

ADOLESCENCE, PANDEMIC, AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES FROM A GLOBAL SOUTH PERSPECTIVE

Adolescência, pandemia e exclusão social: perspectivas teóricas e desafios a partir de uma perspectiva do sul-global

Adolescencia, pandemia y exclusión social: perspectivas teóricas y desafíos a partir de una perspectiva global

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Abstract

This paper discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic has unevenly affected adolescents' lives and how it has accentuated/stressed asymmetries and social barriers existing in the pre-pandemic world. We criticize biological, naturalistic, and essentialist perspectives that suggest the universality of adolescents' psychosocial processes. Furthermore, we present arguments and suggestions for further studies to be conducted with adolescents who experience historical processes of exclusion, enhancing international understanding of their social and psychological needs. This manuscript contributes to the critical understanding of the variability of pandemic impacts on adolescents' lives, encouraging researchers to carry out innovative investigations from a theoretical and methodological point of view.

Keywords: Adolescence; Pandemic; Social Exclusion; Brazil; Global South.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa como a pandemia da COVID-19 afetou de forma desigual a vida dos adolescentes e como esse evento catastrófico acentuou as assimetrias e barreiras sociais existentes no mundo pré-pandemia. Na primeira parte do manuscrito, apresentamos uma posição crítica em relação às perspectivas biológicas, naturalistas e essencialistas que sugerem a universalidade dos processos psicossociais dos adolescentes. Além disso, a partir dos fundamentos da psicologia histórico-cultural, apresentamos argumentos e sugestões para novos estudos a serem realizados com adolescentes que vivenciam processos históricos de exclusão, potencializando a compreensão de suas necessidades sociais e psicológicas. Este artigo pode contribuir para a compreensão crítica da variabilidade dos impactos da pandemia na vida dos adolescentes, incentivando os pesquisadores a realizarem investigações inovadoras do ponto de vista teórico e metodológico.

Palavras-chave: Adolescência, Pandemia, Exclusão Social, Brasil, Sul-Global.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza cómo una pandemia de COVID-19 afecta de forma desigual a la vida de los adolescentes y cómo ese evento catastrófico acentuado como asimetrías y barreras sociales existentes en el mundo pre-pandemia. En la primera parte del manuscrito, presentamos una posición crítica en relación con perspectivas biológicas, naturalistas y esencialistas que sugieren la universalidad de los procesos psicossociales de los adolescentes. Además, a partir de los fundamentos de la psicología histórico-cultural,

presentamos argumentos y sugerencias para novos estudos a serem realizados com adolescentes que vivencian procesos históricos de exclusión, potencializando a comprender de sus necesidades sociales y psicológicas. Este artículo puede contribuir a la comprensión crítica de la variabilidad de los impactos de la pandemia en la vida de dos adolescentes, incentivando a los investigadores a realizar investigaciones innovadoras del punto de vista teórico y metodológico.

Palavras-chave: Adolescência, Pandemia, Exclusão Social, Brasil, Sul-Global.

Background

This paper discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic has unevenly affected adolescents' lives and how it has accentuated/stressed asymmetries and social barriers existing in the pre-pandemic world. From a Brazilian perspective, we argue that historical and social conditions have created divergent challenges for sectors of the population already facing social vulnerability and exclusion conditions. In the first part of this manuscript, we discuss how science, mainly psychology, has distinct theoretical models to explain human development processes, highlighting the divergent theoretical perspectives that enable various frameworks for understanding and explaining adolescence. Biological, naturalistic, and essentialist perspectives that suggest the universality of adolescents' psychosocial processes are criticized. Alternatively, we highlight the epistemological precept of Historical-Cultural Psychology, which understands human development as a dialectic relationship between individual and culture, where the capitalist system is responsible for producing social inequalities and different developmental opportunities for adolescents.

Second, we reflect on how the COVID-19 pandemic brought significant adverse repercussions to groups belonging to historically marginalized contexts. Here, we integrate the concept of syndemic to deepen the discussion of the psychological and social effects of the pandemic on adolescents' lives. In addition, we point out how denialist speeches by political leaders have aggravated the challenges the pandemic has imposed, with more severe repercussions for the working class and groups exposed to poverty.

Finally, we present a summary of the main arguments and suggest that further studies be conducted with adolescents who experience historical processes of exclusion, enhancing international understanding of their social and psychological needs. This

manuscript contributes to the critical understanding of the variability of pandemic impacts on adolescents' lives, encouraging researchers to carry out innovative investigations from a theoretical and methodological point of view.

Scientific Discourses of Adolescence

Psychological theories that seek to understand adolescence are remarkably diverse in their assumptions and methodological approaches. This diversity becomes evident when considering the variety of conceptions about what it means to be an adolescent and the experiences and challenges that this life stage can bring. Although there is a common focus among the different approaches - to understand the psychological development processes that occur during adolescence and their impacts on the formation of identity and well-being of individuals - the way they deal with adolescence may vary significantly.

For example, biological, naturalistic, and essentialist perspectives attribute pre-determined and innate characteristics to adolescence, where this phase is linked to spontaneous biological and psychological processes associated with the emergence of physiologically or naturalistically embedded personal and interpersonal conflicts (Griffa & Moreno, 2010). Conversely, there are critical studies advocating that adolescence is a dynamic period; a phase that is not ontologically determined but is built and experienced according to life materiality and social relationships where the adolescent is inserted (Anjos & Duarte, 2019; Bock, 2004; Pereira et al., 2020).

Critical theorists argue that what is presented as normal adolescent development is actually fiction created by the dominant ideology. As Marx and Engels (1998, p. 67) argued, "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas." The dominant class imposes their own reference pattern of existence on knowledge production and

related knowledge. Thus, everything that deviates from this pattern (in other words, non-European populations, and their cultures, as well as female existence and even life phases that precede adulthood) is seen as non-normative (Maia & Melo, 2020). After all, what is the place of poor people in capitalist societies? What position do women occupy in the patriarchal world? Where do Black people stand in racist societies? In adult-centred societies, can children and adolescents speak? If they do, are their voices considered?

The advance of the organization of marginalized people in collective and social movements has progressively advanced the fight for recognition and enforcement of the rights of marginalized groups (Braga, 2017). However, much contemporary research continues to reproduce reductionist and stigmatizing conceptions of certain groups, including adolescents. Psychology, in particular, is still strongly linked to positivist science, predominating a set of know-how subordinated to capitalism and neoliberalism (Costa & Farias, 2022; Costa & Mendes, 2021; 2022; Farias et al., 2022). Yamamoto (1987) demonstrated, for instance, how ‘the classification (measuring and labelling) of individuals came to constitute one of psychologists’ main activities’ (p. 23). This prerogative helped to consolidate the arguments supporting a supposed authority that defines what is normal and pathological, an approach that continues to be critiqued (Tuleski & Franco, 2019).

A growing body of research highlights the plurality of human existence and development, undermining the validity of static frameworks. From a biopsychosocial perspective, for example, people are seen to be in constant transformation (Franco et al, 2020; Pereira et al., 2020). A society based on competitive ideals, for example, contributes to the construction of equally competitive individuals. The human being is then constantly in transformation according to social-historical reality. In this sense,

adolescent development is framed by the social-historical context in which they are living (Anjos & Duarte, 2019; Malanchen & Anjos, 2018). Therefore, individuals do not precede society or exist independently of it. Ignoring this understanding allows for the emergence of incomplete epistemological approaches, fostering a deficit perspective of human development (Tonet, 2013), ignoring the dialectical process involved in the developmental processes. These theoretical bases are inspired by scientific models inherited from the natural sciences, which are founded on Cartesian logic and suggest the creation of universal laws (Farias & Campos, 2021; Demo, 2002).

In this regard, subjecting all adolescents' ways of being to a single formula. Apart from neglecting the complexity and specificities of this phase of human development, it contributes to the erasure of the diversity of the ways of experiencing adolescence, as impacted by historical positioning and different social, political, economic, and personal contexts. In their efforts to answer the question "what is adolescence?", naturalistic perspectives produce a generalist and incomplete answer (Anjos & Duarte, 2019; Hall, 1904).

That means that certain behaviors and practices are presented as a general rule to explain the development process of all and any adolescent (Aberastury & Knobel, 1981; Erikson, 1968; Hall, 1904; Tiba, 2005), founded above all on theoretical models related to biological maturation. Such perspectives end up universalizing trends and patterns constructed from predominantly middle-class, European and American contexts, whose resource allocation for knowledge production is incontestably higher in comparison with Global South countries (Negri & Squeff, 2014; Schneegans et al., 2021).

Another gap that derives from the absence of dialectical thinking on naturalistic approaches refers to the denial of the dialectical interaction between social, biological,

and psychical domains as if they were separated instances. It is, however, necessary to recognize that distinction does not promote disjunction among these spheres. Founded on positivist assumptions, naturalistic perspectives fail to notice how, for example, the social-historical context relates to the development of psychological functions (Vigotski, 2021; Anjos, 2017) in a dialectical process.

Thus, with the aim of avoiding essentialist idealizations and conceptions of adolescence, it is necessary to produce historically, socioeconomically, and culturally situated knowledge and practices about adolescence that could promote a qualified and ethically committed understanding. The contributions of Historical-Cultural Psychology, proposed by Vigotski (2006; 2021) seem to provide resources and theoretical models more consistent with the needs and demands of adolescents from different contexts and cultures, exactly because this theory understands individuals in their totality.

For Vigotski (2006), in addition to hormonal and physical changes present during adolescence, this period is also characterized by transformations in higher psychological functions via continued brain development, where the development of conceptual thinking continues. As Prestes (2010, p. 36) explains, “Vigotski did not deny the importance of the biological aspect in human development, but he claimed that it is during the process of assimilation of the sign systems that biological psychic functions turn into new functions, in higher psychological functions”. These transformations – both biological and psychological – do not happen in a void of time and space, but they emerge and are conditioned within a specific social context, which produces unequal and differentiated pathways of development. For this reason, the definition a priori of characteristics and “problems” of adolescence impedes the identification of psychosocial determinants that influence this group.

Understanding adolescent developmental processes, especially in extremely unequal contexts – such as those found in Brazil and in other Latin American countries – requires consideration of the asymmetrical positions individuals occupy in societies divided by class, race, and gender oppression, which is expressed in the racist-patriarchal-capitalist model (Saffioti, 1992). Therefore, it does not seem appropriate to employ the term adolescence in the singular form, but in the plural: adolescences.

The development of every adolescent is shaped by a set of social markers determined by the society where they find themselves (Anjos & Duarte, 2019). Consequently, it is essential to demarcate the historical, social, and personal conditions that form their subjective experiences in a dialectical process (Liebenberg, 2020; Oliveira & Costa, 2018). For example, adolescents living in a patriarchal society are subject to a set of behavioral expectations concerning male figures and masculinity. They are coerced to act according to the prescriptions of these patterns (i.e., not showing feelings in public or using violence to solve interpersonal conflicts). Additionally, historical legacies of colonization intersect with these gender expectations, often underpinning acts of lateral violence.

In the case of Brazil, particular social and psychological factors are imposed on adolescents' experiences. The intersection of colonialism, capitalism, racism, and patriarchy constitutes a society where standards of normalcy relegate Black people, women, and workers to a subaltern position in the class structure (Davis, 2016). Brazil, as a peripheral capitalist country, has elevated rates of socioeconomic inequality (Miranda et al., 2018). Nevertheless, recent years have been marked by the advance of neoliberal ideology. This context was accentuated after the 2016 coup d'état and the resulting advancement of neofascist movements during the period of Bolsonaro's administration,

contributing to aggravated inequality and accentuated social problems, such as hunger and unemployment (Miranda & Paiva, 2021). This position poses material and symbolic limitations for individuals who are marginalized. Within this context, adolescents develop based on the conditions and possibilities they are offered or that they can access (Liebenberg, 2020).

However, given the aforementioned structures of oppression, the developmental possibilities of Brazilian adolescents are not just different, but uneven. Adolescents belonging to more impoverished sectors of the working class find a set of constraining conditions for their development (i.e., need to carry out informal work activities, exposure to precarious living and housing conditions, faint possibilities of attending leisure and cultural places; inaccessibility to public policies; among others).

Experiences of Adolescence at the Periphery of Capitalism

Given the broader socioeconomic context, many Brazilian adolescents experience a violation of their fundamental rights. Abhorrent forms of child labor, for example, become a survival strategy for children and adolescents living in contexts of poverty (OIT, 2000; Galdeano & Almeida, 2018). Likewise, many adolescents are sexually exploited and, in many cases, with the connivance of those who should act to ensure their protection, including the State, family or civil society (Caleiro, 2021). Consequently, children and adolescents are coerced to behave like adults. Discussions exploring adolescent development in such contexts are still scarce in human development psychological theories and virtually absent in naturalistic approaches.

The Child and Adolescent Statute, established in 1990, is the main document for ensuring this population's rights in Brazil and considers adolescents people between 12-

18 years old. In practice, it is possible to observe that Brazilian adolescents' life conditions, marked by the inequality of opportunities, produce very distinct and discrepant realities resulting in varied and multifaceted development processes, regardless of arbitrary labelling of adolescence based on chronological age. Additionally, this statute is applied unevenly across various sectors of Brazilian society, where youth living in poverty are seen as less deserving of protection (Scherer, 2017; Trassi & Malvassi, 2010). Therefore, it is possible to argue that experiencing adolescence in a way that does not breach fundamental rights constitutes a "good" that can only be accessed by those occupying a "privileged" position in society. In a country where citizenship is not universal, essential services – such as sewage disposal, right to housing, leisure, transportation, food, and quality education – are accessed only by those who can pay for them, whereas others occupy a position of subalternity and scarcity (Souza, 2009). Collectively, these experiences constitute micro and macro aggressions against already marginalized adolescents, generating humiliation and distress for them. In this regard, encouraging reflection and constructing an agenda to investigate these issues paves the way for a critical psychology that accounts for the demands of adolescents in vulnerable situations.

Based on such reflections, one can infer that psychological and social development in adolescence is concurrently universal and unique because it corresponds to the particular result of the individual's interaction with a complex of social structures, which act within the constitution of subjectivities. Accordingly, there is a need to subvert the axioms on which a significant portion of hegemonic psychological thinking is based, namely, that the individual is sovereign over context. Contrary to what naturalistic perspectives advocate, adolescence is not a static concept but a complex dynamic

category. In this regard, it is necessary to demarcate the difference between an idealized concept of adolescence and a historically and socially situated understanding of adolescence.

This need has been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic that, which affected the whole world, but not equally. After all, given the functioning of dominant social structures previously discussed, some groups were more vulnerable than others and are, thus, more susceptible to suffering from the deleterious effects of the pandemic. The same is true for adolescents where, for example, the demands of a Black poor adolescent are different from the demands on white middle-class adolescents, who can rely on greater access to material and symbolic resources to protect themselves. In this scenario, State and Psychology, when committed to constructing an equitable society, must consider the multiple forms of becoming an adolescent.

Pandemic and Adolescence: Devastating Scenarios from Brazil

The COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic began in China at the end of 2019. Since then, it has been deemed one of the biggest health challenges of the century (Werneck & Carvalho, 2020). With the exponential increase in cases, China declared an epidemic in January 2020 and was followed shortly by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020). Accordingly, COVID-19 was considered a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC); a phenomenon of the potential risk to several countries' health given its spread capacity. This scenario required coordinated and fast international action (WHO, 2005).

In International Health Regulation (IHR) history, a PHEIC has been declared only six times: i) H1N1; ii) poliovirus; iii) Ebola in West Africa; iv) Zika virus; v) Ebola in

the Democratic Republic of Congo; and vi) COVID-19. It is important to emphasize that a disease is considered a pandemic according to its geographic distribution and not to the severity of cases (WHO, 2005). According to Data Analytics (2021), until December 2021, COVID-19 was present in 210 countries, areas or territories worldwide. In terms of the number of cases, data collected by WHO indicated that, until March 2023, over 762,201,169 million cases were diagnosed and about 6,889,743 million deaths from COVID-19 worldwide. In Brazil, over 37,258,663 confirmed cases in the same period and over 700,239 thousand deaths were reported (WHO, 2022).

In this epidemiological and health setting, many questions arose concerning the best strategies to cope with the global pandemic. Scientific knowledge was initially insufficient in understanding the virus, its rapid transmissibility, and the increase in the number of deaths, especially amongst those already considered vulnerable. This lack of knowledge heightened health authorities' concerns over which containment actions would be more effective in dealing with the outcomes of the pandemic (Werneck & Carvalho, 2020).

Despite this lack of knowledge, social isolation (or quarantine) was considered by the WHO as a fundamental strategy to control the exponential growth of cases and overload of health services (Marques et al., 2020). However, the implementation of these recommendations internationally has had diverse repercussions areas across various sectors of society, including their impact on education and health processes, interpersonal relationships and undoubtedly on every level of the economic sector (Marques et al., 2020).

For example, a survey conducted by the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) demonstrated how the economic crisis triggered by COVID-19 created

unprecedented social inequalities (Berniell, 2021). Survey data shows that the decrease in employment was significant in most Latin American countries. However, this impact has not been felt equally among the whole population. In many of these countries, among them Brazil, people with lower education and women suffered more from adverse effects (Berniell, 2021). This demonstrates how the pandemic did not represent a “democratic event”, as it did not affect everyone in the same way (Berniell, 2021). Berniell (2021) concludes that health, economic, social, and relationship crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic magnified vulnerabilities already existing in some portions of the population, mainly those who experienced significant adversities in the pre-pandemic period.

Considering this reality and especially the multilevel impacts of the pandemic, it is possible to perceive COVID-19 not only as a pandemic but also as a syndemic. A syndemic combines and potentiates health, social, economic, and cultural problems (Veiga-Neto, 2020). This perspective aims to understand disease by accounting for biological interactions (i.e., comorbidities among different pathologies) and the extent to which socioeconomic and cultural conditions contribute to the accentuation or interaction of diseases within populations made vulnerable by the social and economic marginalization to which they are subject (Singer et al., 2017).

Horton (2020) pointed out that different governments, scholarly communities, and sectors of society have performed insufficient and inappropriate management against COVID-19, mainly because they did not understand the syndemic dimension created by the disease and its interaction with other important social issues. Thus, uncritical decisions were made that failed to consider how effects were disproportionately reaching

populations living in poverty, social exclusion, stigmatization, structural violence, and environmental issues, among others (Bispo Júnior & Santos, 2021).

In Brazil, it is possible to identify crises that mutually combine and reinforce the saturation in the public health sector, political tension, and economic recession (Veiga-Neto, 2020). COVID-19, for instance, affected the Brazilian population in a period of extreme vulnerability, with high unemployment rates and deep fiscal cuts aimed at dismantling investments in social policies (Werneck & Carvalho, 2020). Consequently, during the pandemic period, the country experienced a significant crisis not only in terms of health but also an overlap of social problems that were catalyzed by the pandemic (Melo and Cabral, 2020), where their repercussions were more accentuated in vulnerable populations.

An emblematic case is that of the first recorded infection and death from COVID-19. The first reported death in the country was that of a Black woman who worked as a cleaner in a private home. She was contaminated through contact with her employer, who had travelled abroad and returned to Brazil with the virus (Globo G1, 2020). This case demonstrated how the virus was brought into Brazil via the elite, but those initial deaths were reported among those living in poverty, spotlighting a syndemic condition where historically marginalized populations are more impacted than others.

Indeed, this reality has been evidenced in the report “Brazil Poverty and Equity Assessment: Looking Ahead of Two Crises” (World Bank, 2022). Here, data indicated that women, young people and low-income people faced higher risks in relation to the labor market, including access to the workplace and loss of established jobs. Poor families in Brazil experienced higher indices of food insecurity, and for children and youth populations living in areas characterized by heightened vulnerability, it was more

challenging to have school access (for example, remote/virtual education). The Black population and residents of North and Northeast Brazil were the most affected by the drop-in employment rates during the pandemic (The World Bank, 2022).

As observed, populations already living in vulnerable situations were even more exposed to structural problems, which aggravated the country's chronic condition of social inequality. In the case of the child and youth population living in contexts of social vulnerability, the argument is made that care efforts should be redoubled because of the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic accentuated existing risks (Cohen & Bosk, 2020). The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020) showed that outbreaks of prior diseases such as poliovirus and Ebola had already left a significant increase in the existing risks for this population. During COVID-19, the quarantine period, combined with increased economic and social instability, accentuated the exposure to vulnerabilities in the intra-family context of adolescents (Cohen & Bosk, 2020). Thus, family environments that were already at risk were affected in a more accentuated fashion because of the lack of resources, movement restrictions, increased unemployment and income reduction, and the shutdown of schools and protective social services, among other factors (Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2020).

Additionally, the education of adolescents was especially dire during the pandemic, given their removal from the school environment to support isolation efforts. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020) found that over 168 million children and adolescents internationally were removed from school in 2020. The situation is even more critical in Latin America, with over 97% of students out of the classroom missing, on average, four times more school days than the rest of the

world (UNICEF, 2020). Considering the heightened social inequality within Brazil, the impact of such school absence could be even more significant and immeasurable.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2020) discussed how governments needed to institute urgent measures to offer support and protection to adolescents and young people in response to COVID. Similarly, the scientific community needs to pay attention to the theoretical perspectives applied to research with adolescents, especially those in marginalized and vulnerable contexts. Importantly, the continued use of theoretical conceptions that individualize social issues of adolescents at risk still will reinforce the social factors and conditions underpinning the exclusion and vulnerability of many (Pessoa, 2015). Given the challenges imposed by the pandemic, these hegemonic and universalizing perspectives of adolescence are innocuous for the consolidation of explanatory models.

Denialist Government and Repercussions on the Life of Adolescents in Social Exclusion Contexts

Apart from all the challenges imposed by the syndemic condition experienced by the young population in Brazil because of COVID-19, it is necessary to highlight that the country already faced a political and economic rearrangement (as previously noted), marked by the dismantling and restriction of basic rights for a large portion of the population. As a result, many communities did not have the capacity required to adhere to the recommendations for virus prevention (such as isolation) (Pinto & Cerqueira, 2020).

Additionally, from the outset of the virus spread, then-president Jair Bolsonaro adopted denialist rhetoric and a position contrary to the indications of global health

authorities, ignoring safety measures and social isolation (Fonseca & Silva, 2021). On several occasions, the former president propagated speeches that confounded the population, invalidating to reliable and valid information sources (such as the scientific community). This political instability and lack of leadership added to the growing health problems, affecting the entire Brazilian population at different levels, especially groups already in situations of personal and social risk (Werneck & Carvalho, 2020).

Collectively, these factors undermined the ability of the public administration to implement the required intervention and prevention measures. Public policies intended for virus containment across the country were postponed and did not receive the required investments from the government (Paixão et al., 2020). The focus of the Brazilian government throughout the pandemic period was economic activities, and stimulus focused on market acceleration, ignoring the severity of the pandemic and the related social repercussions (Fonseca & Silva, 2021). Despite Brazil's economic position in the G-20, the lack of coordinated actions by the Federal government often resulted in some of the highest rates of infection and deaths per capita globally during the pandemic. Paixão et al. (2020) argue that this is a result of the disparity and asymmetry in the attention to, and investment in, protection measures for the poorest and more vulnerable sectors of the population, including adolescents. In other words, Brazil's pandemic experiences demonstrated that the greater the social inequality in the country, the more vulnerable the poor population will be in cases of crises and catastrophes due to the lack of health accessibility and quality education (Centro de Pesquisas e Estudos de Direito Sanitário and Conectas, 2021; Paixão et al., 2020).

Contrary to Brazil's experiences, the OECD (2020) called early in the pandemic for governments to develop urgent measures to support and protect adolescents and youth.

Specifically, the OECD called for strategies that are comprehensive, accounting for the varied risks confronting adolescents, including the psychological distress caused by social isolation, the loss of future perspectives, and the increase of personal and family debts, among others. As it is possible to notice through the given scenario, there are many risk factors and psychosocial vulnerabilities involving the daily living of adolescents and young people in Brazil and Latin America. The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences for the youth people population should be analyzed in a multifactor fashion, accounting for the pre-existing social vulnerabilities and their accentuation during the pandemic.

Similarly, there is an urgent call for efforts to develop social technologies and government actions that can offer support to adolescents given the challenges they face in a post-pandemic world. For these efforts to be successful, it is essential to include the perspectives of adolescents themselves in ways that do not overlook the aforementioned factors, and that do not depend on a universalizing and naturalistic approach.

Final Considerations

The aim of this paper was to discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic has exerted an impact on the life of adolescents in an unequal way and has accentuated social asymmetries and barriers existing in the pre-pandemic world. We reviewed how the theoretical currents adopted by Psychology, founded on naturalistic and universalist approaches, limited our understanding of the diversity of pandemic impacts and repercussions on adolescents living in contexts of financial and social exclusion. In addition, we highlighted some principles of Historical-Cultural Psychology that

demonstrate how social relationships and structures forged by the capitalist system accentuate social inequalities and, relatedly, adolescents' development processes.

Although there were advances promoted by the access of the population to vaccination and by the progressive resumption of regular activities, it is possible to state that the COVID-19 pandemic will carry medium and long-term implications for adolescents' lives, especially as regards their mental health. In this regard, the international scientific community should devote efforts to consolidate actions that could be effective in promoting improvements in the quality of life, mainly for groups that have been more strongly affected by this catastrophe. The employment of critical theoretical models that contextualize the plurality of ways of being an adolescent seems to be more promising and aligned with the needs of these groups.

During the pandemic, many studies were carried out exploring adolescents' reality. Most of these, however, were conducted online. Consequently, groups that did not have internet access were not included, and their experiences and needs remain undisclosed. We, therefore, suggest that further studies investigate how adolescents in contexts of social vulnerability (i.e., homeless, in socio-educational measurements, who live in foster care institutions, among others) have experienced the pandemic, the direct repercussions on their lives, and their understanding of their current needs. Likewise, we consider urgent the development of interventional studies targeted to community contexts of those who live in exclusionary conditions and whose public policies remain inaccessible.

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