

Social distancing in the COVID-19 pandemic: notes on possible impacts on the social skills of individuals and populations

Lucas Cordeiro Freitas. Universidade Federal de São João del Rei
Zilda Aparecida Pereira Del Prette. Universidade Federal de São Carlos
Almir Del Prette. Universidade Federal de São Carlos

Abstract

This paper aims to establish an initial basis for discussion about the possible impacts of social distancing policies resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic on the social skills and social competence of individuals and groups and their likely consequences, considering the knowledge available in the theoretical-practical field of Social Skills (SS) and empirical research on the impact of the pandemic on mental health indicators. The relations between social distancing, social skills, and social competence were addressed, as well as the implications of this new context on the coexistence values shared between individuals, groups, and nations. Due to the scarcity of empirical studies on the subject, until the present date, this theoretical discussion intended to raise conceptual and research questions that can be addressed to future studies in the area.

Keywords: social skills training; social competence; COVID-19; social isolation; mental health.

Resumo

Distanciamento social na pandemia de COVID-19: apontamentos para possíveis impactos nas habilidades sociais de indivíduos e populações. Este artigo tem por objetivo estabelecer uma base inicial de discussão a respeito dos possíveis impactos das políticas de distanciamento social decorrentes da pandemia de COVID-19 sobre as habilidades sociais e a competência social de indivíduos e grupos e seus desdobramentos prováveis, considerando o conhecimento disponível no campo teórico-prático das Habilidades Sociais (HS) e as pesquisas empíricas sobre o impacto da pandemia em indicadores de saúde mental. Foram abordadas as relações entre o distanciamento social, as habilidades sociais e a competência social, bem como discutidas as implicações desse novo contexto sobre os valores de convivência partilhados entre indivíduos, grupos e nações. Em virtude da escassez de estudos empíricos sobre a temática, até a presente data, essa discussão teórica pretendeu levantar questões conceituais e de pesquisa que podem ser endereçadas a estudos futuros na área.

Palavras-chave: treinamento de habilidades sociais; competência social; COVID-19; isolamento social; saúde mental.

Resumen

Distanciamiento social en la pandemia de COVID-19: notas para posibles impactos en las habilidades sociales de individuos y poblaciones. Este artículo tiene como objetivo establecer una base inicial para la discusión sobre los posibles impactos de las políticas de distanciamiento social como resultado de la pandemia de COVID-19 sobre las habilidades sociales y la competencia social de individuos y grupos y sus posibles consecuencias, considerando el conocimiento disponible en el campo teórico-práctico de las Habilidades Sociales (HS) y la investigación empírica sobre el impacto de la pandemia en los indicadores de salud mental. Se abordaron las relaciones entre distanciamiento social, habilidades sociales y competencia social, así como las implicaciones de este nuevo contexto sobre los valores de convivencia compartidos entre individuos, grupos y naciones. Debido a la escasez de estudios empíricos sobre el tema, hasta la fecha actual, con esta discusión teórica se pretende plantear cuestiones conceptuales y de investigación que puedan ser abordadas en futuros estudios en el área.

Palabras-clave: entrenamiento en habilidades sociales; competencia social; COVID-19; aislamiento social; salud mental.

The psychological effects on mental health indicators resulting from the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus (COVID-19) have received the attention of researchers from different countries (Rajkumar, 2020). Despite some differences in terms of public health policies to deal with the pandemic, many countries have adopted measures of social distancing trying to contain the number of infected individuals and mitigate its effects on general health indicators, according to the recommendations of the World Health Organization WHO (Bao, Sun, Meng, Shi & Lu, 2020). According to Wilder-Smith and Freedman (2020), social distancing is a type of intervention to control infectious diseases, applied to a community as a whole, with the aim of reducing social interactions and commuting. This distance includes, for example, canceling public events, closing schools, and implementing new educational modalities (remote and mediated by distance technology), and working at home (Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020).

The psychological problems commonly referred to in the literature during this pandemic (in particular, stress, depression, and anxiety, according to the literature that will be shown below) are strongly associated with the extent and quality of interpersonal relationships and, therefore, can be aggravated by social distancing. On the other hand, there is still no data available on the development of cooperation, solidarity, and empathy skills, which have been highlighted in the media and which may change during the pandemic. In any case, there is still no extensive dissemination of research results on the impacts of social distancing, particularly on the social skills of individuals and populations, possibly because it is a recent phenomenon. These questions are relevant to research in the theoretical and practical field of Social Skills (SS), considered in this study.

This paper had the general objective of establishing an initial basis for discussion about the possible impacts of the social distancing policies resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic on the social skills and social competence of individuals and groups and their likely consequences, considering the available knowledge in the theoretical-practical field of SS. A description of empirical studies that assessed the initial impact of the pandemic and measures of social distancing on mental health indicators in different countries was carried out, followed by a theoretical analysis of the possible repercussions of these events on social skills, social

competence, and coexistence values. Due to the scarcity of empirical studies on the subject, to date, the objective has also been to raise conceptual and research questions that can be addressed to future studies in the field of SS.

Impacts of the pandemic and social distancing on mental health

Empirical studies carried out in the first months of 2020 in countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas demonstrated the initial impacts of the pandemic on mental health indicators such as stress, depression, and anxiety, even in a short time. To compose this section, a search was carried out on the Google Scholar platform, in May 2020, using the following descriptors: pandemic, COVID-19, and mental health. In addition, other publications were retrieved from the references listed in the studies found. Only studies published in the format of peer-reviewed papers, published in the year 2020, that specifically addressed the COVID-19 pandemic were included. Studies made available on preprint servers such as medRxiv and PsyArXiv were excluded, which, despite presenting mental health indicators associated with COVID-19 in different countries, had not yet been peer-reviewed. Following that, examples of studies carried out in different countries are shown. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that, due to the speed of scientific production in the health area during the pandemic, greater evidence related to mental health indicators will certainly be available in journals in a short period of time and may complement the results here described.

In China, in a study that assessed the immediate response of the general population to the emergence of COVID-19 (Wang et al., 2020a), it was found that 53.8% of the participants assessed the psychological impact of the outbreak as moderate or severe, 16.5% reported moderate to severe depressive symptoms, 28.8% moderate to severe anxiety symptoms, and 8.1% had moderate to severe stress levels. A subsequent study with the Chinese population, using a longitudinal design (Wang et al., 2020b), showed that there was a reduction in the levels of stress, depression, and anxiety when comparing two assessments along the local COVID-19 epidemic.

Contrary to the Chinese study, in Spain (Basque Autonomous Community), increases in the levels of depression, anxiety and stress were found in the

population after the national state of alert was triggered, ordering people to stay at home (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Dosil-Santamaria, Picaza-Gorrochategui, & Idoiaga-Mondragon, 2020). Comparing data from the two countries, severe and extremely severe levels of stress, anxiety, and depression were lower in the Spanish sample than in the Chinese population (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020b). Still in China, a study carried out with children after the national order for the closure of schools (Xie et al., 2020) showed that students had higher rates of depression and anxiety compared to other surveys previously conducted in the country.

In a survey conducted with the general population in Italy, in the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic (Moccia et al., 2020), most participants did not report a propensity to distress, assessed using the Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale (K10). However, it was shown that the variables types of temperament and attachment styles acted as risk or protective factors for the worsening of the severity of the reported symptoms. A comparative epidemiological study carried out with participants from Egypt and Saudi Arabia (Arnout et al., 2020) indicated a high prevalence of psychological problems in individuals in the general population after the appearance of COVID-19, although no significant differences were identified between the two countries.

An online survey conducted in the United States (Nelson et al., 2020) showed that approximately 70% of the respondents reported high levels of concern about the possibility of being infected with the new coronavirus. In India, in a survey conducted with the general population (Roy et al., 2020), 82% of participants reported being concerned about the pandemic, 72% reported concern for themselves and those close to them, and approximately 40% reported having paranoid thoughts about being infected with the new coronavirus, among other factors assessed.

A study with the general population in Denmark (Sønderskov, Dinesen, Santini, & Østergaard, 2020) showed that psychological well-being was negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with greater losses for women compared to men. Suicide cases, possibly associated with the emergence and consequences of COVID-19, have also been reported in different countries such as Japan (Shigemura, Ursano, Morganstein, Kurosawa, & Benedek, 2020), India (Goyal, Chauhan, Chhikara, Gupta, & Singh, 2020) and Bangladesh (Mamun & Griffiths, 2020). With regard specifically to

health professionals, it should be noted that the systematic review and meta-analysis carried out by Pappa et al. (2020) pointed out that a high proportion of these professionals had significant levels of anxiety, depression, and insomnia during the pandemic.

In addition to these studies, the development and validation of instruments aimed at assessing fear and stress associated with COVID-19, involving samples from the United States and Canada (Taylor et al., 2020), Iran (Ahorsu et al., 2020), Italy (Soraci et al., 2020), Saudi Arabia (Alyami, Henning, Krägeloh, & Alyami, 2020), Bangladesh (Sakib et al., 2020), and Turkey (Satici, Gocet-Tekin, Deniz, & Satici, 2020).

Considering the studies described above as a basis, it can be assumed that different intensities of implementation of social distancing policies have different impacts on mental health indicators, as well as on the characteristics of the behavioral repertoire of each population or individual. In addition, beyond the methodological differences in the studies reviewed, the weight of cultural factors on mental health indicators in samples from different countries should not be disregarded.

There is ample evidence that social skills are related to more favorable rates of mental health and social adjustment, and their promotion is considered essential in many intervention programs for populations with specific mental disorders and with special educational needs (Barreto, Freitas, & Del Prette, 2011; Freitas & Del Prette, 2013; Matson, 2017; Olivares-Olivares, Ortiz-González, & Olivares, 2019; Silva, Freitas, & Pollo, 2019). However, in the case of events related to natural disasters, wars, armed conflicts, and epidemics, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little empirical evidence in the psychological literature on the impacts of these events on the repertoire of social skills of individuals and populations.

It is reasonable to assume this impact considering that social skills are learned and maintained through social interactions and that these, at least face-to-face interactions, are necessarily limited during the pandemic. In a review of the Brazilian literature on the Psychology of Disasters (Braga, Martins-Silva, Avelar, Tristão, & Netto, 2018), most of the studies found were theoretical and not empirical, none of which directly focused on the basic concepts related to the field of SS. It is also noted the lack of data regarding the role of interventions based on Social Skills Training (SST) on mental health indicators after the occurrence of extreme

events, even in studies of countries that have already developed interventions after incidents involving hurricanes (Brymer et al. 2019), acid rains (Sugiyama et al., 2020), wars, and armed conflicts (Bosqui & Marshould, 2018).

These complex social and interpersonal situations demand research from various areas of knowledge such as Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology. In Psychology, the theoretical, practical, and empirical field of SS (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017) could also contribute, considering the multicentric and transcultural studies already available (Craig, DeRosier, & Watanabe, 2015; Del Prette et al., 2004; Farver, Kim, & Lee, 1995; Morán, García, & Hormazabal, 2018) and which are applicable to these situations that raise several theoretical and empirical questions.

Social skills in the context of social distancing

Social skills are the object of a field of knowledge in Psychology, focused on the study, assessment, and intervention on social behaviors that favor interpersonal relationships (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2019; Gresham, 2017). Social skills are different classes of behaviors, learned and improved throughout life, contributing to social competence and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017). These skills are acquired through different learning processes that are essentially mediated by the social environment, such as differential reinforcement, rule-based learning, and modeling (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2013; Gresham, 2018). In this sense, it can be assumed that the duration and intensity of distancing and restricting social contacts measures have an impact on learning opportunities and refinement of the repertoire of social skills.

In the case of populations that are in critical stages of development, such as childhood and adolescence, the impact of social isolation on the learning of social skills and the acquisition of behavioral variability is highly likely, with consequences for later stages. One can consider, for example, the restrictions on interactions between peers imposed by the suspension of face-to-face classes in schools and, in younger children, the interactions almost exclusively restricted to a small number of adults. The coexistence of the child with his classmates is fundamental for academic learning, social adjustment, and social skills, working

as a protective factor (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2013). Lee (2020) points out that the effects of school closures on children's mental health can be particularly negative in the case of those who already have mental disorders or previous special educational needs. In that same article, interventions during the pandemic are recommended to reduce the damage caused to children's learning, including the use of online resources and SST *per se* (Lee, 2020).

In view of the situational-cultural character of learning and the maintenance of SS (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2013), it can also be assumed that the social distancing policies derived from the pandemic reach subgroups of the population in a quite different way. Considering the demographic composition of Brazil as an example, characteristics such as age, gender, socioeconomic conditions, and access to alternative sources of social interaction (via technology), are probably variables that mediate the frequency and variability of the repertoire of social skills during the period of social distancing. In addition, the role of different family configurations and compositions should not be disregarded when it comes to learning and maintaining interpersonal relationship patterns (Leme, Del Prette, & Coimbra, 2013).

Social competence, coexistence values, and international interpersonal relationships

Restrictions on the usual practices of social interactions during the pandemic can contribute to changes in the shared notion of social competence among individuals in a population. According to Del Prette and Del Prette (2017), the concept of social competence refers to the ability to articulate thoughts, feelings, and actions in an interpersonal task, seeking to meet the objectives of the individual, the situation and the culture and producing favorable results in terms of instrumental and ethical criteria. For these authors, the assessment of social competence depends on a set of criteria related to immediate and long-term consequences, such as: achieving objectives, maintaining/improving self-esteem, maintaining/improving the quality of the relationship, balancing the power between interlocutors, and respecting/expanding interpersonal human rights (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017).

In this context, the coexistence values shared by certain groups or subcultures may be strictly related

to the ethical dimension of social competence and to concepts such as human rights, justice, freedom, solidarity, and other values considered to be universal (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017). Bearing in mind that these coexistence values are susceptible to changes due to contextual and historical factors, it is assumed that the current pandemic may also alter, to some extent, those shared about social behaviors approved or disapproved by certain social groups.

It is reasonable to think that such changes may be located at different levels of interactions such as family groups, relationships of individuals within subcultures, or even interpersonal relationships between people of different nationalities. It can be questioned, for example, what values of interpersonal coexistence have been shared in this historic moment by individuals from different countries, since the pandemic affects all continents. In a context of broad economic globalization and intense transit of people around the world, knowing the coexistence values that prevail in different countries can contribute to the understanding of possible changes in interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it is relevant to carry out cross-cultural studies in the context of the post-pandemic with the aim of showing the differential effect of the period of social distancing on coexistence values and the repertoire of social skills of individuals of different nationalities.

Although it is not the object of this paper to delve into the concept of cultural paradigm, the notion that cultural rules and norms affect the patterns of interpersonal relationships, in a given context and historical moment, may be relevant in understanding the impact of adopting measures of social distancing in the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Del Prette and Del Prette (2014), when behavior rules and norms spread, they can become a kind of cultural paradigm. It follows that the coexistence rules that guide interpersonal relationships at a given historical moment may be the result of a cultural paradigm, thus guiding the cultural practices and products of a group of individuals (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2014). These rules can also spread to other countries and cultural contexts, generating an expansion of certain paradigms.

Applying the notion of cultural paradigm, exposed by Del Prette and Del Prette (2014), to the new patterns of relationship emerging from this pandemic and the various measures of social restriction adopted in many countries of the world, a series of changes can be expected, in terms of the social skills demanded of

individuals at that particular moment, with possible consequences for future interpersonal patterns. The decrease in the frequency of face-to-face social contacts and the reduction of interlocutors available for face-to-face interactions can surely affect the topography of many social skills, as well as their frequency, duration, social adequacy, and proficiency.

In addition, the reduction of interlocutors, the contact with children being limited to adult family members, and the absence of models of the same age group can, theoretically, have a worse impact on the learning of social skills. As examples, one can think of probable changes in the topography and frequency of various social skills, such as initiating and maintaining face-to-face conversation, greeting, and responding to greetings, expressing affection and intimacy through eye contact, smiles and touches, among others. Although it is not possible to predict the extent to which these changes resulting from the time of the epidemic will extend to the patterns of future relationships, it is important to note that the social distancing imposed lacks precedents for most generations that experience the effects of these measures, making it likely that there will be more or less permanent impacts on components of social skills.

The media has an important role in the dissemination of these relationship patterns, when it covers the way in which certain groups are experiencing the pandemic and making the adaptations imposed by the restriction of face-to-face contacts. A good example is the alternative use of technology to maintain interactions, the closest intra-family relationships with present parents (without disregarding the impacts on domestic violence), the phenomena of material and emotional solidarity that are reflected in images, among others. All these examples imply the practice of diverse social skills that, in some way, seek to supply the demand for interpersonal contacts in this pandemic moment.

Despite the possibility of possible changes in indicators of social skills due to the prolonged social distancing, this is only a case-by-case statement, subject to many biases. Its empirical and scientifically substantiated verification poses challenges in the area, since there may be difficulties in comparing the social repertoire before and after the pandemic. However, considering the previous studies already carried out on normative standards of social skills, in different countries or regions, one can count on a precious basis of comparison for the analysis of possible changes in the social

repertoire, both of individuals and groups. This would make possible an investigation, *a posteriori*, on the patterns that are being identified at this historical moment in our country and in different countries that have this normative basis.

The pandemic and the investigative possibilities in the field of Social Skills

From the previous articulations regarding the possible impacts of social distancing on the characteristics of social skills, social competence, and coexistence values, it would be possible to list issues that could be the focus of future investigations by researchers in the field of SS and related areas. In order to reflect on the production of knowledge regarding the relationship between the impacts of the pandemic and social skills, these are some possibilities for investigating:

1) *The influence of the media on the expected interpersonal relationship patterns.* During the pandemic, home confinement exposed people to a variety of information about the COVID-19 virus, as well as about avoidance behaviors to be adopted. This information has been massively disseminated through television news, internet news portals, and different social networks. One can question how much this information included notions of social skills and social competence and how they may have altered the population's understanding of the interpersonal norms and standards expected during and after the pandemic.

2) *The excessive exposure of children to television and videos during the pandemic.* The neurological impacts of this exposure are increasingly documented and the dependency problems generated by this excess are recognized. However, the impacts of this excessive exposure to television and videos (associated with limited interpersonal contacts) on the repertoire of social skills and social competence are still poorly understood.

3) *The variables related to the family environment during home confinement.* It is about investigating the diversity in terms of family configurations that can have a differential impact on the repertoire of social skills in the period of social distancing. In addition to the family composition *per se*, variables such as the number of people living in the same environment, the individuals' previous social repertoire, the parents' educational practices, the previous existence of mental disorders in a family member, the degree of division of domestic tasks, and the internal family organization during the

pandemic can contribute to different patterns of interpersonal relationships during this period.

4) *The role of virtual interactions on social skills and social competence.* Although studies investigating the relationship between the frequency of online interactions and the repertoire of social skills already exist (Mantzouranis, Baudat, & Zimmermann, 2019), it is expected that the prolonged social distancing has considerably increased the frequency, duration, and intensity of relationships between adolescents and adults. The effect of this change could be explored by future studies in the field of SS.

5) *SST interventions using digital information and communication technologies.* In the SST literature, there are reports of interventions with evidence of effectiveness using audiovisual and digital resources, such as videos (Shukla-Mehta, Miller, & Callahan, 2010), mobile devices (Haydon et al., 2017), and video games (Craig, Brown, Upright, & DeRosier, 2016). However, even interventions that use these resources, in general involve some degree of face-to-face social interaction between the professional and the participants. For this reason, the situation of wider social distancing has created unusual conditions for carrying out and testing predominantly virtual interventions. Therefore, the characteristics of new virtual SST interventions that are to be developed must be carefully assessed using their own research designs, in order to verify issues related to efficacy, effectiveness, and efficiency. In addition, the importance of comparative studies between face-to-face interventions and interventions using virtual components is highlighted.

6) *The changes in the prevalent teaching methods used in schools and universities.* Changes in the characteristics of face-to-face teaching, resulting from the adoption of new modalities and distance learning and teaching tools, can also contribute to changes in the traditional patterns of interpersonal relationships in the school and university context, with an impact on the socio-emotional development and mental health of children, adolescents, young adults, and educators.

7) *The social skills of empathy and expression of solidarity.* The pandemic and post-pandemic context can provide relevant opportunities for conducting research on expressions of empathy and solidarity at personal and collective levels, as well as their relationships with associated constructs, such as altruism and compassion.

8) *The stigma associated with people infected with the new coronavirus and their families.* In a time

of profusion of information in the media and increased fear associated with the disease, people diagnosed can suffer the consequences of social stigma. Possible changes in the person's interpersonal relationships with COVID-19 in their community or social group can also be a focus of interest for studies in the field of SS.

9) *The quarantine situation for individuals with COVID-19.* People diagnosed with COVID-19 need to be quarantined to prevent the infection of other individuals and monitor the progress of the disease. This specific situation can further restrict social interactions, compared to people in the general population who practice social distancing as a form of prevention. Therefore, research on the social skills of individuals in quarantine is also necessary.

10) *Social skills as a protective factor for indicators of mental disorder during and after the pandemic.* The role of social skills as a protective variable on the occurrence of indicators of depression, anxiety, fear, stress, suicidal ideation, among others, is also configured as a field of investigation to be explored.

Final considerations

Understanding the relationship between the social distancing measures adopted in the COVID-19 pandemic and possible changes in aspects related to interpersonal relationships, social skills, and social competence still require considerable investment in theoretical and empirical studies. This paper discussed some probable changes, from a theoretical point of view, in the patterns of social skills and social competence depending on the context of the pandemic, considering the knowledge derived from the field of SS and the empirical studies listed here on the impact of the pandemic on mental health indicators. Nevertheless, further empirical studies on the themes listed in this paper (and others that will certainly emerge) are fundamental for the contextual characterization of the social repertoire of individuals, groups, and populations, as well as for the design of interventions to be implemented in the pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

Specially in the Brazilian context, where the implementation of non-pharmacological interventions and individual adherence to preventive COVID-19 measures can strongly contribute to determining the course of the pandemic (Garcia & Duarte, 2020), it is essential to know the factors that favor or hinder adherence

to social distancing, as well as the likely role of the repertoire of social skills in this relationship. Efforts to understand the behaviors involved in adhering to preventive measures have already been made (Bezerra, Freires, Freitas, & Brito, in press; Lira, Silva, Castro, & Nascimento, in press) but the specific study of social skills in the context of maintaining social distance still needs greater investment from Brazilian researchers. In a short-term perspective, as the limitation of the atypical context makes it difficult to conduct studies in a natural environment with direct observation of behavior, the use of interviews and validated scales, with individual applications, controlled or administered online, can assist in understanding the repertoire of individuals during the pandemic, even allowing a comparison with normative standards of standardized instruments.

In a survey of research priorities in the field of Mental Health, conducted in the United Kingdom by an interdisciplinary panel of experts, involving public consultation, the need for programs at the individual and social level was highlighted as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Holmes et al., 2020). At the individual level, among the many actions listed, long-term interventions based on prosocial behavior and altruism stand out, including assertiveness training, conflict resolution, and group interventions in order to provide support among peers. At the social level, evidence-based actions that promote notions of care and concern for others are also suggested, aiming to foster a collective sense of solidarity and altruism (Holmes et al., 2020). It is noted, therefore, the importance of the knowledge produced in the field of SS and related areas for the conduction of intervention programs aimed at facing the impacts of the pandemic on mental health. For example, the social skills intervention program described by Cintra and Del Prette (2019) was recently developed in Brazil and applied to teachers in a semi-face-to-face mode, presenting good evidence of efficacy and effectiveness. This program can be adaptable to students and other segments, aiming to improve the repertoire of relevant social skills to deal with the interpersonal demands of the pandemic and post-pandemic context.

It is understood that the production of empirical research on the themes considered in the present study critically depends on individual and collaborative efforts by researchers from different regions and countries, in order to consolidate data related to

evidence-based assessments and interventions. The current context, while raising uncertainties related to probable changes in the patterns of interpersonal relationships, also points to several possibilities of knowledge production and social contribution derived from the field of SS.

References

- Ahorsu, D. K., Lin, C. Y., Imani, V., Saffari, M., Griffiths, M. D., & Pakpour, A. H. (2020). The Fear of COVID-19 Scale: Development and initial validation. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1-9. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s11469-020-00270-8
- Alyami, M., Henning, M., Krägeloh, C. U., & Alyami, H. (2020). Psychometric Evaluation of the Arabic Version of the Fear of COVID-19 Scale. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1-14. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s11469-020-00316-x
- Arnout, B. A., Al-Dabbagh, Z. S., Al Eid, N. A., Al Eid, M. A., Al-Musaibeh, S. S., Al-Miqtiq, M. N., ... Al-Zeyad, G. M. (2020). The effects of corona virus (covid-19) outbreak on the individuals' mental health and on the decision makers: A comparative epidemiological study. *International Journal of Medical Research & Health Sciences*, 9(3), 26-47. Retrieved from <https://www.ijmrhs.com/medical-research/the-effects-of-corona-virus-covid19-outbreak-on-the-individuals-mental-health-and-on-the-decision-makers-a-comparative-e.pdf>
- Bao Y., Sun Y., Meng S., Shi J., & Lu, L. (2020). 2019-nCoV epidemic: Address mental health care to empower society. *The Lancet*, 395, e37-e38. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30309-3
- Barreto, S. O., Freitas, L. C., & Del Prette, Z. A. P. (2011). Habilidades sociais na comorbidade entre dificuldades de aprendizagem e problemas de comportamento: uma avaliação multimodal. *Psico*, 42(4), 503-510. Retrieved from <https://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/revistapsico/article/view/7593>
- Bezerra, D. S., Freires, L. A., Freitas, L. C., & Brito, T. B. (in press). O que pode explicar a manutenção do isolamento social durante a Pandemia? In S. C. S. Fernandes (Ed.), *Adesão e acesso às medidas preventivas à Covid-19 à luz da teoria da ação planejada*. Maceió: EDUFAL.
- Bosqui, T. J., & Marshoud, B. (2018). Mechanisms of change for interventions aimed at improving the wellbeing, mental health and resilience of children and adolescents affected by war and armed conflict: A systematic review of reviews. *Conflict and Health*, 12(15), 1-17. doi: 10.1186/s13031-018-0153-1
- Braga, A. P. A., Martins-Silva, P. O., Avelar, L. Z., Tristão, K. G., & Netto, P. M. R. (2018). Produção científica sobre psicologia dos desastres: Uma revisão da literatura nacional. *Estudos de Psicologia*, 23(2), 179-188. doi: 10.22491/1678-4669.20180018
- Brymer, M. J., Hansel, T., Steinberg, A. M., Speier, A., Osofsky, J., & Osofsky, H. (2019). The Louisiana Spirit Hurricane Recovery Program: Addressing the needs of children and adolescents after catastrophic hurricanes. *Journal of Family Strengths*, 19(1), 1-22. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1400&context=jfs>
- Cintra, A. B., & Del Prette, Z. A. P. (2019). Características dos professores-cursistas, processo e resultados em programa semipresencial de habilidades sociais. *Psico-USF*, 24(4), 711-723. doi: 10.1590/1413-82712019240409
- Craig, A. B., Brown, E. R., Upright, J., & DeRosier, M. E. (2016). Enhancing children's social emotional functioning through virtual game-based delivery of social skills training. *Journal of Child and Family Study*, 25, 959-968. doi: 10.1007/s10826-015-0274-8
- Craig, A. B., DeRosier, M. E., & Watanabe, Y. (2015). Differences between Japanese and U.S. children's performance on "zoo u": A game-based social skills assessment. *Games for Health Journal*, 4(4), 285-294. doi: 10.1089/g4h.2014.0075
- Del Prette, A., & Del Prette, Z. A. P. (2014). Paradigmas culturais, habilidades sociais e análise do comportamento. In C. Vichi, E. M. Huziwara, H. M. Sadi, & L. M. M. Postalli (Eds.), *Comportamento em foco* (pp. 139-148). São Paulo: Associação Brasileira de Psicoterapia e Medicina Comportamental (ABPMC).
- Del Prette, A., & Del Prette, Z. A. P. (2017). *Competência social e habilidades sociais: Manual teórico-prático*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Del Prette, Z. A. P., & Del Prette, A. (2013). *Psicologia das habilidades sociais na infância: Teoria e prática* (6th. ed.). Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Del Prette, Z. A. P., & Del Prette, A. (2019). Studies on social skills and social competence in Brazil: A history in construction. In S. H. Koller (Ed.), *Psychology in Brazil: Scientists making a difference*. Cham (SWZ): Springer International Publishing.
- Del Prette, Z. A. P., Del Prette, A., Barreto, M. C. M., Bandeira, M., Rios-Saldaña, M. R., Ulian, A. L. A. O., ... Villa, M. B. (2004). Habilidades sociais de estudantes de psicologia: um estudo multicêntrico. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 17(3), 341-350. doi: 10.1590/S0102-79722004000300007
- Farver, J. A. M., Kim, Y. K., & Lee, Y. (1995). Cultural differences in Korean- and Anglo-American preschoolers' social interaction and play behaviors. *Child Development*, 66, 1088-1099. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1995.tb00924.x
- Freitas, L. C., & Del Prette, Z. A. P. (2013). Habilidades sociais de crianças com diferentes necessidades educacionais especiais: avaliação e implicações para intervenção. *Avances en Psicología Latinoamericana*, 31(2), 344-362. Retrieved from <https://revistas.urosario.edu.co/index.php/apl/article/view/2144/pdf>
- Garcia, L. P., & Duarte, E. (2020). Intervenções não farmacológicas para o enfrentamento à epidemia da COVID-19 no Brasil. *Epidemiologia e Serviços de Saúde*, 29(2), e2020222. doi: 10.5123/s1679-49742020000200009
- Goyal, K., Chauhan, P., Chhikara, K., Gupta, P., & Singh, M. P. (2020). Fear of COVID 2019: First suicidal case in India! *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 49, 101989. doi: 10.1016/j.ajp.2020.101989
- Gresham, F. M. (2017). Evidence-based interventions for social skills deficits in children and adolescents. In L. A. Theodoro (Eds.), *Handbook of evidence-based interventions for children and adolescents* (pp. 365-376). Nova York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Gresham, F. M. (2018). *Effective interventions for social-emotional learning*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Haydon, T., Musti-Rao, S., McCune, A., Clouse, D. E., McCoy, D. M., Kalra, H. D., & Hawkins, R. O. (2017). Using video modeling and mobile technology to teach social skills. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 52(3), 154-162. doi: 10.1177/1053451216644828
- Holmes, E. A., O'Connor, R. C., Perry, V. H., Tracey, I., Wessely, S., Arseneault, L., ... Bullmore, E. (2020). Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: A call for action for mental

- health science. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 7(6), 547-560. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30168-1
- Lee, J. (2020). Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(6), 421. doi: 10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30109-7
- Leme, V. B. R., Del Prette, Z. A. P., & Coimbra, S. (2013). Práticas educativas parentais e habilidades sociais de adolescentes de diferentes configurações familiares. *Psico*, 44(4), 560-570. Retrieved from <https://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/revistapsico/article/view/12559>
- Lira, N. E. T., Silva, M. W. L. A., Castro, A. M. F. M., & Nascimento, M. S. (in press). Crenças acerca do distanciamento social como medida de proteção contra a COVID-19. In S. C. S. Fernandes (Ed.), *Adesão e acesso às medidas preventivas à Covid-19 à luz da teoria da ação planejada*. Maceió: EDUFAL.
- Mamun, M. A., & Griffiths, M. D. (2020). First COVID-19 suicide case in Bangladesh due to fear of COVID-19 and xenophobia: Possible suicide prevention strategies. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 51: 102073. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102073
- Mantzouranis, G., Baudat, S., & Zimmermann, G. (2019). Assessing online and offline adolescent social skills: Development and validation of the real and electronic communication skills questionnaire. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 22(6), 404-411. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2018.0655
- Matson, J. L. (2017). *Handbook of social behavior and skills in children*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Moccia, L., Janiri, D., Pepe, M., Dattoli, L., Molinaro, M., De Martin, V., ... Di Nicola, M. (2020). Affective temperament, attachment style, and the psychological impact of the COVID-19 outbreak: an early report on the Italian general population. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 87(S0889-1591), 75-79. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1016/j.bbi.2020.04.048
- Morán, V., García, F., & Hormazabal, P. (2018). Validación transcultural del cuestionario de habilidades sociales para universitarios en estudiantes chilenos y argentinos (CHS-U). *Revista Iberoamericana de Diagnóstico y Evaluación e Avaliação Psicológica*, 2(47), 111-123. doi: 10.21865/RIDEP47.2.08
- Nelson, L. M., Simard, J. F., Oluyomi, A., Nava, V., Rosas, L. G., Bondy, M., & Linos, E. (2020). US public concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic from results of a survey given via social media. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 180(7):1020-1022. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.1369
- Olivares-Olivares, P. J., Ortiz-González, P. F., & Olivares, J. (2019). Role of social skills training in adolescents with social anxiety disorder. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*, 19, 41-48. doi: 10.1016/j.ijchp.2018.11.002
- Ozamiz-Etxebarria, N., Dosil-Santamaria, M., Picaza-Gorrochategui, M., & Idoiaga-Mondragon, N. (2020). Stress, anxiety, and depression levels in the initial stage of the COVID-19 outbreak in a population sample in the northern Spain. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, 36(4), e00054020. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1590/0102-311x00054020
- Pappa, S., Ntella, V., Giannakas, T., Giannakoulis, V. G., Papoutsis, E., & Katsaounou, P. (2020). Prevalence of depression, anxiety, and insomnia among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 88:901-907. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1016/j.bbi.2020.05.026
- Rajkumar, R. P. (2020). COVID-19 and mental health: A review of the existing literature. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 52, 102066. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102066
- Roy, D., Tripathy S., Kar, S. K., Sharma, N., Verma, S. K., & Kaushal, V. (2020). Study of knowledge, attitude, anxiety & perceived mental healthcare need in Indian population during COVID19 pandemic. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 51, 102083. doi: 10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102083
- Sakib, N., Bhuiyan, A., Hossain, S., Al Mamun, F., Hosen, I., Abdullah, A. H., ... Mamun, M. A. (2020). Psychometric Validation of the Bangla Fear of COVID-19 Scale: Confirmatory factor analysis and rasch analysis. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1-12. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s11469-020-00289-x
- Satici, B., Gocet-Tekin, E., Deniz, M. E., & Satici, S. A. (2020). Adaptation of the Fear of COVID-19 Scale: Its Association with Psychological Distress and Life Satisfaction in Turkey. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1-9. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s11469-020-00294-0
- Shigemura, J., Ursano, R. J., Morganstein, J. C., Kurosawa, M., & Benedek, D. M. (2020). Public responses to the novel 2019 coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Japan: Mental health consequences and target populations. *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 74(4), 281-282. doi: 10.1111/pcn.12988
- Shukla-Mehta, S., Miller, T., & Callahan, K. J. (2010). Evaluating the effectiveness of video instruction on social and communication skills training for children with autism spectrum disorders: A review of the literature. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 25(1), 23-36. doi: 10.1177/1088357609352901
- Silva, M. A., Freitas, L. C., & Pollo, T.C. (2019). Desenvolvimento infantil e habilidades sociais: Estudo de caso de crianças com e sem Transtorno do Espectro Autista. In M. N. Carvalho-Freitas, L. C. Freitas, & T. C. Pollo (Eds.), *Instituições, saúde e sociedade: contribuições da Psicologia* (pp. 131-151). Belo Horizonte: EdUEMG.
- Sønderskov, K. M., Dinesen, P. T., Santini, Z. I., & Østergaard, S. D. (2020). The depressive state of Denmark during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Acta Neuropsychiatrica*, 1-3. doi: 10.1017/neu.2020.15
- Soraci, P., Ferrari, A., Abbiati, F. A., Del Fante, E., De Pace, R., Urso, A., & Griffiths, M. D. (2020). Validation and psychometric evaluation of the Italian version of the Fear of COVID-19 Scale. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1-10. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s11469-020-00277-1
- Sugiyama, C., Niikawa, Y., Ono, H., Ito, D., Sato, T., Inoue, Y., & Koseki, S. (2020). School based intervention program based on cognitive behavioral therapy for Japanese students affected by the Hiroshima heavy rain disaster of July 2018. *Japanese Psychological Research*, 62(2), 151-158. doi: 10.1111/jpr.12282
- Taylor, S., Landry, C. A., Paluszek, M. M., Fergus, T. A., McKay, D., & Asmundson, G. (2020). Development and initial validation of the COVID Stress Scales. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 72, 102232. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2020.102232
- Wang, C., Pan, R., Wan, X., Tan, Y., Xu, L., Ho, C. S., & Ho, R. C. (2020a). Immediate psychological responses and associated factors during the initial stage of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic among the general population in China. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(5), 1729. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17051729

Social distancing in the COVID-19 pandemic: notes on possible impacts on the social skills of individuals and populations

- Wang, C., Pan, R., Wan, X., Tan, Y., Xu, L., McIntyre, R. S., Choo, F. N., ... Ho, C. (2020b). A longitudinal study on the mental health of general population during the COVID-19 epidemic in China. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, S0889-1591(20)30511-0. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1016/j.bbi.2020.04.028
- Wilder-Smith, A., & Freedman, D. O. (2020). Isolation, quarantine, social distancing and community containment: pivotal role for old-style public health measures in the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak. *Journal of Travel Medicine*, 1-4. doi: 10.1093/jtm/taaa020
- Xie, X., Xue, Q., Zhou, Y., Zhu, K., Liu, Q., Zhang, J., & Song, R. (2020). Mental health status among children in home confinement during the coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak in Hubei province, China. *JAMA Pediatrics*, e201619. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.1619

Lucas Cordeiro Freitas, Doutor em Educação Especial pela Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), Pós-doutor em Psicologia pela Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), é Professor Adjunto da Universidade Federal de São João del Rei (UFSJ). Endereço para correspondência: Laboratório de Pesquisa em Saúde Mental (LAPSAM), Praça Dom Helvécio, 74, Bairro: Fábricas. 36.301-160 São João del Rei – MG. Telefone: (32) 3379-5189. Email: lcordeirofreitas@ufsj.edu.br

Zilda Aparecida Pereira Del Prette, Doutora em Psicologia Experimental pela Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Pós-doutora em Psicologia das Habilidades Sociais pela Universidade da Califórnia (UC), é Professora Titular da Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar). Email: zdprette@ufscar.br

Almir Del Prette, Doutor em Psicologia Experimental pela Universidade de São Paulo (USP), é Professor Titular da Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar).
Email: adprette@ufscar.br

Received in 30.may.20
Revised in 16.dec.20
Accepted in 31.dec.20