

Community Containment and Family Relationships: Community-Wide Quarantine due to Covid-19 and Parent-Child Interactions

Beatriz Martins Silvério, and Maria Paula Pereira Matos

Southern University of Santa Catarina (Universidade do Sul de Santa Catarina [Unisul]) Tubarão, Santa Catarina, Brasil

Received: January 17th, 2023.

Accepted: June 14th, 2023.

Section editor: Marina Xavier Carpena.

Author Note

Beatriz M. Silvério  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9500-8202>

Maria Paula Pereira Matos  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4655-1142>

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Beatriz Martins Silvério, Rua Francisco de Assis da Silva, n. 2, Tubarão, SC, Brazil. CEP 88706085. Email: beatrizmartissilverio@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to identify the perception of parents of students attending private schools in the city of Tubarão, SC, Brazil, about the influence of community-wide quarantine due to COVID-19 on the interactions with their children. This exploratory and qualitative field research included semi-structured interviews held with ten families. Several aspects related to the quarantine were investigated, such as changes in the families' routine, feelings the parents experienced in the interactions with their children, difficulties faced in these interactions, and positive aspects. The interviews were assessed according to content analysis, from which categories of research emerged. The results revealed changes in the families' routine caused by distance education, less social contact, task overload, and impacts on professional life. The feelings the parents experienced included fatigue, guilt, stress, and emotional responses, adaptation to the change of roles, difficulty in implementing distance education, and more dependent children. A few positive aspects were mentioned: closeness, more mature children, and more affectionate interactions. A few families did not identify positive aspects. The results show the parents' lack of preparation to deal with the new contingencies, the importance of providing preventive parental guidance, and the need to assess the impact of the methods adopted to implement distance education.

Keywords: parent-child relations, covid-19, quarantine, homeschooling, children

CONTENÇÃO SOCIAL E RELAÇÕES FAMILIARES: A QUARENTENA DA COVID-19 E A INTERAÇÃO PAIS-FILHOS

Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo identificar a percepção dos pais de alunos de escolas privadas do município de Tubarão (SC) acerca da influência da quarentena em decorrência da pandemia de COVID-19 na sua interação com os filhos. Trata-se de uma pesquisa de campo em nível exploratório e qualitativo que foi desenvolvida a partir da realização de entrevistas semiestruturadas com 10 famílias da cidade. Foram investigados os seguintes aspectos relacionados ao período de quarentena: mudanças ocorridas na rotina familiar, sentimentos vivenciados pelos pais em sua interação com os filhos, dificuldades encontradas nessa interação e aspectos positivos vivenciados. As entrevistas foram avaliadas a partir do método de análise de conteúdo, sendo determinadas as categorias de análise. Os resultados mostraram mudanças na rotina relacionadas à prática da educação a distância, diminuição do contato social, sobrecarga de atividades e impactos na vida profissional. Com relação aos sentimentos vivenciados pelos pais, destaca-se a dificuldade de identificação deles, além de serem referidos cansaço, culpa e estresse. Como dificuldades encontradas, foram apontadas reações emocionais, adaptação à mudança de papéis, dificuldade em aplicar a educação a distância e filhos mais dependentes. Poucos foram os aspectos positivos vivenciados referidos, sendo eles a aproximação, amadurecimento e aumento da demonstração de afeto. Algumas famílias não identificaram aspectos positivos. A partir dos resultados, destaca-se o despreparo dos pais para lidar com as novas contingências e a importância da realização da orientação de pais de forma preventiva, além da necessidade de avaliação do impacto dos métodos utilizados na aplicação da educação a distância.

Palavras-chave: relações pais-filho, covid-19, quarentena, homeschooling, crianças

CONTENCIÓN SOCIAL Y FAMILIA: LA CUARENTENA DE COVID-19 Y LA INTERACCIÓN ENTRE PADRES E HIJOS

Resumen

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo identificar la percepción de los padres de alumnos de escuelas públicas del municipio de Tubarão (SC) sobre la influencia de la cuarentena por COVID-19 en la interacción con sus hijos. Una investigación exploratoria y cualitativa que se desarrolló a partir de entrevistas semiestructuradas con 10 familias. Los resultados se obtuvieron a través del análisis de contenido, que mostró cambios en la rutina, menos contacto social, sobrecarga de actividades e impacto profesional. Los padres mencionaron la fatiga, la culpa y el estrés como sentimientos experimentados. Se mencionaron como dificultades encontradas las reacciones emocionales, la adaptación al cambio de roles, las dificultades con la educación a distancia y el aumento de la dependencia. Se mencionaron pocos aspectos positivos. A partir de los resultados, se pone de manifiesto la falta de preparación de los padres para afrontar nuevas contingencias, la importancia de la orientación parental preventiva y la necesidad de reevaluar la forma en que se lleva a cabo la educación a distancia.

Palabras-claves: relaciones padres-hijo, covid-19, cuarentena, homeschooling, niños

In early 2020, the world faced an unprecedented challenge: the coronavirus, which causes COVID-19. The outbreak began in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and rapidly spread to various regions around the globe, causing different impacts and much concern. The COVID-19 epidemic is compared to other severe epidemics, such as influenza in 1918; the virus is highly transmissible and clinically severe (Freitas, Napimoga & Donalisio, 2020). On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization [WHO] (2020) declared COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern. More than 214,000 cases had already been reported and confirmed worldwide only three months after its outbreak.

Before identifying the pathogen, later named severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), six coronavirus species were already known to cause human disease (Gao, 2018). Two of these caused severe outbreaks of respiratory infections in 2002, 2003, and 2012 (Zhong, 2003; Zaki et al., 2012, as cited in Zhu et al., 2020). The pathogen identified in Wuhan at the end of 2019 was classified as a new species of coronavirus previously unknown: SARS-Cov-2, corroborating the possibility of a periodic emergence of new coronaviruses, considering its high prevalence, wide distribution, and frequent genetic recombination (Zhu et al., 2020).

Coronavirus is part of a group of viruses that cause respiratory infections, and COVID-19's primary symptoms include cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat, and difficulty breathing. Its effects range from a cold to severe pneumonia (Ministry of Health, 2020c). Recent studies show that the effects go beyond respiratory infection, possibly affecting the neurological system, mental health, cardiovascular system, smell and taste, vascular system, skin, and the respiratory and gastrointestinal tracts (Aguar et al., 2022). In some cases, it leads to severe conditions that may be fatal (Xu, Li, Tian, Li, & Kong, 2020).

The transmission of COVID-19 occurs mainly through direct contact with saliva expelled by those infected, but it can also happen through contact with contaminated objects or surfaces. The coronavirus outbreak led to the sixth Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) declared by the United Nations (UN), with the greatest significant impact due to its extraordinary nature and the potential to spread between world regions (Ventura, Aith & Rached, 2021).

The first case of coronavirus contamination, a 60-year-old man who had recently traveled to Italy, was confirmed in Brazil on February 26. At that time, the Ministry of Health had not yet considered the coronavirus a critical threat, claiming that transmission and contagion would not be significant, as the country was not going through winter at that time, as was the case in most countries facing high rates of contamination (Ministry of Health, 2020a). By then, 8,230 cases had already been confirmed worldwide (WHO, 2020d).

The WHO declared a coronavirus pandemic fourteen days after the first case was confirmed. Transmission was relatively low in the first few days but grew exponentially in the following months. After an intense battle against the virus and its variants, at the end of 2022, Brazil had 3,633,128 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 693,853 deaths, and 34,938,186 recovered

cases. All Brazilian states reported contamination cases (Ministério da Saúde, 2020d). On a global scale, the COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the most significant challenges of this century.

In March, less than a month after the decree, the criteria that should be applied by local health authorities to prevent the spread of the virus across the country were regulated. Decree No. 356, from March 11, 2020, published in the *Diário Oficial da União* [Official Gazette of the Federal Government], determined that individuals with suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 should undergo laboratory and clinical investigation. According to medical recommendations, these individuals should isolate themselves at home or hospital for 14 days, which could be extended if needed. Quarantine measures were also determined and should be applied by the state, municipal, and Federal District health departments, state health ministers, or higher instances at each management level. Such a measure was to be adopted for 40 days and was later extended (Ministério da Saúde, 2020b).

On March 21, the President of the Republic determined which essential services should not be suspended during community containment measures. Such critical services include health care, public safety, water supply, sewage and garbage collection, electricity and gas supply, public lighting, postal services, and environmental inspection. The following day, employment contracts were suspended for four months (COVID-19 Legislation, 2020).

Unlike the concept of social isolation, which refers to the separation of infected individuals from others, community-wide quarantine concerns the protection of healthy individuals, regardless of having had contact with the virus, in addition to restrictions on the functioning of any activity that involves crowding of people; such measures are imposed by authorities (Brooks et al., 2020). Therefore, after implementing the “quarantine law,” the states determined the closure of schools, churches, shops, public squares, and everything that involved potential transmission. The population was instructed to keep social distancing and stay home (Vasconcelos, Feitosa, Medrado, & de Brito, 2020).

In Santa Catarina, community containment measures began on March 17, when the state governor decreed those classes in all teaching schools, masses, and religious services, and crowded events and activities were suspended for 30 days, starting on the 19th. Public transportation, non-essential activities, businesses (such as shopping malls, gyms, restaurants, and shops in general), and the entry of new guests in hotels were also suspended. In the 19th, people were forbidden from staying in public, collective spaces. Such decrees were extended several times as contamination progressed (COVID-19 – State Decrees, 2020).

The community-containment measures applied due to the pandemic significantly impacted life in society. The stoppages affected the economy, and despite government measures aimed at maintaining jobs, such as the temporary suspension of employment contracts, 5 million jobs were lost in the first months of 2020. The most affected were informal workers, making up 3.7 million jobs lost, representing three-quarters of the population affected by unemployment (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [IBGE], 2020).

Those who had not lost their jobs needed to adapt to a new working format – remote work, which was a considerable challenge, as it demanded individuals to learn how to work mediated by technology and organize teams differently. Additionally, there was a need to establish boundaries between one's public and private life (Brant & Mourão, 2020).

Instability permeated everyone's lives, and the risk of unemployment, the need for subsistence, and the overload of domestic chores, parental care, working outside the home, or working from home became significant stressors, coupled with the little or no opportunities people had to exercise their individuality (Melo et al., 2020). This new way of working is no longer regulated by the hours worked. Instead, one must meet goals, while the managers' control over workers is no longer limited by public life, as it invades the workers' private lives; one needs to remain available and responsive to avoid any impression of idleness, even though housework and family relationships directly compete for the workers' time (Branto & Mourão, 2020).

Not only adults were affected by community-wide containment measures. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (2020), approximately 1.5 billion children and adolescents stopped attending school due to such measures. Universities and kindergartens had their activities suspended, and distance education was the alternative teaching mode.

Homeschooling has been a common practice for a long time in more than 60 countries; hence, parents in these places have an advantage. However, homeschooling has not been allowed in Brazil since the court decision with general repercussions from September 2018 (Extraordinary Appeal No. 778141, 2018); hence, the Brazilian education system and families were unprepared for having a homeschooling-like experience. Only in May 2022 did the proposal to regulate the practice reach the Brazilian Senate to be evaluated after approval by the Chamber of Bill 1338/2022, which governs the practice of homeschooling in primary education, which is still in progress (Bill No. 1338, 2022).

Homeschooling occurs in the private sphere, and, as a rule, children are educated by their caregivers (Brito, Síveres, Mercado & Neves Júnior, 2020). However, there are some differences between homeschooling and the context experienced during the pandemic. Homeschooling emerged as an initiative of parents, who opted for this model based on their dissatisfaction with school education. Hence, the family becomes fully responsible for the academic education of its child and has discretionary freedom to follow a formal curriculum (Barbosa & Evangelista, 2017), which is not necessarily directed equivalent to that of schools. Unlike homeschooling, how education was implemented during the pandemic in Brazil due to community-wide containment measures is supported by Decree No. 9057, from May 25, 2017. Hence, distance education (Decree No. 9057, of May 25, 2017) is the term used in this paper to refer to the educational practice adopted during the pandemic. Thus, homeschooling is the background here as it is the closest to the educational model adopted in this context.

Thus, distance education is not governed by family criteria, nor does it depend on their interest in applying this education format, but the Ministry of Education governs it. Virtual learning environments and online classes are the tools adopted in distance learning, and caregivers and teachers need to work together to educate children (Brito et al., 2020).

For the early elementary school years, practical and structured scripts should be followed under the supervision of parents and teachers' guidance. Students attending middle school's final years and high school were more autonomous, but virtual learning should still be implemented under the parents' supervision and guidance (Ministério da Educação, 2020).

In this context, most of the population stayed home full-time (Marques et al., 2020). In a review of the evidence concerning the psychological impact of the community-wide quarantine, considering previous viral outbreaks, feeling isolated from the rest of the world, boredom, and frustration were associated with staying at home, loss of routine, and decreased social and physical contact with others, which led the participants to experience anxiety. A higher prevalence of negative emotional responses was also found, such as fear, sadness, irritability, insomnia, anxiety, anger, and depressed mood, among others (Brooks et al., 2020). Vasconcelos et al. (2020) also point out stress, anxiety, fear, and anger as effects of social isolation. The community-wide quarantine imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in specific psychological effects, which may also be considered in the long term (Rubin & Wessely, 2020).

While much is being discussed about the virus and how to fight it, the consequences of the community having to stay at home on family relationships, especially between parents and children, have received little attention from researchers and crisis committees dedicated to fighting the coronavirus (Marques et al., 2020). The context experienced by families during the pandemic significantly affected family dynamics, with parents and caregivers from different parts of the world facing the challenge of reconciling work from home (when it was an option), housework, work overload, stress, and childcare. In turn, children and adolescents may experience irritation due to a lack of mobility, contact with other family members and friends, and interrupted school routine, which may lead to more aggressive and disobedient behavior (Marques et al., 2020).

Thus, interactions between family members are affected by the context experienced by its members and can be affected by periods of crisis or reorganization, considering that there is a relationship between the behavior of caregivers of children and adolescents and environmental variables (Leme & Bolsoni-Silva, 2010 as cited in Rocha & Gurgel, 2018). A family can be considered a group of people who interact and act together, forming a social group that aims to develop care and mutual protection skills among its members. However, it is important to note that this is not the only definition among psychology and sociology scholars, considering existing cultural diversities (Banaco, 2008). Thus, in terms of behavior, a family, which is an essential learning context, is a system in which the attitudes of its members affect each other.

In this learning context, parents are the main socializers for most children during the first years of life, modeling attitudes that are consistent with social norms (Shofield & Abraham,

2017). As observers of what happens around them, people have as a model what is observed, and children, in particular, have their parents or caregivers as their primary role models (Bandura & Watts, 1996). Children learn by imitating the adult behaviors they observe, supported by social contact (Bandura, 1986).

The family context involves several contingencies: a relationship between at least two individuals, relationships between other individuals and the first two, relationships established by different social groups with this group, etc. The individuals integrating this group are part of the family context and influence the behavior of other family members (Banaco, 2008). Governed by their contingencies, each family group has its specific functioning based on the behavior of each member, and despite being structurally distinct, families generally and ideally provide emotional support to their members, favoring healthy development (Teodoro & Baptista, 2020).

As a system, a family is based on regulatory structures that provide stability; hence, it needs to adapt to new contingencies (Salvador et al., 2016). It plays a vital role in mediating the relationship between individuals and society, especially regarding feelings of instability in relationships. It consolidates its members' potential ability to adapt to the environment (Teodoro & Baptista, 2020). However, a family may be either a support or a stressor. As a stressor, a family hinders one's coping with crises and fails to fulfill its functions (Marshall & Henderson, 2014).

The community-wide containment measures intensified family life, considering that, in many cases, the support network that used to help parents take care of their children (e.g., daycare centers, schools, health services, grandparents, and uncles) became inaccessible (Melo et al., 2020). For this reason, activities related to school, work, domestic chores, and leisure activities were performed at home, and the entire family shared the same space, decreasing the time people spent leisurely, resting, promoting relationships, and facilitating physical and mental recovery (Brant & Mourão, 2020).

Intensified contact within the home may lead to increased tension and more conflicts, favored by stressors characteristic of the pandemic context. The educational demands of children require adults to dedicate their time to support them; however, the parental stress resulting from an overload of responsibilities and the psychological impacts caused by the quarantine may lead to anxiety, irritability, and impatience, hindering the parents' ability to meet their children's needs. Children may also become stressed due to restricted mobility, the impossibility of interacting with their peers and other important people from their social milieu, and expressing aggressive behavior as a response to external demands. They may also present other behavioral changes, such as problems concentrating, irritability, fear, restlessness, boredom, feelings of loneliness, and changes in sleeping and eating patterns due to the pandemic (Melo et al., 2020).

Thus, considering the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study aims to answer the following question: What is the perception of parents of students attending private schools in the city of Tubarão, SC, Brazil, regarding the influence of the community-wide quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic on their interaction with their children? Hence, to achieve this objective, we sought to identify the following aspects related to the quarantine: the changes

imposed on the family routine, the feelings the parents experienced in the interaction with their children, and the difficulties and positive aspects observed in this interaction during this period.

Method

This study is field research with a qualitative and exploratory approach. Field research is intended to “gain information and/or knowledge about a given problem for which an answer is sought, [...] or discover new phenomena or the relationship between them” (free translation) (Lakatos & Marconi, 2005, p. 83), being characteristic of this method the collection of data from people (Fonseca, 2002).

It is considered exploratory research because the objective of this method is to obtain greater familiarity with the problem and make it more explicit. This method is adopted when there is still little scientific data on the subject (Gil, 2002).

The approach adopted here is qualitative because it “is not concerned with numerical representation, but rather with deepening the understanding of a social group [...]” (Gerhardt & Silveira, 2009, p. 31), being interested “in the history of events and their interdependencies” (free translation) (Rauen, 2018, p. 190).

2.1 Participants

This study’s sample comprised ten families, each consisting of 2 adults – father and mother, and child(ren). Although both adults were invited to participate, only the mothers were interviewed due to their availability. The participants were selected according to the inclusion criterion: men and women with children between 6 and 10 enrolled in a private school in Tubarão, SC, Brazil. There were no exclusion criteria. Convenience sampling was adopted, and the sample characterization is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample’s characterization

Participant	Sex	Profession	Partner’s profession	No. of children	Children’s age
E1	Fem.	Lawyer	(Single)	2	8 and 10
E2	Fem.	Educational assistant	Social worker	2	8 and 12
E3	Fem.	Self-employed Maternity coaching	Industrial mechanic	2	8 and 3
E4	Fem.	Not employed	Grocery store manager	2	7 and 11
E5	Fem.	Self-employed – Beauty field	(Single)	1	7
E6	Fem.	Not employed	Dentist	1	6
E7	Fem.	Hairdresser/Manicure	(Single)	1	8
E8	Fem.	Teaching Assistant	Factory worker	2	7 and 11
E9	Fem.	Not employed	Broadcaster	2	4 and 7
E10	Fem.	Condo Property Manager	Truck driver	1	6

Note. Source: Developed by the author, 2023.

2.2 Instruments and procedures

The participants were contacted by telephone and invited to participate in the study. After providing their consent, the participants received clarification regarding the study's objectives, ethical aspects such as confidentiality of their information, autonomy, risks, and benefits, and procedures that would be implemented during and after the interview. After which, they signed free and informed consent forms.

The interviews were based on a semi-structured script that included open-ended questions addressing the research objectives, such as: "How have you experienced the stay-at-home orders?"; "What was your family routine like before these measures?"; "Do you think that staying home interfered with how you interact with your children?"; "In your perception, what difficulties have you encountered in the interaction with your children during the community-wide quarantine?" etc. The participants were encouraged to provide additional information if they wanted. All interviews were face-to-face and lasted 40 minutes on average. We complied with the health protocols in force, maintained the minimum social distance required, wore facemasks, and conducted the interview in a well-ventilated environment. The interviews were audio recorded, and confidentiality was ensured by holding the discussions in a private room.

Data were collected after the study was submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the *Universidade do Sul de Santa Catarina – UNISUL*, according to guidelines established by resolutions 466/12 and 510/16, Brazilian National Health Council (Opinion No. 4,174,040).

2.3 Data Treatment and Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed based on the Content Analysis technique, which is "a set of communication analysis techniques, which uses systematic and objective procedures for describing message content" (free translation) (Bardin, 1997 as cited in Campos, 2004, p. 612). The interviews were processed according to units of analysis and code categories.

Results

The interviews were analyzed according to the participants' perceptions of how the community-wide quarantine intended to fight COVID-19 influenced their interactions with their children, as follows.

3.1 Changes in the family routine

The first aspect concerns changes in the family routine during the community-wide quarantine. The emerging categories included *distance education, less social interaction, overload of activities, and impacts on professional life*.

Distance education stands out as a category because it was mentioned in all interviews. It was an expected finding, considering that, according to previously mentioned government decrees, all students should receive education at home. The schools the children attended

adopted a mixed model, i.e., synchronous videoconferences and asynchronous online classes. Such a model requires parents or legal guardians to become involved, demanding they spend a large portion of their families' routine in their children's learning process, as the following statements show: "I spend four hours a day being a teacher" (Interviewee 1); "We needed to create an environment for them to attend classes" (Interviewee 4); "I had to support her during school assignments and watch the online classes with her" (Interviewee 7).

Less social interaction was manifested in the interviews as aspects such as lack of contact of the children and their peers, of the family with the religious community (due to restricted religious services), and with members of the extended family. This aspect inherent to a quarantine process was also observed in previous viral outbreaks such as SARS, Ebola, H1N1 influenza, and Middle East respiratory syndrome. Such a context may cause feelings of isolation from the rest of the world, and frustration may be aggravated by the impossibility of engaging in the usual day-to-day activities (Brooks et al., 2020).

Note that the elements presented in the interviews concerning less social interaction represent significant emotional support and generally refer to contexts that generate many positive stimuli. Hence, it is essential to consider the loss the following participants express: "They miss their friends, they miss playing with other children" (Interviewee 1); "We don't go to church anymore" (Interviewee 7); "Mainly, they are not seeing mother and father (grandparents) because they are in the risk group" (Interviewee 10).

Nine out of ten interviews mentioned the overload of activities as a significant change in their routines, especially single mothers who had to assume most of the parenting responsibilities, considering absent fathers. A study conducted at the beginning of the outbreak in China suggested that there could be a more significant psychological impact on women whose stress levels were intensified (Wang et al., 2020). Even among the families where the fathers were present, the overload of activities was more significant among women, who were responsible for supporting distance learning, housework, preparing meals, and, in some cases, had a paid job and worked from home. Therefore, it is interesting to consider the possibility of a relationship between overload and increased stress levels: "This overload is usually only on women, 99% on women" (Interviewee 1); "Since I'm single, I became responsible for house chores, working from home, the school is on me... It's everything on me, right? I have no one to share the responsibility with" (Interviewee 7).

This category concerns distance education due to the demands involved, as the participants' reports show: "We are used to doing a certain amount of daily tasks, one activity or two, not the number of tasks that are proposed now, you know?" (Interviewee 1); "There were many days when, if you arrived at my place exactly at that time, everything would be there, sometimes even my lunch would be on the table because I had to be paying attention to them (children during online classes)" (Interviewee 4).

The impacts on professional life were mentioned in eight of the ten interviews. Such effects included unemployment or having to work from home, decreased work demand, difficulty

in reconciling work with childcare, etc.: “I spent all my time working from home” (Interviewee 1); “I can’t work in the morning because I have to share the computer with my son; he has to attend his classes, you know?” (Interviewee 3); “I spent some time away from work, and when I came back nobody wanted to have their hair or nails done, everyone disappeared” (Interviewee 7); “They fired me” (Interviewee 9); “I used to work at an events company, and that company ended up closing” (Interviewee 10).

Considering this study sample, women more frequently experienced the impacts on professional life. The table presenting the sample characterization shows that only the mothers participated in the interviews because, in all cases, the fathers worked outside the home while the mothers were out of work or working from home. The impact on the fathers’ professional life was minor, while women faced considerable routine changes.

In addition to the categories mentioned above, which stand out for their frequency in the responses, five other categories emerged: *increased use of electronic devices, care to prevent being infected with the virus, quarantine, increased time spent with family, and decreased time for the parents’ personal development.*

3.2 The feelings the parents experienced in their interactions with children

Regarding the feelings experienced by the parents when interacting with their children during the quarantine, the following categories stand out: *difficulty in recognizing feelings, tiredness, guilt, and stress.*

When asked about their feelings, the participants found it challenging to identify them, as the following statements show: “I don’t really know what to say” (Interviewee 2); “I cannot identify” (Interviewee 5); “I... Like, I don’t know if I’m able to explain... It’s...” (Interviewee 8). The answers were always more related to how the children were coping with the quarantine and little about what the interviewees were experiencing, which is related to changes in routine since the mothers reported having less time for self-care and personal development; hence, they could not identify their needs. Additionally, it was clear that the participants had a limited understanding of the importance of identifying the contingencies involved in family relationships. As noted by Banaco (2008), these relationships involve different contingencies that shape the functioning of this group. Thus, the parents’ inability to recognize their behaviors, how they were affected by the behavior of other family members, and the social context and how these affected them sometimes hindered their understanding of their families’ dynamic.

The fatigue category represents physical fatigue resulting from an overload of tasks and mental fatigue resulting from the demands imposed by the quarantine, with emotional exhaustion being a factor foreseen by previous studies (Brooks et al., 2020). The following statements illustrate this notion: “There are times when it gets really tiring” (Interviewee 1); “It’s very tiring having to keep an eye on the kids all the time and order them for things to get done” (Interviewee 4); “Tiredness, you know? Tiredness is multiplied... Tripled!” (Interviewee 7).

Although several studies report guilt results from a community-wide quarantine context (Brooks et al., 2020; Vasconcelos et al., 2020), it is generally related to exposure to potential contamination or transmission. In this case, it appears directly related to the interaction with children: “I might be to blame, you know?” (Interviewee 7, regarding the changes in her daughter’s behavior); “I don’t know if they were agitated because I was agitated” (Interviewee 8); “I always demand a lot from myself, and many times I felt I wasn’t a good mother” (Interviewee 10). According to the interviews, the mothers feel guilty and somehow responsible for their children’s behaviors, which changed due to the changing contingencies, for not being able to play with their children or for spending little time with them.

Stress stands out, as it is frequently mentioned in the interviews, and appears to be related to the overload of activities, the demands imposed by distance education, and the difficulties encountered in the interaction with children, an aspect also predicted by other previous studies (Brooks et al., 2020; Vasconcelos et al., 2020). The following statements illustrate this aspect: “Stress ends up being a little higher” (Interviewee 3); “Each time the teacher comes up with something, I get even more stressed” (Interviewee 5); “It makes me feel like quitting and be left alone” (Interviewee 9).

In addition, seven other categories emerged: *incompetence*, *overload*, *pressure*, *frustration*, *impatience*, *worry*, and *ambivalence*. The latter is directly related to the difficulty in recognizing the feelings category. Several participants expressed ambivalent statements regarding their interaction with their children during the quarantine, showing both satisfaction with getting closer to them and the adverse effects of the quarantine. Interviewee 2’s statements illustrate this aspect: “At times it has been pleasant”; “It ends up generating some kind of stress, you know?”; “I feel angry”; “I feel satisfied”; “I experience stress”; “I feel much happier with them during this time at home”; “That causes stress”; “There was some stress, but overall, it was more positive than negative.”

The participants did not mention positive feelings; all categories expressed negative feelings. As previously mentioned, positive feelings were mentioned only in contexts of ambivalent statements.

3.3 Difficulties experienced in the interaction with children

According to the participants’ perceptions, some categories stand out concerning difficulties when interacting with their children during the quarantine, such as *emotional reactions*, *adaptation to changing roles*, *difficulties supporting their children during distance education*, and *more dependent children*.

The participants mentioned emotional responses in the interviews, denoting an inability to deal with their children’s behaviors, something that they had not had much contact with before, which led to conflicts: “I am not having much patience” (Interviewee 7); “Sometimes I even end up losing my patience with her” (Interviewee 5); “I’m having conflicts with my husband because of the online classes and the boys’ education” (Interviewee 9).

In this context, task overload can hamper the parents' ability to deal with conflicts. Thus, increased tension in interpersonal relationships may lead to more frequent disruptive emotional responses and behaviors (Marques et al., 2020).

Not only did the mothers experience emotional responses to the new contingencies, but the children also became more irritable, aggressive, and disobedient: "They got in a power struggle, challenging my patience" (Interviewee 1); "Your child shows herself, shows her personality, and sometimes we are not prepared for it" (Interviewee 2); "Stamps her foot, gets mad" (Interviewee 7). For Marques et al. (2020), this results from less social contact and restricted mobility. However, we must consider that family members influence each other in their interaction and that changes in the behavioral repertoire of one of the members mean environmental changes influencing the other members' repertoire (Banaco, 2008). Thus, the relationships themselves must be added to other environmental factors so that we can understand their functioning.

With children having classes online, the parents needed to assume a new role when interacting with their children: that of a teacher. The interviewees reported that they and their children had difficulties adapting to this new role: "They would not accept my teaching role, 'you are not a teacher who will teach us, you're just mom'" (Interviewee 1); "I now have daily tasks that were not part of our routine. I'm not used to these tasks, and I think that was my greatest difficulty" (Interviewee 2); "We are not teachers, are we? Mothers are not teachers, so it is more difficult" (Interviewee 7).

UNESCO (2020) points out that not all families have the skills, time, and resources to operate remote teaching, so there are enormous barriers, and one of them directly involves changing environments and roles. This aspect becomes apparent in Interviewee 2's report:

We think our child is an extension of us, and we tell them what to do. We coordinate everything, we own it all [...], but they go to school, and there they go without us. The school is not under our domain; they behave however they want. [...] And then when it comes to home, we expect them to do what we say. We imagine one scenario, we imagine that our child will sit down and do the tasks, but when you check on him, he is doing something else.

This category is directly related to the category concerning difficulty implementing distance education. It was the main difficulty identified. All the participants mentioned this aspect throughout the interviews. Here, the difficulties are expressed in different aspects: difficulties in performing different tasks within the time required to follow up on classes and tasks, and difficulties related to academic knowledge: "I can't explain it well, like the way the teacher does" (Interviewee 3); "I didn't know if I had to explain the way I had learned or the way the teacher was teaching" (Interviewee 4); "I didn't know how to write 'amended'. I had to learn to help my daughter" (Interviewee 7). Thus, objective and relational difficulties reflect parents' unpreparedness to deal with the demands imposed by distance education.

Another difficulty that emerged as a category was the greater dependence on the part of the children: “Since they don’t receive attention from other people, they end up demanding more attention from me. They compensate, right?” (Interviewee 1); “The little one demands my attention all the time, and the two—keep calling me at the same time” (Interviewee 3); “She’s really clingy right now. This is something that has changed [...], this need for us to be physically together, you know?” (Interviewee 6). As previously mentioned, the pandemic context may lead to behavioral changes in children due to loneliness, insecurity, and less social contact (Melo et al., 2020), making the relationship with parents the source of safety and socialization.

Thus, the interviewees reported that they sought information and guidance on how to raise children, manage school tasks, and learn appropriate ways to deal with the challenges imposed by the quarantine. At the beginning of the viral outbreak, many informational materials were produced to guide parents (Marques et al., 2020) regarding these aspects. However, the mothers only accessed and searched for such information when they realized their unpreparedness. Much information and recommendations were disseminated at the beginning of the pandemic regarding how to prevent contamination by the virus (Vasconcelos et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2020); however, the same was not true regarding disseminating guidelines to parents. For example, there was no effective dissemination of information, and no informational material was developed before the quarantine was imposed regarding its consequences.

Four other categories were presented: the *need to seek guidance*, *little time for interaction*, *agitated children*, and *discouraged children*. Note that when asked about how their relationships with their children used to be, the participants were first concerned with showing that they were strict in their parenting and reported how they disciplined their children. Only then do they address the difficulties encountered in the interacting with the children. This finding corroborates Banaco’s (2008) perception that, sometimes, parents assume aversive control to avoid negative evaluations of their performance as parents. Perhaps, the mothers felt judged in the interview’s context, given the content of the questions, which led to the behavior mentioned above.

3.4 Positive aspects experienced in the interaction with children

Regarding the positive aspects experienced in the interaction with children, four categories were identified: *closeness*, *more mature children*, *more affectionate interactions*, and *no positive aspects were identified*.

Closeness was reported because of the increased time spent with the family and the need to interact: “We ended up somehow getting closer, you know?” (Interviewee 1); “This whole situation intensified our interaction. (Interviewee 4); “We became a little more united” (Interviewee 5).

Likewise, the longer time spent together also increased the display of affection: “We hug more, have more time to say ‘I love you’... The display of affection has certainly increased. There is more time for such interaction, and it becomes more intensified” (Interviewee 2);

“Lovingness... Being affectionate all the time” (Interviewee 6); “I always try to kiss him, caress him” (Interviewee 9).

Over time, during the quarantine, the participants also noticed the children becoming more mature in different aspects: “They become more mature and understand that mommy also gets tired, mothers also have their limits” (Interviewee 1); “He developed other aspects, like, really expressing himself, you know?” (Interviewee 6); “I see him more independent” (Interviewee 10).

However, some interviewees’ reports composed a category no positive aspects were identified: “I don’t see one thing that is better... In general, no, okay?” (Interviewee 7); “No positive aspects, only difficulties” (Interviewee 10).

It should be noted that identifying and expressing positive aspects were more frequent in families where the parents live together and enjoy more socioeconomic support. For example, the participants who did not recognize positive aspects (Interviewees 7 and 10) do not have such support. Interviewee 7 is a self-employed single mother who experienced difficulties ensuring her family had sufficient food during this period. Interviewee 10, on the other hand, works full-time outside the home and is married, but her husband is a truck driver and spends time traveling, spending little time at home. Her son stays by himself all day long. One of her reports illustrates her little interaction with him during this period: “The moment we lie in bed at night is the only time I can pay attention to him, so we often don’t let him sleep in his bed. So, he sleeps with us in the middle because it is the only time we have physical contact” (Interviewee 10). On the other hand, interviewees 6 and 9 experienced positive aspects. In both cases, the mothers do not work by choice and stay at home with their children, as the fathers are financially stable.

Discussion

This study’s results show that the participants’ perceptions vary according to socioeconomic conditions and family configurations, i.e., experiences with the quarantine are more negative, the more unfavorable financial conditions, and the less one accesses information and interacts with their extended family. The sample was not intentionally selected with such aspects in mind, as a convenient sample was adopted; nonetheless, the implications of the social and economic contexts are discussed below.

The results show a need to highlight that the contingencies to which an individual or group is subjected must be considered in social contexts affecting these individuals directly, such as the mothers interviewed here, who reported a significant task overload. They were responsible for supporting their children during distance learning and for housework. In most cases, they did it all by themselves, which compromised their performance and led to considerable stress. This result is related to the social role women are expected to play, meeting the needs of their families concerning education and house chores. Although women are taking on new roles, such as in the job market, the tasks previously entrusted to them because they did not work before

have yet to be redistributed among family members who now occupy the same spaces. This imbalance has aggravated the overload reported by this study's participants.

The changes in routine and main challenges reported are mainly related to the need to support their children during distance education, such as feeling unprepared to implement it and assuming the teacher role. Additionally, the participants' difficulty in identifying their feelings is highlighted. Such difficulty is related to the mothers' lack of time for self-care and personal development. However, it also reflects their inability to discriminate the contingencies in which they are inserted and discern how they are affected by the environment and operate on it.

The participants' difficulties led them to seek information and guidance interacting with their children. This finding highlights the importance of providing preventive parental guidance in collective spaces. Generally, it occurs in private contexts to remedy conflicts or difficulties already experienced; however, if provided in advance, parents can develop the skills necessary to discriminate the characteristics of the context in which they are inserted and make the changes needed for better adaptation.

Finally, this study contributes to the academic community and the public as a historical record. Also, it clarifies the influence of the social context on human interaction in family relationships. New studies are suggested to address the perspective of other family members, as only mothers were interviewed in this study, which configures a limitation.

Additionally, it is worth investigating whether the impacts found in this study remain to some extent after face-to-face classes resume and whether the families' behavior changed permanently due to the context addressed here. This study's results reveal a need for more comprehensive and preventive parental guidance to be provided and a need to assess the conditions involved in the quarantine, especially concerning remote education, as the world still fights against the spread of coronavirus variants and is subject to new periods of community containment, given the potential regulation of homeschooling in Brazil. Discussions like the one addressed here are essential to address how to implement it. Social psychology, a fundamental and indispensable science, is supposed to address these phenomena to promote mental health through the collective dimension of human existence, considering the understanding of the psychosocial processes involved in the adoption of control practices and their social and psychological effects.

References

- Aguiar, B. F., Lind, J., Pasquini-Netto, H., Böger, B., Abatti, R. T. B., Ramos, M. P., & Rocha, J. L. L. (2022). Uma revisão integrativa das sequelas da COVID-19. *Revista Brasileira em Promoção da Saúde*, 35, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.5020/18061230.2022.12606>
- Banaco, R. A. (2008). A terapia analítico-comportamental em um grupo especial: A terapia de famílias. *Terapia Analítico-Comportamental em Grupo*, 193–212. ESETec Editores Associados.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action*. Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A., & Watts, R. E. (1996). *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barbosa, L. M. R., & Evangelista, N. S. (2017). Educação domiciliar e direito à educação: a influência norte-americana no Brasil. *Educação em Perspectiva*, 8(3), 328–344. <https://doi.org/10.22294/eduper/ppge/ufv.v8i3.907>
- Brant, R. G. C., & Mourão, H. C. (2020). Desafios do teletrabalho na pandemia Covid-19: Quando o home vira office. *Caderno de Administração*, 28, 71–75. <https://doi.org/10.4025/cadadm.v28i0.53637>
- Brito, R. de O., Síveres, L., Mercado, L. P. L., & Neves Júnior, I. J. das. (2020). O diálogo e a aprendizagem com Tecnologias da Informação e Comunicação no homeschooling. *Práxis Educativa*, 15, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.5212/PraxEduc.v.15.14804.029>
- Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: Rapid review of the evidence. *The lancet*, 395(10227), 912–920. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)
- Campos, C. J. G. (2004). Método de análise de conteúdo: ferramenta para a análise de dados qualitativos no campo da saúde. *Revista brasileira de enfermagem*, 57, 611–614. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0034-71672004000500019>
- COVID-19 – Decretos Estaduais – Dados Abertos SC. (2020). Governo do Estado de Santa Catarina. <http://dados.sc.gov.br/dataset/covid-19-decretos-estaduais>
- Decreto n. 9.057, de 25 de maio de 2017. (2017). Regulamenta o art. 8o da Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996, que estabelece as diretrizes e bases da educação nacional. Presidência da República. http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2017/decreto/d9057.htm
- Freitas, A. R. R., Napimoga, M., & Donalisio, M. R. (2020). Análise da gravidade da pandemia de Covid-19. *Epidemiologia e serviços de saúde*, 29(2). <https://doi.org/10.5123/S1679-49742020000200008>
- Fonseca, J. J. S. (2002). *Apostila de metodologia da pesquisa científica*. Fortaleza: UEC..
- Gao, G. F. (2018). From “A” IV to “Z” IKV: attacks from emerging and re-emerging pathogens. *Cell*, 172(6), 1157–1159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2018.02.025>
- Gerhardt, T. E., & Silveira, D. T. (2009). *Métodos de pesquisa*. Plageder.
- Gil, A. C. (2002). *Como elaborar projetos de pesquisa*. Atlas.
- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (2020). *Painel de Indicadores*. Brasília, DF. <https://www.ibge.gov.br/indicadores#desemprego>
- Lakatos, E. M., & Marconi, M. D. A. (2005). *Fundamentos de metodologia científica*. Atlas.
- Legislação COVID-19. (2020). Presidência da República. http://www.planalto.gov.br/CCIVIL_03/Portaria/quadro_portaria.htm
- Lei n. 13.979, de 6 de fevereiro de 2020. (2020). Dispõe sobre as medidas para enfrentamento da emergência de saúde pública de importância internacional decorrente do coronavírus responsável pelo surto de 2019. Presidência da República. http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2019-2022/2020/lei/L13979.htm
- Marques, E. S., Moraes, C. L. D., Hasselmann, M. H., Deslandes, S. F., & Reichenheim, M. E. (2020). A violência contra mulheres, crianças e adolescentes em tempos de pandemia pela COVID-19: panorama, motivações e formas de enfrentamento. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, 36(4). <http://doi.org/10.1590/0102-311X00074420>

- Marshall, C., & Henderson, J. (2014). The influence of family context on adolescent depression: A literature review. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth/Le Journal Canadien de Famille et de la Jeunesse*, 6(1), 163–187. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy21488>
- Melo, B. D. et al. (Org.). (2020). *Saúde mental e atenção psicossocial na pandemia COVID-19: Violência doméstica e familiar na COVID-19*. Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz. <https://www.arca.fiocruz.br/handle/jicict/41121>
- Ministério da Educação. (2020). *CNE aprova diretrizes para escolas durante a pandemia*. Brasília, DF. <http://portal.mec.gov.br/component/content/article?id=89051>
- Ministério da Saúde. (2020a). *Brasil confirma primeiro caso da doença*. Brasília, DF. <https://www.saude.gov.br/noticias/agencia-saude/46435-brasil-confirma-primeiro-caso-de-novo-coronavirus>
- Ministério da Saúde. (2020b). *Saúde regulamenta condições de isolamento e quarentena*. Brasília, DF. <https://www.saude.gov.br/noticias/agencia-saude/46536-saude-regulamenta-condicoes-de-isolamento-e-quarentena>
- Ministério da Saúde. (2020c). *Sobre a doença*. Brasília, DF. <https://coronavirus.saude.gov.br/sobre-a-doenca#o-que-e-covid>
- Ministério da Saúde. (2020d). *Painel Coronavírus*. Brasília, DF. <https://covid.saude.gov.br/>
- Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura. *Fechar escolas desestabilizou vida de crianças; como podemos ajudá-las a continuar aprendendo*. <https://naacoesunidas.org/artigo-fechar-escolas-desestabilizou-a-vida-de-criancas-em-todo-o-mundo-como-podem-os-ajuda-las-a-continuar-aprendendo/>
- Organização Mundial da Saúde. (2020). *Coronavirus disease (COVID-2019) situation reports*. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>
- Projeto de Lei nº 1338. (2022). Altera as Leis nºs 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996 (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional), e 8.069, de 13 de julho de 1990, (Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente), para dispor sobre a possibilidade de oferta domiciliar da educação básica. Senado Federal. <https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/atividade/materias/-/materia/153194>
- Rauen, F. (2018). *Roteiros de investigação científica*. Clube de Autores.
- Recurso extraordinário com agravo n. 778141. (2018). Supremo Tribunal Federal. <http://redir.stf.jus.br/estfvisualizadordpub/jsp/consultarprocessoeletronico/ConsultarProcessoEletronico.jsf?seqobjetoincidente=4774632>
- Rocha, T. M. A., & Gurgel, P. R. H. (2018). Práticas parentais e análise do comportamento: o estado do conhecimento de teses e dissertações de 2010 a 2015. *Série-Estudos-Periódico do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da UCDB*, 241–262. <https://doi.org/10.20435/serie-estudos.v23i47.1084>
- Rubin, G. J., & Wessely, S. (2020). The psychological effects of quarantining a city. *Bmj*, 368. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m313>
- Salvador, C. C., Monereo, C., Bronfenbrenner, U., Castorina, J. A., Baquero, R. J., Heron, J., & Smole, K. S. (2016). *Psicologia da Educação: Série UniA*. Penso Editora.
- Schofield, T. J., & Abraham, W. T. (2017). Intergenerational continuity in attitudes: A latent variable family fixed-effects approach. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 31(8), 1005–1016. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000375>
- Teodoro, M. L., & Baptista, M. N. (2020). *Psicologia de Família: Teoria, Avaliação e Intervenção*. Artmed Editora.
- Vasconcelos, C. S., Feitosa, I. O., Medrado, P. L. R., & de Brito, A. P. B. (2020). O novo coronavírus e os impactos psicológicos da quarentena. *Desafios-Revista Interdisciplinar da Universidade Federal do Tocantins*, 7(Especial-3), 75–80. <https://doi.org/10.20873/uftsuple2020-8816>
- Ventura, D., Aith, F., & Rached, D. (2021). A emergência do novo coronavírus e a “lei de quarentena” no Brasil / The emergency of the new coronavirus and the “quarantine law” in Brazil. *Revista Direito e Práxis*, 12(1), 102–138. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2179-8966/2020/49180>
- Wang, C., Pan, R., Wan, X., Tan, Y., Xu, L., Ho, C. S., & Ho, R. C. (2020). Immediate psychological responses and associated factors during the initial stage of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic among the general population in China. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(5), 1729. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17051729>

Xu, Z., Li, S., Tian, S., Li, H., & Kong, L. Q. (2020). Full spectrum of COVID-19 severity still being depicted. *The Lancet*, 395(10228), 947–948. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30308-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30308-1)

Zhu, N., Zhang, D., Wang, W., Li, X., Yang, B., Song, J., ... & Tan, W. (2020). A novel coronavirus from patients with pneumonia in China, 2019. *New England journal of medicine*. <http://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa2001017>

EDITORIAL BOARD**Editor-in-chief**

Cristiane Silvestre de Paula

Associated editors

Alessandra Gotuzo Seabra
Ana Alexandra Caldas Osório
Luiz Renato Rodrigues Carreiro
Maria Cristina Triguero Veloz Teixeira

Section editors**“Psychological Assessment”**

Alexandre Luiz de Oliveira Serpa
André Luiz de Carvalho Braule Pinto
Juliana Burges Sbicigo
Natália Becker

“Psychology and Education”

Alessandra Gotuzo Seabra
Carlo Schmidt
Regina Basso Zanon

**“Social Psychology and
Population’s Health”**

Enzo Banti Bissoli
Marina Xavier Carpena

“Clinical Psychology”

Ana Alexandra Caldas Osório
Carolina Andrea Ziebold Jorquera
Julia Garcia Durand

“Human Development”

Maria Cristina Triguero Veloz Teixeira
Rosane Lowenthal

Technical support

Camila Fragoso Ribeiro
Fernanda Antônia Bernardes
Giovana Gatto Nogueira

EDITORIAL PRODUCTION**Publishing coordination**

Surane Chiliani Vellenich

Language editor

Andrew Benson (Bardo Editorial)

Layout designer

Acqua Estúdio Gráfico