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Life Was Pandemic Without Covid-19: Solidarity Activities in Marechal Cândido Rondon-Pr



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ABSTRACT

This research objective was to analyze and demonstrate the importance of solidarity groups to reduce hunger, and unemployment in the pandemic of covid-19 among Haitian immigrants in Marechal Cândido Rondon, Paraná-Brazil, and verify their levels of education in the group called "Haitians in Brazil". To obtain this objective, the construction of the work goes through the methodology of content analysis that served to analyze the two groups of Whatsapp (MCR- Resistance solid) and Whatsapp (Haitians in Brazil), besides a questionnaire that served as a research instrument. To allow a better result from qualitative research such as this, we went through the theory of functionalism that allows a complete and deep analysis of solidarity in society. It was possible to find elements to dialogue with the procedures used, to the point of reaching the conclusion that solidarity groups have a strong impact on society, especially during this fragile moment of covid-19, besides bringing specific results about the degrees of instruction of Haitian immigrants.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years Brazil has become a free-for-all for immigrants as a result of the social and economic problems in their countries of origin, such as Haiti, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Colombia, among others. In 2018 about 774,200 legal immigrants sought a dignified life in Brazil (Cavalcanti *et al.*, 2019). But what life do immigrants seek or dream of having in Brazil? The circumstances of the countries of origin of each person who embarked on this journey, or this adventure, among others, had the purpose of killing hunger, raises new questions: what is life like here in Brazil? Do they kill hunger or does hunger kill them? Considering this precarious circumstance, one realizes that the largest number of immigrants today belongs to Haitians totaling 106.1 thousand in 2019 (Exime *et al.*, 2021; Cavalcanti *et al.*, 2019).

The purpose of those who immigrate is clear: A search for an opportunity to improve their lives, and for this, it is essential to find a way to live well, but the responsibility to control or establish rules in order to maintain a process of adaptation, coexistence in society, training, insertion in the labor market, creation of public policies for this purpose is of the authorities of the country that receives immigrants.

There is no need for a prophecy to tell those who have walked this path what they need, but science has the ability to help understand the situation of each people, to look at the facts, and the cultures of those who embark in search of dreams and not to die from hunger. From this perspective, the labor factor is important to meet these needs. If we buy the number of immigrants in a general context who remain in the country until 2018, (492.7 thousand) and the total number of work cards issued between 2010 and 2018 (305,796 thousand), we see that the inequality is very large (Cavalcanti, *et al.*, 2019).

According to the (IBGE, 2020), the situation in Brazil is not very favorable in the field of employability due to the fact that the unemployment rate figures between 10% and 13.7% in recent years, but what draws more attention is in fact the average salary of immigrants if compared to Brazilians, shows us that the foreigner's work is transformed into cheap labor: while the national average salary is 2,500 reais, that of immigrants is 1,500 reais. A very considerable difference, and one that directly impacts the quality of life of those who choose Brazil as their

second home. Thus, one can see that, due to this salary, the quality of life is below the level necessary to achieve their migratory purposes.

Most of this population (the refugee and all those who share their residence, whether or not they contribute to the household's income) live in households with no more than two bedrooms. In general, although they have their expenses committed to renting and other housing-related expenses (water, electricity, etc.), their income does not meet the household's needs, which explains the reduction of food, various loans, reduced spending (less than R\$ 100.00/month) on education, health, and leisure, resulting in the impossibility of investing in the quality of life and individual progress. The refugee population analyzed is, in general, excluded from the national credit system and in debt (De Mello, 2019: 27).

The immigrants that were in this situation, with debts and a job that did not allow them to live well, were faced here in Brazil with the arrival of Covid-19¹, worsening, even more, their already precarious living situation. Still, in July 2020, the number of Brazilian workers directly affected by the health crisis was 6.2 million, adding to the already unemployed 16.6 million in total. The numbers of companies affected by the pandemic show a very serious crisis from the beginning of the pandemic to the present moment: of the 4.0 million companies surveyed by IBGE, 70% had negative impacts directly involving employees, and this is no different for immigrants (IBGE, 2020).

On the government's part, to help the population, emergency aid² was created. Access to this government aid has been fundamental in diminishing the impacts of covid-19 for a part of the population. More than three months have already passed since the program was created, and it has helped more than 29.4 million people, and so far, this aid has been extended for another two months. All the new debates on the subject are that this aid should be extended for longer since the economy is still recovering (IBGE, 2020).

In general, according to the rules for obtaining this benefit during covid-19, it is the same for the entire population, but refugees are having difficulty acquiring this benefit, some agencies such as

the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have even made a step-by-step in several languages to facilitate, with several points of reference to contact in case of doubt (IMDH, 2020).

Even with this information, we can see it on several news sites, such as *Campo grande notícia, repórter Brasil. org, Globo notícias*, among others, that many immigrants could not access the benefit, which leads to the need for the formation of solidarity groups by Brazilians and immigrants in order to help during this troubled moment of a pandemic.

In face of this conjuncture, perhaps it is not daring to say that we were already in a pandemic world and that only this moment of Covid19 aggravated this situation of penury of the immigrants in the country.

In relation to education, this already comes from several previous crises, marked by changes in ministers, cuts in scholarships in public universities, and the abandonment of language programs for immigrants, which directly impact the possibility for foreigners to progress and find a job with their qualifications that make it impossible for them to insert themselves into society. Even the possibility of continuing their studies, when we know that education should not have any barriers because it is through education that the new is created because a society reinvents itself with educational progress, development of responsibility and freedom; this statement corroborates the thought of Ahlert (2001: 103) who states that it is through education that the human being becomes a being capable of existing in the world and relating to this world and its social and natural surroundings with responsible freedom and autonomy. [...] which does not only mean moving to the freedom to eat but to the freedom to create and build, to admire, and adventure.

This is also due to the methodologies used in schools that have not adapted to the new demands, and new principles for progress. Without hypocrisy, a government that should guarantee the rights and welfare of people, the freedom and possibility of access to education, whether they are white, black, immigrant, or whatever their origin, should provide more qualified access to education to ensure the full development of all people. An education that excludes the neediest and weakest promotes poverty in society. Thus, the slowness of the adaptations required by the pandemic of the educational process, the new forms and methodologies of learning limit, to some

extent, the access and the work of teachers who often need to reinvent themselves to help build the new for humanity that includes everyone, immigrants or not (Ahlert, 2001).

From this perspective, as we will show in the following session, the work will deal with the importance of the creation of solidarity groups of Brazilians and Haitians, as well as their impacts on the immigrant community. Thus, the objective of this work is to analyze the importance of solidarity groups to decrease hunger, and the lack of employment in this time of covid-19 and to verify the levels of education of Haitians in the group called "*Haitianos no Brasil*". The research was guided by the following questions:

Does solidarity have the capacity to decrease hunger in this pandemic context from an immigration perspective?

Are the types of job vacancies occupied by Haitians in the Brazilian labor market due to a lack of educational level or qualifications?

THEORETICAL REVIEWS

This work has as its theoretical reference the functionalist theory, which allows us to analyze society, social classes, and the factors that impact its growth, from institutions to the behavior of individuals in society. At this point, our concern is to discuss the important points of a specific author, while respecting the other authors who contributed to the construction of the functionalism theory, among which one of the main names is the Frenchman Émile Durkheim, whom:

Functionalism strongly influenced social theories until the 1980s, becoming the hegemonic method in sociology during this period. Its major thinkers in social theory were Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton. Far beyond the impact on the very constitution of sociology as an academic discipline, these authors influenced the way social relations were seen and the issues that arose from this view. Without a doubt, functionalism had a great influence on the theories that sought to explain the modernization process of the "less developed" or "developing" countries. Taking into account this strong influence, mainly Parsons', on the Modernization Theories, we can see that the major problems posed by this theory refer to the issues of order, integration, and social relations. [...] (Dos Reis, 2016: 8).

As for this process, the less developed countries have a big problem related to social structures, integration in general, addition to economic situations, and inequalities as a key points to get to think about solidarity. Therefore, this theory needs the support of governments and also of civil institutions to deal with social issues, especially in times of difficulty as in the context of the covid-19 pandemic, which affects the whole world, but in the least developed countries ends up creating the greatest inequality ever seen in history. With that said, this discussion requires everyone's thoughts to go through the timeline below,

MECHANICAL SOLIDARITY ← FUNCTIONALIST → ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

We should start thinking about the current functionalism, which brings to light the sense of the need for unity among peoples, thinking of society through interaction and integration. In fact, Max already brought the idea of the union of workers that connects with the theory under discussion here. Thus, the purpose is to demonstrate that individualism does not have the characteristics of a functional society. In the context of functionalism, norms and rules reign in a perceptive of obligation for the collective and, in face of the reality that we are living, it ends up becoming a plausible way to face problems in education, in the situation of abandonment, isolation, and hunger, which, for this reason, demand groups of immigrants that introduce and create a bond of collectivity, union, and involvement to develop solidarity. Without aiming to analyze or explain the social fact, we must take into account that sociology has a lot to do with social facts and the daily events of each individual, thus achieving the purpose of the smooth functioning of society (De Queiroz, 1995).

For Émile Durkheim, solidarity has its basis in consensus, which allows people to make a commitment to society, allowing the idea of collectivity to circulate among people. In this respect, we should try to understand that the emergence of a problem or the appearance of difficulty allows society to enter the context of continuous evolution. As for the proper functioning of the system that exists there or is available for people to build a social system of balance is necessary to a clear way to develop solidarity (Linares, 2012).

Émile Durkheim's theory helps us with the division and explanation of the two forms of solidarity: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. However, it was understood that these two concepts treated in *On the Division of Social Work*, in 1893, were not properly valued in

theoretical analyses after its publication. Only now is their value and importance being recovered, as De Vares demonstrates, [...] in the first place, we will discuss the concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity, highlighting their importance for the main ideas developed by the author in his doctoral thesis; in the second place, we will recall the main criticisms directed against the supposed "abandonment" of these interpretative keys in his final works; and, in the third and last moment, we aim to demonstrate, from the analysis of some of his works, that Durkheim never abandoned his original premises, and that the fact of not having employed them again in no way invalidates the importance of these concepts for the development of his sociological theory (De Vares, 2013: 150).

In developing this critical analysis, it becomes clear that there was no abandonment of concepts by Durkheim, on the contrary, the concepts continue to be widely used by researchers, and we can constantly come across the concept of mechanical solidarity in society, especially in underdeveloped countries. In this sense, we should think about the division of labor that took place in the pre-capitalist context, which involved the perception of what each trade consisted of in order to make a society function by means of cooperatives, even if there was not a high degree of complexity of work within mechanical solidarity. From this, society relied on traditions, especially in the productive context. An important fact is the simplicity of those societies before capitalism, where the determined people of society knew where all the products of their needs came from, the manufacturing processes and construction in general, which did not depend much on other sectors (Durkheim, 1999).

According to Durkheim's theory, today we live in an organic society. In organic solidarity in which society functions as the human body, just as in the human body, in the absence of an organism in the body, this body would stop functioning or would have serious problems, causing an interdependent process. In today's society, with its high degree of division of labor, there is a lack of knowledge of the work process, and this leads society to be much more individualistic. Thus, any impact in one sector can interfere in another, for example, the current Covid-19 crisis in the world, which directly implies the functioning of life in society, from the perspective of Émile Durkheim's organic solidarity opens the debate about the phenomenon of individualism and the modernity of labor capitalism, becoming a very present discussion in the 21st century (Durkheim, 1999).

In the immigration process, the phrase "They kill hunger or hunger kills them", also establishes a connection with Durkheim's work on suicide. From this perspective, the issue of hunger is not only a responsibility of those who immigrate to Brazil but also of the society that receives them. This theory, with its essential focus on solidarity, guides the logic of the analysis of the issue of individualism as an obstruction to the progress of immigrants because in an organic society everyone is interconnected and interdependent (Durkheim, 2000).

It is in this sense that the work process plays a fundamental role in the lives of immigrants, and if it is not achieved, that is, unemployment for the immigrant, it causes frustration, heartbreak, and misery, a reality that is still persistent for Haitians even though they are already in Brazil. In this case, it is worth remembering that the dream of each one goes through the adaptation in society, through cooperation that involves the work factor, through education, among other factors, which are marks of the immigrants in the country today.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative in nature, as it allows bringing a thorough and reflective approach to theories and results to reach a conclusion through interpretation. In this way, the interviewer directs his focus on the initial interests and not on the conclusive results of the research, which only becomes possible by following the letter the procedures of qualitative research (De Oliveira, 2008).

The methodology of this work is the content analysis that allows interpreting documents in the form of messages, letters, and large volumes of reports, the possibility of analyzing this, is profound by the fact of having the journalistic characteristics. This methodology is a set of techniques widely used in the media, establishing a commitment to the truth of the facts that allows a very broad and complex investigative process for researchers who want to bring innovations in research (Bardin, 1977).

This work had as an instrument of data collection a questionnaire composed of ten questions about education, emergency aid, the economic situation of Haitians during the pandemic, and an analysis of a group formed on *WhatsApp*, whose name is "*Haitians in Brazil*" composed of 103 people, 15 female, and 79 males, in order to verify the issue of solidarity. For its analysis, they were divided into two groups, one named Group B, and the second Group A, formed by the

Brazilian majority who live in the western region of the State of Paraná, Brazil, composed of 60 people, being 18 female and 42 males, whose name of the group in *Whatsapp* is "*MCR-Resistance solid*"³, with a focus essentially on helping the neediest during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since June 05, 2020, it was requested by the researchers, and accepted by the administrators of the Groups, to be inserted in them. This action aimed to have access to the dialogues to make this content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The content analysis of the *Whatsapp* groups was developed based on the following question: does solidarity have the capacity to decrease hunger in this pandemic context from an immigration perspective?

To produce answers to the above questioning, a storm map of words related to the work of Group A, a group in *Whatsapp* named "*MCR-Resistance solid*" was created. This map evidenced that there are wide ranges of possibilities of impact on society coming together to address a problem.

The figure that we named group A, brings a type of map that constitutes the importance of collectivity to reduce hunger during the pandemic. In fact, the word that was most used in this first group is baskets (74), which demonstrates in the presentation of the figure, that the same word is repeated more times in the group due to the fact that there were 3 deliveries of food baskets during two months. These deliveries were made to low-income people, indigenous people, and immigrants, especially Haitians, for a total of 26 baskets with a market value of 115.00 reais. The resources that were acquired to do this collective work are the result of collections and donations from teachers, the population, and students, among others. As Émile Durkheim said, it is a test that guarantees the organic solidarity of society, by the interdependence of the parts.

The resources that made it possible to purchase the products were gathered through a collective work that collected donations from teachers, university students, and some people from the general population, among others. This action confirms Emile Durkheim's theory that the organic

solidarity of society, through the interdependence of the parts, leads a society to organize itself to face the problems that arise. Such an experience affirms the popular saying that *"An action is worth a thousand words"*.

In the same perspective of organic solidarity, in July 2020, 26 food baskets and 700 kg of beans and rice were delivered to families from three Tekohas, indigenous communities in the municipalities of Diamante do Oeste and Santa Helena. In Santa Helena, there are 18 families that received 8 basic baskets. There, only two families had not received the Emergency Aid. In Diamante do Oeste there are about 200 families, to whom 700kg of rice and beans and 18 baskets of basic food items were delivered. The donations were delivered to the *caciques*, who took charge of distributing them to the most vulnerable families, and of sharing the other baskets in slices, according to the assessment of the need for each family.

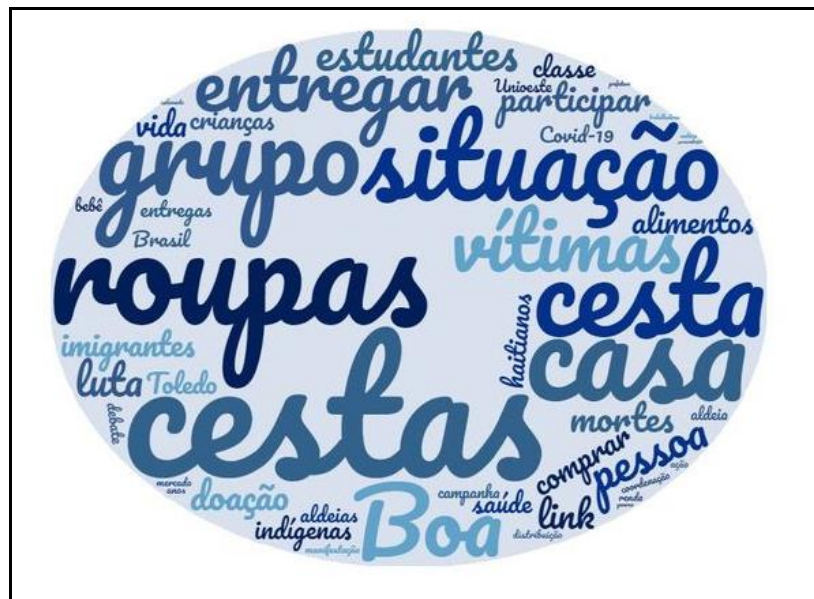


Figure 1 - Map of the most discussed words in Group A

Source: The authors, 2020.

Figure 2 shows an image of baskets made with the donation campaigns and distributed among the needy.

This action evidences a clear way of demonstrating the importance and strength of a group in developing solidarity in difficult times of hunger, as in the Covid-19 Pandemic. Group A, after

the actions described above, continued active and collecting donations to practice emergency solidarity. At the time we finished the analysis of this group, it had R\$ 4,547.64 in cash, which allowed the acquisition of 36 more baskets as shown above in the picture.



Figure 2 - Baskets ready for delivery

Source: Whatsapp Group "*MCR- Resistance solid*", 2020

Thus, Group A has supported and participated in the distribution of 1,424 food baskets in the western region of Paraná since its creation on 03/13/2020, having a huge impact on the neediest families. These actions have reached 3,000 vulnerable families with Covid-19 fighting materials for protection and food baskets worth 163,760 thousand reais, not counting other products. Therefore, it is clear that this solidarity group helps to reduce hunger and the impact of Covid-19 in the western region of Paraná.

Subsequently, we present the analysis and discussions related to the group of Haitian immigrants in Brazil from the group formed on *WhatsApp* with the name "*Haitians in Brazil*", in this research called Group B. The information gathered in the aforementioned group was diverse, starting by highlighting the process of residence⁴ of Haitians in Brazil, necessary for the renewal of their passports.

There was solidarity in this group based on information and contributions. The word "Haiti" was the most used in the group. This massive use of the word can mean the deep homesickness that immigrants feel for their origins and their country. This pain of homesickness is expressed by an immigrant in a UniCeub's report on their website that is titled "*Saudades e esperança: conheça histórias de imigrantes no DF*" (Homes and hope: get to know immigrants' stories in the Federal District). In it, a Haitian immigrant is quoted expressing his longing for family members left behind in his home country: "Fennel appreciates the diversity of Brazilian culture and some musical styles. Despite being adopted in the country; he misses his family and keeps in touch with relatives *via* the internet" (UNICEUB).

One fact that became clear in the group's analysis is the lack of interest in speaking the Portuguese language, considering that it should be a novelty due to the work. The preference for speaking the language of origin, Creole, which is a dialect derived from several other languages, is due to the fact that most immigrants cannot write Portuguese. This situation has a strong impact on the jobs that Haitian immigrants are competing for here in Brazil. The limitation of being able to express themselves correctly in Portuguese makes it extremely difficult for them to enter the job market in the professions in which they are trained and have a good command.

From the point of view of a critical recommendation, there should be a common effort of authorities to develop policies to offer courses in learning the Portuguese language for a better insertion of these immigrants by sharing their knowledge and expertise. Below we present a map with a "storm of words" most used in the Whatsapp group of "Haitians in Brazil". Some of the most used words in the Word Map of Group B are translated into Portuguese in the footnote⁵.

The words evidence a distinct form of cooperation and solidarity in the above group B. Our work methodology allowed us to see that the economic power is not the same as that of the participants in Group A, that is, the solidarity group. Even so, unity and collectivity are present as a concern among them in helping each other with work issues, in solving doubts or problems with regard to access and permanence in the residences, among others. It is also interesting to note how they think about staying in Brazil, because they want to do the residency process permanently, dreaming about the opportunities that are offered here at the moment.

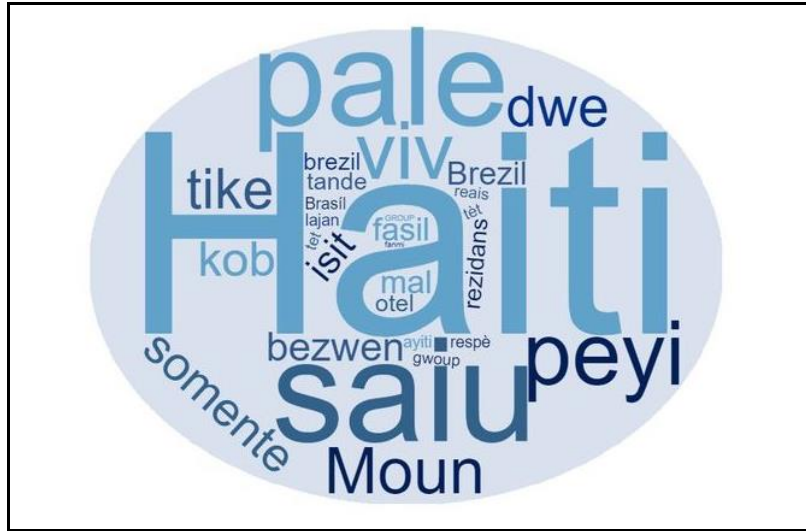


Figure 3 - Map of the most spoken words in group B

Source: The authors, 2020

From this, it is important here to analyze the educational levels of Haitian immigrants presented in the form of a table. The data were obtained from the analysis of the *WhatsApp* group "*Haitians in Brazil*" which contains 103 participants. A questionnaire was offered to them, and it was answered by 30 people, which represents a sample of 30.9%. The education of the Haitian immigrants is presented as Level 1 which is portrayed as those with academic training, Level 2 with technical training, and Level 3 without specific training, that is, only production assistants.

Of the 27 answers to the questionnaire, we found that 10 immigrants have higher education, 16 have a degree in technology or vocational training, and only one immigrant who performed activities as a production assistant has no qualifications. The results of Table 1 show that the Haitians in the western region of Paraná represent immigrants of high professional qualification.

From this perspective, the tendency to find Haitian immigrants in the labor market in a job that requires a certain degree of education would be much fairer and more feasible.

Table 1 - Professions and educational levels

N/P	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
	02 Computer Engineers	01 Air conditioning installation and maintenance technician	01 Production Assistant
	01 Nurse	04 Professional bricklayers	
	01 Journalist	01 Mechanical Technician and 01 Mechanic	
	01 Informatics Teacher	01 professional photography technician	
	01 Cultural Journalism	02 tradesmen	
	01 University Teacher	02 Electricians	
	01 Agronomist Technician	01 Mechanical Technician, Painter	
	01 Childhood Teacher	01 Commercial salesperson	
	01 Teacher	01 Construction professional (master)	
		01 Musician	

Source: The authors, 2020

Regarding the educational questions related to the language of Portuguese, 73% answered that they have knowledge of understanding the Portuguese language spoken in Brazil. Another result that deserves to be highlighted is that when asked about the level of language spoken: the results pointed out that 30% attribute this to their advanced or intermediate level of education, and finally 40% to the basic level. In an effort to think about the positions that immigrants occupy here in Brazil, the research shows that they are underutilized workers because they do not exercise activities in their areas of training. This means that their qualifications are being poorly used, which, from an economic point of view has a direct impact on their quality of life and

future prospects for growth and economic emancipation. The causes of this lack of interest and absorption by companies are not making the best use of their intelligence should be studied. It seems to remain only in the criticism attributed to Haitian immigrants for not learning to write Portuguese, limiting their own progress, which does not convince us as researchers.

In the 2019 Immigrants Report, (Simões; Cavalcanti; Pereda, 2019), all Haitians who were employed occupied a job that did not require any specific technical knowledge. Usually, the great movement in the labor market is related to underemployment in meatpacking plants, and animal slaughtering in meat production, mainly in southern Brazil. Therefore, the criticism of this reality becomes quite legitimate due to the fact that of the 20 job categories presented, there is none that appears in a position that admits a Level 1 education presented in the table above.

What further increases our questioning about this issue is that in the Report it is highlighted that most Haitian immigrants do not have a higher education degree and that the majority would be educated below high school, that they have not even completed their elementary school (Simões; Cavalcanti; Pereda, 2019).

As a counterpoint to this report, our research identified that the degrees of instruction of Haitian immigrants do not confer with the 2019 Report. This finding needs to register a criticism against the contracting companies that do not take advantage of the knowledge immigrants possess and prevent their professional progress in Brazilian lands, being relegated to production assistant services with insignificant salaries and limiting professional growth and consequent professional and economic growth of their family's fixing nationality in the country that received them.

Therefore, our research raises important questions that deserve further research in order to identify more problems on the issues of education, economic growth, quality of life, underemployment, and discrimination against Haitian immigrants, which require immigration policies accompanied by strict controls on how immigrants are used and dealt with in their search for their dreams and professional and family growth.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we analyze and demonstrate the importance of *solidarity groups to reduce hunger, and lack of employment in times of Covid-19 that affect Haitian immigrants in Brazil from the WhatsApp group called "Haitians in Brazil"*. The work allowed the impacts of the solidarity groups to be evidenced, conferring a high degree of importance to society in times of global crisis such as the one we are experiencing with the Pandemic in progress and without definitive solutions and that will leave a trail of many crises, from economic to environmental. Hunger and poverty, inequalities need to be addressed through the collective, and the research results testify that building supportive relationships and solidarity is an important step in addressing hunger and improving the quality of life for immigrants and indigenous communities through a chain of good for good.

In this search to reach the objective, we found very important data from the Haitian group whose analysis shows that these Haitian immigrants have a high educational level, which should allow them better and more profitable professional occupations, which, however, does not happen and requires new research and interpretations. This reality forces Haitian immigrants to accept any job, not having their education and qualifications met in the country that receives them, making room for possible exploitation in the field of labor because of their immigration status.

The research concludes that there is a problem with the absence of public policies aligned with the immigrant community, and a complete lack of interest in building means and developing tools that can help the process of inclusion of Haitians in Brazil. The educational issue denotes a clear lack of interest from the companies themselves in welcoming the immigrants' education and professions to fill the job positions with Haitian foreigners.

For this reason, we suggest the construction of a state public policy to help orient immigrants about the available jobs according to their qualifications, and also to get support from the authorities in order to have continuing education and training to improve their lives. We also recommend a radio or television extension project, with the objective of spreading the word to Brazilian society, to companies, about the culture of the Haitian people, as well as answering a key question, who are the Haitians really. We believe that an important part of the process of

inclusion of Haitians is for the Brazilian society to know who the Haitians are, their people, their culture, their customs, and their backgrounds, in order to avoid any kind of prejudice.

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