Editorial

Research in Psychology in the COVID-19 era: Challenges and opportunities

In addition to the incalculable consequences for individuals' daily lives, the COVID-19 pandemic also imposed essential limitations on the conduct of scientific research. In compliance with the ethical precepts and guidelines of health agencies, and prioritizing participants and research team's health and safety, scientists from around the world have postponed or significantly changed the protocols of their studies. The case of research in Psychology is particularly complex, given that data collection often implies direct and close contact with human beings. Depending on the study's target population, participants from risk groups (e.g., by age group, presence of comorbidities, condition, among others), who are more vulnerable to severe sequelae (Padala, Jendro, & Padala, 2020) can be contemplated.

In this scenario, many researchers quickly moved to replace face-to-face data collection modalities with remote modalities (for example, using video-conferencing tools or filling out online questionnaires). However, such changes are not possible for many other kinds of research, such as those that involve the use of neuroimaging techniques or the application of instruments for exclusive use by psychologists. In the case of collections that need to occur in person, researchers are gradually evaluating and planning when and how they can be resumed. This is an essential move, as the prolonged interruption of scientific research in psychology may have negative consequences that are difficult to anticipate precisely. We may see a delay in the development of diagnostic tools and new treatments for various psychological disorders and mass dropouts of researchers at the beginning of their careers or with precarious ties (Simmons & Luck, 2020). Therefore, it is vital to make efforts to resume, as soon as possible, and, when necessary, face-to-face collections in a safe way for all involved – participants and research teams. To this end, the responsible researchers must take into account ethical principles, guidelines and local/national legislation, the risk of local transmission, the wear and tear of the research team and the

individual risk for each participant, to determine the risk-benefit ratio to perform, postpone, or cancel data collections (Padala et al., 2020).

It is undeniable that the pandemic imposed a new reality that will probably persist for some time, and researchers will need to: a) adapt to new contingencies to resume ongoing studies or outline new studies; and b) to think about new researches dedicated to a better understanding of the psychological impact of the pandemic on individuals, families, and society, thus contributing to the reduction of psychological suffering and increase in the quality of life of people. In this line, it is to be welcomed the launch of specific financing lines for the study and confrontation of the COVID-19's effects, including those of a psychological nature, by national and international development agencies.

From the point of view of scientific publications, whenever relevant, authors should include additional information to clarify the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the results obtained. In this line, the journal *Psicologia: Teoria e Prática* asks the authors to pay special attention to the Method, Results, and Discussion sections, considering the suggestions of Stiles-Shields, Plevinsky, Psihogios, and Holmbeck (2020), summarized below. In the Method, they should seek to specify all changes implemented as a result of the pandemic (e.g., the inclusion of new variables/measures; indicate whether recruitment and data collection occurred before, during, or after the pandemic). In the "Results" section, the proportions of the sample recruited, evaluated, and/or subject to intervention must be specified before, during, or after the pandemic. In the case of quantitative studies, accompany the descriptive data with statistical analysis of the differences between the groups. If there are differences, the authors should consider how the moment (pre, during, post) can be controlled statistically in the analysis plan. In the Discussion, the authors should list the possible limitations of the work as a result of COVID-19, as well as incorporate considerations on the potential impact of such a pervasive stressor on the results obtained.

I end this editorial by encouraging the submission of manuscripts on the adequacy of research protocols to reduce the risk of contagion in the context of data collection in psychological research – from behavioral, observational, neuroimaging, psychophysiological, biological data, among others. Sharing this knowledge will be essential so that researchers can continue to successfully face the challenges posed

by the pandemic, transforming them into new opportunities for growth and affirmation of Psychological Science.

Regards,
Prof. Dr. Ana Alexandra Caldas Osório

References

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Stiles-Shields, C., Plevinsky, J. M., Psihogios, A. M., & Holmbeck, G. N. (2020). Considerations and Future Directions for Conducting Clinical Research With Pediatric Populations During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, *45*(7), 720–724.