SOCIAL NETWORKS AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ANALYSIS OF PUBLICATIONS IN OPEN NETWORKS

Cristiane Borzuk[1*]
Universidade Federal de Goiás/Universidade Federal de Jataí[1]
*Autora correspondente: e-mail: cristianeborzuk@gmail.com

RESUMO

O propósito deste trabalho é apresentar elementos que indiquem o clima anti-iluminista e regressivo que tem orientado o comportamento de parte importante da população brasileira durante a pandemia do COVID-19. Parte-se do pressuposto de que os meios de comunicação de massa, principalmente as redes sociais, exercem um papel demasiadamente importante na disseminação de tais ideias. Os resultados preliminares desta investigação apontam para os seguintes elementos: 1. As publicações expressam uma tendência não apenas a subestimar o papel do conhecimento científico no enfrentamento à pandemia do COVID 19, como certa hostilidade a esse conhecimento; 2. O ticket-thinking foi identificado como a forma primordial das publicações analisadas; 3. Há uma importante estandardização do conteúdo das mensagens. O referencial teórico e metodológico é a Teoria Crítica da Sociedade.
Palavras-chave: Redes Sociais. Pandemia do covid19. Psicologia Social. Teoria crítica da sociedade.

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to present elements that point to the anti-enlightenment and regressive climate that has guided the behavior of a significant part of the Brazilian population during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is assumed that the mass media, especially social networks, play an excessively important role in the dissemination of such ideas. Preliminary results of this investigation point to the following elements: 1. The publications express a tendency not only in order to underestimate the role of scientific knowledge in facing the COVID 19 pandemic, but also with a certain hostility to that knowledge; 2. The *ticket-thinking* was identified as the primary form of the analyzed publications; 3. There is an important standardization of the content of the messages. The theoretical and methodological framework is the Critical Theory of Society.
Keywords: Social Networks. COVID-19 Pandemic. Social Psychology. Critical Theory of Society.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few months, Brazil and the world have faced one of the greatest public health emergencies in human history: the new coronavirus pandemic. In its current version, the coronavirus collects frightening death statistics worldwide and mobilizes the entire scientific community in the search for solutions to its effects. There is no news that at any other time in history, researchers from all countries and from different theoretical traditions were mobilized for a single purpose: to control the spread of a virus and to develop biomedical technology to fight the disease. Contrary to the efforts of researchers from all over the world, an important part of the Brazilian population refuses to adopt the measures recommended by national and international organizations to confront COVID-19, replacing them with questionable actions without any scientific basis.

In times when scientific knowledge is the only way to combat the harmful effects of the virus, Brazil deals to and suffers from uncertainties of the most varied orders, mainly due to a tendency to ignore or minimize the effects of such a pandemic, assuming positions

SOUTH AMERICAN JOURNAL
of Basic Education, Technical and Technological

SAJEBTT, Rio Branco, UFAC
v.8 n.1 (2021): Edição jan/abr.
ISSN: 2446-4821

incompatible with the current state of enlightenment of our time, even in the face of frightening numbers of deaths.

Amidst this scenario, the place of virtual communication networks should be highlighted. Today, competing with traditional media in broadcasting information, social networks have become an important instrument of social organization. The speed with which they allow the communication and transmission of information, as well as the ease of access, are characteristics that ensure their popularity and possibilities of instrumentalization. In addition, it is observed a change in the traditional forms of socialization of individuals, what implies new modes of relationship with concrete references and with the notions of true or false [1].

Therefore, the present paper aims to investigate the publications of ordinary people about the COVID 19 pandemic on an open internet network. It is assumed that an anti-enlightenment and regressive tendency has guided the behavior of a significant part of the Brazilian population with regard to understanding and coping with the COVID 19 pandemic.

This paper presents the results of the first stage of an ongoing investigation that evaluates the role of social networks in understanding and coping with the COVID 19 pandemic by the Brazilian population. The theoretical and methodological framework is the Critical Theory of Society

2. METHOD AND MATERIAL

The material used for the analysis was publications in an open network of users of the social network Twitter. Twitter is currently considered to be one of the most widely disseminated tools in recent years, enabling its users to send and receive messages instantly, in addition to being a quick communication channel between people and the community [2].

For the collection of *tweets*, an account was created that followed topics and accounts that had manifestations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interactions with *hashtags* were also made in the subjects of the moment in order to ensure a better use of the algorithms.

In about three months, from March to May 2020, 68 collections of tweets were made, which constituted the empirical material of the first stage of this study. In addition to the methodological adaptations necessary to the current scenario, which requires the researcher to improve research practice in crisis situations, social networks have been a privileged source for obtaining data in the field of social psychology, mainly due to the reach and, in consequence,

to the social impact of popular demonstrations. In addition, depending on the type of research, the use of social networks as a means of obtaining empirical data can contribute to overcome certain limitations of traditional methodological approaches in social sciences [3].

3. PROCEDURES

After collecting the empirical material, a sociological empirical analysis of intellectual products was performed as a methodological procedure. This procedure is the most appropriate one for the investigation of objects that belong to the scope of mass production, since, in these objects, there is a considerable standardization of the material to be analyzed [4]. In accordance with the theoretical framework, the continuity of data analysis will occur from the search for a structural sense of the results [5].

4. RESULTS

Preliminary results of this investigation point to the following elements: 1. The publications express a tendency not only predisposed to underestimate the role of scientific knowledge in facing the COVID 19 pandemic, but also a certain hostility to that knowledge; 2. The *ticket-thinking* was identified as the primary form of the analyzed publications, which indicates a reproduction of ideas without due reflection on them; 3. There is an important standardization of the material analyzed so far.

5. DISCUSSION

The objective initially proposed for this investigation was to present elements that indicate the anti-enlightenment and regressive climate that has guided the behavior of a great part of the Brazilian population during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is assumed that the mass media, especially social networks, play an excessively important role in the dissemination of such ideas.

As this is based on primary results of an ongoing investigation, the data presented here must be understood as preliminary, requiring further confirmation. In spite of this, the analysis carried out so far suggests an important standardization of both the form and content of publications, which indicates little or no reflection on the published content. Likewise, *ticket-*

thinking could be observed as much as in those publications that explicitly presented content contrary to the scientific approaches to dealing with the COVID 19 pandemic, and in those that presented content favorable to the scientific approach as a basis for fighting the pandemic. This implies that the two positions found predominantly in those publications, despite having different contents, substantially opposed to each other, follow a way in which the thought of both is structured in a similar form. *Ticket-thinking* refers to a way of thinking and perceiving the world that operates from apparently coherent 'blocks of meaning', but that are intrinsically contradictory [6]. It presents itself in contexts of political and economic instability, and consists of adherence to beliefs, ideas and conceptions that were not formed in the individual's own experience [7].

It is expected, with the progress of the research, to obtain more elements to understand the role played by social networks in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, contributing to the need to develop effective policies against the spread of fake news, especially in times of crisis.

REFERENCES

[1] Sodré, M. Antropológica do espelho: uma teoria da comunicação linear e em rede (5a ed.). Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2010.

[2] Gómez, L. M; García Torres, C. Twitter. Revista Colombiana de Anestesiología, 38(4), 539-540, 2010.

[3] Kosinski, M.; Matz, S. C.; Gosling, S. D.; Popov, V.; Stillwell, D. Facebook as a research tool for the social sciences: opportunities, challenges, ethical considerations, and practical guidelines. American Psychologist, 70(6), p. 543-556, 2015.

[4] Adorno, T. W. Epistemología y ciencias sociales. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2001.

[5] Adorno, T. W.; Frenkel-Brunswik, E.; Levinson, D. J.; Sandford, R. N. The authoritarian personality. New York, NY: WW Norton, 1969.

[6] Cohn, G. Esclarecimento e ofuscação. Lua Nova, n.43, p.5-24, 1998.

[7] Adorno, T. W; Horkheimer, M. Dialética do Esclarecimento. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1985.