

Masculinity in pandemic times: where power decreases, violence increases^{1,2}

Masculinidade em tempos de pandemia: onde o poder encolhe, a violência se instala

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Abstract

In the context of the emergence of the pandemic caused by covid-19, the objective of this essay is to reflect on the man-power-violence relationships and the resignification of men's place, from the conceptions of Hannah Arendt, problematizing the normalized concept of hegemonic masculinity and seeking to understand the increase in domestic violence against women. Throughout this essay, we seek to deconstruct the idea that there is a single model of hegemonic masculinity that proposes a global domination of men over women, since women also present aspects of masculinity, being a historical-social construction that is constantly changing. Thus, in the face of historical gender reforms added to the instability caused by the covid-19 pandemic, there is an increase in domestic violence as an effect of the decrease in patriarchal power, in an attempt to stabilize the masculinity model defined by this patriarchal power, an attempt is made to reconstitute it (re-signify it) in new configurations.

Keywords: Pandemics; Masculinity; Domestic Violence; Violence Against Women; Gender Violence.

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1 The presented essay is part of the doctoral thesis of the author DF Santos, enrolled in the Programa de Pós-graduação em Saúde Coletiva (PPGSC) of the Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES), responsible for the research entitled "The behavior of male domination practices over women from the perspective of health professionals in the period of social isolation due to Covid-19", under the guidance of Professor Dr. Rita de Cassia Duarte Lima, also linked to UFES' PPGSC.

2 The research is an essay, involving only public domain data that does not identify the research participants, without involving human beings, therefore, according to Resolution No. 466/12, it does not need approval of the CEP-CONEP System.

Resumo

No contexto de emergência da pandemia causada pela covid-19, o objetivo deste ensaio é refletir sobre as relações homem-poder-violência a partir das concepções de Hannah Arendt, problematizando o conceito normalizado de masculinidade hegemônica e buscando compreender o aumento de violência doméstica contra a mulher. Buscamos desconstruir a ideia de que existe um único modelo de masculinidade hegemônica que propõe uma dominação global dos homens sobre as mulheres, uma vez que mulheres também apresentam aspectos de masculinidade, sendo uma construção histórico-social que se transforma continuamente. Assim, diante das reformas históricas de gênero acrescidas da instabilidade provocada pela pandemia da covid-19, observa-se o aumento da violência domiciliar como efeito da diminuição do poder patriarcal, na tentativa de estabilizar o modelo de masculinidade definido por esse poder patriarcal, ou tenta-se reconstituí-lo (ressignificá-lo) em novas configurações.

Palavras-chave: Pandemias; Masculinidade; Violência Doméstica; Violência Contra a Mulher; Violência de Gênero.

Introduction

“Normal men do not know that everything is possible.”

David Rousset apud Arendt, Hannah

Covid-19 has a considerable speed of propagation, in which extended social distance (DSA), social isolation and total lockdown have become important strategies to reduce this transmission speed, decelerate death cases, provide more time for better therapeutic plans and prevent a collapse in the health system. However, these same measures can bring important economic and social impacts, such as the increase in unemployment and violence (Brazil, 2020).

When the virus spreads between countries, gender, race, class, geopolitical and economic inequalities intensify, while chaos and fear reveal how our society is organized and what its main problems are.

The recommendation of social isolation to prevent the spread of covid-19 has been associated with an increase in violence against women, especially domestic violence, justified by concerns about security, health and money (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020). In this challenging moment, the increasing precariousness of women's situation and the consequent amplification of their vulnerabilities reveals the need to respond to the immediate and long-term consequences of the current crisis (Acabar, 2020).

Therefore, it is not possible to contest or ignore the statistics referring to the involvement of men in domestic violence, however, it is necessary to overcome fragmented explanations about the phenomenon centered on hegemonic models of socially legitimated masculinity, which naturalize violence as an attribute of men, capable of generating violently conflicting human relationships in this context of social isolation. It is important to highlight that hegemonic masculinity is mainly associated with negative characteristics, which portray men as non-emotional, independent, non-caregivers, aggressive and non-passionate. These characteristics are seen as causes of toxic

practices, including physical violence and criminal behavior (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013).

Although hegemonic masculinity is normative, it is important to point out that it was not frequently assumed in a statistical sense, since only a minority of men may adopt it. However, based on the established model, hegemonic masculinity “incorporates the most honorable way of being a man, it demands that all other men take a stand in relation to it and ideologically legitimizes the global subordination of women to men” (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013, p. 245).

Masculinity is affirmed as a configuration of practices around the position of men in the complex structure of gender relations, however, speaking of this configuration of practices means putting action in the spotlight, assuming that actions have a rationality and historical significance. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the practice is necessarily rational, like the practice of violence (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013).

A central theme to be discussed within the violence debate is the questioning of the existence of a universal male. It is believed that, just as it is not possible to talk about “a woman”, it is not possible to conceive of male identity as natural and unique. On the contrary, it is necessary to denaturalize this concept as unison and recognize that masculinity is not an essence, but historically constructed, and should therefore be relativized in relation to the intersections, such as ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religiosity, among others, that point to the diversity of male behaviors and experiences throughout history (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013). In this sense, “the concept of masculinities, with an emphasis on the plurality of the term, impelled the questioning of the notion of hegemonic masculinity, which focused on the notion of man, as a naturalist and essentialist category” (Batista; Lima, 2017, p. 176).

Another central aspect to be highlighted is the definition of violence as the dominance of human relationships, marked by the absence of dialogue and the instrumentalization of the subject (Arendt, 2008). Violence is installed where power decreases (Arendt, 2009) and, in these pandemic times, this concept is fundamental to seek to understand the instrumentalization of the

subject, the fragility and the annihilation of the source of legitimate power - the most egalitarian human interactions - and the consequent loss of human condition, related to the growing domestic violence. It is important to emphasize that power, in Hannah Arendt, is related to the dimension of legitimacy, authority, meaning, power and political constitution, and it must be understood as a human capacity, not only to act, but also to act in concert, that is, power is conceived as coexistence, joint action (Arendt, 2009).

The emergence of the pandemic emphatically calls for thinking about the narrowing of the man-power-violence relationship and the redefinition of men’s role in sustaining reproductive life, emotional ties and care. In this context of social isolation, seeking to understand the increase in domestic violence against women, the objective of this essay is to reflect on the man-power-violence relationships from the conceptions of Hannah Arendt, problematizing the normalized concept of hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity: reflections on the concept’s normalization

The dominating practice of men over women does not happen only through violence, despite the possibility of being supported by this resource. This male hegemony means ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions and persuasion (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013). However, depending on this cultural and historical context, often being violent can be characterized as a trait of local hegemonic masculinity (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013). Thus, violence against women has been understood as a pattern linked to hegemonic masculinity, either as a mechanical effect, in which aggressions are the consequences of this toxic masculinity, or through the pursuit of maintaining this domination. In accordance, violence against women would appear as a disciplinary exercise or as a sign of manliness in its maximum potency. However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity cannot be guided by a continuous practice of collective domination of men over women, as violence and other toxic practices

are not essential characteristics of all hegemonic masculinities, since they are plural and manifest in different ways at the local, regional and global levels (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013).

Masculinity is defined as a configuration of practices designed on the structures of gender relations. Society historically (re)produces gender relations (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013) that in certain situations allow the collective domination of men over women to be maintained, being defined as hegemonic masculinity. It is not uncommon that, on some occasions, hegemonic masculinity is identified as toxic masculinity.

The domination of men and the subordination of women represent a historical process, not a self-reproducing system. "Male domination" is open to challenge and requires considerable effort to maintain it. There are several studies that show the tactics of maintaining domination through the exclusion of women (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013).

Thus, it is important to emphasize that hegemonic masculinity is expressed in different ways. In the internal hegemony, there is the social ascendancy of men over other men, while external there is the domination of men over women. Such differences need to be observed with caution, as multiple masculinities and femininities must be considered, in addition to the dynamic roles of their relationships. In addition to these forms of domination, Connell and Messerschmidt (2013) state that hegemonic masculinity is analyzed at three geographic levels: local (built in the arenas of face-to-face interaction of families, organizations and immediate communities), regional (built within the scope of culture or the nation-state) and global (built in the transnational arenas of world politics, media and transnational businesses).

In this sense, the pandemic crisis must be understood as an opportunity to unveil the essence of the problems related to violence, which were hidden in the mask of prejudices, such as the idea

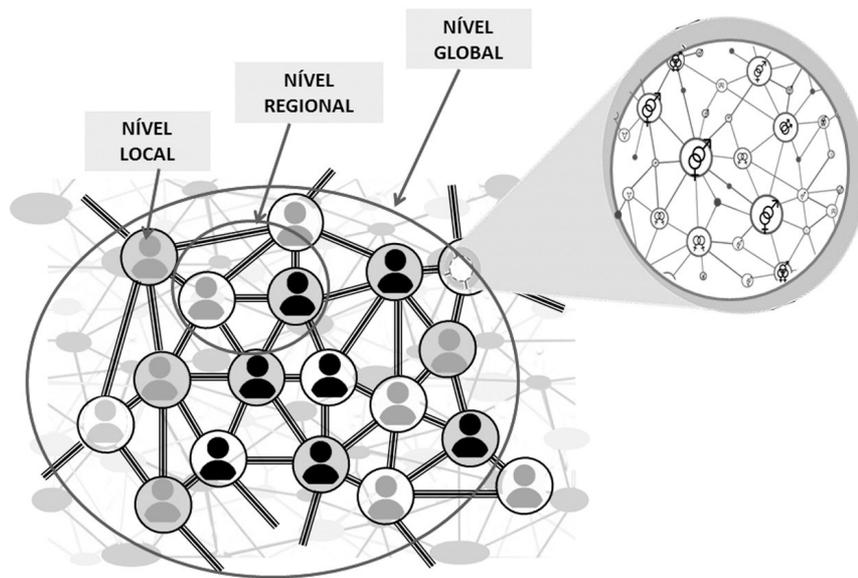
that all masculinity is toxic. Thus, it is understood that the crisis increases when it is responded to with prejudices (pre-formed judgments) that end up preventing reality from being seen as an opportunity for reflection (Arendt, 2016).

Based on the above considerations, the concept of hegemonic masculinity cannot be understood as an inherent characteristic of men, it is necessary to abandon this essentialist character, since women also present aspects of hegemonic masculinities. For that matter, masculinity is not a fixed entity embodied in a body or in the personality traits of male individuals, but they are configurations of practices that are carried out in social action and, thus, masculinities can be put into action by people with female bodies (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013).

Therefore, it is not possible to make a simplistic analysis, which borders on prejudice, based on the assumption that there is a global domination of men over women, since we live with multiple masculinities and different ways of relating to them. Following this idea, there is no single, universal masculinity, what exists are processes of production of subjected masculinities built from established models (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013), inscribed in a relational context (Batista; Lima, 2017).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity, in this essay, is understood as a plurality of hierarchical masculinities, which coexist in a subordination relationship by non-hegemonic masculinities (Figure 1). These multiple patterns of masculinity are present in different contexts, institutional and cultural, showing that some masculinities are socially more central, being references for others, becoming hegemonic. It is noteworthy that this hegemony is not achieved by force, but by cultural consensus, by dominant and institutionalized speeches, leading to the marginalization and delegitimization of other masculinities.

Figure 1 – Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity



This process of hegemony, which has numerous configurations, will take place through the (re) construction of examples that have the authority and power to produce the ideal image of standard and normative masculinity, not needing to be present in the daily life of most boys and men (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013).

It is important to emphasize that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is a historical-social construction, in constant transformation, generating changes in gender relations, generating new strategies in power relations and resulting in the redefinition of socially accepted masculinities.

Based on the hegemonic masculinity model instituted and accepted, social expectations are built on the men's profile, hoping that they will be providers of their families, sexually dominant, present behaviors that involve risks, have difficulties to demonstrate or discuss their emotions or seek help. This profile is associated with the highest rates of addictions, suicide, homicide and traffic accidents among men, also promoting the emergence of chronic non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, heart problems, diabetes, among others (PAHO, 2019).

In addition to affecting men's health, this pattern of behavior leads to negative outcomes also for

children and women, relating to interpersonal violence, sexually transmitted infections, absent parenthood and imposed pregnancy (PAHO, 2019).

In this scenario, the risks of dominant masculinities can be accentuated by adding vulnerabilities, to which men are exposed, such as: being poor, immigrant, young, indigenous or Afro-descendant, omission of morbidities, high mortality, not being heterosexual and being unemployed. Such vulnerabilities contribute to the socialization of dominant masculinities being exposed to a triad of health risk behaviors, composed through the socialization of men in relation to women and children, in relation to other men and in relation to themselves (PAHO, 2019).

Even violence, belonging to the group of external causes, having a significant impact on the morbidity and mortality of men, is still an aspect minimally explored in the debate around the National Policy for Integral Attention of Men's Health (PNAISH), instituted in 2009. Thus, questioning men's health and the social issue of violence is a necessary discussion when contextualizing the existing tensions in the constitution of this health policy.

Men have been the **major absent factor** in the formulation of PNAISH, so it was never the result of claims. They remain distant from the spaces of care

and health actions, especially those offered in the context of Primary Care. This stance diverges from the construction of the Policy for Integral Attention of Women's Health (PAISM), since this policy is the result of the struggles and demands of women and feminist movements for women to gain full access to health services, considering their specificities and singularities (Martins; Malamut, 2013).

After surveying the different perspectives that men are faced with during the pandemic, PNAISH does not seem to be able to accommodate this demand, as it mainly prioritizes its actions based on epidemiological data on male morbidity and mortality, without taking into account that there are risky behaviors in men, such as violent attitudes, which also impact the morbidity and mortality rates of women (Schraiber; Figueiredo, 2011).

It is possible to reflect that, from these stereotyped patterns about hegemonic masculinity, which institute the idea of a self-sufficient man, a tension arises between men's health and specific policies (PNAISH), since men who do not care for their health through attitudes of promotion and prevention - provided by the services of Primary Health Care (APS) - starts to overload the emergency services, burdening public health. Couto et al. (2010) point out that, in the representations of APS health professionals, men are not characterized as potential subjects of care and the services at this level of the health system are substantially aimed at women and children.

Finally, it is reiterated that the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity is neither reifying nor essentialist. It also emphasizes the idea of multiple masculinities, the concept of hegemony and the emphasis on transformation and dynamics, emphasizing the intersectionality between the local, regional and global levels, recognizing the internal contradictions and the possibilities of movement towards gender democracy (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013).

Despite this, it is important to note that society has historically (re)produced gender relations and that hegemonic masculinity is defined as a configuration of practices designed on the structures of gender relations (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013), which, in certain situations,

may allow the domination of men over women to be maintained. However, it should be noted that the concept of domination does not have the same meaning as power. According to Arendt (2009), power refers to acting in agreement. In this case, the domination practices of men over women are a response to the loss of the masculinity power in relation to femininity.

After clarifying the main conceptual aspects and the pertinence of the approach, we will now analyze the man-violence-power relationship through the theoretical lens of Hannah Arendt.

Man-violence-power in Hannah Arendt

The World Health Organization (OMS) defines violence as the use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or may result in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (WHO, 1996).

The OMS concept definition based on the use of force or power requires us to ask: Does men act violently because they have more or less power? What power are we talking about? What is power? How and why does it manifest? In Hannah Arendt, power is an action/an act, but an act in common agreement. For the author, the power never belongs to the individual, but is delivered to the individual by a group that allowed him to act on their behalf. From the moment this group falls apart, power falls apart with them. Arendt also works on four concepts to better understand power: vigor, force, authority and violence, being distinct and different phenomena (Arendt, 2009).

For Arendt, we confuse power with vigor, because when we call a man "powerful" we use the word power allegorically. What we are narrating is the vigor, which is a quality proper to an object or a person and which is revealed in relation to other things or people, but it is independent of them. Authority, on the other hand, is characterized by recognition without resistance by those who are called to obey. Force, popularly used as a synonym for violence, is, for Arendt, an energy released

through physical and social movements and it would be more correct to call it “force of nature” or “forces of circumstances” (Arendt, 2009).

The last relevant concept about the idea of power, which we will delve into it more deeply, is violence. For Arendt, violence has an instrumental character. Therefore, there is always a search for guidance and justification for its objectives (Arendt, 2009). Violence is traditionally the last and most shameful resource used in relationships between nations and/or in domestic life, being considered a mark of tyranny (Arendt, 2016).

Violence can serve to represent dissatisfaction, bringing the public’s attention. Some violent practices need to act together, that is, in an agreement, since an isolated man, without others to help him, would not have the necessary power to use violence effectively. Although it is common to find violence and power together, it cannot be concluded that authority, power and violence are the same. This is only possible if we admit that power is synonymous with command and obedience (Arendt, 2009).

For Arendt, violence is the result of unequal human relationships for the purpose of domination and its emergence occurs when power falls apart. At this point, it is valid to consider that, in our culture, domination is an identifier of the male condition and a requirement for its socialization, relating man to violence (Alves et al., 2012).

Masculinity based on domination, whether in the relationship between men and women (gender inequality) or between men and men (multifactorial inequality), greatly affects subjects considered subordinate (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013). This pattern of masculinity naturalizes violence as something inherent to men and as an instrument to confirm their *status quo*, which promotes actions that put their lives at risk and promotes authoritarian behaviors, both of which generate violent human relationships (Alves et al., 2012). Such an idea of masculinity serves as the basis for a patriarchal culture, generating an offensive environment for women and violent practices in the home environment (Silva et al., 2020).

With the advent of feminist movements, this model of masculinity begins to be confronted.

Women start to fight for emancipation and equal rights, in order to question the conditions that govern gender relations. In addition to the fight against the domination of men over women, feminist movements have enabled women to be at the forefront of women’s causes and to occupy the public sphere, placing their demands on the agenda now in the political space. In this displacement, women are inserted in different sectors of society and this is reflected in the financial organization of the family. This emancipation is considered a relevant factor on the questioning of patriarchy and male domination (Blay, 2014), generating change in traditional gender roles, causing an impact on the male role of provider (Schraiber; Figueiredo, 2011).

Still on the relationships between masculinities and femininities, it is emphasized that the field of feminist studies is a heterogeneous field, permeated with a diversity of approaches, categories and analyzes (Oliveira, 2020a). In this context, the importance of feminist movements that, in addition to the fight against the domination of men over women, has been making it possible for women to approach the multiplicity of positions - while explaining the structures modeled on these identities - that must be recognized in the bodies that are crossed by different cultures and oppressions and located in an unequal world, generating transformations of the existing masculinities. Recognized in their plurality, feminisms seek strategies for political action in different spaces and social contexts and cannot be treated as something homogeneous (Larrondo; Lara, 2019; Akotirene, 2019).

As a result, the gender relations and the perspective of the loss of male dominance are rearranged, injuring the figure of the male provider, given by a certain hegemonic model of masculinity. On the other hand, health insecurity caused by the pandemic challenges the stereotype of male invulnerability. This can be perceived by the manifestation of toxic practices, such as domestic violence, or by the low adherence to social isolation on men’s part, attitudes reinforced by various socioeconomic issues and by the practices of some hegemonic masculinities that feed these risky behaviors (Mapa, 2020).

With these and many other social changes on gender roles, the man's power is questioned. It is important to emphasize that the concept of power in Hannah Arendt, used here, is understood as domination, and the man, in seeking to guarantee his position of dominator and to define his property and to externalize his anxieties, uses violence as a means to try and resolve conflicts (Alves et al., 2012). Arendt (2009) concludes that the inability to act jointly and the monopolization of power is an invitation to violence, because those who lose the ability to speak for each other hardly resist the temptation to exchange the power that is weakening by violence.

That way, we can highlight, as probable causes of the increase of violence against women in the pandemic, the loss of socio-emotional contact of woman, the affected financial condition, the use of isolation as a way of controlling the partner, the increase in the use of alcohol and decreasing women's access to sources of help (Melo et al., 2020).

Among these causes, we draw attention to the alteration of the population's economic condition in isolation. When taking an intersectional look that starts from the categories class, race/ethnicity, it is recognized that the most perverse effects of the pandemic affect the most vulnerable groups of society, that is, young people, black people, women, the poor and those with less education. The health crisis only widened the differences in an already extremely unequal country. With no forecast for the end of the pandemic and with the early termination of emergency aid in August 2020, associated with the number of informal workers, the propensity is the worsening of the living conditions of thousands of Brazilians in the country.

At this juncture, it is necessary to highlight that, in the midst of oppression systems imbricated and present in society, some masculinities are subordinate in relation to others, which benefit from privileged positions (Hirata, 2014). Intersectionality, then, presents itself as an analysis mechanism that helps us to understand how different social markers have an impact on the way in which rights and opportunities are ascended (Akotirene, 2019). In these intersection zones,

different experiences of oppression and privilege of masculinities and femininities are observed. However, we must not look at the intersection (gender, class and race/ethnicity) as a trivial sum, we must see it as an articulation that leads to substantially different experiences (Cesaro; Santos; Silva, 2018). Therefore, a woman, articulated by certain intersections, can find herself in a position of domination in relation to the man subordinated by her class, race/ethnicity, emphasizing that the phenomenon of masculinity experiences does not occur isolated from femininities and other intersectional categories.

In this context, is it necessary to question which part of the population is most vulnerable? According to the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), known as PNAD covid-19, from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2020), from May to June 2020, the black population (blacks and browns) accounts for two thirds (66.3%) of the registered increase of unemployment, aggravating a rate that was already above the average in previous months. Moreover, the survey revealed that the number of unemployed grew among black youth, rising from 18.4% to 21.0%.

Yet, historically, black women suffer from informal jobs, lower wages, underemployment, in addition to double or triple hours, and their claims were focused on labor rights and guarantees, seeking the support of their partners to overcome the stigma left by slavery, which differs black feminism from white women feminism. Population studies carried out in Brazil between 2009 and 2015 registered more than 71 million families with 42% of women responsible for the house, most of them single and with per capita family income lower than that of male-headed families. When the percentage of female-headed household was compared with the variables of income and race, the differences were significant between black and white women. In 2015, in households headed by white women, the per capita household income is 47.3% higher than in those headed by black women - and 40% higher than in households headed by black men (Ipea, 2015).

Even though the greatest impact of the unemployment rate is on women, especially black

women, which rose from 12.2% to 14.1%, compared to 11.1% of men (IBGE, 2020), we highlight the different effects of unemployment between men and women. As the pandemic advances and substantially impacts the occupation of women, the unpaid care and dedication of women to household chores, historically aimed at them, intensifies. On the other hand, men behave in other ways, impacted by hegemonic masculinity models. Therefore, gender is also a marker of inequalities, which must be considered in the way men and women behave in the face of the serious effects of the pandemic.

It is possible to think that, from this change in the social and economic scenario that unevenly affects the most vulnerable populations, the financial provision associated with isolation means the abrupt withdrawal of the man from the public sphere, causing the displacement of his activities (Figure 2). According to Silva (2017), to Arendt, there are three activities that are present in the experience of the man in his social condition: labor, which consists of maintaining life; the work, or the production or manufacturing activity; and action activity, which includes political activity and public life. It is in this sphere that the subject develops the defense of interests that are common to all and generally occupied by the man.

The man as head of the family, until then, was not limited by any law or justice. Ensuring the maintenance of domestic order, he exercised totalitarian power over the life and death of all who were imprisoned in the private sphere. This sphere was considered a space of needs and concealment, which was reduced to the protection and maintenance of life. It was considered the family space but remembering that all types of repression originated in this sphere, domination and violence being marks of the private sphere, and not of the public sphere, except in cases of war. Thus, violence against women is not something new in our society, it is the result of a patriarchal culture, which contributed to the naturalization of this practice (Saffioti, 2004).

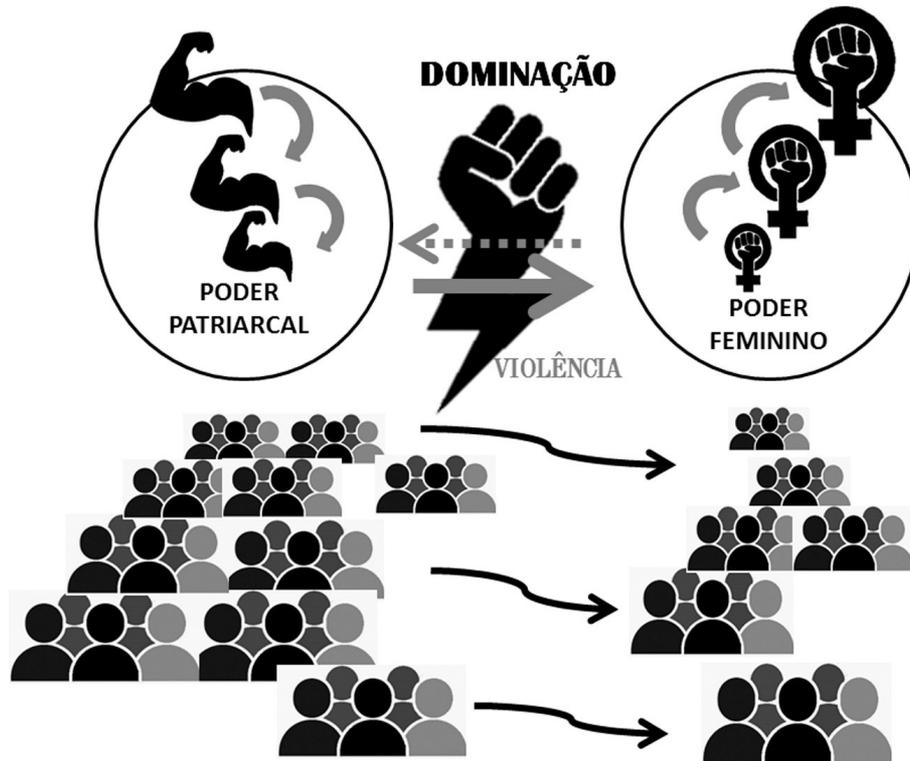
In addition to the private sphere, the man is deprived of his most important social

capacity - political action. Man's withdrawal from the public sphere displaces him from his socially accepted role, as a good professional, as the family member responsible for leaving the home to provide sustenance and as a person who practically does nothing within the domestic environment. That way, it is clear that social construction based on patriarchal culture is an incentive to control gender by violence, limiting freedom, sexuality and actions, resulting from this patriarchal domination to violence against women (Oliveira, 2020b).

The hegemonic masculinity model, understood as normative, is daily making men susceptible to internal and external conflicts, in the face of the need to adapt to the new reality, while fighting for the maintenance of hegemony and domination over femininities and other marginalized masculinities, even making use of toxic practices, such as violence in all its manifestations (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013). It is important to emphasize that marginalized masculinities coexist with hegemonic ones and that men walk between these positions as they face different social situations.

It is significant to emphasize that this man, the agent that causes violence, is not a monster, but an equally normal person to others. For Arendt (2003), a normal human being is a common subject who does what is expected in relation to social demands, which are (re)produced by the dominant classes, with the intention of maintaining the established model. It is important to stress that not all men are fighting for domination, or that they are bad, or that we should not believe in better days. According to the author, the inability to think, that is, the inability to distance themselves from the world to examine it, generates naivety in the face of power strategies and inability to think about micro and macropolitical movements related to the instituted powers, that empty public affairs and hinder the perception of the dismantling of political power by institutionalized violence. Thought is not something abstract, but the action of affirming what is desired as a value or refusing what is indicated as annihilation.

Figure 2 – Relationship between man, power and violence in the pandemic



To contribute to this change in perspective, we propose the questioning of hegemonic masculinity through the exercise of thought according to Hannah Arendt. Based on the analysis of the status of thinking, Arendt presents in the work *The Life of the Mind* a pedagogical proposal that educates for thought, which it translates as a capacity to be attentive to things and events. The author differentiates knowledge from thought, so that the first is focused on the search for truth and when he finds it, it is limited to it, ending the search. Thought, on the other hand, would be the exercise of going beyond the truth, seeking the meaning of things in the world, always new and unpredictable. Therefore, when we refer to the questioning of hegemonic masculinity, we are defending the thought that seeks new meanings in the relationships between the different intersections. To this end, we propose that institutions adopt Arendt’s pedagogical proposal and break through the enlightenment character of education that remains educating for

knowledge. For this to be effective in building a peace, supportive, tolerant and democratic culture, it is necessary to seek the meanings of the world, not just its truths (Arendt, 1995).

When we question hegemonic masculinity by increasing the expression of different forms of masculinity, we enable a way of constituting “being a man” in a more humane and less oppressive way. With this, masculinity seen as hegemonic is challenged, either by the resistance of women and/or men themselves as bearers of alternative masculinities, which facilitates the transformation of gender relations and male domination (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013).

These alternative masculinities generate a crisis in men who commit gender violence, envisioning the loss of their place in the social world. It is a crisis of certainties, models, patterns and stereotypes that implies a change in the paradigm of being a man, being considered a recent crisis that implies transformation, changes, openness, listening and acceptance and not just judgment and

punishment. covid-19 can act as a boosting effect for this collapse, as already mentioned.

In addition to being seen as something negative, it is worth emphasizing here the definition of crisis for Arendt as a disturbing situation that allows for reflection and that favors the opportunity for critical thinking and analysis, thus “a crisis forces us to return to the same questions and demands new or old answers, but, in any case, direct judgments” (Arendt, 2016, p. 223).

Arendt directs us to think about violence and power beyond common sense, from the most current knowledge and prejudices (performed judgments), since these two concepts are treated by scholars from the most diverse areas and in other philosophical currents, usually in conjunction. It is understood, in this way, that some men end up using violence which, according to Arendt (2009), is an action that can indicate dissatisfaction, in addition to being the result of unequal human relationships, with the aim of maintaining domination.

It is important to emphasize that, when violence is present, power falls apart. In view of this decrease in the power of the relationship between man and woman and the increase in violence, in Arendt we identified the following explanation: our capacity for birth, that is, to renew ourselves as subjects and/or as a society, at any moment of existence. There is a capacity of birth in us, which consists in constantly placing newcomers in the world whose actions cannot be predicted by those who are already in the world. This is not a purely biological concept, but rather our ability to make a new beginning at various times in existence, whether privately or collectively, with birth also being the starting point for political existence. Thus, in the face of human relationships, there is always the possibility of the new, of a new beginning (birth) (Arendt, 2009).

Final remarks

Considering the path taken in this essay on masculinities, it is worth mentioning that bodily practices are also linked to hegemonic masculinity and femininity models, which materialize through

the representation and use of bodies. In this regard, bodies participate in social action by producing social behavior, intertwining with social contexts, such as, for example, the context of the pandemic. These incorporated hegemonic masculinities and femininities are both objects and agents of social practice, in which gender relations are always considered arenas of tension. To speak of a practical configuration means to speak of what people actually do, not of what is expected or imagined, such as: the sexual division of labor in the care of children, in the labor market, in financial provision, in household chores, in the relationships between parents and children, among others. These masculinities and femininities, which are experienced by the body, involve relations of tension, since they are constantly defining themselves in a dynamic network relation.

Historically, the efforts of the women’s movement towards change projects have caused tensions in gender relations, at local, regional and global levels, continually questioning a certain pattern of hegemonic masculinity, generating a tension between the search for the stabilization and restitution of patriarchal power and the establishment of new forms of gender relations and redefinition of the hegemonic masculinity model.

The pandemic increases the arena of tension in gender relations, since the incorporated masculinities are limited to the private space, losing its expression in the public space, related to the establishment of its reputation. Thus, in the face of historical gender reforms plus the instability caused by the covid-19 pandemic, there is an increase in domestic violence as an effect of the decrease in man’s power. The power that consists in speaking for and acting in agreement. Also attributed to the displacement of this man from the public sphere and the questioning of his domination in the private sphere, toxic and violent practices appear in an attempt to stabilize the masculinity model defined by patriarchal power or trying to reconstitute it in new configurations.

For that matter, how can we (re)think the social participation of bodies in social contexts that can give way to new possibilities of being/living/acting

for men and women? How can we seek to provide a solution to these tensions? Are men truly bad or just naive? Could the exercise of thought, like the search for meaning, contribute to banning the naive way we face the world? Shouldn't PNAISH focus on health promotion, through educational actions that seek to break with positivist models still focused only on knowledge?

These and other questions were and are for us a form of action, since thinking is not about abstracting, but about building new meanings and movements of change, re-signifying masculinities, the pandemic being an opportunity to build new possibilities of being, living and acting in the relations established in this scenario of inequality and social injustice.

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Authors' contribution:

Santos and Andrade were responsible for the design and development of the study, data analysis and writing of the article. Cordeiro and Sipioni were responsible for writing the article. Barbosa, Demarchi and Lima were responsible for the data analysis and interpretation. All authors participated in the critical review of the manuscript and approved the final version.

Received: 07/30/2020
Resubmitted: 12/23/2020
Approved: 02/01/2021