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Conducting a Systematic Reviews in Latin America: Difficulties in searching studies and Lessons Learned

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BACKGROUND

The diversity of scientific publications is difficult to manage, especially when carrying out systematic reviews of the literature. Being fundamental, the correct identification of all published scientific research, allowing us to have a clear vision of diversity^{1,2,3}. Possibly, one of the problems in the identification of publications is the indexing of the keywords associated with each database, as well as the restriction in the databases that are considered for searches⁴. Therefore, the awareness and promotion of the correct indexing of articles and the inclusion of multiple databases in the search process can be a great ally in this task.

In 2019, the United States appears as the country with the most publications indexed in the Web of Science, almost doubling China and quadrupling Germany⁵. In Latin America, Brazil is the country with the greatest number of documents published in the Web of Science, ranking 13th in the world⁵. Therefore, it is not surprising that, when searches for articles for any systematic review are carried out, final results are mostly from these countries. Whether or not this is a reality, we believe that an important part of research carried out in countries that do not rank in the above reference lists, is invisible.

OBJECTIVE

To describe the difficulties and lessons learned in searching articles for a systematic review "Suicide mortality in adult from countries in Latin America".

METHODS

Based on the results of searches according to MOOSE, in the following databases: VHL, EBSCOhost, EMBASE, LILACS, PubMed, ProQuest, PsycNET, ScienceDirect, SciELO, Scopus and WoS, to identify the studies related to factors associated with mortality due to suicide in adults in Latin America, a final list of 60 articles was reached. Specifying in which database these were identified and in which database they were indexed, and contrasting these results for each article and database.

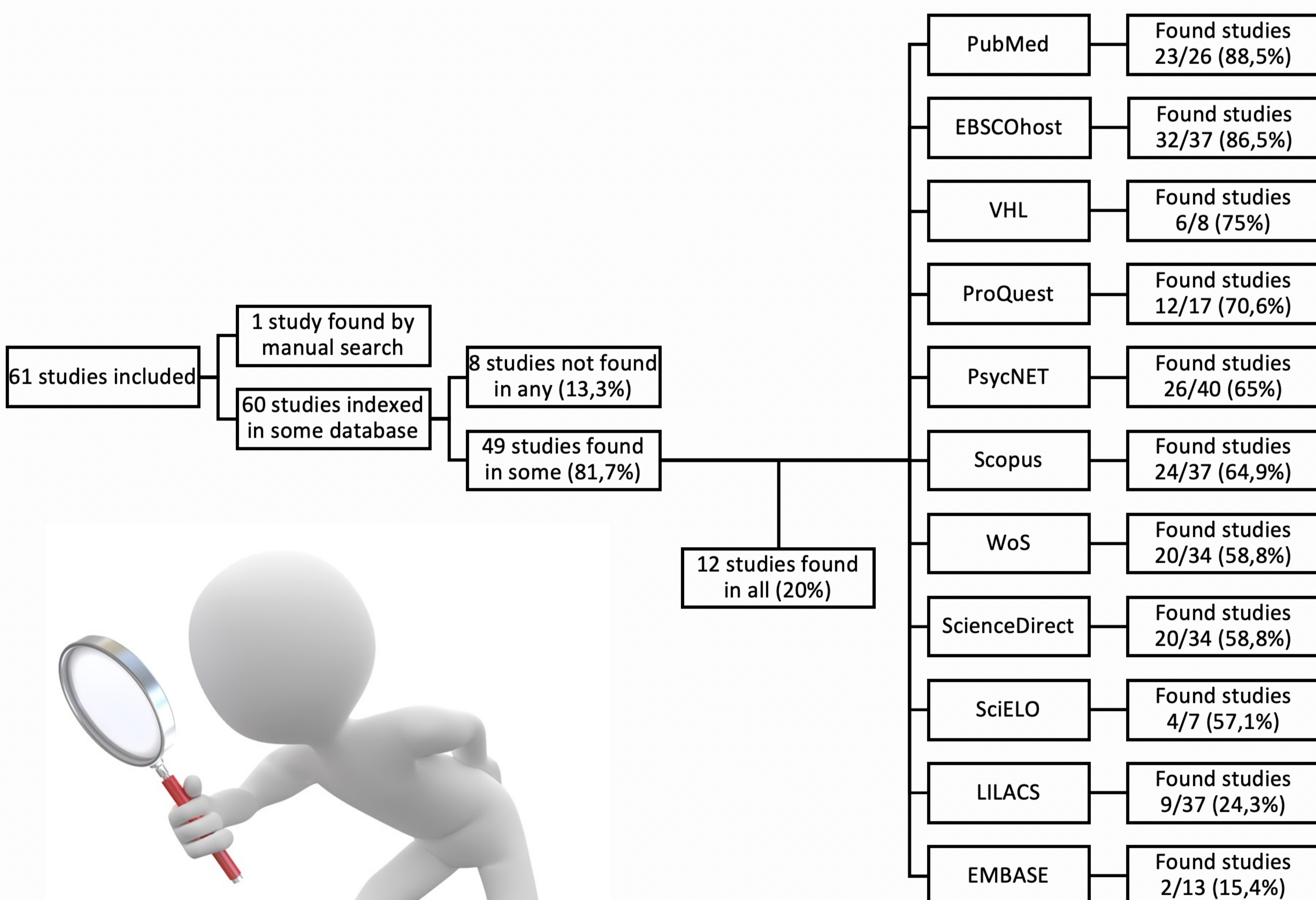
KEY RESULTS

Ninety-eight point four % of the identified articles are indexed in some of the databases, but only 80.3% of these were identified by means of search strategies. 13.3% of the articles were not found in any database, although they were indexed in some, they were only found by cross reference search. Furthermore, of the articles 86.7% were duplicated in at least two databases and 78.3% in at least 3 databases. When a specific analysis was performed for each database used for this search; the percentages of coincidence between the number of articles actually found, and the number of articles that should have been found none exceeded 89% efficiency; reaching a final result of only 15.4% in EMBASE.



DISCUSSION

Independent of the search strategies, which could be criticized despite rigorous construction, the difficulty in identifying the articles is definitely noteworthy. The above is a possible indicator that investigative efforts become invisible, and as such do not reach their ultimate goal of applicability and generalization. It is clear that this research only refers to a specific systematic review and it would be optimal to be able to replicate this analysis in other systematic reviews. We believe it is fundamental to encourage researchers to use multiple databases in their searches, as well as the revision of cross references.



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