


COVID-19 PANDEMIC: LEISURE PRACTICE AMONG TEACHERS BRAZILIAN

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ABSTRACT: In this study, we examined leisure activities among teachers during the COVID-19, assessing issues related to sociodemographic profile and working conditions. This is a cross-sectional websurvey, performed with teachers of public basic education of Minas Gerais. A digital form was used to collect data in 2020. Leisure practice in pandemic was the dependent variable. In the multiple analysis, Poisson regression was used. A total of 15,641 teachers participated in the study, of which 43% were not having leisure practices in pandemic. There was a higher prevalence of absence of leisure practice among women, among the elderly, brown and black-skinned teachers, contracted/designated teachers and those not satisfied with teaching work in pandemic. Thus, this research sought to discuss sociocultural topics, highlighting, that access to leisure practices lacks a social, human vision focused on the inequality.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Leisure activities. Social distancing. Education.

PANDEMIA DA COVID-19: PRÁTICA DE LAZER ENTRE PROFESSORES BRASILEIROS

RESUMO: Neste estudo, examinamos as atividades de lazer entre os professores durante a COVID-19, avaliando questões relacionadas ao perfil sociodemográfico e às condições de trabalho. Trata-se de um websurvey transversal, realizado com professores da educação básica pública de Minas Gerais. Foi utilizado um formulário digital para a coleta de dados em 2020. A prática de lazer na pandemia foi a variável dependente. Na análise múltipla, foi utilizada a regressão de Poisson. Participaram do estudo 15.641 professores, dos quais 43% não estavam tendo práticas de lazer na pandemia. Houve maior prevalência de ausência da prática de lazer entre as mulheres, entre os idosos, professores pardos e pretos, contratados/designados e insatisfeitos com o trabalho docente na pandemia. Assim, esta pesquisa buscou discutir temas socioculturais, destacando que o acesso às práticas de lazer carece de uma visão social, humana e voltada para a desigualdade.

KEYWORDS: Atividades de lazer. Distanciamento social. Educação

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Introduction

As in many parts of the world, in Brazil, in order to face the COVID-19, several activities were interrupted, such as commerce, schools and universities. With the exception of the essential services, such as healthcare and public and private security activities, there was a lockdown and remote work was encouraged for most workers. In this scenario caused by the pandemic, “the dynamics of families with children and adolescents has required greater effort from parents, guardians and/or caregivers who need to reconcile remote work, domestic work and childcare” (MARQUES *et al.*, 2020, p. 3).

However, the regime of telework, despite being able to establish greater flexibility in the routine of a teacher, can predispose to the emergence of different social adversities, in addition to the increment of a new configuration of labour subjection: the so-called ‘digital slavery’ (SCALZILLI, 2020). This panorama conflicts, absolutely, with the basic rights foreseen in the Constitution of the Republic, among them, the right to a healthy quality of life in the workplace, rest and leisure.

From a legal point of view, although little systematized, leisure is a social right provided for in Article 6 of Chapter II of the Brazilian Constitution. And, as far as this study is concerned, leisure will be understood as a phenomenon with its own meanings, therefore, it will not be approached in association with another specific area, such as health or work. Based on this assumption, the development of this survey was anchored in the theory of leisure developed by Gomes (2014), i.e., a social phenomenon represented by the need for recreational enjoyment, based on cultural practices constituted in each social context.

In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an acceleration of sensitive changes caused by a new order of work relations (and, consequently, of the experiences

lived in the time that is available). Therefore, the pandemic scenario requires a long-term effort and significant transformations, the context for which tends to become more urgent as the factors that trigger social and economic conditions deepen. Ultimately, with regard to the work/leisure relationship, the task is to rethink the world of work by linking it to other worlds from which it should never have been isolated. Additionally, in this effort, leisure must be re-thought, not regulated, but liberated; not as a business, but as a community activity, with its creative and playful potential expanded by integrating the vast cultural diversity of the world (WORLD LEISURE ORGANIZATION, 2019). In this sense, it is in the midst of this scenario of uncertainty that this study proposes, as an objective, to analyze the practice of leisure, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, among teachers of the state of Minas Gerais, in Brazil, by assessing differences related to the social and demographic profile and working conditions.

Methods

This study is part of the 'ProfSMoc Project – Minas Covid Stage: Health and Work Conditions Among Teachers from Government Schools in the State of Minas Gerais During the COVID-19 Pandemic'. This is a cross-sectional websurvey, performed with teachers of basic education (kindergarten, elementary and high school) at government schools in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The state of Minas Gerais had approximately 90,000 teachers of basic education in 2020, working at 3,441 state government schools (SEE-MG, 2020).

Sample calculation was performed to identify the minimum sample size to ensure the representativeness of the population. Thus, a formula considering infinite populations was used, tolerable error of 3%, prevalence of 50% of the event of interest,

deff=2, and addition of 20% to compensate for losses. A sample of at least 2,564 teachers was estimated. The survey was conducted online with the data collection form widely disseminated by the State Department of Education in Minas Gerais with a previously established deadline, which made it possible for more teachers than estimated to participate in the research.

A previous pilot study was performed with 20 teachers from five different cities in Minas Gerais to test and adjust the data collection tool. Data collection took place from 20 August to 11 September 2020, by using a digital form made available to teachers through the Google Forms® platform. The link to the form was widely disseminated and sent by the Minas Gerais State Department of Education to the institutional email of all teachers in the state. A reCAPTCHA feature was used to prevent automatic filling of the form by robots. All questions on the form were mandatory and the anonymity of each teacher was ensured.

Teachers exercising their teaching function in 2020, those working in early childhood education, elementary education, and/or high school, and those who agreed to participate in the study were included in the study. Teachers deviating from the teaching function, retirees and those who answered 'no' when asked if they agreed to participate in the study did not participate in the survey. There was no restriction on participation for those who were on sick leave or for any other reason.

The leisure practice during the pandemic was the following dependent variable: 'When evaluating your weekly time for fun (leisure/hobbies), considering before and during this moment of social isolation, you would say that: a) it did not change; b) decreased up to 2 hours; c) decreased more than 2 hours; d) increased; e) I am not having leisure activities'. For the statistical analysis, the leisure practice response options were dichotomized into those participating in leisure activities during the

pandemic (categories a, b, c, d) and those not participating (category "e"). The independent variables were organized into two thematic blocks, listed below.

Social and demographic profile: gender (female; male), census area (urban; rural), age group (20 to 29 years; 30 to 39 years; 40 to 49 years; 50 to 59 years; 60 years or older), self-declared skin color (white; brown; black; yellow; native/indigenous) and family income during the pandemic (increased; remained the same; decreased; not receiving any income). The school district area refers to the location of the state school where the teacher works.

Working conditions: teaching experience (years), weekly hours of teaching work, type of employment contract with the school, has a graduate degree and job satisfaction.

The data were organized, audited and analyzed using the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS®) version 22.0. Simple frequencies and prevalence of the studied variables were presented. A bivariate analysis was previously conducted using Pearson's chi-square. A multiple model was initially constructed using variables with descriptive levels lower than or equal to 20%.

In the multiple model, Poisson Regression was used with robust variance. The models were manually adjusted. All selected variables ($p \leq 0.20$) were entered into the model together and were removed one by one in a decreasing order, leaving only variables with descriptive levels below 5% ($p < 0.05$) in the final model. Prevalence Ratio (PR), 95% confidence interval (95%CI) and descriptive level were estimated. A Deviance test was used to assess the model's quality.

The project was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Montes Claros (Unimontes), with opinion n° 4,200,389, approved in August 2020. All participating teachers received a copy of the Free and Informed Consent Form and marked 'yes' to the question regarding the agreement to participate

in the survey. The survey also complied with Resolution No. 466/12 of the National Health Council of the Ministry of Health, which provides for research involving human beings.

Results

The study collected data from 15641 teachers representing 795 municipalities across 853 municipalities in Minas Gerais. Table 1 shows that, when projecting sociodemographic profiles of the surveyed teachers, 81.9% were female, 36.7% were between 40 and 49 years old, and 40.6% reported that their family income declined during the pandemic. In terms of working conditions, 25% of teachers had 21 years or more of experience; 15.8% worked 40 hours or more per week; and 33.7% were dissatisfied with their jobs.

Figure 1 details how the pandemic affected teachers' leisure time, with 43.0% not engaging in leisure practices during this period.

The results of the final multiple model are presented in Table 2. Female teachers and teachers in urban schools were more likely to be absent from leisure activities during the pandemic. When comparing teachers of different age groups, younger teachers (aged between 20 and 29) were the ones least impacted by the pandemic in terms of leisure practices than older teachers', as the absence of leisure practices decreased as age increased.

The absence of leisure practices among brown and black teachers during the pandemic was higher than that among white teachers. There was a higher prevalence of absence of leisure practice among teachers under temporary contract, without master's and/or PhD degrees and those who were indifferent or dissatisfied with their teaching work during the pandemic (Table 2).

Figure 1: Teachers leisure practice during the COVID-19 pandemic in Minas Gerais. ProfSMoc - Minas Covid Stage, 2020 (n=15,641)

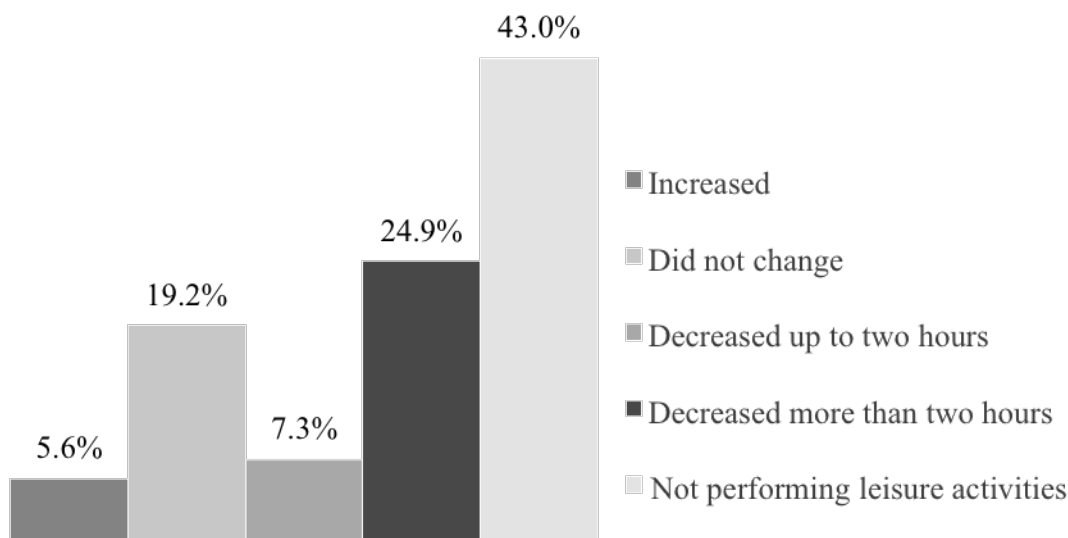


Table 1: Descriptive and bivariate analysis of leisure practice, according to sociodemographic profile and working conditions among public basic education teachers in Minas Gerais during the COVID-19 pandemic. ProfSMoc – Minas Covid Stage, 2020 (n=15,641)

VARIABLES	Leisure practice DP			p-value
	n (%)	YES n (%)	NO n (%)	
<i>Sociodemographic profile</i>				
Gender				
Male	2,824 (18.1)	2,099 (74.3)	725 (25.7)	0.000
Female	12,817 (81.9)	6,815 (53.2)	6,002 (46.8)	
School district area				
Rural	2,076 (13.3)	1,235 (59.5)	841 (40.5)	0.014
Urban	13,565 (86.7)	7,679 (56.6)	5,886 (43.4)	
Age (years)				
20 to 29	1,163 (7.4)	845 (72.7)	318 (27.3)	0.000
30 to 39	4,685 (30.0)	2,852 (60.9)	1,833 (39.1)	
40 to 49	5,740 (36.7)	3,078 (53.6)	2,662 (46.4)	
50 to 59	3,507 (22.4)	1,847 (52.7)	1,660 (47.3)	
≥ 60	546 (3.5)	292 (53.5)	254 (46.5)	
Ethnicity				
White	7,642 (48.9)	4,499 (58.9)	3,143 (41.1)	0.000
Brown	6,321 (40.4)	3,506 (55.5)	2,815 (44.5)	
Black	1,246 (8.0)	666 (53.5)	580 (46.5)	
Yellow	359 (2.3)	189 (52.6)	170 (47.4)	

Native/Indigenous	73 (0.5)	54 (74.0)	19 (26.0)	
Family income DP				
Increased	304 (1.9)	185 (60.9)	119 (39.1)	0.000
Remained the same	8,947 (57.2)	5,270 (58.9)	3,677 (41.1)	
Decreased	6,350 (40.6)	3,440 (54.2)	2,910 (45.8)	
Not receiving any income	40 (0.3)	19 (47.5)	21 (52.5)	
<i>Work conditions</i>				
Teaching experience (years)*				
01 to 10	5,941 (38.0)	3,580 (60.3)	2,361 (39.7)	0.000
11 to 20	5,788 (37.0)	3,276 (56.6)	2,512 (43.4)	
≥ 21	3,911 (25.0)	2,058 (52.6)	1,853 (47.4)	
Weekly hours of teaching work*				
≤ 19	3,613 (23.1)	2,105 (58.3)	1,508 (41.7)	0.200
20 to 39	9,554 (61.1)	5,401 (56.5)	4,153 (43.5)	
≥ 40	2,472 (15.8)	1,407 (56.9)	1,065 (43.1)	
Type of employment contract				
Permanent	8,440 (54.0)	4,960 (58.8)	3,480 (41.2)	0.000
Temporary	7,201 (46.0)	3,954 (54.9)	3,247 (45.1)	
Graduate degree				
Master's and/or PhD degree	692 (4.4)	459 (66.3)	233 (33.7)	0.000
Specialization course	11,115 (71.1)	6,144 (55.3)	4,971 (44.7)	
No	3,834 (24.5)	2,311 (60.3)	1,523 (39.7)	
Satisfaction with teaching work DP				
Satisfied	3,375 (21.6)	2,189 (64.9)	1,186 (35.1)	0.000
Indifferent	6,995 (44.7)	3,901 (55.8)	3,094 (44.2)	
Dissatisfied	5,271 (33.7)	2,824 (53.6)	2,447 (46.4)	

Table 2: Absence of leisure practice among public basic education teachers in Minas Gerais during the COVID-19 pandemic. Poisson regression. Adjusted prevalence ratio. ProfSMoc – Minas Covid Stage, 2020 (n=15,641)

VARIABLES	Adjusted PR (95%IC)	p-value
Gender		
Male	1.00	
Female	1.72 (1.61;1.84)	<0.001
School district area		
Rural	1.00	
Urban	1.06 (1.01;1.12)	0.037
Age (years)		
20 to 29	1.00	
30 to 39	1.35 (1.22;1.49)	<0.001
40 to 49	1.55 (1.40;1.71)	<0.001
50 to 59	1.58 (1.43;1.75)	<0.001
≥ 60	1.63 (1.43;1.85)	<0.001
Ethnicity		
White	1.00	

Brown	1.10 (1.04;1.12)	<0.001
Black	1.15 (1.08;1.23)	<0.001
Yellow	1.10 (0.97;1.21)	0.138
Native/Indigenous	0.68 (0.46;1.01)	0.058
Type of employment contract		
Permanent	1.00	
Temporary	1.10 (1.06;1.14)	<0.001
Graduate degree		
Master's and/or PhD degree	1.00	
Specialization course	1.14 (1.02;1.26)	0.017
No	1.12 (1.01;1.25)	0.041
Satisfaction with teaching work DP		
Satisfied	1.00	
Indifferent	1.25 (1.19;1.32)	<0.001
Dissatisfied	1.35 (1.28;1.42)	<0.001

Deviance: 0.697 / p-value: 0.569

PR: Prevalence Ratio

95% CI: 95% Confidence Interval

p-value: Wald's test

DP: During the pandemic

Discussion

Studying the leisure practice of teachers in the Minas Gerais government school network in southeastern Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed scenarios that extrapolated isolated quantitative observations. The figures also made it possible to analyze routine social aspects of the surveyed teachers, in a multifaceted context of life, that of human development.

As already mentioned, leisure is understood as one of the aspects of life that influence human development, thus, “more free time and a greater number of leisure options, political, cultural, religious and sexual freedom and political and community participation make the target not to be the mere satisfaction of the so-called basic needs” (RECHIA, 2017, p. 42).

Namely, through the analysis of the numerical meanings and prevalences on the leisure practice of the individuals that comprise the sample, social distortions were noticed, caused by an unfair, inequitable society, reflected in prejudice as to gender,

skin color of a person, financial condition, age and working conditions. This is corroborated by Crochemore-Silva *et al.* (2020), by identifying that there are social and cultural impediments that play a central role in the lives of Brazilians, while this survey also provides visibility to this panorama by presenting the breadth of disparities in the leisure practice of teachers in the state of Minas Gerais, in Brazil.

As part of the breakdown of the survey data, Table 2 presents the bivariate analysis of the independent variables. Teachers who did not perform leisure activities during the pandemic differed significantly according to their gender, indicating women exhibited less leisure habits than men. This scenario represents the discrepancy in the assignment of daily tasks in a family, where domestic work is more part of the routine of women than that of men, which explains the significant difference in leisure practice between genders. As stated by Marques *et al.* (2020), “For many women, the emergency measures needed to fight COVID-19 increase domestic work and care for children, the elderly and sick family members” (p. 2).

Thus, it is worth noting that, both formal and informal, household and domestic chores still fall into the category of work directed exclusively towards women in the country, indicating a gender imbalance. This work is marked by distress, abuse and illness, especially in view of the naturalization of the subordinate arrangement that women fulfill in society and in the hierarchy of the traditional family framework, which leads her to exhaustion, due to the care demanded by all members of the family (MACÊDO, 2020). Often, the woman herself reveals and internalizes, in the domain and power relations prevailing in society, that it is her duty to perform these tasks, thus dedicating very little time to take care of herself, rest or look for means of leisure (PORTO, 2009).

In a study conducted by Ribeiro *et al.* (2020), in which leisure activities were also surveyed during the pandemic, with a predominantly female sample (77%), “[...] 15% of them said they had ‘no free time’ due to professional work. Another similar portion, 15%, said they did not have free time, either because of household chores or because they had to take care of family members” (p. 411).

Regarding the school district area, there was also a significant difference. Teachers residing in the countryside used their free time with more leisure activities than those in the urban area. This finding is explained, possibly, by the Brazilian urban way of life being characterized by the use of time, which could be free for leisure, commuting to work and performing exhaustive household chores. “The difficulties of urban mobility in large cities or metropolises have taken a longer time for commuting to work” (RECHIA, 2017, p. 44).

In a probable clarification, even though the state of Minas Gerais is comprised, in its majority, of regions of low population density (33.41 inhabitants per km²), when adding the population of the capital, the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte (6,006,091 people), with the eight largest cities in the interior with more than 200 thousand inhabitants, the sum of more than 9 million people is reached (IBGE, 2021). This populous urban scenario in the state of Minas Gerais, in general, indicates the existence of few leisure facilities for the population, aggravated by the little time available for leisure and the poor education of citizens for the use of their free time. Thus, sustained by the understanding of Marcellino (1998), it is considered that leisure can provide something greater than merely easing afflictions or brightening up life. In this sense, criticism is given to the control of society and the fetish for consumption, and the rescue of affection and of the human still present in the human being is defended (BACHELADENSKI, MATIELLO JÚNIOR, 2010). In this way, the educational

potential offered by leisure is exalted, either as an educational instrument (education through leisure) or as an object of education (education for leisure). Marcellino (1998) still states that it would not be enough to only ensure the access of individuals to leisure, but it would be essential to produce and disseminate a popular culture that, by breaking with conformist attitudes, would provide conditions for a critical and fruitful participation, with a view to protecting a new social order.

With regard to the age of the respondents, a significant difference was observed in the leisure practice of the teachers when comparing the age groups. The group of 20 to 29 years old was the one that most maintained leisure habits during the pandemic, while, in contrast, people aged 60 years and over were the ones who least reported leisure practices.

Regarding the phases of life, and the temporal trajectory of leisure habits among the age groups, it is important to emphasize that this course is dynamic. At the same time that there are similarities between the tastes of individuals of different ages, different characteristics inherent to the age groups are also revealed. Thus, also in the practice of leisure, a process of permanent reconfiguration of the subjectivity of each one and reconstruction of their identities is constituted.

In the dynamics of the survey figures, it can be inferred that social responsibilities, maximized throughout life, notably work and the financial support of the family, are factors that influence the use of non-work time for leisure. Thus, public policies and qualified professionals are indispensable for the constitution of concepts, projects and equipment that expand leisure, by spreading it and encompassing people from the early stages of life (MORI, SILVA, 2010).

Regarding skin color, information reported by the individuals in the sample, a difference was also found between the self-declared groups of white, brown and black.

To analyze part of this aspect, it is necessary to associate it with the financial condition, since having access to some equipment and leisure modalities requires a more privileged economic condition to consume. So, if the white-skinned group surveyed maintained leisure practices in the pandemic, significantly higher than those with brown skin and black, this behaviour can be explained by the financial condition of the individuals surveyed.

Teachers who work in the Minas Gerais state government school network currently have two forms of employment relationship: permanent position/approved in public examinations or hired/appointed. Strictly speaking, both forms require basic professional training in teaching to work, however, the first category mentioned means teachers who have acquired job stability through public examinations, and the second category is comprised of teachers employed under contracts that are in force for a maximum of one school year.

It cannot be said that the working condition, either by passing a public exam or hired, is the cause, however, of the identification of a significant difference in leisure practice during the pandemic between these two groups of teachers. However, it is suggested that there is more willingness for leisure, or even tranquility, for teachers who have job stability, when compared to the group of teachers bond to short-term precarious contracts. Finally, it is inferred that the priority of the hired individual will be immediate survival, subduing their 'own' leisure to a secondary plane of life.

Throughout the professional career of a teacher, it is common to have incentives to keep up to date in their specific area of expertise. One of the possibilities are postgraduate courses: Specialization (*lato sensu*), Master's and Doctorate (*stricto sensu*). Both, in addition to adding knowledge, provide financial advancement in terms of jobs and salaries. In this study, when categorizing teachers from the Minas Gerais

government school network, a significant difference was noted in leisure practice in the fact of having postgraduate degrees. The fact is that the group of teachers with a Master's and/or Doctorate degree indicated that they maintain more leisure habits than the other teachers.

Based on these data, it is possible that the greater maintenance of leisure practices among the group of teachers with higher degrees, is linked to a broader educational access to leisure. Crochemore-Silva *et al.* (2020), also, when presenting, in a pioneering way, the practice of physical activity of leisure in times of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, based on data of population representativeness, also warned of significant inequalities identified, unfavorable to the less educated. In this way, the relevance of the educational aspect of leisure for cultural education that allows those involved to expand their worldviews and understand themselves as individuals would be highlighted (SILVA, ISAYAMA, 2017). Melo and Alves Júnior (2003), even, recognize the imperative to analyze the double educational process of leisure, whose meanings are the use of the potential of activities to work on values, behaviors and conducts (education through leisure) and the conformation of leisure while an object to which the acts are aimed (education for leisure).

Specifically related to the provision of classes, the state of Minas Gerais decreed a teleworking regime within the scope of the Education System, due to the pandemic, in the month of April 2020 (COMITÊ EXTRAORDINÁRIO COVID-19, 2020). In this way, the collection of data from the survey occurred while the teachers worked remotely, using virtual teaching tools. Such an unprecedented form of distance work was also surveyed and, according to what was observed, a significant difference was observed when comparing job satisfaction and leisure practice during the pandemic.

Notably, teachers who reported being satisfied with remote work were the ones who maintained more leisure practices.

The hegemonic speech in the fields of science, politics and the media engenders and reproduces a narrative that leisure would be reduced only to notions of rest, entertainment and consumption. However, there are social and cultural impediments that hinder both the understanding and the access of Brazilians to everything that the leisure dimension can represent and provide. By ignoring this intricate panorama, one contributes to the conservation of the highlighted difficulties. A stimulus to a perception and the development of a leisure practice that reinforces the limited discourses related to it, without a discussion, in the sense of socialization and the recognition of inequalities in the lives of the Brazilian population, especially in relation to social class, race or ethnicity and gender, collaborates sparingly in the construction of leisure experiences.

Particularly, with regard to the relationship among leisure, teaching and pandemic, we realized how much this particular reconfiguration of social experiences (given forcibly), had an impact on the daily lives of teachers in the state government school network of Minas Gerais, in Brazil. Aspects such age group, gender, race and notably working conditions established a notorious relationship with the use of spare time of the Brazilian teachers surveyed, mainly due to the reorganization of habits (both professional and personal) caused by the pandemic.

Some limitations need to be considered in this study. As it is a websurvey, it is necessary to consider the selection and memory bias, since the survey depends on internet access to fill out the instrument and the answers are based on self-report. However, online surveys also have advantages, such as achieving wide geographic coverage, speed in publishing results and carrying out remote data collection (suitable during social distancing) (BONI, 2020). Other strengths are also highlighted, such as the

methodological rigor, the robustness of the sample and the good distribution of the sample by the State.

There is a challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in the relationship between work and leisure, however, “It is not about the end of the world, but of a new world that can change the lifestyle when we regain control of our existence, demanding all adaptability, empathy, fast learning and especially cognitive flexibility” (SCALZILLI, 2020, p. 644). It is also in this direction that we sought to contribute with what was pointed out by Ribeiro *et al.* (2020), about the need for more research, in order to achieve more detailed results on the spectrum of individuals, regarding leisure in this long period of social distancing.

Finally, it is worth noting that, although the scope of the sample of this study in Minas Gerais, Brazil, has been quite comprehensive, new studies can (and should) be conducted - which are supposed to result in the unfolding of new relationships - in order to conduct comparative analyzes that broaden the debate on the topic, based on consistent empirical data.

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