

Theoretical Investigations to Explain Haiti's Famine

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Abstract: The objective of this article is to investigate how the theme of hunger and poverty in Haiti is being discussed in scientific research already carried out theorizing the theme, we adopted as methodological strategy, from a literature review, demarcate the following descriptors: 1) Hunger and poverty in Haiti, 2) Brazilian program Fome Zero, 3) Social programs and 4) Cultural Hunger in the period from August 17 to 23, 2021. We used two databases, of theses and dissertations available online: the Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD) and the Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações of the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). The linguistic technique called skimming was used to read the theses, and the analysis was done using the MAXQDA tool, software for qualitative and mixed methods research. It is concluded that the analyzed theses did not provide enough theoretical and conceptual indexes about Haitian hunger. It is considered a separate case that deserves dedication, discussion and reflections, besides the ideas of social programs, since these would imply in investments, funds that the government does not have, it is time for another way to understand the root of hunger and poverty in Haiti.

Keywords: Cultural Hunger; Hunger and Poverty in Haiti; Zero Hunger Program; Social Programs.

1. Introduction

The Republic of Haiti¹ is about 27,750 km, a relatively small country with an economy based on agriculture. The economic, political, and governmental problems, components of a kind of all-inclusive package, are the lack of food in the world, the few possibilities to obtain food in a given society. In the case of Haiti, besides the aggravating political crisis in the country, the lack of food becomes a culture of permanent destruction in "Koupe Tèt, Boule Kay". This famous phrase in the streets of Haiti, in schoolbooks, in the thoughts of those who were born and live on the island, is part of this package that makes hunger and poverty unbeatable. A hunger for rice, for fême, for medicine in hospitals, for drinking water in homes, for what to wear daily, and so on. Defining hunger in Haiti is a big challenge, because, Haitian hunger is the lack of everything, it is the lack of perspective of nothing for today and not for tomorrow. This definition, can be understood as a replication of the

Haitian situation through writing, further elaborated by Ribeiro¹ (2016, p. 64), who understood, "to hunger, is malnutrition," being a worrisome situation of millions of Haitians going hungry. In this interpretation, hunger is considered an aggravating condition for there to be malnutrition, it is considered (Monteiro², 1995; 2003). There are some words and expressions that lead us to realize that hunger is present, as Santos³ (2018, p. 72) cites, "need" and "hunger" in the first periphery, "humble", "humiliation", "no money", "it's the devil", "struggle", "have nothing", "beggar", and "lack of opportunity". They are understood as expressions that guide the life of those who plunge into misery.

Haitian poverty can also originate from the lack of care for the environment, practices that affect nature, directly implying the productions of agricultural products to supply the people's needs. As Fontana⁴ (2014, p. 53) reports, poverty has typically "associated environmental degradation [...] the dissolution of their collective identities, their social

¹ The original name of Haiti is "Ayiti", which means mountainous land, because the relief of the Republic of Haiti is very rugged. More than 50.0% of its territory is made up of slopes greater than 40.0% and less than 30.0% have slopes between 0 to 10%. Located in the Caribbean basin, the Republic of Haiti is the second largest of the Greater Antilles. It is bounded on the north by the Atlantic Ocean; on the south by

the Caribbean Sea; on the east by the Dominican Republic and on the west by Cuba (90 km) and Jamaica (190 km). With its approximately 1,530 km of coastline, 386 km of border with the Dominican Republic and its five (5) small islands, it occupies the western third of the entire island shared with the Dominican Republic (IHSI, 2018).

solidarities, and their traditional practices." The culture of deforestation, political and economic become laws that legitimize a hunger based on the Haitian culture of little is done to get out of this situation.

From the Brazilian perspective, the evolutionary capacity of social programs in Brazil, in the constructions of public policies, such as the Fome Zero program in 2002, which later became the Brazilian Bolsa Família program, with the objective of combating hunger and poverty, are examples in the fight against misery. Already at the beginning of the Fome Zero program, 46 million people who were in a critical situation were assisted. The actions of these programs were, for example, the distribution of emergency food baskets, donations of food and money, facilitating the creation of jobs, etc. (Silva⁵, 2003; Suplicy⁶, 2003). In light of the research, this article aims to investigate how the issue of hunger and poverty in Haiti is being discussed in scientific research already conducted, theorizing the theme.

2. Methodology

This article is characterized by a literature review study from theses produced between 2003-2021 in Brazil, with aspects of qualitative and quantitative elements that was carried out through a survey, called "State of the art" of dissertations and theses related to the theme, Fome Cultural to eradicate hunger in Haiti, taking into account the following descriptors.

- Hunger and poverty in Haiti;
- Fome Zero Program;
- Social programs; and
- Fome Cultural.

For this article, two online databases of theses and dissertations were used. The first is the Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD)² and the Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações³ of the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). The search for works to compose the field of analysis of this article was carried out, considering the years 2003, which is characterized in a year after the beginning of the fome zero program in Brazil to 2021.

That said, this bibliographical review article, based on secondary sources, includes all scientific bibliographies available on the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and especially theses and dissertations that are part of the analytical body of this article. In this way, the bibliographical research allows us to

find diverse materials to better understand the subject being researched, besides providing a range of opportunities related to the ways in which other research on the same theme has been carried out. (Marconi⁷; Lakatos, 2003).

Fig. 1- The numbers of theses and dissertations found in the databases used.

2.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

We searched two databases, the first entitled Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações and the second the Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações, for postgraduate works related to the research theme. In the first moment of this methodologically-regulated search from the 4 descriptors, we present figure 1, entitled: The numbers of theses and dissertations found in the databases used, below.

Initially, the amount of documents found were presented in figure 1, before applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, it is considered a characteristic of data cleaning. The documents in question referred to the theses and dissertations that make up this work, the descriptor with the most documents found in the first database is "**hunger and poverty in Haiti (1,277,426)**", while for the descriptor **fome cultural** no document was found. Note, when doing the same search in the second database, the descriptor with the most documents found is "**social programs (102,568)**", in the same circumstance as in the first database, the descriptor **fome cultural** does not appear in any of the searches.

Five steps are used for the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 1.) Remove all dissertation texts to compose the analysis, leaving in the corpus only the theses that discuss the theme of hunger in Haiti; 2.) Consider the theses produced between the years 2003 - 2021; 3.) apply in the database search, the filter of the area of knowledge of the humanities and multidisciplinary; 4.) Choose for readings the abstracts of the theses on the theme; 5.) Use the descriptors of each work that are related to the thesis theme, in addition to reading the final considerations.

Finally, from the searches made in the two databases "Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações" and "Catálogo De Teses e Dissertações", a total of 24 theses were found for the construction of this article, after the inclusion and exclusion process. Given the above, at this first moment, it is confirmed that the descriptor "Hunger and Poverty in Haiti" has 13 theses, being the largest number of works produced per descriptor and also presents the most recent research produced over the

² Brazilian thesis and dissertation database, available with 686,311 documents. Link: <http://bdtd.ibict.br/vufind/>

³ Link to access the catalogue of dissertations and theses: <https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/catalogo-teses/index.html#!/>

years. When grouping the theses of each descriptor, we obtained the following works by descriptor, Fome Zero Program (4), Hunger and Poverty in Haiti (13), Social Programs (7), Fome Cultural (0), totaling 24 theses that make up the analytical *corpus* of this research.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the discussion of the results is presented in 3 topics. The first one deals with the works found based on the descriptor Fome Zero Program, the second one discusses the findings of Hunger and Poverty in Haiti, and the third one based on the descriptor social programs.

3.1 The main results and conclusions of the findings from the Fome Zero program

The idea of reducing hunger in any underdeveloped society becomes a weapon of combat in almost all spheres of local and national policies of countries, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. The challenge of doing something concrete and lasting, thinking about the most vulnerable, is more related to what can be gained, for example the vote of those who are in misery. Social programs, such as Fome Zero in Brazil, should not belong to a government, but to the State, in order to give continuity without depending on a proposal for 4 or 8 years of governments.

The Fome Zero program emerged exactly at this juncture,

Um dos carros chefes da campanha de Lula foi o Programa Fome Zero, que colocou a questão da pobreza no centro do debate político. A materialização deste programa se deu por meio principalmente de uma política de transferência condicionada de renda de caráter não contributivo (Pompeu⁸, 2011, p. 112).

The Fome Zero program was used as a political proposal, but it reached many Brazilians who lived in poverty, in particular those who were part of excluded groups, such as those in the Brazilian Northeast, communities or slums in large metropolises in Brazil. Thus, the main objective of this program in 2002 was to decrease social inequality, to allow access to incomes for a group that had previously been abandoned. Looking from this perspective, it can be said that it was an important milestone in the fight against hunger and poverty in Brazil that served as an example at the national and

international levels.

With this descriptor, one finds 4 theses, (Bichir⁹, 2011); (Azevedo¹⁰, 2013); (Fontana⁴, 2014); (Melo¹¹, 2016). It is understood that social programs in Brazil were proposed to reduce hunger in fact, but especially to allow access to the excluded, that is, people living below the poverty line in the reflections of Suplicy⁶ (2003). Looking at it this way, those who receive an income from these public policies to eradicate poverty have had the chance to build a new life, it is worth remembering that it was not just about incomes, but, access to food, public schools among others. (Bichir⁹, 2011; Fontana⁴, 2014).

3.2 The main results and conclusions of the findings from the descriptor of Hunger and Poverty in Haiti

The Haitian conjuncture, can no longer be considered as a novelty, when it comes to extreme poverty, there is hunger in every corner of the country. This discussion can be considered recurrent, periodically in the international arena, the fact of the permanent existence of hunger or the fight against it. In dealing with this situation, considered fragile and delicate, it is understood that,

The constant struggle of Haitians has been debated in the international context in search of solutions to implement measures that can help the government in the mission to take the country out of extreme poverty. In the national context, the discussion about confronting hunger becomes more and more a struggle for power and political debates, and many plans remain on paper due to lack of resources and a long history of corruption that aggravate hunger in the Haitian territory. (Exime¹², *et.al.*, 2021, p. 10).

The struggle for power in Haiti, is only a millimetric aspect, which prevents the proposals to reduce hunger or alleviate poverty, as it is said there, "lavi a di wi"⁴, "souf nou ap koupe"⁵ and "chay la lu, nou paka pote l"⁶, are some common phrases that portray how difficult it is to live and be Haitian in Haiti. The 13 authors who discuss this descriptor are presented, (Pompeu⁸, 2011); (Avila¹³, 2013); (Marins¹⁴, 2013); (Rissato¹⁵, 2015); (Pinto¹⁶, 2016); (Figueiredo¹⁷, 2016); (Ribeiro¹, 2016); (Marques¹⁸, 2017); (Dallmann¹⁹, 2018); (Carvalho²⁰, 2018); (Santos³, 2018); (Monteiro²¹, 2020); (Nina²², 2021).

As a result, hunger and poverty in Haiti, as in other countries in the world, usually has as consequences

⁴ t means: Life is hard, usually when you say this in Haiti it's because you don't have enough to eat, clothes, etc.

⁵ It is when a person is on their last breaths, in a nutshell, they are on the verge of death.

⁶ It's like carrying a cross, when someone can't take it anymore, all that's left is to surrender and accept whatever comes, such as death, permanent hunger, and so on.

acts of corruptions, the lack or non-existence of public policies to combat poverty. Being poor does not specifically mean not having an income, financial resources to meet needs. According to Dallmann¹⁹ (2018, p. 213), poverty does not only have by definition the "lack of access to everything that society produces that is best for us to live with dignity. It is thought to access to hospital, common goods that everyone should have access, it remains the obligation of the States the proper functioning of these areas in the lives of the population, which in turn should charge and demand compliance with ongoing public policies, as the role of the agents and attendants responsible should get inspections in order to ensure the services they were assigned. (Santos³, 2018; Rissato¹⁵, 2015; Marins¹⁴, 2013).

With all that said, it is useless to fight poverty without joint efforts of measures in the fight to decrease absolute poverty among those who live in deprived communities, in municipalities far from large centers, which become poorer due to lack of investment to local infrastructures.

3.3 The main results and conclusions of the findings from the descriptor Social Programs

Social programs, created over the years in a society, may have political, election, and re-election motivations. However, an important fact that cannot be denied is the intentionality in trying to provide an improvement in the quality of life for low-income populations. It is clear that in order to obtain funding for government projects, to bear the costs of providing incomes for millions of people, political consent is needed, and to be sure that the public coffers will be able to meet the demands.

It is justified that the programs are proposed and created in consensus to reach the population, in order to help overcome inequality, thus allowing more inclusion in society (Silva²³, 2003).

In dealing with this understanding, it is clarified that the issue of social programs was already being discussed before 1997, in view of other Brazilian programs such as "Bolsa Escola or Programa de Renda Mínima vinculada à Educação"⁷. (Suplicy⁶, 2003, p. 65).

From these 7 authors, (Moreira²⁴, 2012); (Kinpara²⁵, 2013); (Camara²⁶, 2014); (Macedo²⁷, 2015); (Silva²⁸, 2017); (Menezes²⁹, 2017); (Sordi³⁰, 2019); who discuss this descriptor, it is noted that education serves as one of the parameters to know if the programs have had impacts on society, since from

⁷ created initially in 1997, through Law 9.533/97 and expanded in 2001, with Law 10.219/01, which provides families with children from 6 to 15 years old, with income below R\$ 90.00 or half salary per capita (in April 2001) a monthly benefit of R\$ 15.00, R\$ 30.00, or R\$ 45.00 per month, depending on whether the family has one, two or three children attending school. At

this there can be constant improvements so that families can increase their qualifications and soon there will be sequentially an increase in income, making room for professional and personal growth. From the legal point of view, it represents a key action in the perspective of allowing citizens to establish a relationship, a bond to end the historical inequality.

Therefore, the definitive permanence of social programs, must always present a new design of evolutionary thoughts surrounding their existence linked to the first needs of the subjects in poverty. Thinking this way, that social policies should alleviate hunger and poverty, allowing a way out of misery, towards empowerment for definitive progress and away from social registries to obtain basic incomes, that is to say without total and defined dependence on Federal and State government programs to live without hunger. (Silva²⁸, 2017; Kinpara²⁵, 2013; Camara²⁶, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to establish a partnership between the Federal Government and state managers, that is, with municipalities in harmony with private entities that work to implement, facilitate, and contribute to the success of the programs.

Now, taking into account the previous discussions, which were the sum of the results of each descriptor researched in two official databases (Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD) and the Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações), which host hundreds of theses made in Brazil by post-graduation programs, no thesis was located on the descriptor named Fome Cultural, thus it is not necessary to discuss this descriptor, but to point out as a need to produce research works on it.

4. Final considerations

Thus, it is affirmed that the Fome Zero Program has been of great help in diminishing, eradicating, and alleviating extreme poverty, since it has served as a basis for other social programs such as the Bolsa Família Program. In fact, in the years 2002, in assignment for the economic growth of the cities, for which its citizens were plunged into hunger, from the creation of jobs, access to education, thus allowing personal and professional advancement for a dignified life of less inequality

It is understood that Haitian hunger is a case apart that deserves dedication, discussion, and reflections, beyond the ideas of social programs, since these would imply investments, funds that the government does not have, it is time for another way to understand the root of hunger and poverty in Haiti.

the end of 2002, there were about 5.7 million families registered in this program, involving about 10.7 million children in 5,545 municipalities, almost all of Brazil's 5,561 municipalities. (P. 65).

It is affirmed that it is necessary to establish a partnership between the federal government and the state managers, that is, with the municipalities in harmony with the private entities that work to implement, facilitate, and contribute to the success of the social programs.

In light of the above, it is stated that all 24 theses analyzed were important for thinking about hunger in Haiti, helping to understand what it means to be poor and its characteristics in society, even though most of the theses were produced from the Brazilian perspective. Theorists and concepts linked to the construction and proposal of social programs, capable of serving as an example in other societies like the Haitian one, are used. Throughout the analysis, there is an absence of themes and concepts intertwined with Fome Cultural, as it was used as the guiding key-word and object of this research.

Some limitations of this work are listed, due to the use of theses produced only in Brazil and to the discussion of all the instruments used in the research. As future work, a deeper theoretical discussion is indicated, based on other theories about Fome Cultural as a concept, conducting work that can discuss all Brazilian social programs and seek the application of the understanding of Fome Cultural in societies and communities.

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