

One Hundred Years of Solitude: Distance Education in Brazil – Negative Perceptions Before and After the Pandemic

Cem Anos de Solidão: a Educação a Distância no Brasil – Percepções Negativas Antes e Depois da Pandemia

ISSN 2177-8310
DOI: 10.18264/eadf.v14i2.2188

Leonardo VIANA^{1*}
Milton N. CAMPOS²
Ibis M. Álvarez³
Fabiane PROBA⁴
Vittorio LO BIANCO¹

¹ Cecierj Foundation. Praça Cristiano Ottoni, s/nº, 6º andar, Centro - Rio de Janeiro - RJ - Brasil.

² Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - Av. Pasteur, 250, Praia Vermelha - Rio de Janeiro - RJ - Brasil

³ Universitat Autònoma Barcelona. Carrer de La Fortuna, s/nº - Bellaterra - Barcelona, Espanha.

⁴ Rio de Janeiro State Research Foundation (a.k.a FAPERJ). Av. Erasmo Braga, nº 118, 6º andar, Centro - Rio de Janeiro - RJ - Brasil.

Abstract

With the centenary of distance education (EAD) in Brazil, completed in 2023, the article presents an exploratory descriptive study comparing negative social representations about the teaching modality before and after the coronavirus pandemic (2019 and 2023). The objective is to reflect on the formation of an apparent prejudice in relation to EAD in the country - of historical, economic and sociocultural origin - based on this research in the psychosocial field, carried out with 1,000 candidates from the Vestibular Cederj – Distance Higher Education Center in the State of Rio de Janeiro, in those years. The work “One Hundred Years of Solitude” by García Márquez inspires an analogy about the “isolation” of EAD, due to the little recognition that seems to have marked its one hundred years of existence. The percentage of participants who presented negative perceptions related to EAD was practically unchanged in the pre- and post-pandemic periods (42% in 2019 and 43% in 2023). The data were collected using the word evocation technique inspired by Abric, through questions to the ego (self) and the alter (other). Supported by the theoretical-methodological approach of Ágoras from Viana, we analyzed the results with emphasis on the fact that negative evaluations stood out significantly in both years when those surveyed were asked from the alter and not the ego. The fact showed that the construction of the individual’s thought, influenced by their condition of social being, is a preponderant factor in the formation of Agoras: groupings based on affinities of social representations.

Keywords: Distance education. Social representations. Prejudice. Coronavirus pandemic. Agoras.



Recebido 18/ 12/ 2023
Aceito 05/ 04/ 2024
Publicado 19/ 04/ 2024

COMO CITAR ESTE ARTIGO

ABNT: VIANA, L. et al. Cem Anos de Solidão: a Educação a Distância no Brasil: Percepções Negativas Antes e Depois da Pandemia. *EaD em Foco*, v. 14, n. 2, e2188, 2024. doi: <https://doi.org/10.18264/eadf.v14i2.2188>

Cem Anos de Solidão: a Educação a Distância no Brasil – Percepções Negativas Antes e Depois da Pandemia

Abstract

Com o centenário da educação a distância (EAD) no Brasil, completado em 2023, o artigo traz estudo exploratório descritivo de comparação das representações sociais negativas sobre a modalidade de ensino antes e depois da pandemia do coronavírus (2019 e 2023). O objetivo é refletir sobre a formação de um aparente preconceito em relação à EAD no país - de origem histórica, econômica e sociocultural - a partir da presente pesquisa do campo psicossocial, realizada com 1.000 candidatos do Vestibular Cederj – Centro de Educação Superior a Distância do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, nos referidos anos. A obra “Cem anos de solidão” de García Márquez inspira analogia sobre o “isolamento” da EAD, pelo pouco reconhecimento que parece ter marcado seus cem anos de existência. O percentual de participantes que apresentaram percepções negativas relacionadas à EAD esteve praticamente sem alteração nos períodos pré e pós-pandemia (42% em 2019 e 43% em 2023). Os dados foram coletados pela técnica de evocação de palavras inspirada em Abric, por meio de indagações ao ego (eu) e ao alter (outro). Amparados pela abordagem teórico-metodológica das Ágoras de Viana, analisamos os resultados com destaque para o fato de que as avaliações negativas sobressaíram significativamente em ambos os anos quando os pesquisados foram indagados a partir do alter e não do ego. O fato evidenciou que a construção do pensamento do indivíduo, influenciada pela sua condição de ser social, é fator preponderante para a formação das Ágoras: agrupamentos por afinidades de representações sociais.

Palavras-chave: Educação a distância. Representações sociais. Preconceito. Pandemia do coronavírus. Ágoras.

1. Introduction

This article is a descriptive exploratory study aimed at comparing negative social representations of distance education (DE) in Brazil before and after the coronavirus pandemic, in 2019 and 2023 respectively. The aim is to reflect on the scenario of apparent prejudice towards the teaching modality in question - as a historical, social and cultural consequence - by exploring ideas and thoughts through the analysis of the object of study (distance learning), based on empirical research in psychosociology, with 1,000 people aspiring to Cederj distance learning undergraduate vacancies in 2019 and 2023.

The analogy between the article's title and Gabriel García Márquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude" refers to the "isolation" that distance learning is going through in the country - motivated, among other things, by evidence of its lack of recognition - even after a hundred years of existence. We begin the article with a conceptualization of distance learning, on-line learning and remote learning; and we consider the possible causes of the prejudice against distance learning.

Afterwards, we present the foundations of the research with Viana's Agora theory (2020), the theoretical-methodological foundations that make it up and its dynamics of group formation by affinities of social representations (MOSCOVICI, 2001). Next, we introduce the methodology of the study, which is exploratory-descriptive in nature with a quantitative and qualitative observation method. As a data

collection procedure, we adopted the Agoras (VIANA, 2020), which makes use of the TALP - Free Association of Words Test, with stimulus questions asked to the ego (me - what do I think about distance learning?) and the alter (other - what do I think the other thinks about distance learning?), inspired by Abric's prototypical approach (1994).

We went on to present the results, which showed a greater expressiveness of negative social representations in questions addressed to the alter: 42% of the participants in 2019 and 43% in 2023, showing that there was practically no change in perceptions about distance learning before and after the pandemic. Among the most cited words/expressions are "bad, unreliable and difficult", showing prejudice, whose supposed motivations are explored in the text in reflections situated in a historical, economic and socio-cultural context. In the ego questions, negativity did not stand out: only 1.6% (2019) and 2.2% (2023).

The analysis and interpretation of the results was supported by the theory of the Agoras (VIANA, 2020), which takes into account the inseparability of the individual and the social being in the construction of human thought, a determining factor for the formation of groups by affinities of mental images of the world, influenced by culture, morality, life stories, etc., co-constructed in exchanges through configurations of meaning, in contributions by Campos (2017).

2. General research context

2.1 Distance learning, on-line learning and remote learning

When the teaching-learning process is promoted in a place other than the physical environment, using appropriate technologies that allow the exchange of content, it can be characterized as distance education (MOORE; KEARSLEY, 2010).

There are misconceptions in Brazil about distance education, on-line education and remote teaching (NOLASCO-SILVA and LO BIANCO, 2022). Distance learning is generally more instructional, with teachers guiding studies and answering questions about the content, say the authors (2022). Students carry out their tasks individually and are accountable for their activities, and there may be limited interactions between students and teachers; the latter are the system's agenda administrators (NOLASCO-SILVA and LO BIANCO, 2022).

On the other hand, on-line education values interactive communication and collaborative production in networks, exploring the potential of cyberculture as a field for building knowledge (SANTOS, 2019). According to the author, cyberculture - our contemporary culture strongly marked by digital technologies - has on-line education as a phenomenon. In it, there is "everyone-to-everyone" communication, through the creation and dispute of meanings, as well as the production of content and processes of subjectivation in a network. In on-line education, form becomes content, exploring the hypermedia possibilities of the digital environment (SANTOS, 2019).

Remote teaching, on the other hand, can have limitations, although it has provided affectionate encounters and good curricular dynamics during social isolation in the coronavirus pandemic, experienced worldwide with greater impact in 2020/2021 (NOLASCO-SILVA and LO BIANCO, 2022). In this context, there has been significant use of emergency remote learning. Santos (2019) comments that remote teaching is characterized by communication by appointment, in which subjects are coupled in agendas and its practice commonly repeats massive models that underutilize the potential of cyberculture in education. This scenario can lead to boredom, discouragement and physical and mental exhaustion for both teachers and students (SANTOS, 2019).

2.2. Distance education and prejudice

Pointing out the distinctions between distance education, on-line education and remote teaching sheds light on the origins of the apparent prejudice against the modality, sometimes rooted in the nuances of confusion between these forms of education and/or their misuse. As we have seen, distance learning is not simply a transition from face-to-face to remote learning. Working and learning in a distance context requires professional adaptation specific to the modality, a specialized job of the utmost importance (NOLASCO-SILVA and LO BIANCO, 2022).

Distance education is closely linked to technological evolution, an advance which has popularized teaching, but which has also been criticized for distorting the qualities of distance education and trying to standardize it along the lines of mass production, such as remote teaching (MASCHERINI, 2020). There is a vast amount of literature on the prejudices against distance learning in various dimensions (BELLONI, 1999; GOMES, 2008; VIANA, 2020). Here are some of the arguments: (1) Unsatisfactory regulation: Priority given to profit over academic quality (BIELSCHOWSKY, 2018); (2) Quality - the preparation of distance learning courses often occurs through amateur conversions of face-to-face courses to the virtual format (BRAUER, 2008); (3) Decentralization of teaching - opposes the traditional model of teaching, in which the figure of the teacher is no longer the center and the focus becomes the student; (4) Courses for low-income audiences - distance learning was initially adopted for courses considered to be of low academic value, such as sewing, mechanics, etc., to meet the needs of society (MOORE, 2007); (5) "second chance" character - for people who were unable to finish their studies within the "expected" time.

2.3. One hundred years of solitude: distance education in Brazil

In the year 2023, when distance education celebrated its 100th anniversary in Brazil, the title of this article paraphrases Gabriel García Márquez's classic "One Hundred Years of Solitude", which tells the story of generations of a family living in Macondo, a place cut off from everything and everyone, situated between the mountains and the swamp. By analogy, distance learning in Brazil resembles Macondo, isolated between academia and the job market, in a digital reality where socialization is supported by technology. But this socialization is proving to be inefficient in the task of attracting and engaging human beings to the point of arousing their desire to be there together in the virtual learning environment in an effective and pleasurable way (PROBA, 2020).

García Márquez says in the book that the events take place in a time so remote that most things did not even have a name. In comparison, are we still experiencing difficulties in naming or representing distance learning in Brazil today? It seems that this type of teaching lacks a legitimized place, even after a hundred years of existence, paving the way for prejudices. Based on this central question, we discuss the research in this article comparing negative social representations of distance learning before and after the pandemic.

3. Foundations of research

3.1. Foundations of the Agora

Viana's Ágoras theory (2020), which guides this research for data collection and analysis, is based on the following theoretical-methodological foundations: Moscovici's social representations (2001), Marková's dialogicity (2003), prototypical approach and use of Abric's TALP - Free Word Association Test (1994), Campos' ecology of the senses (2017) and Grize's natural logic (1994).

The theory of social representations (TRS), first proposed by Moscovici (2001), considers that perceptions of an object are natural and social phenomena, influenced by culture, tradition and language, made possible by human thought and closely linked to “common sense” (MOSCOVICI, 2001). For Marková (2003), the human mind is capable of processing and communicating the dialog between ego (self), alter (other) and object, thus creating social realities. The author (2003) considers this structure of dialogicity to be the basic unit of the theory of social knowledge.

Differentiating itself from the qualitative approaches that generally characterize the field of social sciences - with techniques such as interviews, field notes and participant observation - the prototypical analysis of social representations is based on the premise that it is possible to take a mathematical approach through techniques such as the TALP (Free Association of Words Test), providing the respondent with a stimulus question to bring out their representations through the evocation of words (ABRIC, 1994). This perspective is a methodological approach to capturing data on social representations in the theory of Agoras (VIANA, 2020), inspired by this mathematical, psychometric and accounting model of the TALP.

Also supporting the Agoras (2020) is Campos' (2017) theory: ecology of the senses. The author (2017) proposes a different understanding of the construction of world images of subjects, groups or society. These would be created and co-created, as well as constantly re-signified in dynamic processes of exchange, producing configurations of meanings in the natural and social environment, by the “layers” of the subject represented by cognitive and affective structures; their consciences, wills and moralities; and material conditions of existence (CAMPOS, 2017).

Finally, the representations proposed by Grize (1994) support the formation of Agoras based on five basic postulates: (1) dialogism, which recognizes the interaction between subjects as essential in the construction of representations; (2) the situation of interlocution, which considers the context and conditions in which communication takes place as determinants in the production of meaning; (3) representation, which involves the mental construction of an image or concept based on social interaction; (4) cultural pre-constructions, such as shared and pre-existing knowledge in the culture that influences representations; and (5) the construction of objects, which refers to the process of attributing meaning to these objects and phenomena through interaction and dialogue between subjects.

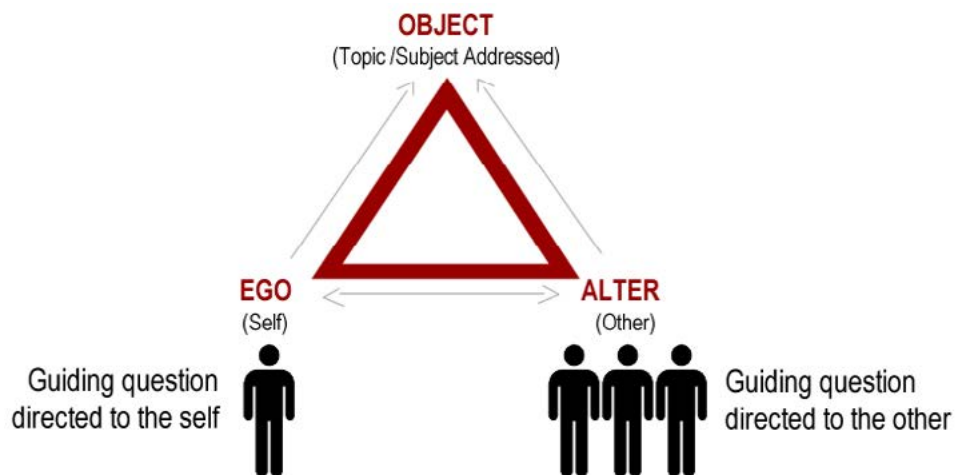
3.2. Agora Theory

Agoras are groups of people who have similar mental images of themselves (which have to do with the ego) and/or similar images of others (which refer to the alter). The groupings emerge organically through an affinity of social representations, which reflect collective perceptions and understandings of a certain aspect of reality (VIANA, 2020). According to the perspective of the Agoras (2020), it is through interaction with others that we construct our own identity and understand the world in which we live.

For a broader understanding of the subject and their logic in society, supported by Viana's theory (2020), a stimulus/narrowing question in relation to an object is addressed to the ego and the alter. See the following illustration (Figure 1) of this methodological dynamic in the formation of the Agoras¹:

¹ The theoretical-methodological application of the Agoras has already been used by Viana (2020) in

Figure 1: Methodological dynamics of the Agora theory for formation of groups by affinities of social representations (Agoras)



Fonte: Viana (2020)

4. Methodology

4.1. Method

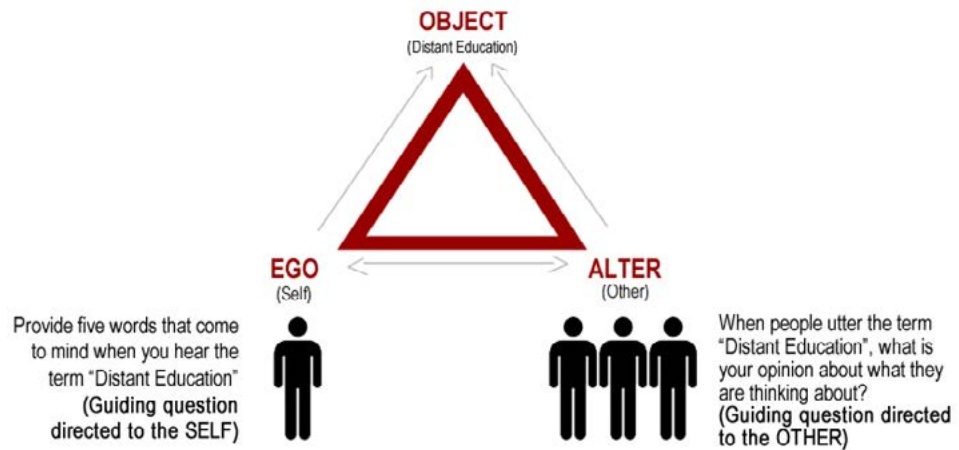
This research is exploratory-descriptive in nature, using a quantitative and qualitative observation method, with uncontrolled variables, without interference from the researcher (SÁNCHEZ GAMBOA, 2010). According to the author, the method unravels ideas and thoughts for the characterization of phenomena and situations through the analysis of the object of study (distance education in our case), based on hypotheses or intuitions normally built on a comparison. Our intuition refers to prejudice against the teaching modality in Brazil - as a reality of historical, economic, social and cultural origin - when comparing two groups of respondents, in 2019 and 2023.

4.2. Data collection instrument

The guiding questions for the formation of the Agoras (Viana, 2020) in the research are inspired by the word evocation technique (TALP) used by Abric (1994), as discussed in item 3.1 Fundamentals of the Agoras, and were addressed to both the ego (self) and the alter (other), regarding the theme/object: distance education. See Figure II below for the guiding questions in the methodological application of the Agoras theory in the research:

another investigation with a universe of more than 42,000 people.

Figure 2: Application of the Agora theory



Fonte: Viana (2020)

The ego perspective considers the subject as the starting point for the mental image of themselves in relation to the object, while the alter perspective also starts from the subject, but for the mental image of what they project onto the other in relation to the object. Both possibilities coexist in the same cognitive, affective and moral space of the subject (CAMPOS, 2017).

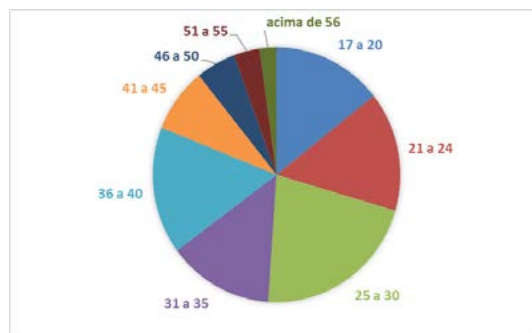
In partnership with Cederj - Centro de Educação Superior a Distância do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Distance Higher Education Center of the State of Rio de Janeiro), data was collected using a socioeconomic and demographic questionnaire applied during on-line registration for the 2019 and 2023 editions of the Cederj Vestibular. Applicants were asked to fill in personal details such as gender, age, schooling and socio-economic information. Next, the two stimulus/nudge questions (aimed at the ego and the alter) were asked of the participants to capture data on social representations using the theory of the Agoras (VIANA, 2020).

4.3. Subject sampling strategy

The survey was carried out with 1,000 candidates for the Cederj entrance exams in 2019 and 2023, 500 in each year. The study included the first 500 applicants - per edition - who were considered valid (with no problems filling in the registration form) and who were willing to answer the survey, as participation was not compulsory.

Among all those surveyed in both years, the predominant age group was between 21 and 40, as shown in Graph I below:

Graph I : Age group of respondents



In terms of location, the participants are residents of the state of Rio de Janeiro, with the majority concentrated in the metropolitan region.

5. Results

In this study on the social representations of distance education before and after the pandemic, it is worth remembering that we focused exclusively on the negative representations of distance education that emerged from the research, as can be seen in the presentation of the results in the following item (5.1) and in their analysis and interpretation (5.2); against the backdrop of prejudice about the teaching modality, already addressed in item 2.2 Distance education and prejudice, and taken up for discussion in this section.

5.1 Presentation of results

The results point to a significant percentage of negative representations about distance learning when the question was addressed to the alter, both in 2019 and 2023, with 42% and 43%, respectively, of people having negative perceptions. When the question was asked of the ego, in both years, the percentage of participants with negative evaluations of the teaching modality showed a significant reduction: only 1.6% (2019) and 2.2% (2023).

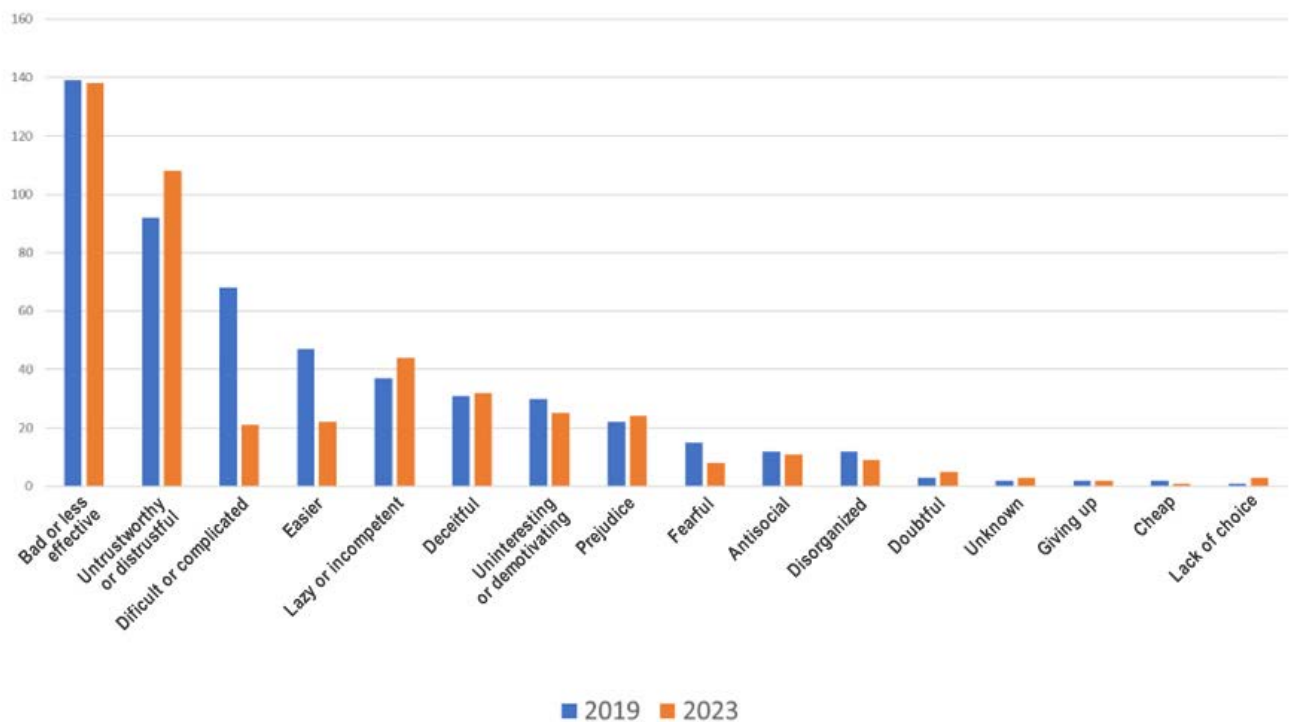
Table I below shows the number of people and their respective percentages from the universe studied (500 respondents - 2019 and 500 respondents - 2023), referring to negative representations of the object in questions addressed to the ego and the alter:

Table I: Negative social representations of distance education in the ego and the alter

Negative social representations of distance education in the ego and alter ego		
Year 2019 - 500 participants	Results of the question to the ego	6 people (1.6%) rated distance learning negatively, with 4 words.
	Results of the question to the alter	210 people (42%) rated distance learning negatively, with 548 words
Year 2023 - 500 participants	Results of the question addressed to the ego	11 people (2.2%) rated distance learning negatively, with 22 words.
	Results of the question to the alter	215 people (43%) rated distance learning negatively, with 541 words.

Next, take a look at Graph II, comparing 2019 and 2023, which shows the negative words most often cited as answers to the guiding question addressed to the alter, in which the incidence of negative perceptions was higher than when addressed to the ego (VIANA, 2020):

Graph II: Most cited negative words/expressions about distance learning in the question to the alter in 2019 and 2023



Finally, we present in Table I the words most mentioned by the survey participants who positioned themselves negatively in the question addressed to the ego, which represents a smaller proportion of those surveyed, as we have seen:

Table I: Most cited negative words/expressions about distance education in the question addressed to the ego in 2019 and 2023

Most cited negative words/expressions about distance learning in the question addressed to the ego in 2019 and 2023		
Year 2019	Results of the question to the ego	alone, doubts, few resources, low learning development
Year 2023	Results of the question to the ego	easy, fear, lack of physical contact, worried, stressed, sad, disintegration, static, does it work?, how are the assessments done? contact with colleagues, dedicated teachers?, tiring, lack of interaction, tired, anxiety, monotonous

5.2 Analysis and interpretation of results

5.2.1 The formation of the Agora

In this descriptive exploratory study on negative social representations in relation to distance learning in pre- and post-pandemic periods, we observed that ego perceptions were not accentuated for negativity towards distance learning, while alter perceptions stood out on this point in both 2019 and 2023. Supported by Viana’s theory (2020), we obtained what we can call Agoras with negative representations: one stimulated by the ego’s perceptions (what I think about distance learning) and the other by the alter’s (what I think the other thinks about distance learning).

Negativity was more prevalent when participants thought about what the other (alter) thinks about distance learning - 425 out of 1,000 people - than when they reflected on their own judgments (ego) - 17 people out of 1,000. Why did this happen in our research? We can assume that people like and feel satisfied with the distance learning modality, but when asked to capture the general collective thought, they were enveloped by an atmosphere of prejudice. As we reflected on in section 2.2 Distance learning and prejudice, the origin of this way of thinking is influenced by the history of education in Brazil and the emergence of distance learning itself, such as the following aspects: the teaching modality was started to serve the low-income population, and was therefore given the air of a second chance; it had to compete with the already established traditional face-to-face teaching model; and the lack of active regulation contributed to the existence of courses of dubious quality.

In line with Viana (2020), human thought is invariably influenced by the society in which it operates. The research participants are therefore the fruit of the natural and social environment, since their experiences, life stories, places where they live, study, work, etc. are decisive for the composition of their images of the world which, when socialized, produce configurations of meanings (CAMPOS, 2017). These reflections may be the reason for what was found: the Agora formed by negative representations from the alter is made up of more people than those formed from the ego. According to Moscovici (2000), the social representations that resulted in the groupings among those surveyed - the Agoras (VIANA, 2020) - are a set of concepts, propositions and explanations that originate in everyday life during interpersonal interactions. Thus, we connect the consideration that the exchanges between individuals, typical of social life, shape their thoughts.

To continue analyzing the results, the percentage of people who evaluated distance learning negatively in both years remained almost the same, both in the questions directed at the alter (42% in 2019 and 43% in 2023) and those directed at the ego (1.6% in 2019 and 2.2% in 2023). The number of words cited to express negativity in both years was also very close: 548 and 541 respectively (Table I). It should be remembered that each participant could mention up to five words.

The years in which the survey was carried out are set in markedly different world-historical contexts, as they are located at times before and after the coronavirus pandemic. The fact that the incidence of negative words was so similar in both years (in the questions to the alter, when negative evaluations stood out) may suggest that the pandemic situation, despite having spread the teaching modality in question and made it better known and used, was not able to soften the negative judgment about it. On the contrary, the criticism remained just as strong in terms of the number of people and words mentioned.

The results presented lead us to return to the parallel we established - which even gives this article its name - linking the 100 years of distance learning in Brazil, which will be completed in 2023, with the 100 years of existence of the village in García Márquez's literary work. In both fiction and reality, not even the passage of a century has been able to mitigate the "isolation" reflected in the apparent lack of legitimization that entrenches prejudices, which we will discuss in more detail in the following sections.

5.2.2 Negative social representations from the alter

As a result of the negative representations of the survey directed at the alter (the case with the highest incidence of negative perceptions: from 425 people out of a total of 1,000 surveyed), we found that, in 2019 and 2023, the judgments of distance learning as "bad or inferior" were in the same proportion, as shown in Graph II; which corroborates our previous comment that the experience of the pandemic does not seem to have mitigated the unfavorable views of distance learning.

From 2019 to four years later, the number of people who consider distance learning to lack credibility or perceive it with distrust has risen, also according to Graph II. This may be related to the surge in the use

of distance learning during the fight against the coronavirus, in the sense that the population found itself in a situation where distance learning was the only way or at least the most viable way to learn and study. As a result, a veritable boom in courses that claimed to be distance learning emerged as adaptations to face-to-face teaching.

The unpreparedness of the institutions and the urgency of the situation meant that the quality of non-presential education was lacking. As we commented in section 2.1, the growth that took place during the pandemic was in the use of emergency remote learning. It was recurrent at the time to take it as a representation of distance learning, but remote learning does not incorporate the practices and specificities of distance education, which presuppose specific pedagogical and organizational concepts. For this reason, not every curricular activity mediated by meeting technologies can be classified as distance education (NOLASCO-SILVA, LO BIANCO, 2022). Thus, the educational modality classified as remote can be unfavorable to students and teachers, adds Santos (2019). These observations may represent reasons for the survey results of negative perceptions against distance learning.

In addition to the factors that can contribute to negative views on the modality, we also take up as a possible argument one of the points highlighted in item 2.2 Distance Education and Prejudice, regarding the practice of unsatisfactory regulation, which prioritizes profit over academic quality (BIELSCHOWSKY, 2018). Barros and Alencar (2021) consider it regrettable that business sectors have made the education system more precarious through neoliberal policies, using the pandemic as a justification to increase profits, a period in which the lack of adequate didactic planning for distance education was accentuated.

The literature shows that when carried out seriously and correctly, distance education figures are very close to those of face-to-face teaching in terms of quality (SILVA, 2010). This reinforces the importance of the institution offering its adapted content, as well as regulation and supervision by the competent body (BIELSCHOWSKY, 2018). But even institutions that develop quality distance learning need to overcome the symbolic barrier of a negative image that has grown, taken root and perpetuated itself over time, reinforces the author (2018).

Still on the interpretations of the words that formed the groupings of negative representations from the alter (with a more expressive result for negativity), the difference between 2019 and 2023 (Graph II), related to the significant reduction in the incidence of “difficult or complicated”, makes us think that people began to see distance learning without the initial resistance of looking at the unknown. Since it has become more widely used since the pandemic, even if confused with remote learning, we can infer that familiarity has generated the feeling that distance education is less difficult and complicated.

The use of the expression “easier” showed a reduction from 2019 to 2023 and we can understand that there are two possible semantic interpretations of this fact: (1) it has the sole meaning of being uncomplicated and (2) easier also carries a charge of prejudice due to a lack of rigor in teaching. In the latter interpretation that the expression carries a prejudiced tone, a drop in this supposed discrimination would have been seen post-pandemic in 2023.

The association of distance education with the representation of “laziness” and “incapacity” was something that remained practically unchanged in 2019 and 2023. By discrediting those who opt for the modality, the appearance of this word in the survey ends up disqualifying distance learning itself by associating it with those who are not interested in studying. The volume of mentions of the other words and expressions most often cited by those surveyed in the question to the alter, as shown in Graph II, showed almost no variation between 2019 and 2023; a fact that also reflects the intricacies of the arguments so far regarding their negativity. They are: “deception”, “disinterest or demotivating”, “prejudice”, “fear”, “antisocial”, “disorganized”, “doubtful”, “unknown”, “giving up”, “cheap” and “lack of options”.

5.2.3 Representações sociais negativas a partir do ego

After focusing on the negative representations of distance education that emerged from the questions addressed to the alter, we will now analyze those that emerged from the questions to the ego, as shown in Table I. As we have seen, the results of negative perceptions of distance learning, originating from the ego, are not very significant in the survey (represented by 17 participants out of 1,000), but they are worth considering. The mentions of “alone” in 2019, for example, and “lack of physical contact” and “sad” in 2023, suggest a connection between them because they refer to the lack of interaction between colleagues and teachers that characterizes distance learning. In addition, it is interesting to note that this point refers to a sadness mentioned, typical of the pandemic situation that may have accompanied people’s imagination about the modality, appearing in the 2023 results. In that context, many people may have accentuated their feelings of sadness at having to study without face-to-face meetings and for associating the modality with the social isolation that became necessary. Also linked to the problems of the pandemic seem to have been the mentions of “worried, tired, stressed and anxious”.

In 2019, mentions of “doubts, few resources and low learning development” raise criticisms about the quality of distance education, as do others from 2023 such as “static, does it work? how are the assessments done? dedicated teachers? and monotonous”. This last word, together with “disintegration”, also mentioned, seem to point to a certain difficulty in engaging students in distance learning. The efficient functioning of discussion forums - virtual environments where interactions between students and teachers take place in distance learning - represent one of the great challenges of this modality, as they are generally poorly used in terms of their potential for attractiveness, engagement and co-construction of knowledge provided by exchanges (PROBA, 2020). Interaction on digital networks is fundamental, as the lack of physical contact in distance education cannot prevent the establishment of affective ties originating in social interactions, according to the author (2020), with benefits for strengthening attention, critical sense, the ability to argue and structure reasoning, favored by asynchronous communication and the written language specific to these spaces (CAMPOS, 2004).

6. Final considerations

On the centenary of distance education in Brazil, in the year 2023, this type of teaching was the field of action for this research, the results of which contribute to psychosociology due to the importance of not neglecting the gaze of others when it comes to looking at ourselves. The concepts of the formation of Agoras (VIANA, 2020) and how they are sustained provide science with a tool for capturing and analyzing psychosocial processes which, in this study, refer to the origins of discrimination against distance learning in Brazil.

It was curious to see such different results from the questions addressed to the ego (self) and the alter (other). The construction of prejudice against distance learning over the course of a hundred years, with its possible reasons represented by the country’s social, cultural and economic strata, was revealed more intensely in people’s thoughts when they attempted to judge the other, compared to judging themselves only. It was interesting to see, therefore, that the apparent deep-rooted discrimination is manifested with an emphasis on the collective sphere rather than the individual.

This article establishes facts and reflects on realities based on history and socio-cultural influences, which are essential for looking to the future, with the serious work of distance learning professionals, educational technologies and regulation interested in leveraging the modality to levels of excellence, in favor of positive perceptions of distance learning and leaving prejudice in the past.

The negative social representations that resulted from our research, delimited before and after the coronavirus pandemic, can contribute to other studies and new perspectives based on the difficulties that

the teaching modality has gone through in these hundred years of solitude, as well as García Márquez's Macondo, both comparatively isolated. Oscillating between the aspiration to democratize education and the inadequate exploitation of its attributes, distance learning - despite many achievements - seems to have a long way to go before it is effectively consolidated and recognized. Let us just hope that it does not take another hundred years to reach this day!

Biodata and author contacts



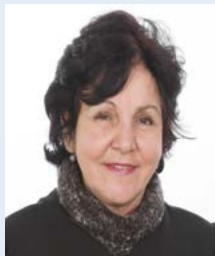
VIANA, L. G. holds a PhD in Psychosociology and Social Ecology from UFRJ, with a sandwich period at the Universitat Autònoma Barcelona, Spain. He has a Master's degree in Management from UFF and a degree in Industrial Design. He works as a researcher at the Cecierj Foundation's NITE (Innovation, Technology and Education Center), where he coordinates the GITE research group on "Innovation and socio-technological and psychosocial interaction: Social Computing Applications, Advanced User Experience (UX/CX), Artificial Intelligence for Education, Science Dissemination and Digital Communication". His research interests include UX (user experience), CX, human interaction and perception, social psychology, social representations, ideological bubbles, methodologies for studying populations, social ecology, social media, social computing, digital communication, education and technologies.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5568-664X>
E-mail: lviana@cecierj.edu.br



CAMPOS, M. N. is a professor of Communication, PhD in Social Psychology, Master in Communication and graduate in Journalism from the University of São Paulo. An honorary professor at the Université de Montréal in Canada, he works as a professor-researcher at the School of Communication and the Postgraduate Program in Psychosociology of Communities and Social Ecology (EICOS) at the Institute of Psychology of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). He has worked as a teacher from elementary school to post-graduate level and has worked as a radio and television journalist for national and international institutions such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3051-3985>
Email: milton.campos@eco.ufrj.br



ÁLVAREZ, I. M. holds a PhD in Psychology. Professor in the Department of Basic, Evolutionary and Educational Psychology at the Universitat Autònoma Barcelona (UAB), Spain. Her research interests are related to the cultural aspects of learning and psychological development. She has been involved in various art education projects and, in partnership with UFRJ and the Cecierj Foundation, has run a course in Service Education for Vulnerable Groups in Brazil, as well as lectures and events.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3250-3214>
Email: ibismarlene.alvarez@uab.cat



PROBA, F. holds a PhD in Psychosociology of Communities and Social Ecology from the Institute of Psychology of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ, with a sandwich doctorate at the Università Degli Studi di Bergamo, Italy. She has a Master's degree in Communication from the State University of Rio de Janeiro - UERJ; a postgraduate degree in Business Communication from the Cândido Mendes University; and a degree in Social Communication, in Journalism and Advertising from the Faculdades Integradas Hélio Alonso. She is a researcher in technology and innovation in the field of education and network interactions, with a focus on the psychosociology of communication and emotions, especially in digital education using games. She is the founder of the startup Affect Comunicações Digitais.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0988-1233>
E-mail: fabiproba@gmail.com



LO BIANCO, V. holds a PhD in Education from ProPed/UERJ, with a Post-Doctorate in Education from UFRJ. He holds a Master's degree in Public Policies, Strategies and Development from the Institute of Economics at UFRJ, a specialist in Public Policies (UFRJ) and in Gender and Sexuality (Institute of Social Medicine/UERJ) and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Puc-Rio. He is a state civil servant, a Distance Learning and Scientific Dissemination Analyst at the CECIERJ Foundation and a leading researcher at the Cecierj Foundation's Innovation, Technology and Education Research Group (GITE). He is a member of the research groups Cyberculture, Education and Audiovisual Narratives - Cena (UERJ) and the Teaching and Cyberculture Research Group (GPDOC - Rural). He is a lawyer who graduated from the State University of Rio de Janeiro. He works in the following areas: Education, Cyberculture, Distance Education, Virtual Teaching-Learning Environments, Public Policies, Globalization and Comparative Analysis.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0083-303X>

Email: vlobianco@cecierj.edu.br

References

- ALENCAR, F. R.; BARROS, V. DA S. Ensino Remoto Emergencial e Reforma Neoliberal da Educação Brasileira: Tecendo Relações. **EaD em Foco**, v. 11, n. 1, p. 1–12, 2021.
- BELLONI, M. L. **Educação a Distância**. Campinas: Editora Autores Associados, 1999.
- BIELSCHOWSKY, C. E. Qualidade na Educação Superior a Distância no Brasil: Onde Estamos, para Onde Vamos? **EaD em FOCO**, v. 8, n. 1, p. 1–26, 2018.
- BRAUER, M. **Resistência à educação a distância na educação corporativa**. Tese (Doutorado em Administração de Empresas). São Paulo: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2008.
- CAMPOS, M. N. **L'intégration des forums de discussion dans l'enseignement supérieur**. 1. ed. Montreal, Quebec: Centre d'études et de formation en enseignement supérieur, 2004.
- CAMPOS, M. N. **Navegar é preciso, comunicar Impreciso**. São Paulo: Edusp, 2017.
- CAMPOS, M. N.; GRABOVSKI, C. Argumentação e design: Cognição, afetividade e moralidade em comunidades universitárias de aprendizagem. **Revista Educação e Cultura Contemporânea**, v. 08, n. 17, p. 1–27, 2011.
- GOMES, M. B. **Resistência à Educação a Distância na Educação Corporativa**. Tese de Doutorado—São Paulo: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2008.
- GRABOVSKI, C.; CAMPOS, M. **Lógica, Linguagem e representação**. p. 1–23, 2019.
- GRIZE, J.-B. **Logique naturelle et communication**. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996.
- MARKOVÁ, I. **Dialogicality and Social Representations: The Dynamics of Mind**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- MARKOVÁ, I. A fabricação da teoria de representações sociais. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, v. 47, n. 163, p. 358–375, mar. 2017.
- MÁRQUEZ, G. **100 anos de Solidão**. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1977.
- MOORE, M. **Educação a Distância uma versão Integrada**. São Paulo: Editora Tompson, 2007.
- MOORE, M.; KEARSLEY, G. **A educação a distância: uma visão integrada**. São Paulo: Thomson Le, 2010.
- MOSCOVICI, S. **A representação social da psicanálise**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1978.
- MOSCOVICI, S. **Representações sociais - Investigações em psicologia social**. 3. ed. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 2000.

- NOLASCO-SILVA, L.; LO BIANCO, V. **Os isolados e os aglomerados da Cibercultura**: ensino remoto emergencial, educação a distância e educação online. Salvador: Devires, 2022.
- PROBA, F. **Afetividade na educação superior a distância: competição e colaboração em fóruns por meio de jogos educacionais**. Tese (Doutorado em Psicossociologia de Comunidades e Ecologia Social), Rio de Janeiro: Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2020.
- SÁNCHEZ GAMBOA, S. (Org) **Pesquisa educacional**: quantidade – qualidade. São Paulo: Cortez, 2010.
- SANTOS, E. **Pesquisa-formação na cibercultura**. Teresina: EDUFPI, 2019.
- SILVA, A. **Estudo comparativo entre a metodologia do ensino a distância no âmbito do Consórcio CEDERJ e a presencial com enfoque nas disciplinas de contabilidade dos cursos de Administração da UFRRJ**. Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciências Contábeis). Rio de Janeiro: Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2010.
- SPINK, M. J. P. **Representações sociais: questionando o estado da arte**. Rio de Janeiro: Psicologia & Sociedade, 1996.
- VIANA, L. G. **Determinantes da resistência à educação a distância (EAD): Uma pesquisa com alunos do Curso de Administração da UFF**. Dissertação (Mestrado em Sistema de Gestão), Niterói: Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2011.
- VIANA, L. G. **Ágora: um novo olhar sobre representações sociais no contexto de preconceitos contra a educação à distância**. Tese (Doutorado em Psicossociologia de Comunidades e Ecologia Social), Rio de Janeiro: Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2020.