direct relationship with God) over religiosity (relationship with God through an institution). There is also evidence showing the importance of prayer in a private setting, which corroborates the relevance of Gospel practice in the home. (KARDEC, 2008a) (ANDERSON; NUNNELLEY, 2016) (PANZINI et al., 2017) (BRADSHAW; KENT, 2018) (RAINVILLE, 2018)

Spiritist therapy also stimulates activities related to assistance services and social promotion, which is Charity, whether in the home environment or in external actions. For the Spiritist doctrine, Charity is of fundamental importance, since Kardec himself states in his work that outside of charity there is no salvation (for the soul). Studies show that becoming or being a volunteer is directly related to better mental health parameters, better individual and community quality of life, i.e. doing good to oneself and others, as well as increasing well-being in adults through social cohesion. In contrast, volunteering can subject the individual to a context of suffering, with possible negative consequences, but the most evident signs speak of improvement in mental health. (KARDEC, 2009) (DOUGLAS; GEORGIU; WESTBROOK, 2017) (BRETT et al., 2019) (CRAMM; VAN DIJK; NIEBOER, 2013) (CASSIDY et al., 2019; WILLEMS et al., 2020)

Encompassing all the activities of the Spiritist Center, Lucchetti *et al.* studied the relationship between health and six spiritist therapies: prayer, laying on of hands (Passes), Fluidized Water, volunteer work, spiritual enlightenment (Gospeltherapy) and disobsession (Mediumistic Meeting). The research revealed strong evidence of improvement in mental health through volunteer work. Positive associations regarding Passes and Prayers were also found. There was a lack of studies associated with Fluidized Water and the treatment of deobsession. In a more recent national study, in Spiritist Houses in the city of São Paulo, it was seen that the most performed Spiritist therapy was deobsession (92.7%) and the most treated health problem was depression (45.1%), followed by cancer (33.3%). (2011) (LUCCHETTI et al., 2011) (LUCCHETTI et al., 2016)

### **3.3.2 Research on mediumship**

Research related to mediumship declined at the end of the twentieth century, but increased significantly from the beginning of the twenty-first century, showing peculiar results. In a recent meta-analysis, the results showed support for the possibility that mediums can truly acquire information about dead people through unknown means. (DAHER et al., 2017) (SARRAF; WOODLEY OF MENIE; TRESSOLDI, 2021)

In research research for possible explanations about mediumship, four possibilities were raised: (1) fraud, (2) dissociative personality generated by the unconscious mental activity of the medium, (3) extrasensory perception, and (4) mind can survive bodily death and communicate through another

person. The result, in the words of the author (p. 87): "Mediums in trance have been able to exhibit abilities beyond those demonstrated in normal states of consciousness, sometimes in tune with those of the supposed communicating personality." (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2013)

From a national study on the epidemiological profile of spiritist mediums and possible symptoms and dissociative and/or psychotic psychiatric disorders and in this population, it was concluded that mediums presented a low level of psychiatric symptoms when compared to the general population. In a previous study, it had already been observed that spiritist dissociation could not be considered a psychiatric disorder, because some theoretical models perceived this phenomenon as something cultural and not pathological. In another national survey, people with anomalous dissociative experiences were seen as healthy from a psychic point of view. In a large convenience sample of more than 3000 people (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2005) (BLACK JUNIOR; PALLADINO-BLACK; LOUZÃ, 1999) (MARTINS; ZANGARI, 2012), individuals who claimed mediumship experiences had higher dissociation scores than those who did not, but no group exceeded the threshold for pathology. (WAHBEH; RADIN, 2018)

In terms of a qualitative study, the potential of balanced mediumship for the relief of psychic suffering and for the improvement of mental health was highlighted. In another qualitative study, conducted with 10 Brazilian mediums, it was highlighted that the anguish and fear at the beginning of the manifestations were replaced by resilience, altruism and self-knowledge after contact with spiritism. In a double-blind study, psychometric and brain electrophysiology data were evaluated in four mediums in two different situations: (1) demonstrate knowledge about a deceased person (unknown to the medium), in which 3 of the 4 mediums scored significantly above chance ( $p < 0.05$ ); and (2) analysis of brain electrophysiology in distinct mental states, including the mediumistic trance, which showed that the impression of communicating with someone deceased is electrophysiologically different from ordinary thought or ordinary imagination. (HOTT, 2019) (SANCHES FURLANETTO et al., 2022) (DELORME et al., 2013)

In a study with psychographic mediums (dissociative experience of mediumistic writing), through functional imaging exams (SPECT), the moment of psychography and another moment without mediumistic trance were examined. The result showed that the written material had more quality at the time of psychography, although the SPECT image showed hypoactivation of several brain areas responsible for reasoning and creativity. (PERES et al., 2012)

Mediumship was also seen in research as one of the best evidences of survival in the afterlife, with Leonora Piper and Chico Xavier as the main mediums studied. Taken together, other evidences of this survival were near-death experiences, out-of-body projection experiences, and cases of

reincarnation. In fact, there is a large barn of studied cases of reincarnation with evidence of the veracity of this phenomenon. (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA; COAST; RABBIT, 2022b) (STEVENSON, 2007)

Despite some research on the subject of mediumship, more comprehensive studies are needed, as well as studies for other spiritist activities, as well as a larger sample size for this research object.

#### **4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Spiritism, through a theoretical-practical body, advocates the "intimate reform", which corresponds to a proposal of cognitive and behavioral changes, individual and collective, in favor of a state of greater harmony and satisfaction.

Due to this therapeutic function of the Spiritist doctrine, traditional science has shown more interest in studying the impact of Spiritism on health. This movement can be seen in institutional research centers, as well as areas of knowledge and topics of study, such as transpersonal, anomalistics and research on mediumship. Thus, a body of scientific knowledge is progressively formed, evidencing, to a large extent, a salutary effect of spiritism on mental health. Future research should further explore this relationship and deepen knowledge on this topic.

#### **NOTE**

This article is adapted from the thesis: Magnitude and factors associated with Spiritist involvement, common mental disorders and suicidal ideation: a cross-sectional study in Ceará. Fortaleza/CE, 2023. <https://repositorio.ufc.br/>



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