

The street and social representations for the population of street of Manaus

A rua e as representações sociais para a população de rua de Manaus

La calle y las representaciones sociales de la población de la calle de Manaus

RESUMO

Objetivo: O trabalho apresenta algumas significações da rua do ponto de vista da população que faz dela sua moradia versando sobre os diferentes significados que ela assume para os sujeitos. **Método:** As representações sociais resultam de informações e ações coletivas realizadas por pequenos grupos, e as mesmas refletem nas atitudes tomadas individualmente. A pesquisa foi realizada durante a segunda onda de covid-19 com as pessoas que vivem em situação de rua em Manaus através de roda de conversas e atividades de expressão artística. **Resultados:** Como resultado foi possível observar como o significado de rua segue um padrão negativo quanto à saúde, alimentação, moradia, segurança, conforto e sociabilidade, sendo a criminalidade, o medo e a ausência de uma alimentação adequada, os fatores mais correlacionados à definição do que é a vida na rua. **Conclusão:** A representação da rua ora é penosa ora um lugar de afetividades maneira que a rua é caracterizada em sua complexidade.

DESCRITORES: Representações sociais; População em situação de rua; Pesquisa qualitativa.

ABSTRACT

The work presents some meanings of the street from the point of view of the population that makes it their home, dealing with the different meanings it assumes for the subjects. Social representations result from information and collective actions carried out by small groups, and they reflect on defined attitudes. The research was carried out during the second wave of covid-19 with people who live on the streets in Manaus through conversation circles and artistic expression activities. As a result, it was possible to observe how the meaning of street follows a negative result in terms of health, food, housing, safety, comfort and sociability, with crime, fear and the lack of adequate food being the factors most correlated to the definition of what it's life on the street. The representation of the street is sometimes painful and sometimes a place of affection, the way the street is characterized in its complexity.

DESCRIPTORS: Social representations; Homeless population; Qualitative research

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo presenta algunos significados de la calle desde el punto de vista de la población que la convierte en su hogar, abordando los diferentes significados que asume para los sujetos. Las representaciones sociales resultan de la información y acciones colectivas realizadas por pequeños grupos, y reflejan las actitudes tomadas individualmente. La investigación se realizó durante la segunda ola del covid-19 con personas que viven en situación y calle en la ciudad de Manaus, a través de círculos de conversación y actividades de expresión artística. Como resultado, se pudo observar cómo el significado de la calle para cada uno de ellos sigue un patrón negativo en términos de salud, alimentación, vivienda, seguridad, comodidad y sociabilidad, siendo la delincuencia, el miedo y la ausencia de una alimentación diaria adecuada. los factores que más se han correlacionado con la definición de vida en la calle.

DESCRIPTORES: Representaciones sociales; Población sin hogar; Investigación cualitativa

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INTRODUCTION

Studies in Brazil on the subject of social representation among the homeless population are still few, mainly because it is a floating population on which data are imprecise and insufficient. In this sense, this qualitative research proposes to study the meanings of the street for the homeless population of the city of Manaus from the experiences, daily life, way of living and the meanings of the street for this population, especially at a time when the pandemic has also changed the daily life of those who use the street space as a way of life and survival.

Social representations result from experiences, information and collective actions carried out by groups, which are reflected in the attitudes taken individually. When the identity of this group is put to the test or contradicted, it is from then on that these representations arise, as they point out how these individuals see themselves in the face of reality Araújo, (2008).³

The homeless population is influenced by several complex situations taking into account their life history, the influences of family conflicts, the use and abuse of psychoactive substances and the street situation itself, which is already characterized by a set of violence and violation of rights.

Definitions about homeless people and public opinion are influenced by preconceived ideas, by the erroneous thought that people who live on the street are criminals, but in fact, anyone, for numerous reasons, can end up living on the street. The National Policy for the Homeless population defined it as a heterogeneous population group that suffers from extreme poverty, weakened or broken family relationships and lack of conventional housing⁴, and

is forced to use the streets temporarily or permanently as a space for living and sustenance. And for the homeless, what is the meaning of the street? The article aims to bring some ideas of what the street is from the meanings for the homeless population of Manaus.

METHOD

The article is the result of an exploratory-descriptive research, with a qualitative-quantitative approach carried out in the urban area of the city of Manaus (AM), with data collection and conversation circles, in May and June 2021 in a temporary shelter for the homeless population due to the pandemic, using the focal research method where conversation circles were held in small groups to carry out art and artistic expression activities.

The field research was carried out in November and December 2021, with a bibliographic survey on the topic and research planning with prior contact with the shelter and clarification of the work. The field research was carried out with people who were sheltered during the pandemic period and who agreed to participate in the study with data collection scheduled with the proper authorization and consent of the participants. The project was approved with CAAE number: 14643019.6.0000.0007.

The Social Representations Theory (SRT) was adopted, whose theorist is Serge Moscovici,¹² which defines social representations (SR) as “a particular type of knowledge having the function of elaborating behaviors and communication between individuals”. Thus, for the author, social representations are modalities of knowledge that circulate in our daily lives.

As a data collection technique, the focus group was used, where conversation circles were held with the group of people who agreed to participate in the study and who were sheltered during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a maximum of five people in conversation circles. A script with open questions was used as data collection instruments to encourage people to expose their view of the street and the sheltering process, the pandemic. People were asked to express their opinions from an art activity, drawing and painting where the meaning of the streets for each research participant would be associated through speech, writing and artistic expression through drawings and a script of questions to guide participants to speak freely about the topic.

The data were analyzed using the Content Analysis method, which is one of the best methods of reading the data obtained through interviews. For this research, the content analysis technique used was categorization, which consists of an operation of classifying elements into categories following criteria previously defined by Bardin.⁴ Therefore, the data obtained from the interviews went through a transcription process and, after discussion with the research group, tabulation and analysis were performed.

RESULT

The meaning of the street for each person depends on the individual stories and the affective bonds established by him during his life. In this sense, when approaching people about what the street means to them, the answers indicated that it depends on how each one experienced the street in their individual experience, the

meanings of the street for the interviewees were categorized according to the speeches in the conversation circle and from the finished drawings, they were able to express their feelings and verbalize the meanings of the street categorized as: discomfort, sadness, violence, suffering and solidarity. Expressing feelings is not an easy task for these people, we noticed that many had difficulty speaking and, little by little, felt comfortable, demonstrating the opportunity to speak, it is not a routine for them.

In the conversation circles, each one was asked to write in a single word, what the street meant to them, then these papers were drawn and redistributed among the participants so that they could talk about the written words. After this conversation circle, they were invited to express everything that was discussed through the drawing activity. Each one was able to expose their speeches, which were recorded, transcribed and tabulated according to the categorization performed and identified as shown in the table below:

According to the answers of the interviewees, there are things in common in the answers that were categorized into discomfort, sadness, violence, suffering, but also solidarity. It was possible to observe how the meaning of the street for each of them follows a negative pattern regarding health, food, housing, safety, comfort and sociability, with criminality, fear and the absence of an adequate daily diet, the factors that were most correlated to the definition of what life on the street is, making it one of the cruelest and most painful a person can go through.

DISCUSSION

Despite the hardships expressed in the speeches, solidarity was present in the speeches when the participants associated the street with union and humility, especially among peers and the affective relationships reproduced. One of the interviewees talked about "union" on the street and another talked about solidarity between people who live on the street and help each other, at the same time, this so-

CONCEPTS FROM THE SPEECH OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONVERSATION WHEEL

MEANINGS OF THE STREET	SPEECH
Discomfort	"When you can sleep at dawn, you can sleep on that bench, when there's a problem or accident, it's all night sitting." (Participant 1) "If something happens to you, you don't have a doctor, you don't have help from anyone. The worst problem for a homeless person is the rain, there's nowhere to run, other than what happens, like crime." (Participant 2)
Sadness	"Sometimes you're on the street, someone blessed helps you, and sometimes not. These things. Of course I agree, for everyone on the street it's sad, today I can get food, but what about tomorrow? Many don't think about it." (Participant 2). "For me, it is sad to see this, especially for us, who is a mother, who is a father, you know? Just like they who are far away passing by, none of us want it for our children" (Participant 1).
Violence	"On the street I didn't trust or sleep close to anyone, I walked alone. There is the group of the quiet and the most disturbed, there you choose who you want to hang out with. I didn't know anything, then I started hanging out with some guys from the street, when I saw it, I was already doing harm to other people, then I walked away." (Participant 4)
Solidarity	"I can put the 'R' as 'wheel' because there you find many cars, motorcycles, buses, bicycles, 'U' as 'union', you are always with someone, you always have an acquaintance and the 'A' as 'love', love is always on the street in some way, there is always someone to help you in some way." (Participant 5)* *translator's note: In Portuguese, wheel means "roda", which starts with "R"; "love" means amor, which starts with "A"; Street means rua, so the participant forms an acrostic with the word RUA and its initials. "It is easier for a homeless person to offer a plate of food to another than a neighbor next to your house, a brother takes a shirt out of his bag and helps you, this becomes humility on the street, so through this I gain many friendships, I am friends with perdition, alcohol, drugs, I am friends with theft, traffic, then it's up to you to choose which friendship you prefer, so it's a little bit of everything." (Participant 3)
Suffering	"It's true, suffering in many ways such as pain, hunger, thirst, sleep poorly, eat poorly, live poorly, walk poorly, dress badly, hurt the mind, hurt the body, hurt the emotional, hurt the soul, hurt the spirit, that is, suffering in its most literal definition. I don't want to go through this anymore, I don't want this suffering anymore." (Participant 6) "I'm unemployed, I had to go to the street, and then I couldn't fulfill the dream of having a job, because I have six children. So this distresses me a lot, because a father feels it, right? When a son needs the support of his father and the support of a mother. So I went through a depression. A lot of people lost their jobs, some relatives, some friends of ours, it messes a little with the person's psychological, and you are at the mercy" (Participant 2)

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2021.

lidarity was not extended to society, that is, there is a sense of collectivity and solidarity relations in life on the street that is linked to survival.

The way they interact on the street and the sources of food and services offered by social and religious organizations, the places where they look for food, bath and sleep, lead people to establish commu-

nication networks that end up bringing together common interests and networks of social relationships. Montes (1994)¹² said that there is an interaction of this street man that leads to his insertion in networks of relationships, from the network of "Boca de Rango" to the "mocós" and the information that circulates about other people who are arriving on the street. And

from there, bonds of solidarity are created between them and links with the institutions that work with them.

In this sense, it is important to remember that the solidarity network is established among the homeless population as well as externally in favor of people living on the street, such as religious, social and non-profit institutions, it integrates actions to reduce social exclusion and many are established with the purpose of taking care of homeless people.

Palheta et al, (2019) considers that the house and the street have things in common and different, it often changes, according to each experience, with singularities lived and with the stories, not always happy with the house, which in the social imaginary is the enclosure of the four walls that we usually know and the street, can, indeed, be better than the house, for many of them.

As well as for Ferreira and Alves (2015) 7 who argue that “Homeless people are rarely heard and, when they are, they tend to borrow the dominant representation, repeating the already existing discourse that they probably learned from the media.” Once homeless people find a space to express their opinions, they can feel represented and can make clear the survival difficulties they face such as hunger, violence and humiliations 10 and, at the same time, an opportunity to express their pain, difficulties and forms of resistance.

It is the expressive knowledge of the common sense of social knowledge, not only for its importance in everyday mutual influence and social life, but also because it is related to life relationships, in which we absorb the social representations of childhood, where we use our experiences and thus, we can show their concepts in different areas of life.

The process of building these representations is related to the unknown, so that stories, images, objects, etc., start to be seen, reinterpreted and reorganized, to the point of becoming familiar through two forms of materialization and anchoring, that is, in the materialization of things on a more abstract level. 3 Social

representations are articulated and shared to establish a common reality that can be communicated and disseminated in the form of discourse, images and behavior in the social environment; its origin and function are related to three areas of attribution - subjective, intersubjective and superobjective. Oliveira et al (2016). In addition to guiding us to define, name and interpret different aspects of reality,

Social representations result from experiences, information and collective actions carried out by groups, which are reflected in the attitudes taken individually.
ARAÚJO , (2008)

making decisions and opposing us, these representations also bring meaning to individuals and keep them together (Silva et al., 2020).

Feelings such as suffering, sadness and situations of violence, discrimination and discomfort are common to people living on the streets, in many cases, this feeling

is extreme and with experiences within families and that, often lead to the use and abuse of psychoactive substances.

Through qualitative research, Mattos and Ferreira ¹¹ demonstrate the typification that society creates around this population segment usually associated with vagrancy, dirt, madness, dangerousness and also pity, contributing to these adjectives serving as symbolic material in the construction of their social representations.

Some see them as a threat, as an imminent danger, wanting to see the city free from their presence, a sanitizing idea that considers them tramps for not working formally, looking at them with hostile eyes, but there are also those who sympathize with these residents, who look at them emotionally with a feeling of pity 11, which generates the birth of social organizations that offer food, bath, clothes, among other actions to minimize the situation of vulnerability.

The streets are places where countless people seek to be welcomed, supported and sheltered, even if they often suffer from unsanitary conditions and human settlements, in addition to food and water deprivation, climate change and violence.

To Paula et al. ⁰⁶ “The problem of living on the street is daily crossed by the proliferation of diseases, violence, stress and hostility. Getting sick on the streets has its own characteristics in the health-disease process, being determined by the spacing between meals, exposure to climate change and other factors. But, at the same time, living on the street depends on “opportunities” that the street itself brings, such as food and money.” Thus, together with the issue of not having a home, another problem is living on the streets without the subsidies that it offers them, taken away by social isolation, even if scarce.

Another additive is the breaking of marital ties resulting from the lack of basic subsidies for a minimally dignified and humane survival. These factors are pointed out by the interviewees as a consequence of a government that is oblivious to the health and well-being needs of this

population.

CONCLUSION

The street for many who live on it means suffering and sadness and, at the same time, solidarity and union. The representation of the street in this research is painful, but it can also be a place for affective social relationships, so that in the street space there are complexities and the establishment of bonds and not just criminality and hardships.

From the point of view of citizenship, the street situation is the violation of all

fundamental rights, of all the degrading situations that a human being can experience, but it is also possible to establish bonds in it, it can also be a space of solidarity, of union and this paradoxical situation makes perfect sense when we have the opportunity to listen to the street population.

By listening to the meanings of the street for the homeless, it was possible to conclude that the social representations of the homeless population of Manaus transit in the dimensions of emotions and sociability. In this context, the experience of each one brings sadness and social relationships

that find meaning in being solidary and in very scarce dimensions, contributing to the fact that life on the street is seen by them as a place of great vulnerability, counterproductive and unfavorable, but at some point, solidarity finds a place in the satisfaction of survival needs.

Future studies on the reality experienced by the homeless population is necessary, since it is a broad and complex topic, of extreme importance for socialization, well-being, health and guarantee of basic rights to this marginalized and excluded part of the social wealth in Brazilian society.

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