

ARTICLE

THE REORGANIZATION OF THE FAMILY LIFE WITH CHILDREN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BRAZIL¹**ALINE SOMMERHALDER¹**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6024-0853>

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to discuss the daily home life of families with school-age children during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also intends to problematize possible changes in the Brazilian children's routine due to the closure of schools and increased time at home. According to socio-humanist theoretical thinking, we analyzed the data through a critical-interpretative lens based on family life concepts. This paper presents part of the Brazilian results obtained through an online questionnaire, e-survey, in a public opinion format, using a quantitative and qualitative approach. Four hundred seventy-two families participated, mostly from cities in the state of São Paulo. The results indicate that the family structure followed the changes proposed by adults, who were protagonists in the domestic daily life transformed by the pandemic. In Freire's perspective, the changes indicated by the adults occurred through the expansion of children's proximity and recognition, in addition to the inclusion of school activities and re-creation of new educational forms in the routine, under several limitations. The household changes were permeated by understanding new configurations that established educational-dialogical-cooperative relationships between different members, children, and adults.

Keywords: daily life at home, children in homes, COVID-19 pandemic, school suspension.

A REORGANIZAÇÃO DO CONVÍVIO FAMILIAR COM CRIANÇAS EM PANDEMIA PELA COVID-19 NO BRASIL

RESUMO: Este artigo objetiva discutir o convívio doméstico cotidiano de famílias com crianças em idade escolar diante da pandemia de COVID-19. Intenciona, ainda, problematizar possíveis mudanças na rotina de vida de crianças brasileiras, em decorrência da ausência de frequência presencial nas escolas e ampliação de tempo diário em contextos domésticos. O trato crítico-interpretativo ofertado aos dados

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pauta-se nas concepções de convívio familiar, em consonância com o pensamento teórico sócio-humanista. Com aplicação de método misto (quantitativo e qualitativo), apresenta parte de resultados brasileiros obtidos por meio de questionário *on-line, e-survey*, em formato de opinião pública. Participaram 478 famílias brasileiras, majoritariamente residentes em municípios do estado de São Paulo. Os resultados indicam que a estruturação familiar acompanha mudanças propostas pelos adultos como sujeitos protagonistas de um saber fazer no cotidiano doméstico transformado pela pandemia. À luz da dialogia freireana, as mudanças indicadas pelos adultos ocorreram pela ampliação do sentimento de proximidade e reconhecimento dos filhos, além da inserção na rotina das atividades escolares e recriação de novas formas de educação diante dos diversos limites impostos. As alterações ocorridas na esfera domiciliar perpassam pela compreensão de novas configurações que estabeleçam relações educativo-dialógico-cooperativa entre os diferentes membros, crianças e adultos.

Palavras-chave: cotidiano doméstico, crianças em lares, pandemia COVID-19, suspensão da escola presencial.

LA REORGANIZACIÓN DEL CONVIVIO FAMILIAR CON NIÑOS EN LA PANDEMIA DEL COVID-19 EN BRASIL

RESUMEN: El estudio objetiva discutir el convivio doméstico en el hogar de las familias con niños en edad escolar ante la pandemia del COVID-19. Tiene la intención, aun, de problematizar posibles cambios en la rutina de vida de los niños brasileños en detrimento de la ausencia de las escuelas y la expansión del tiempo diario en los hogares. El enfoque crítico-interpretativo ofrecido a los datos se basó en los conceptos de vida familiar, de acuerdo con el pensamiento teórico socio-humanista. Utilizando un método duplo (cuantitativo y cualitativo), este artículo presenta parte de los resultados brasileños obtenidos a través de una encuesta virtual, *e-survey*, en formato de opinión pública. Participaron 478 familias brasileñas, en su mayoría residentes en municipios del estado de São Paulo. Los resultados indican que la estructura familiar sigue cambios propuestos por los adultos como protagonistas de un saber hacer en la vida diaria doméstica transformada por la pandemia. Tras la perspectiva de Freire, los cambios señalados por los adultos se dieron a través de la expansión del sentimiento de proximidad y reconocimiento de los hijos, además de la inserción en la rutina de las actividades escolares y recreación de nuevas formas de la educación por los diversos límites impuestos. Los cambios en el hogar permean la comprensión de nuevas configuraciones que establecen relaciones educativo-dialógico-cooperativas entre los diferentes miembros, niños y adultos.

Palabras clave: cotidiano doméstico, niños en hogares, pandemia COVID-19, suspensión de la escuela presencial.

INTRODUCTION

This article comes from international inter-institutional research derived from scientific and academic cooperation and coordinated by researchers from the educational area of an Italian public university, located in Rome, Italy, in collaboration with Brazilian researchers from two federal public universities, located in the Southeast regions and Mid-West of Brazil. The macro-research involved an empirical collection in two European countries (Spain and Italy) and one in Latin America (Brazil) in 2020. This material presents a part of the Brazilian results, on which it is interesting to weave a contextual analysis of scientific findings from the participation of Brazilian families in the broad study

The discussion about the daily life of families and children at home is put on the scene, considering the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the measures of social restriction and absence of face-to-face attendance at schools. The survey was carried out in a public opinion format,

using an e-survey, and based on possible changes in routines, habits, and daily behaviors of families with children, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the beginning of 2020, with the outbreak of the new coronavirus and given the significant increase in cases of illnesses caused by the virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the contamination a public health emergency of international importance, decreed a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO/WHO Brazil, 2020). Brazil, a country of continental dimensions, on April 15, 2021, had around 211 million inhabitants, according to the projection of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, [s.d.]). The pandemic intensified crises and inequalities in the population, bringing macrostructural repercussions for the entire country (and for the world) in its multiple dimensions: in health, economy, politics, work, education, society, and environment, among others so many spheres inserted in public and private sectors (CARDOSO, 2020).

To reduce the number of people infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, countries have defined actions based, in particular, on restrictive measures, including the contenance of face-to-face human interactions, the prohibition of travel to international territories or within the territory, the implementation of an accentuated period of lockdown in European countries and at times in Brazilian cities and the closure of all non-essential activities, including schools, at all levels and modalities. In the state of São Paulo, the general recommendation defined for the so-called “social isolation” measures in Brazilian territory was that everyone should remain in their homes and go out only in case of urgent need, except for workers in essential sectors, in addition to recommending that they keep two meters away from other people on these occasions. Such measures began to be monitored by official bodies via a measuring device of the social isolation index (SÃO PAULO, 2020). In this scenario, impacts on the patterns of the daily life of families were added since the permanence in domestic homes increased. There were also implications on economic sustainability, given that many families lost jobs or had a decrease in income due to the reduction in working hours or daily professional activities.

From an acute health emergency to a humanitarian crisis (SPIEGEL, 2021; BORBA et al., 2020), social relations and living conditions have been modified, presenting new and numerous challenges, some of them dramatic, including the impact on the quality of life of people with loss of income, social conflicts and expansion of violence and social and educational inequality. Thus, the social life and routine of families were also affected, since school activities for children and young people began to be carried out remotely (at a distance) and/or in a hybrid way. This conviviality also changed due to the professional activities of adults beginning to be carried out in a home office or remotely (BRASIL, 2020a, 2020b). The challenges imposed by the restriction of interpersonal physical contact brought endless consequences to the daily organization of families, especially those with children, in the face of the new reality of schools without face-to-face attendance and, with that, the sudden insertion of children in remote/distance learning (UNESCO, 2020).

Data from the report by the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), released in March 2021, showed that about 1.6 billion students around the world were out of school in the period from February 2020 to March of the following year due to the epidemiological scenario caused by the disease in many countries. In Brazil, it is estimated that the closure of schools affected more than 45 million Basic Education students, and 38.7 million belong to the public education network (UNESCO, 2020; INEP, 2019). These indicators reveal a large number of children and young people without access to the school's physical facilities, deprived of school interaction with peers and with teachers in person, and, therefore, with a longer daily stay in domestic homes.

The information from the health protocols was disseminated uncertainly, with multiple news of different orientations and daily changes in terms of guidelines for the Brazilian population, which reinforced the need for constant adaptations in the interior of the home, reviewing strategies for meeting the demands of the management of the home, profession or work of adults, together with conducting conjugality, domestic economy, parenting, and co-parenting (SILVA et al., 2020; LINHARES; ENUMO, 2020). The school life of children was also impacted, due to the multiple conditions of contexts caused by the coronavirus, whether due to the high contagion and direct impact on the health of family members or due to the implication of living everyday life, at home, in a regime of longer stay with parents and/or guardians.

The study assumes the understanding of everyday family life as an emerging structure of relationships established by people (social group) who have some degree of kinship and share the same living space daily, forming a home. From the socio-anthropological perspective, these relationships are fundamental to human societies, and their forms of organization depend on the concrete conditions arising from the social and cultural contexts of the subjects (SINGLY, 2007). Heilborn, Peixoto, and Barros (2020, p. 4) explain: “The situation of confinement, caused by the sanitary situation, directly affects the family in the face of the recurrence of stressful situations that lead to increased stress due to family demands on their responsibility in the delivery of care”. Here are the challenges faced to meet the demands of schools that resumed remote teaching, in addition to incentive practices that sought to guarantee the child's permanence in the institution, at least the maintenance of affective relationships and the memory of the school routine with teachers and fellow students.

In the most current generations, children's daily social activities – whether school, leisure, socializing with peers or adults, especially, in social spaces other than the domestic environment – are a broad and intense challenge. The challenge is on considering the high rates of violence in urban or even rural contexts and requires, in everyday life, that life in childhood takes place in more domestic and less collective or public spaces (such as parks and streets), implying a longer daily stay in households. As a result, games, children's bodies (BUSS-SIMÃO; LESSA, 2020), and interactions with nature in open and collective spaces (RATUSNIAK; MAFRA; SILVA, 2020) are redesigned to preserve the safety of children in the live daily life. Contemporary reality is modeled differently in different countries; especially in the Brazilian reality, given the levels of violence, this reality is a requirement that presupposes that families build new routines and habits of life to meet an already concrete social reality in many cities or rural contexts.

Measures of social restriction or even social isolation placed in the face of the chaos of high death rates from COVID-19 in Brazil added to the resulting intense economic and social difficulties meant that the reality of children staying in domestic contexts increased abruptly. This fact, added to inadequate eating habits, sedentary lifestyle, and increased exposure to television screens and other technological equipment (computers, tablets, and cell phones), directly affected the health and quality of life of the Brazilian population, with rates increased rates of childhood obesity and related diseases (FIOCRUZ, 2020a, 2020b; SILVA et al., 2020; PRIME; WADE; BROWNE, 2020).

Faced with this phenomenon, examining and understanding the daily life of families and school-age children, in a domestic context, in the face of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, was presented as an emerging scientific demand to understand the imposed reality, expand scientific knowledge and contribute to the problem. How was the organization of daily family life established between families with school-age children, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic? What happened in the family's daily life in the face of the demands generated by the children's school activities, remotely or at a distance?

This research aims to discuss the daily domestic life of families with school-age children in the face of the pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2. It also intends to problematize possible changes in the routine of children's lives, resulting from the absence of face-to-face attendance at schools and the increase in daily time in domestic contexts.

INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS

This research is an exploratory study with a quantitative and qualitative approach, using a mixed method. For Gil (2008), this type of research combines principles of a quantitative nature such as measurable data captured from an objective reality, with principles of a qualitative nature, with the description, analysis, and critical discussion of the phenomenon. It was characterized as an opinion survey and followed the ethical standards required with research with human beings in the countries involved, approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings of the Brazilian university involved, under opinion 4,683,194, and by the department of the Italian university involved, complying with European Union standards for research production.

For data collection, a questionnaire was used considering the nature of the survey (GIL, 2008) with a composition of open and closed questions. The instrument was elaborated by the researchers

of the work team in the study and considering the guidelines of Hill and Hill (2008) regarding objectives, sections, description of the questions, layout, and evaluation.

E-surveys, also known as websurveys, were used, which are strategies for obtaining primary data that have been used since the 1990s (De BONI, 2020). E-surveys are valid, as they allow data collection to occur at a distance, without the demand for the presence of participants and with the speed of obtaining, breadth of geographic coverage, and breaking of borders, such as intercontinental ones, to carry out surveys. In this design, study participants are recruited on social networks or websites, using member email registration lists and disclosing the research link on these channels (De BONI, 2020).

The e-survey was used given the need for data collection to be carried out at a distance, due to social distancing in the face of the crisis generated by COVID-19, the speed of collection execution and the breaking of geographic barriers, which allowed, in the case of Brazil, the expansion of the participant recruitment process. This recruitment was carried out meeting the following criteria: being a family with children of school age, and having the skills to use electronic devices and access to the internet, with complete completion of the questionnaire only once.

The instrument was formulated specifically for this study in the original English version, with free translation into Italian and Portuguese, carried out by researchers with proficiency in English, Italian, and Portuguese. It was available through the Google Forms platform, and the access to the link was throughout May and June 2020, totaling approximately 60 days of collection in the participating countries. A set of closed questions was attached to the beginning of the form for characterization information of the participants such as gender identification; age; working status (employed or unemployed from the beginning of the pandemic until the data collection period); family configuration (number of residents in the same space, aggregated during quarantine, etc.); and physical characteristics of the domestic environment (number of rooms or spaces in the residence, presence of collective or individual outdoor or outdoor spaces, and geographic location).

The thematic questionnaire formulated by open questions focused on scrutinizing the social life in domestic homes of families with school-age children, in particular, the daily relationships with children during the period of social isolation or social restriction and suspension of face-to-face assistance at schools. Therefore, it had 42 open and 33 closed questions, totaling 75 questions.

Participants

The participants in the survey were 478 adults from Brazilian families. Participants were defined by self-interest criteria and accessibility to the online questionnaire, constituting a non-probabilistic study. From the explanation described in the research, the participants who freely agreed to participate signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF), attached to the beginning of the form.

In Brazil, the questionnaire was sent to the five regions of the country, in addition to the Federal District, obtaining wide participation. There was greater participation from the Southeast region, especially from the central-eastern macro-region of the state of São Paulo, known as one of the most developed regions in the state. These data helped to identify the geographic location of the homes of the respective groups of participants, as well as to identify the socioeconomic profile of the respondents, who have an average family income between four and five minimum wages.

Table 1 shows the description of the other variables of the composition of the profile of the study sample – age group; gender; marital status; higher level of education; working condition (employed and unemployed); and number of children per participating family –, presented in terms of absolute and relative frequency.

Table 1 – Description of study sample profile variables.

Categories	#qtd	%qtd
Age group		
20 to 29 years old		6.9%
30 to 39 years old		43.5%
40 to 49 years old		38.7%

50 to 59 years old		9.8%
60 years old or more		1.04%
Gender		
Female	434	90.8%
Male	44	9.2%
Marital Status		
Married	369	77.2%
Divorced	42	8.8%
Single	64	13.4%
Widower	3	0.6%
School level		
Doctorate	88	18.4%
Master's degree	88	18.4%
Undergraduate	239	50.0%
High School	52	10.9%
Middle School	7	1.5%
Elementary School	2	0.4%
Not graduated	2	0.4%
Working condition		
Yes (employed)	379	79.3%
No (unemployed)	99	20.7%
Number of children		
0	15	3.1%
1	174	36.4%
2	212	44.4%
3	55	11.5%
4 or more	14	2.9%
*Lack of information	8	1.7%
Total Geral	478	100.0%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As seen in the table, the average age of the participating Brazilians was 39.24 years old, with participants ranging from 20 to 64 years old. The following aspects predominated: greater participation of women; a higher percentage of married and predominance of the graduation course as maximum education. A significant portion of the participants has two children. At the time of data collection, participants had jobs.

Regarding the physical characteristics of the domestic environment, the residences had a representative average of six to seven rooms, and 66.1% reported having open spaces (backyard and gardens) at home. In addition, 27% reported having a private balcony, and a small percentage (2.5%) reported having a shared balcony. Only 8.2% of the participants did not have the spaces mentioned above, and less than 1% reported having a swimming pool and/or playground, or other space characteristic of certain leisure activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Part of the Brazilian results found in the broad international survey are presented here. Quantitative data were tabulated using descriptive statistics – frequency (f) and percentage (%) –, using Microsoft Excel. The qualitative data collected were submitted to the process of content analysis

(BARDIN, 2009), in the form of thematic analysis (MINAYO, 1992), with the two categories structured a posteriori. The first, entitled “Family Structure in a pandemic context”, presents and discusses the structure of daily family life during the pandemic, highlighting established changes in the process of living life in the new context. The second, “Relationships with children in the family's daily life in a pandemic context”, presents and discusses adult relationships in living with children in the face of the [new] family organization, which includes the discussion of the creation of behaviors for children's education. Both categories take the construct of Paulo Freire's thought (FREIRE, 2014, 2017) and other references inserted in the socio-humanist theoretical field, for analysis and discussion.

Category 1: Family Structure in a pandemic context

Regarding the configuration of families, there is a reduced insertion of co-parental members in the family nucleus during the pandemic. Only 6.1% (29 participants) indicated having welcomed relatives during this period, mostly due to the integration of the mother and/or father of the spouses (elderly and the children's grandparents), followed by their respective siblings (the children's uncles).

Changes were also observed in the formal work situation of the participants and their spouses. Of the employed respondents (79.3%), 58.6% worked at home (222 participants); 22.2% indicated that work was temporarily suspended (84 participants); and 10.7% indicated working in person at their usual location (10 participants). The remaining indices, representing 8.5% of the total number of employees (32 participants), indicated that they were on a shift schedule, maternity leave, and/or vacation.

Regarding the working conditions of the spouses of respondents who indicated a marital relationship (77.2% - 369 participants), 80.7% were employed (297 participants), with only 16.3% (about a quarter - 60 spouses of participants) reported being unemployed; other respondents who were widowed or single did not report. Of the number of employed spouses, 41.4% (that is, most of them) were working at home (123 participants); 33.9% in the usual workplace (100 participants); and 11.6% indicated that their work was temporarily suspended (34 participants). Values lower than 1% in this regard indicated a shift schedule, maternity leave, and/or vacations.

The results showed that the alterations provoked in the daily life of the family were caused by the continuous presence of the family members at home, whether adults, children, and households, increasing the time of coexistence between them. From this condition, there was the need to adapt habits and situations that, before the installation of the pandemic, did not exist or were not considered problematic, therefore, not demanding new realignments, such as distributing study/work and leisure activities in a balanced way; be patient with the other's time and routine; insert inaugural rules – such as constantly washing hands and wearing masks when meeting external demands of the residence. The data demonstrate:

“We are not having the right time to sleep and eat like we used to.” (P-108).

“We were more stressed by trivialities, however, I feel like we are fine despite the circumstances.” (P-32).

“Because daily living in long-term isolation generates stress and anxiety. Reconciling a home office with a stipulated workload and not being able to take a break to be with my son or take him for a walk, generates frustration.” (P-231).

Respondents revealed the learning of a continuous socialization process in which, among other facets, they learned to assimilate routines and practices, the result of the intensive recognition arising from parental interaction. These learnings seem to go far beyond the simple act of being together for a short period at home, for example, for the main meals or quick and uncompromising conversations, expanding to a set of necessary skills and postures, recruited and honed for the accomplishment tasks arising from home, family, work (or suspension or loss of it) and school, seeking family harmony. The new reality dialogues with the concept of “normality of exception” by Santos (2019), when reflecting on the knowledge, existence, and unveiling of different things and different ways of living and (re)existing, in this case, compelled by the pandemic.

Thus, it reflects on the constitution of rules and values that came to compose an inaugural domestic culture, the organizational culture emerged from the know-how to survive the home reconfiguration, which can be called unnoticed practicable solutions. Such solutions sought to circumvent the stress factors arising from tense and overloaded relationships between adults and children in confinement, adding to the absence of face-to-face assistance from the school. In this regard, reflections are made on adult life, such as, especially, the life of the Brazilian woman-working-mother, which, with excellence, is reported in the work “Plural Maternities: the different reports, adventures, and Oceans of mothers scientists in the pandemic” - *“Maternidades plurais: os diferentes relatos, aventuras e oceanos das mães cientistas na pandemia”* (SOARES; CIDADE; CARDOSO, 2020). This publication deals with motherhood, politics, the essence of home and work, resistance to research, militancy, domestic education, academic life, and the invisibility of women, among hundreds of other topics amid the effects of COVID-19.

The results of this research advance and converge to a certain type of know-how of subjects in the face-to-face experience (DUSSEL, 2000). These subjects were protagonists, hopeful, tolerant, and autonomous when remodeling the family routine due to the reconfiguration of the scenario, which included not only the adult presence at home but also the occurrence of financial crises, unemployment, cases of their illness and/or co-parental by COVID-19 and pathologies, among other variants of what Cardoso (2020) calls “corona-crises”, markedly by Brazilian inequality. As expressed by Silva et al. (2020) and Prime, Wade, and Browne (2020), it must be assumed that the pandemic period brought additional challenges to parenting, as parental figures needed to redefine the family routine, implying the establishment of strategies for dividing work activities, study, care, and leisure for themselves and the children (if they exist), combined with professional demands and domestic chores and management.

The creation of new behaviors is shown in a continuous process of organization by the adult members. It is considered that true changes expressed by human beings permeate affectivity, questioning, mobilization, cooperation, dialogue, and awareness (FREIRE, 1979; GADOTTI, 1996; STRECK; REDIN; ZITKOSKI, 2017) arising from a community process, supportive and integrated approach to reality and effective engagement in change. To understand family structure, in pandemic times, the conceptualization of Freire's dialogue is collaborative.

For Freire (1983a), dialogue is the force that drives critical thinking in the human condition in the world. Through it and with it, human beings can say the world according to their way of seeing and understanding it, making it possible to open new paths to rethink life in society. True dialogue implies attentive and patient listening to different knowledge that cannot be imposed by anyone but emerges from critical and hopeful communication about the different conditions of the world, which requires trust in the other, availability, love, respect, and humility. In this sense, there is a latent behavior among adult family members to include in the agenda of dialogue with the children what Covid-19 has caused in Brazil and the world, accompanied by the survey of the perceptions and sensations of the children regarding the experience, mainly due to the abrupt absence from school and the implications of a new routine in which friends and everyday co-parents were no longer a part.

When explaining the situation experienced, 76.5% of the total number of respondents (366 participants) indicated telling stories to the children about the existence of an “animal” that lives outside the house (from the door to the outside) and cannot let it come in. Therefore, they must stay indoors. When thinking about the dialogue with children over 10 years old, a summary is made from the following answer:

“Taking into account the age, I explain it to her as it is transmitted to us, reinforcing the need for care that must exist even if she does not leave but in this way, she is aware of the situation in which we find ourselves. When the father leaves for work, he is aware of all the precautions we must take so that we remain well at home.” (P-309).

“I explain that there is a virus (he already knows what a virus is) that is circulating and that contagion is very easy. As we don't have enough places in hospitals for those who don't feel well when they catch the virus, we need to stay at home to avoid contagion. We don't know how many people won't be fine at home and will need places in hospitals when they get infected.” (P-14).

In other stories, a configuration was also observed in which people play the role of “good guys” and the virus, of “villains” to be fought by a human union, projecting a happy ending when children are told: “It will pass”.

Based on Freire's ideas, the new structuring of the intimate family environment in a pandemic context made families start to face the extraordinary, the limit-act, with utopias (future) in unpublished viable nourished by the hope/hope for the achievement of a possible dream, a worldwide collective dream, whose performance would occur via overcoming/ending the pandemic and an approximate return to the pre-pandemic scenario. These highlights are part of the “plan of action” in the face of the limit-act, which includes intuition, emotion, pleasure, lovingness, and joy present in the relationship between children and adults (FREIRE, 1983a).

This analysis as a whole reinforces the findings of the research “First Childhood – Interactions in the Pandemic: Behaviors of parents and caregivers of children aged 0 to 3 years in times of Covid-19” - *“Primeiríssima Infância – Interações na Pandemia: Comportamentos de pais e cuidadores de crianças de 0 a 3 anos em tempos de Covid-19”*, published by the Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal Foundation, which aimed to investigate how the new coronavirus affected the family dynamics of care and development of young children (FMCSV, 2021). This study demonstrates that parents needed to seek new arrangements to take care of their children; uncles also began to assume responsibility for the children, given the perception of overload by mothers from economically less favored classes; there was also an increase in the time spent by parents with their children, especially in the higher class and education segments, in addition to a regression in children's behavior.

Category 2: Relationships with children in daily family life in a pandemic context

This category emphasizes the results related to the routine of children's lives due to the absence of attendance and, therefore, face-to-face attendance at schools, and increased daily time in domestic contexts.

Alongside the conditions of family structure, the data now allocated allow discussion of aspects of adult relationships with children. Of the participants working at home, 61.9% (137 participants) indicated sudden changes in their relationship with their children. In the adult interpretation, the changes that took place were necessary to improve the interaction between parents and children, as well as to positively expand harmonious relationships. Mostly, the changes occurred due to the expansion of the feeling of closeness and recognition of the children, so that they could spend more time together and at home.

“We are much closer! Carrying out activities that with the rush of everyday life we would not do.” (P-117).

“We are closer. Children call all the time. We are eating better. We are also more aware of school difficulties.” (P-06).

“I started to provide school guidance and literacy for my 6-year-old daughter.” (P-453).

The changes also emerged as measures to ensure family harmony and not create opportunities for the decline of relationships due to the presence of children and the concomitant difficulties of maintaining work and supporting the family, bringing together accentuated situations of home stress. Given the imperative of daily and intensified interaction with children at home, 57.7% of Brazilians (128 participants) indicated that they had changed the rules, while 42.3% responded that they had not made changes (93 participants). These data were observed, although this study did not stop investigating the need/intention of changes by those responsible, as it is possible that the need already existed, but, for unknown reasons, it had not been implemented until then. The modification of the rules, mostly, acted to reinforce the home-study routine:

“New agreements about time on electronic toys, more commitment from everyone to the house, new schedules with the diversification of activities with staying at home all day. Remember to sunbathe when the sun enters through the bedroom window...” (P-408).

“We’ve established play periods that don’t use electronics.” (P-108).

“Hours for bathing, studying, using the computer, video games, eating. At first it felt like a vacation, with no set schedule, now we follow a routine.” (P-214).

The modifications in this context occurred in the alteration of preexisting behaviors, which were, from the highest to the lowest incidence, the creation of limits to reduce the time of exposure of children in front of video game screens, television, cell phones, and tablets; in the flexibility of sleeping and waking times, being postponed compared to the pre-pandemic time; and personal hygiene habits. In lesser appearance, there was an improvement in the quality of food and the inclusion of children in helping with household chores.

Considering the previously registered notes, the data point to the intensification of the parent’s participation in the children’s school life, followed by decisions about leisure and food activities. Results of comparisons between participants working at home and those working at their usual place allow us to state that there was a difference between those who stayed at home and those who did not. This scenario was also accompanied by complaints, such as:

“Lack of understanding of what is proposed, there is no adequate explanation, the teacher’s presence is very important, in addition to interaction with classmates. I can’t help him, for example, with math exercises.” (P-218).

“Both mother and father are teachers, which greatly facilitates the monitoring of studies. But the difficulty comes in carrying out our remote work and accompanying a dyslexic child who demands more time to carry out the activities. So a strict schedule is necessary.” (P-27).

The domestic space shared by members of a family network, adults and children, in times of COVID-19, seemed to materialize into a (non-formal) education space through the continuity of the child’s education, in interaction, in conviviality, in dialogue with and between what is limited and possible to the small family nucleus, resulting in the unveiling of reality, reinforcing the findings in the study by Linhares and Enumo (2020). According to these authors, even though children are less severely and symptomatically contaminated by the virus, as they are a vulnerable population, they may be more affected in terms of psychological development. From this stems the preponderant socio-educational role played by the family microcontext since “[...] parental figures are central in the development of the child, especially in early childhood (zero to six years old), to achieve the healthy and adaptive development of an individual ” (LINHARES; ENUMO, 2020, p. 4).

The historical, critical-chaotic moment placed in different environments of society, especially the domestic one, can be interpreted by the Freirean concept of education, which occurs through dialogic, solidary, and transformative educational processes, being directly associated with the concept of human being and imbued with hope. Thus, it acts in the sense of feeding the roots of humanization, since hope acts as a force for the fight to be faced. As Freire (1983a) states, only then will the human being, unfinished, assume the condition of being unfinished and, aware of this, aspire to “Be More”, through education that takes place in relationships. Despite these reflections, some provocations are in order: it will be possible (and desirable) to unilaterally make the family responsible for the creation of horizons in the face of a humane and more humanized education (BRANDÃO, 2002), in the absence of coexistence and broad sharing between beings humans of different roots, origins, and cultures? Would there be and what would be the possibilities of a more humanizing education in a circumscribed domestic context, marked by adverse situations, which, are circumvented with insecure/unprepared postures of adults?

A significant part of the homeworkers, 78.9% (175 participants), began to develop specific activities with the children, especially when monitoring school activities, followed by the proposition of games for the family. There was also an incentive to practice physical activity, as well as to perform manual work, reading practices, and extracurricular studies (demands, not schedules). Finally, to a lesser extent, the request of adults for help with household chores and in the development of cultural and artistic activities is highlighted, as reported:

“Study rules and we keep housekeeping rules.” (P-03).

“Cooking, organizing the house, playing Combat.” (P-401).

“The children began to demand more help and also, my wife and I, demanding that the eldest son helps with cleaning and cooking.” (P-377).

In these activities, there was still evidence of recruiting help from older children in the care of younger children, as well as making them responsible for greater demands at home, such as cleaning and organizing spaces. However, with the change and intensification of living together, from the point of view of expanding shared times and spaces, for 43.6% (97 participants), the prolonged presence of children at home, concentrated on school or non-school activities, began to generate feelings of impatience, especially when such activities were superimposed on the professional obligations of adults, also carried out at home, as observed in the following extracts:

“We got closer. We talked and played more. Sometimes we argue more too.” (P-116).

“It gets more tense, we lose more patience, both adults and children.” (P-77).

It is clear in Freire's writings that the concept of education as an act of “building people” acts in the humanization process of humans and in overcoming dehumanizing elements (FREIRE, 1983a). Educating consists of an act of love and courage that is based, and nourished during dialogical relationships. For Freire, educating is an interactive relationship between people, that is, subject-subject from the perspective of “reading” reality to transform it, constituting the subject-world relationship (FREIRE, 1983b, p. 104). The defense of interactive constituents between human beings in Freire's perspective is reaffirmed by Arroyo (2001, p. 47):

For Paulo Freire, educating will always be a relationship between people, between adults and children. [...] For Paulo Freire, the renewing character of education is in the intrinsically renewed character of every human relationship, between humans. We are formed in dialogue, in interaction with other humans, we are not formed in a relationship with knowledge. This can be a mediator of this relationship as well as supplant this relationship.

Concerning adult behavior in the act of recreating new ways of educating their children, 64.9% of the total number of respondents indicated that they did not adopt punishments during these times, while 35.1% signaled the practice as positive for their children's educational formation. Highlighting the population that makes use of negative reinforcements in certain children's behaviors, there are the compensatory practices and restrictions of the moments most desired by children, as evidenced by the following responses:

“Remove access to screens, internet, video games, and other electronics.” (P-297).

“In particular, the activities chosen in front of screens, there is a preference for mobile and video games, children's drawings, watching Youtubers, etc.” (P-445).

In addition to restricting electronic devices, those responsible indicated using verbal repression accompanied by practices such as leaving the child “thinking in the corner”, expanding the obligations linked to school study activities, restricting the intake of some food, and/or making it impossible to play with the brother and with the toys. As can be seen, the use of technology was indicated as the most desired moment by children. In this sense, Anjos and Francisco (2021), when investigating children's access to digital technologies inside or outside educational institutions, through the analysis of a set of documents on COVID-19 and Early Childhood Education in the context of TDIC, concluded that the remote activities violate the principles and specificities of this stage, even considering that, in some contexts, technologies acted as possible communication resources and maintenance of bonds between children, family members, and teachers. Thus, the authors point out that the debate on DICT and Early Childhood Education needs to be expanded, especially after the period of social isolation and full-time at home with intense use of electronic devices, as evidenced by this research.

The disposition of these results indicates that the application of punishment occurred, notably, by the children's acts of disobedience, exemplified by stubbornness and tantrums in not fulfilling tasks (school and domestic), or by spending many hours on video games and cell phones (abusive use of screens), even after they have signed rule agreements with their parents. Secondary punishments also appeared, followed by aggressive behavior towards the brother and, to a lesser extent, so that the children understood that the period of social distancing and not going to school did not mean a vacation period and that, therefore, they should continue with the activities and rules established for the fulfillment of responsibilities and the maintenance of respectful and harmonious coexistence.

Because of the concrete/direct punishments applied by adults to guarantee good living together at home, we emphasize here the abstract/indirect punishments also suffered by children, which were determined by the pandemic in its context, which emphasizes the absence of going to school in person. This sanction, assertively the most expressive, deprived the child of access to an essential system of learning and development, mainly due to the loss/deprivation of formal learning of scientific concepts dealt with by the school, in addition to socializing with peers and so many other significant learning experiences for human formation in a collective, such as conviviality, cooperation, overcoming challenges, conflict resolution, face-to-face experiences, playfulness, sharing, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

In this investigation, Freire's epistemological attitude was assumed to discuss the daily family life with school-aged children in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and to problematize possible changes in the routine of children's lives in face-to-face absence in schools and extension of time in contexts domestic. Thus, there was no intention here to say how family reorganization should have been in a pandemic period, but rather to highlight what happened within Brazilian families, through the analysis and understanding of their actions and conduct developed by them.

The breakdown of these data reveals that the impacts of social isolation on relationships and the new restructuring suffered by families are not the same for all of them, since only a portion of the respondents were able to comply with the recommendations of social isolation and even positively share the presence of their children at home. Participants in the condition of employees had a fixed income to meet basic needs, while a minority of participants did not express such a condition. Despite this, some changes in the home sphere, especially for families working remotely, permeate the understanding of new configurations that establish educational-dialogical-cooperative relationships between different members, children, and adults.

Numerous elements shape the family structure and impact relationships with children in the scenario caused by the everyday life of the pandemic. Questions related to the routine of life of families with children of school age due to the increase in daily time in domestic contexts caused by the absence of face-to-face visits to schools are presented as an inaugural configuration from 2020 onwards. The change in these relationships seems to be justified by the presence of co-parental members at home, who share the same space, but are dedicated to different activities, sometimes overloaded, an issue that lies at the heart of most of the current challenges. However, it is necessary to consider the existence of other elements that make up the list of problematizations of this critical-historical moment, mainly the reflections arising from the inadequate current political conduct, which are directly linked to the possibility (or not) of staying at home and rules of social isolation, as well as aspects related to the minimum and dignified financial condition at least for family subsistence.

The new dynamism in which family interrelationships are developed between adults and children is a key element to start thinking about the transformation of the configurations established in the lives of children in pandemic conditions, especially in the process of their development, considering the insertion of apparent dialogic and horizontal educational practices in the education of children. The synthesis of this understanding unfolds from the socio-humanist analysis and can transmute as a prominent contribution in interface with the Freirean perspective, an issue that cannot be explored in depth by segments of the academic and educational-school field, as well as Brazilian macrostructural politics.

We can conclude that the referral of other investigations may present the perceptions of family members about children in the scenario of COVID-19 based on the analysis of the management of relationships with childhood and its lasting effects, discussing the activities of remote teaching and domestic and relational life in the context of a pandemic. Thus, there is a need to analyze the dynamic and diverse structures that mark the scope of intimate family life in the face of social isolation measures and the multifaceted assumed in the face of schools closed for face-to-face attendance.

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Author 2 – Elaboration of the introduction, organization, presentation of data, and elaboration of the discussion and conclusions of the manuscript.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this study.