



PRESENTATION: COVID-19 PANDEMIC: FROM THE DISCOVERY OF NEW WAYS TO EDUCATE TO SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY IN EDUCATION

APRESENTAÇÃO: PANDEMIA DE COVID-19: DA DESCOBERTA DE NOVOS MEIOS DO EDUCAR AOS SINTOMAS DE ANSIEDADE NA EDUCAÇÃO

PRESENTACIÓN: PANDEMIA COVID-19: DEL DESCUBRIMIENTO DE NUEVAS FORMAS DE EDUCAR A LOS SÍNTOMAS DE LA ANSIEDAD EN LA EDUCACIÓN



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How to reference this paper:

NASCIMENTO, M. S. Presentation: COVID-19 pandemic: From the discovery of new ways to educate to symptoms of anxiety in education. **Doxa: Rev. Bras. Psico. e Educ.**, Araraquara, v. 24, n. esp. 2, e023019, 2023. e-ISSN: 2594-8385. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30715/doxa.v24iesp.2.18637>



| **Submitted:** 22/07/2023
| **Revisions required:** 10/08/2023
| **Approved:** 18/09/2023
| **Published:** 31/10/2023

Editor: Prof. Dr. Paulo Rennes Marçal Ribeiro
Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

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ABSTRACT: Between 2020 and 2022, we experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. The Violence Observatory, affiliated with Barra Mansa University Center (RJ), was surveyed in 2021 and 2022. The objective was to understand the experiences with remote learning of school administrators, teachers, family members of students in the municipal education system, and college students. To reflect on the pandemic scenario, we drew on the works of Homem (2020) and Santos (2020; 2021), and for insights on education during the pandemic, we referenced the work organized by Gomes (2021). The research encompassed quantitative and qualitative methods, with data collected through virtual questionnaires and focus groups. General results are presented with an emphasis on the focus groups. We identified a low density of public policies for adequate access to education. Other findings included violence against women, children, and adolescents and psychological distress among teachers and college students. Additionally, we found successful experiences. Our results contribute to the reflection on the impacts of the pandemic on the learning process.

KEYWORDS: Pandemic. Distance Education. Life Experiences.

RESUMO: Entre 2020 e 2022, vivenciamos a pandemia da COVID-19. O Observatório da Violência, do Centro Universitário de Barra Mansa (RJ) realizou uma pesquisa em 2021 e 2022. Objetivou-se compreender as experiências com o ensino remoto de gestores, professores e familiares de alunos da rede municipal de ensino e de acadêmicos. Para refletir sobre o cenário pandêmico, utilizamos Homem (2020) e Santos (2020; 2021) e sobre o ensino na pandemia, o trabalho organizado por Gomes (2021). Trata-se de pesquisas quanti e qualitativa, com dados coletados através de questionários virtuais e grupos focais. Resultados gerais são apresentados, com ênfase nos grupos focais. Identificamos baixa densidade de políticas públicas para acesso ao ensino adequado. Outros resultados foram percebidos: violência contra mulheres, crianças e adolescentes, sofrimento psíquico de professores e acadêmicos. Encontramos, também, experiências exitosas. Nossos resultados contribuem para a reflexão sobre os impactos da pandemia no processo de aprendizagem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pandemia. Ensino a Distância. Experiências de Vida.

RESUMEN: Entre 2020 y 2022 vivimos la pandemia de COVID-19. El Observatorio de la Violencia, del Centro Universitario de Barra Mansa (RJ), realizó una encuesta en 2021 y 2022. El objetivo fue conocer las experiencias de enseñanza a distancia de directivos, docentes y familiares de estudiantes de la red educativa municipal y académicos. Para reflexionar sobre el escenario de la pandemia utilizamos a Homem (2020) y Santos (2020; 2021) y sobre la enseñanza durante la pandemia, el trabajo organizado por Gomes (2021). Se trata de investigaciones cuantitativas y cualitativas, con datos recopilados a través de cuestionarios virtuales y grupos focales. Se presentan los resultados generales, con énfasis en los grupos focales. Identificamos una baja densidad de políticas públicas para el acceso a una educación adecuada. Se notaron otros resultados: violencia contra las mujeres, niños y adolescentes, sufrimiento psicológico entre profesores y académicos. También encontramos experiencias exitosas. Nuestros resultados contribuyen a la reflexión sobre los impactos de la pandemia en el proceso de aprendizaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pandemia. La Educación a Distancia. Experiencias Vitales.

Introduction

I begin this presentation with uncertainty regarding its specific nature, questioning whether it takes the form of a research report or an experiential account. It's challenging to separate both, just as it was difficult to separate physical places from subjective spaces during the pandemic. Here, I find myself as a teacher, mentor, researcher. But also as a wife, mother, and daughter. In all these roles, attempting to navigate a virus, social isolation, and the losses, which were many: physical, symbolic, of freedom, of gatherings. However, we were also weaving the threads of a frayed fabric in the face of the humanitarian, political, and health crises we live through.

Similar to many researchers and educators worldwide, we created. All the aspects enumerated were not exclusive to my life. The students I mentored, the other teachers, and the researchers involved in this work navigated adversities and reconstructed a way of life. As Maria Homem (2020, p. 445, our translation) states, "A lost year of learning and production? This does not exist for the psyche." It did not exist. Collectively, we crafted another way of living and producing. Despite our familiar social boundaries, those known to us and commonly used, being restricted, our "symbolic crossing" (HOMEM, 2020, p. 452, our translation) was done hand in hand.

Perhaps this was the research's greatest challenge: to maintain hand in hand, from a distance, creating possible outlets to sustain production. Thus, one understands why research reports and experiential accounts intertwine. Our research blended with these everyday experiences, with the entanglement of subjective positions, with the clock ticking that made days stretch beyond 24 hours. Maria Homem emphasizes the blending of public and private, business hours and the hours of the day, weekends and workdays, and the confusion of spaces and territories.

If this is how it happened to us, the researchers, the same reality applied to the researched public: students, teachers, mothers, and school administrators. Therefore, concluding this research was a formidable task: it required months for data collection, transcription, compilation of results, and final writing. The data collection period was 2020 and 2021. We will present the results in 2023.

However, at the same time, as Santos (2021) highlights, is it really that distant? Has the pandemic indeed ended? For the author, the pandemic persists as it will demand the erection of a new *modus operandi*: a change in the relationship with nature, a rupture with the shackles of capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy.

The pandemic summoned a new way of life: work, leisure, learning. Each institution, in its own way, reorganized methods, space, and time, not to mention the technological equipment: the creation and acquisition of virtual environments. It did not happen the same way for everyone. The distinction between public and private institutions is alarming. The latter quickly transitioned to the virtual space and sustained it. Meanwhile, the public institutions... (HOMEM, 2020; SANTOS, 2020, 2021).

The fact remains that the States and the Federation, governed mainly by right-wing and far-right parties, proved incompetent in managing the pandemic. Both from a health and the biological and social protection perspective (SANTOS, 2021). Socially, the necessary conditions for adequate learning and work were not guaranteed.

The Violence Observatory at the Barra Mansa University Center was established in 2017 to diagnose local school violence and promote prevention and intervention actions, as well as scientific knowledge production. It is affiliated with the institution's Research Center and involves the participation of students, alums, and faculty members from various fields: Psychology, Journalism, Pedagogy, and Law. Thus, the Observatory provided an opportunity for students and faculty to build knowledge and expand their horizons, also focusing on the university environment.

In this opening document, I present the structure and general results of this issue's research. The first part pertains to the psychological conditions of higher education students during the pandemic and the shift to remote learning, and the second addresses the experiences of managers, teachers, and mothers of students in public schools from three municipalities in the southern region of Rio de Janeiro state.

Our research contributes to understanding the reality of education in our region and supports the university in its social role: promoting the development of our community by providing possible intervention tools. As a university center, the research results have led us to reflect on ways to contribute to changes in reality. Furthermore, the research outcomes provide insights into our social reality, highlighting the low density of public policies aimed at reducing violence against women, children, and adolescents. The Ethics and Research Committee of the Barra Mansa University Center approved and authorized the research. Data collection took place after reading the Informed Consent Form and participants' acceptance in an online format. Interviews were recorded with participants' consent.

Methodology

As this document aims to present the papers that make up this issue, I will outline our methodological approach. The research demonstrated a descriptive objective, with both quantitative and qualitative data treatment. According to Moresi (2003), descriptive analysis presents characteristics of the studied phenomenon or population. There is no intention to establish causal links, and its data are analyzed inductively. The quantitative approach translates numbers and opinions into numerical data, while the qualitative approach attributes meaning to the studied phenomenon.

In this document, I provide an overview of the experiences with the research, presenting their main results, with a focus on those identified through listening to mothers and teachers regarding the focus groups. To do so, following the qualitative approach, still with a descriptive objective, I conducted a literature review of works published between 2020 and 2022, which addressed the theme "learning and pandemic." Subsequently, I carried out a systematic review of the results produced by the research to identify some predefined questions, evaluate, and select the most relevant results. In this regard, the markers used for this analysis were: experiences with technology, individual perspectives on the experience of remote learning, and the assessment of the period of distant learning.

As previously indicated, our research created room to listen to the experiences of managers, teachers, and family members from public school networks in three municipalities in the South Fluminense region of Rio de Janeiro and university students from a private institution in the same area. We utilized some distinct methodological resources, as described below.

Virtual Questionnaires

There are two separate surveys: the first aimed to understand the psychosocial conditions of higher education students and their relationship with remote learning during the pandemic. The second part of the research on the pandemic's impacts on education sought to understand managers' experiences in three municipalities in the South Fluminense region during the transition to remote learning when schools were closed due to the pandemic. The data collection method in both cases was the virtual questionnaire conducted through Google Forms.

The first survey, titled "Social distancing: the psychological conditions of higher education students during the pandemic" used a virtual questionnaire to collect data. The

questionnaire was made available to students via Google Forms and covered the following dimensions: social conditions, psychological conditions, and access to technological resources. Following a similar methodology to the research by Maia and Dias (2020), which sampled 24.2% of the enrolled students in the higher education institution (HEI), and Machado (2020), who researched 22.5% of the university population, we aimed for a similar number. However, we could not reach the desired quantitative figure, which would have been approximately 519 students, even after extending our initial timeline.

This was due to the difficulties of adhering to remote conditions and students' demotivation, as it was the first year of the pandemic (2020). We obtained 225 responses from students over 18 years of age, representing approximately 18.75% of the enrolled students in the surveyed institution. For this issue of the *Doxa* journal, we chose to discuss the identified psychological conditions, presenting the results in the article "Social distancing: the psychological conditions of higher education students during the pandemic", by Amanda Almeida Duarte, Fernanda de Souza Alves and Milene Santiago Nascimento (2023).

The research titled "*Os impactos da pandemia na educação* (The Impacts of the Pandemic on Education)", initially sought information from administrators through another virtual questionnaire, also made available on Google Forms. It involved 41 administrators from three Municipal Departments of Education in the South Fluminense Region of the state of Rio de Janeiro. Administrators in office during the year 2020 were included. The semi-structured questionnaire consisted of 20 closed-ended questions and space for suggestions. The questions were based on three main areas: 1) communication between the Municipal Department of Education and students, including the administration, teachers, students, and parents; 2) the teaching work, including conditions of access to technological resources, teaching strategies, the teaching-learning process, and assessment; 3) the use of technological resources (websites, platforms, connectivity). The results were presented in a live event as part of the Research Seminar at the Barra Mansa University Center in 2021, which involved the researchers and three administrators.

In this issue of the *Doxa* Journal, we present the results and an account of the experience of the live event in two separate articles: 1) "Research report on education and pandemic in the South Fluminense region", by Ana Maria Dinardi Barbosa Barros, Rosa Maria Maia Gouvêa Esteves and Maricineia Pereira Meireles da Silva; and 2) "The challenges imposed on education by the COVID-19 pandemic and the new strategies: a report of experiences", by Florencia Cruz da Rocha Ebeling.

Focus Groups

To hear the experiences of mothers and teachers from the same three municipalities as the administrators, we employed the online focus group technique via the Google Meet platform. Bordini and Sperb (2013) studied the use of focus groups in psychology. These are traditional focus groups, which involve semi-structured interviews in a group format, where interaction is the primary data collection tool. The online form involves digital technologies, facilitating communication between moderators and the groups. The moderator stimulates the group to interact and discuss the proposed topic. The authors emphasize that the online format is not inferior to in-person sessions. In our case, it was a crucial strategy for conducting the research.

Deslandes and Coutinho (2020), when analyzing the expansion of research in digital environments driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, point to opening a field of possibilities. For us, the permeability of the boundary between the real and the virtual and the redefinition of the meaning of the field, as highlighted by the authors as characteristic elements of digital research, allowed us to navigate through different geographical territories, even during times of health restrictions. The regions were present without losing their political and cultural characteristics. For Deslandes and Coutinho “the sense of a geographically defined territory is lost in online/offline boundaries, they are fluid and dynamic” (2020, p. 6, our translation).

We used the same thematic areas from the questionnaire for administrators to guide the group interviews, aiming to understand how different groups experience the same reality. It is interesting to note that we identified aspects that were not directly investigated. However, as research is dynamic, we ventured into other paths. Thus, in this article, I present the results of the questions that guided the focus groups. The other findings will be further explored in four separate articles: 1) “Symbolic violence against women under the spotlight of the COVID-19 pandemic: Gender inequality in the domestic labor division”, by Carolina Zimmer, Nicole Silva dos Santos and Milene Santiago Nascimento; 2) “The access to education and the right’s violation: Insertion’s consequences of emergency distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic”, by Camila da Silva Costa, Amanda Almeida Duarte and Milene Santiago Nascimento; 3) “Teaching in the pandemic: Technology, isolation and psychic suffering”, by Nicole Silva dos Santos and Mariana Barbosa Miquilini; and 4) “Successful experiences of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A flower on the asphalt”, by Carolina Paiva, Fernanda de Souza Alves and Milene Santiago Nascimento.

Results and Discussion

The experiences of teachers, students, and administrators during the pandemic have been the subject of studies throughout this period. Researchers paused their usual studies to focus on the exhausting reality of remote or distance learning. These works report difficulties, suffering, and the innovations this group used to meet a social demand: maintaining the teaching and learning process.

In 2021, a remarkable work organized by Gomes gave a voice to educators. Titled "*Com a palavra... os profissionais da educação: relatos de experiência sobre o trabalho educacional* (In Their Own Words... Education Professionals: Experience Reports on Educational Work)," the e-book presents experiences of education professionals guided by the following questions: the challenges educators face today, self-reports about their lives, and theoretical discussions of professional experiences.

The work of Sanches (2021), "*Ensino remoto e pandemia: breves considerações* (Remote Teaching and the Pandemic: Brief Considerations)" stands out. The application of a virtual questionnaire to teachers and students at a municipal school in São Paulo revealed that there were no objective conditions for the continuation of learning activities. This indicates the absence or lack of technological resources in both schools and households, as well as the lack of preparation on the part of professionals, students, and families since they do not have the necessary digital skills to maintain remote learning.

Furthermore, the author points out that the pandemic has raised questions about the role of teachers, as if technology could replace their function, disqualifying them or even positioning homeschooling as the great savior of moral and family values. According to Sanches (2021, p. 106, our translation):

The remote assistance format disrupted this school's functioning, which has always been based on personal and in-person contact. Therefore, it is possible to indicate that the school and its professionals were affected by the foundational aspects of their work and organization, highlighting the material and formative precariousness.

Nishimori and Cruz (2022) reflect on experiences with literacy during the pandemic. They emphasize that the municipality where they conducted the research provided chips and tablets to students to access the internet and school content. The resources were given to students in vulnerable situations in the first and second segments of Elementary Education and Youth and Adult Education (EJA). The authors found that even with technological resources, there was no progress in literacy, and they observed the same scenario reported by Sanches

(2021): Family members did not demonstrate proficiency in the necessary technological language to use the resources and, consequently, to maintain school activities. Additionally, the location of some residences did not allow for the proper functioning of internet signals through mobile data.

In this document, the authors emphasize that the manifesto from the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CONANDA) regarding the right to education for children and adolescents during the pandemic underscores the need to recognize social inequality in the country, supported by the Federal Constitution of 1988. Our country has a structural social abyss that is reflected in housing conditions, food, access to education, health, leisure, information, and technology. The CONANDA manifesto emphasizes that homeschooling reinforces and exacerbates inequality. Therefore, it is possible to assume that there were severe issues in the education process in the country at various levels, from early childhood education to undergraduate courses, with distinct impacts depending on each age and social segment.

Our research was able to formalize the facts observed during the pandemic: technological insufficiency, a low density of public policies to ensure access and adequate education, difficulties in the learning process for teachers, families, and students due to the lack of necessary technological knowledge, as well as significant psychological and social impacts.

It is interesting to note that the investigations, both focused on undergraduate students and those dedicated to municipal experiences, revealed different perspectives on the experiences with the remote teaching process. However, in some ways, these results are interconnected. The studies encompassed the psychological conditions of undergraduate students with remote learning during the pandemic, the viewpoint of administrators and their assessment of public administration support for maintaining education during the pandemic, and the reality experienced by mothers and teachers during the virtual teaching process. Except for the administrators' perspective, all express dissatisfaction, insecurity, difficulties, burden, and psychological distress.

University students suffered psychologically due to the scarcity of technological resources and shared housing, which often hindered class attendance, combined with the conditions imposed by the pandemic (social isolation, losses, mourning, unemployment). The same reports were observed among teachers in early childhood education, primary education, and mothers of students. The reader will notice that using the terms 'teachers' and 'mothers' was deliberate. The focus groups included female participants. Only two male teachers were present.

Did they feel a greater need to discuss their experiences? Did they suffer the most? Did they experience a workload, both professionally and domestically? One of our articles will address this topic. The fact is that we know that the caregiving role is predominantly female.

The mothers and teachers in the focus groups reported many educational obstacles, including difficulties communicating with school management and education departments. Among the mothers and teachers, the term 'communication' was reduced to literal communication about the closure of schools and the adoption of emergency remote teaching. One mother verbalized, "We were notified via WhatsApp that there would be no class on Monday," while another said, "We were somewhat confused, but we watched television and knew there would be no class." Other schools sent the 'message' through the student's agenda.

On the other hand, the teachers said they were in constant contact with school administrators immediately after the closure. However, they claim that they also learned through social media on the fateful day of March 13 when the closure of schools was decreed.

Therefore, we did not observe a thorough analysis of the communicative process, which encompasses more than just information related to the closure of schools and the implementation of emergency remote teaching. Mothers and teachers reported no effective learning process during the pandemic.

Professor Respondent 1:

So, it's very complicated. There will be a significant learning gap, and we'll have to revisit this later while seeking improvement... but it's challenging, especially regarding the lack of interaction between the student and the teacher, even in the classroom.

We also heard reports from mothers and teachers concerned about the psychological impacts of the pandemic:

Mother Respondent 1:

You know, the psychological issues are very shaken, which has a significant influence. This was already an issue, but now, with the pandemic.

On the other hand, the administrators presented a different perspective on the experience. Two articles present this viewpoint. Administrators who evaluate the process acknowledge the transition from in-person to remote learning as "successful." We emphasize that the Education Departments, each in their way, sought resources and tools, creating

arrangements with teachers and families. There were no initiatives from the Federal and State Governments to improve these conditions and ensure access to education.

Although our research was structured around questions related to the transition to remote learning, communication, and technological resources, we found highly relevant results. For this reason, they deserve specific articles. We have unveiled a common scenario in our country: violence and rights violations.

We observed that women were the most impacted by the pandemic, as they suffered from a heavy professional and domestic work burden. We interpreted this scenario as symbolic violence, where multiple roles are carried out daily, with no defined start or end time—a reality experienced by many Brazilian women.

We heard from mothers and teachers about various obstacles related to the learning process. We thus qualify public education during the pandemic as a violation of the rights of families, children, and adolescents. This was not due to the responsibility of the teachers but rather because of the model implemented, coupled with the lack of support provided by the administration. This includes the lack of training for teachers and families to handle technological resources and the failure to provide equipment and support for internet access for both families and teachers. Moreover, the government cannot deny that our social reality does not offer the conditions for sustaining remote learning. We ask: what was done? Was there a teaching and learning process? Did our children and adolescents truly have broad access to education?

Another prominent theme was the psychological distress experienced by teachers. Teaching has always involved suffering and mental health issues. The pandemic conditions, uncertainty about technological resources, and endless work exacerbated this distress.

Despite our results not being encouraging, we found positive elements in the scenario. We identified initiatives aimed at promoting emotional support, social interaction, and the creation of new teaching methods, which will be presented in this document. What drove them? What drove us? What died? What was born?

These are the questions that confronted us during the pandemic. We experienced a chaotic and unimaginable scenario due to the poor public administration at the federal level and in the state of Rio de Janeiro. There was no effective management of the pandemic and public policies, and the feeling was suffocated.

Final considerations

From our general findings, we were able to identify the following: 1) The condition of remote learning led to a state of psychological distress a) among students, due to a lack of technological resources, motivation for studies, and social conditions that did not align with the requirements for maintaining their education; b) Among teachers, because of the challenges related to the use of technological resources, given the lack of support from municipal authorities; c) Among family members, likewise due to difficulties with technology, and in some cases, the absence of it. 2) Insecurity regarding the assurance of learning among teachers and family members; 3) Different perspectives on remote learning experience among administrators, teachers, and family members. These situations can be summarized by identifying a low density of public policies that ensured access to and proper education during the pandemic.

The publication of this journal will allow us to delve deeper into these results and understand their implications. The low density of educational policies leads us to characterize it as a form of violence against these families, children, and adolescents and to recognize the impacts on the mental health of students and teachers. Furthermore, as we observed that the individuals most directly involved in the remote learning process during the pandemic were women, we can also perceive an overload and violence against this gender.

The pandemic has highlighted significant social issues. Perhaps the purpose of our research has been to officially document what is already recognized and discussed by civil society: social inequality, violence against children and women, and the suffering of students.

The pandemic has also led us to create new forms of interaction and ways of life. I am not sure whether we can qualify them as positive or negative, but it is a fact that we are experiencing a necessary historical period for humanity and an equally significant moment in the political history of Brazil.

For many, there was a lack of air to create, live, and wake up. This issue reveals different perspectives on life during the pandemic, starting from experiences with remote learning. We do not intend to seek blame, as our research has revealed a social problem resulting from various factors. However, we endorse the need for public policies compassionate to human suffering that can guarantee rights by addressing the social structures of violence and exclusion.

From this point on, it is necessary to research to assess the long-term implications of remote learning. There is concern that what was observed between 2020 and 2021 may confirm the suffering conditions for women and the significant social disparity between those who are

financially, ethnically, and socially privileged and those excluded from the expected production cycle.

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CRediT Author Statement

Acknowledgements: We would like to express our gratitude to the administrators, teachers from the education departments, families of students from municipal school networks, and students who willingly participated in our study.

Funding: There was no funding for this research.

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval: The research was submitted to the Ethics and Research Committee of the Barra Mansa University Center and approved under protocol number 4426858. Throughout the research process, ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to.

Data and material availability: The data and materials used in this work are available for access via the author's email upon request.

Authors' contributions: The author was responsible for all article construction stages.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

