The Necrobiopolitics of COVID-19 in Brazil: Transitivity Choices in Global Media Representations

A necrobiopolítica da COVID-19 no Brasil: escolhas de transitividade em representações midiáticas globais

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Abstract: Global media have reported widely on the (in)actions of the Brazilian federal government, particularly of president Jair Bolsonaro, in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper aims to describe media representations in terms of their transitivity choices (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2004) and to discuss how emerged language patterns may be indicative of particular ways life and death have been controlled in terms of a coupled conceptualization between biopolitics (FOUCAULT, 2008) and necropolitics (MBEMBE, 2019) which we call *necrobiopolitics*. Overall results indicate how the death of babies and mothers, the collapse of hospital and health service, the spike in hunger, the dismissal of the severity of the pandemic, and the purposeful delay in purchasing vaccines are instrumental in the way president Jair Bolsonaro has implemented a political agenda that defines whose lives are worthy and whose deaths are tolerated.

Keywords: global media; COVID-19; Brazil; transitivity; necrobiopolitics.

Resumo: A mídia global tem noticiado amplamente as (in)ações do governo federal brasileiro, em particular do presidente Jair Bolsonaro, no enfrentamento da pandemia

de COVID-19. Este artigo objetiva descrever representações midiáticas em termos de suas escolhas de transitividade (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2004) e discutir como os padrões de linguagem emergentes podem ser indicativos de maneiras particulares de como a vida e a morte foram controladas em termos de uma conceituação combinada entre biopolítica (FOUCAULT, 2008) e necropolítica (MBEMBE, 2019) que chamamos de *necrobiopolítica*. Os resultados gerais indicam como a morte de bebês e de mães, o colapso da rede de hospitais e do serviço de saúde, o aumento da fome, a negação da gravidade da pandemia e o atraso proposital na compra de vacinas são fundamentais na forma como o presidente Jair Bolsonaro implementou uma agenda política que define quais vidas têm valor e quais mortes são toleradas.

> Não posso e não me interessa transcender a mim mesmo como habitualmente os cientistas sociais declaram supostamente fazer em relação às suas investigações. Quanto a mim, considero-me parte da matéria investigada.[1]
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> **Abdias Nascimento – *O genocídio do negro brasileiro* (1978, p. 41)[2]**

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the most striking health related phenomena in modern history, as the lives of millions of people around the world have been cut short and the usual flow of social, cultural and economic world events has been interrupted. SARS-

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[1]   English translation: "*I cannot and am not interested in transcending myself as social scientists usually claim to do in relation to their investigations. As for me, I consider myself part of the investigated matter.*"

[2]   In this paper, cited materials originally written in Portuguese will be inserted within the flow of the text accompanied by an English translation in footnotes. In addition to allowing for greater appreciation of the value of original materials, we believe this choice urges readers to welcome the complexity of multilingual scholarship and to navigate its idiosyncrasies in ways that may destabilize long-lasting language hierarchies in academia.

CoV-2, the virus responsible for this pandemic, may cause severe acute respiratory syndrome in a small percentage of its victims, with potentially lethal outcomes in just a few days. Having been first identified in the city of Wuhan, China, in the month of December, 2019, the disease was initially considered to be of medium risk. Nevertheless, soon after the international medical community realized the gravity of its effects and characteristic widespread growth, it was recognized as a pandemic and declared an International Public Health Emergency by the World Health Organization on January 30, 2020.

In Brazil, the first case was confirmed on February 26, 2020, in a man who had recently returned from Italy. Tragically, a year after its emergence, the country had already reached the disheartening number of more than 300,000 deaths. However, despite the importance and severity of the pandemic, the Brazilian government, headed by president Jair Bolsonaro, has dealt with it rather ineptly and irresponsibly, drawing vast and severe criticism from various national and international human rights entities, medical research institutions, and other sectors of civil society.

In similar terms to Abdias Nascimento's (1978) opposition to transcending himself, as a black man, to denounce the myth of racial democracy in Brazil, we take on an implicated stance as scholars, as we also consider ourselves part of the investigated matter at hand, having been experiencing and suffering the grave consequences of the negligence of the federal government in effectively addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in our country. Such consequences are multidimensional as they span personal, social, professional, mental, and spiritual spheres of our everyday lives. Therefore, while remaining diligent in carrying out language and social analyses that are based on data and sound sources, we are not at all interested in adhering to a fallacious idea of scientific neutrality when, conversely, scholarship should be increasingly committed to advancing demands for more equitable social relations and more responsible political and economic management of crises.

Having said that, the main objective of this study is to investigate how international news agencies have represented the effects of the pandemic in Brazil on their websites, thus extrapolating the confines of national media coverage. More specifically, we aim to: 1) describe the transitivity choices (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2004) in these websites as far as such representations are concerned; and 2) discuss the

extent to which these choices may reveal patterns in the management of life and death in this pandemic by the Brazilian federal government.

The investigation covers the months of March, April, and May, 2021. This period was chosen not only because it marks one year after the beginning of the pandemic in Brazil, but also because it encompasses three of the most gruesome statistical landmarks around the time of data collection: 300,000 deaths (March), 400,000 deaths[3] (April), and 15 million cases of COVID-19 in Brazil (May). Importantly, as this period also encompasses other despairing facts and moments of the pandemic, a corresponding timeline is provided in Graph 1.

Graph 1 – Some facts about the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil (March–May 2021)

March
10: Brazil hits 2.000 deaths per day.
15: Marcelo Queiroga replaces Eduardo Pazuello as the new Health Minister.
16: number of deaths in 24 hours: 2.798; average deaths per day: 1.976 (80% of intensive care units occupied)
17: number of deaths in 24 hours: 2.736; average deaths per day: 2.031; total deaths: 285.136.
23: number of deaths in 24 hours: 3.000
24: total deaths: 300.000
26: number of deaths in 24 hours: 3.600
30: number of deaths in 24 hours: 3.780; most deadly month: 62.918
April
5: total deaths: 333.153
6: number of deaths in 24 hours: 4.195
10: total deaths: 390.925 (total number of deaths in 2021 (195.949 in 113 days) higher than 2020 (194.976 in 289 days)
27: Senate opens inquiry to investigate federal handling of pandemic
29: total deaths: 400.00
May
6: new variant (P.1.2) found in Rio de Janeiro. P.1.2 muted from P.1 found in Manaus
6: 15 million cases of Covid-19 in Brazil
10: Anvisa suspends Astrazeneca vaccine for pregnant women
31: total deaths: 462.791

Source: Adapted from Linha (2021).

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[3]   By the day we submitted this paper for publication, the COVID-19 pandemic had already caused a harrowing number of 663,759 deaths in Brazil. Available at: https://covid.saude.gov.br/. Access: 04 May 2021.

Following these introductory remarks and information, the next section delineates the methodological procedures that guided the data collection and analyses presented in this paper.

2 Methodology

Firstly, we selected the websites wherefrom the data would be collected. To that end, we searched for reliable sources categorizing existing websites mainly in terms of access frequency. In this search, we chose *Feedspot*, a professional service that allows for multiple websites to be checked in one place, as they offered a comprehensible rank of websites globally according to "traffic rank, social media followers, domain authority & freshness" (TOP, 2021).

Second, we selected the top 20 websites listed for initial screening, making sure no country would be listed in the data more than once (see Table 1). Among these, the final choice of 12 websites and countries was indicated by the cutoff value of at least 10 occurrences in the websites of news about the pandemic in Brazil in the period selected (March-May 2021).

Table 1 – Top 20 websites per country according to *Feedspot*

RANK	NEWS AGENCY/NETWORK[4]	COUNTRY	OCCURRENCES
1	CAN – Channel News Asia	Singapore	52
2	FRA – France24	France	44
3	BBC – British Broadcast Channel	England	24
4	RT – Russia Today	Russia	24
5	NYT – New York Times	U.S.A.	11
6	Al Jazeera	Qatar	18
7	NEWS24	South Africa	16
8	DW – Deutch Welle	Germany	14
9	CBC - Canadian Broadcasting Corporation	Canada	14
10	ABC – Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Australia	14
11	KWT – KWT Today	Kwait	14

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[4] All selected websites are listed after the references at the end of this paper.

12	SCMP – South China Morning Post	China	11
13	BN – Breaking News	Ireland	8
14	The Local	Spain	3
15	Global Issues	Not informed	1
16	DanielsPost	Not informed	0
17	Iran Front News	Iran	0
18	Neweurope	Belgium	0
19	WatchDog News	Uganda	0
20	Africa Launch Pad	Not informed	0

Then, we carefully read all the collected data to identify the main themes described in the news reports in order to narrow down the scope of the research and focus solely on the most important events. The main themes identified were: 1) death of the population (reaching 400.000 deaths, including those of babies, children, and pregnant and post-partum women); 2) collapse of hospitals; 3) hunger; and 4) Bolsonaro's role in the pandemic (e.g. refusal to lock down and follow safety measures; change of health ministers; dismissal of the graveness of the pandemic; and the purposeful delay in acquiring vaccines).

After that, the transitivity analysis was carried out to classify the main process types and participants involved in each of the clauses addressing the selected themes. The examples used to illustrate the results and discussion are preceded by an identification tag, in bold, containing four elements: (i) the news agency where it was issued, (ii) its position number in the collection procedure for that specific news agency, (iii) the country where the news agency is located, and (iv) the issue date. For example:

BBC 23 – England - 29 April
|| <u>Brazil</u> **passes** *400,000 deaths* amid slow vaccination. ||

The double bar symbol (||) is used to indicate the boundaries of the analyzed clauses. When a sentence enclosed several clauses, only one or two were in fact analyzed as they circumscribed our research focus. For instance, in the sentence: Families mourn || as <u>Brazil</u> **hits** *400,000 COVID deaths* ||, (ALJ 12 - Quatar - April 30), only the second clause was analyzed for the purpose of this paper.

Additionally, both clauses in sentences such as || Bolsonaro refuses to lock down || as Brazil approaches grisly milestone. || (CBC 11 – Canada – April 13) were analyzed, as they refer to different thematic subsections in this paper – with the first and second clauses, in this case, referring to actions by president Bolsonaro and to the theme of Covid 19-related deaths, respectively. In the appropriate subsections, the two clauses are shown in the following ways.

|| <u>Bolsonaro</u> **refuses to lock down** || as Brazil approaches grisly milestone. ||
|| Bolsonaro refuses to lock down || as <u>Brazil</u> **approaches** *grisly milestone*. ||

This is meant to enable readers to distinguish and understand more easily what is being discussed in each particular thematic subsection. Lastly, due to time, space and scope constraints, circumstantial elements were analyzed only when deemed essential for the discussion.

Following the transitivity analysis, we discussed the extent to which described language patterns may be indicative of how the global media perceive the role of the Brazilian federal government in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, thus allowing us to illustrate and problematize how the management of life and death has taken up particular configurations in our country.

3 The system of transitivity as analytical tool

The system of Transitivity is a theoretical framework in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) devised to organize and explain language resources used to construe different representations of experience in what concerns the experiential metafunction of "who does what to whom under what circumstances" (BUTT *et al*., 2000, p. 48). In terms of transitivity, a figure consists of three elements: the process (verb or verbal group), the participants involved in the process (noun or nominal group), and any attendant circumstances, which are typically realized by an adverbial group or prepositional phrase (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2004). The system of transitivity encompasses four main types of processes (material, mental, verbal, and relational) and two intermediary ones (existential and behavioral). This study focuses on the main ones as these are by far the most frequently occurring processes in the collected data.

Material processes are used to represent events indicating some kind of action or going-on – realized, in our data, by verbs such as

collapse, *infect*, *kill, die, bury,* and *vaccinate*. A clause with a material process may have seven elements besides the process itself: Actor, Goal, Initiator, Client, Recipient, Attribute, and Scope. While the Actor is the participant represented as the 'doer' of the action, the Goal is the participant affected by the action – and the occasional Initiator is the participant who causes an Actor to perform an action. There may also be actions that have participants as beneficiaries, which may be classified as Client (for whom a service is done) or Recipient (to whom something is given). Finally, the Attribute is a quality ascribed by the process to an entity, and the Scope is the participant unaffected by the process, as it is more clearly the domain of the action (Scope-entity) or the action itself (Scope-process).

Mental processes, in turn, are used to represent "our experience of the world of our own consciousness" (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2004, p. 197). According to the authors, mental clauses construe figures of emotion, perception, cognition, and desideration – being typically realized in the data by processes such as *know* and *ignore*. The entities usually involved in mental processes are the Senser, who is "the participant sensing, i.e. involved in conscious processing" (MARTIN; MATTHIESSEN; PAINTER, 1997, p. 105), and the Phenomenon, which is the 'thing' being sensed. In addition, some clauses may have an Inducer, which is the participant who causes a Senser to experience a Phenomenon.

Verbal processes refer to manifestations of symbolic meaning exchanges. They include "not only the different modes of saying (asking, commanding, offering, stating) but also semiotic processes that are not necessarily verbal (showing, indicating)" (MARTIN; MATTHIESSEN; PAINTER, 1997, p. 108). Verbal processes are usually realized in the data by verbs such as *ask* and *tell*. The participants in a verbal clause are: the Sayer, the participant producing the meaning; the Receiver, the participant to whom the saying is addressed; and the Verbiage, the content of what is said. Some verbal clauses of the sub-type 'judgement' may also have a Target, the participant 'verbally affected' by the Sayer in processes such as *blame*, *accuse* and *criticize*.

Relational clauses construe figures that set up a relationship of 'being' between two separate entities. Martin and Rose (2003, p. 76) explain that "[f]igures of 'being' are used most commonly to ascribe qualities to people and things, to classify them as one thing or another, to name their parts, or to identify them". Relational clauses are usually

realized by the processes *be* and *have*. There are three types of relational clauses, namely Intensive, Circumstantial, and Possessive, with are, in turn, cross-classified as either attributive or identifying. In the intensive attributive mode, an Attribute is ascribed to a Carrier. In an intensive identifying relational clause, an identity or value, i.e. the Identifier, is assigned to a participant, the Identified. Finally, relational possessive processes are those in which one participant, the Possessor, is represented as possessing something, the Possessed. Besides the participant roles of Carrier, Identified, and Possessor, a relational clause may also have an Attributor or an Assigner. The Attributor is the participant who causes a Carrier to have an Attribute, while the Assigner is the one that causes an Identified to have an identity.

The participant roles of Actor, Senser, Sayer, Carrier, Identified, Possessor, and Behaver are underlined in the clauses analyzed. The process is represented in bold type, and the roles of Goal, Phenomenon, Attribute, Identifier, and Receiver are shown in italics. For instance, in the following clause, Covid is the Actor, **is killing** is the process, and *Brazil's babies* is the Goal.

BBC 20 - 16 April
Why **is** Covid **killing** *Brazil's babies*?

Additionally, occasional circumstantial elements are represented by dashed lines, such as in the following sentence.

SCMP 9 - China – May 8
|| *Over 4,000 pregnant women or women who gave birth* **were infected** with coronavirus just in the first four months of 2021, with 494 deaths. ||

Next, we provide a few theoretical concepts for the ensuing discussion of the social implications of the results of the linguistic analysis carried out in systemic functional terms.

4 Necrobiopolitics as coupled conceptualization

In a publication addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated atmosphere of denialism and fake news, where he discusses the massive challenge of having to fight both the virus and its allies in our country, Hallal (2021, p. 146), the creator/coordinator of EPICOVID-19 – the largest epidemiological coronavirus study in Brazil – concludes his testimony by stating that

> O Brasil tem 2,7% da população mundial, mas representa mais de 12% das mortes por Covid-19 no planeta. Em outras palavras, se tivéssemos uma resposta à pandemia na média mundial, poderíamos ter salvado 3 de cada 4 brasileiros que perderam suas vidas nessa pandemia. A culpa dessas mortes é da ação anticiência liderada pelo Palácio do Planalto.[5]

In order to discuss the sociopolitical and economic operations behind the decisions specific governmental agents make in regard to the administration of life and death, especially in times of intense crises such as the one created by the COVID-19 pandemic (BEZERRA; SOUZA, 2021), but intensified by its inefficient control by public officials, as indicated in the numbers presented by Hallal (2021), the concepts of biopolitics (FOUCAULT, 2008) and necropolitics (MBEMBE, 2019) are instrumental.

Closely connected to the emergence of the notion of population as fertile ground for the understanding of power exerted in the micro dimensions of human experience, the concept of biopolitics represents the multi-sectorial ways in which control and subjection can be effectively implemented in society. Foucault (2008) describes such control as biopower – a pervasive element in human relations by which certain mechanisms impact people's material experiences in society, i.e. their bodies and subjectivities. Notwithstanding its strong influence in the microspheres of lived experiences, biopower expands itself towards the social body as governments aim to control life and death more broadly, affecting from social groups to entire communities and nations. Such control is often largely disguised in the crafty balance between power and knowledge to which only a very limited number of people have access as they are used to disseminate beliefs serving particular sociopolitical purposes embodied in discourses and regulatory practices.

Unsettling the concept of biopolitics as a universal category, Mbembe (2019) proposes a debate over the complex ways in which some countries have long used military, economic, and political power beyond their own territorial boundaries in their invariably violent

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[5]   English translation: "*Brazil has 2.7% of the world's population but represents more than 12% of deaths by Covid-19 on the planet. In other words, if we had a global average response to the pandemic, we could have saved 3 out of 4 Brazilians who lost their lives in this pandemic. The anti-science action led by the Planalto Palace is to blame.*"

colonizing efforts towards other peoples and nations, usually masked under the pretense of sovereignty protection, which begs the question: whose sovereignties matter? The author delineates how power exerted in these domains assumes configurations other than the ones initially problematized by Foucault (2008), whose reflections are mostly positioned in European contexts. In these terms, Mbembe (2008, p. 92) refers to the term necropolitics as a way to

> account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating *death-worlds*, that is, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*.

The necropower-necropolitics matrix enables us to expand the scrutiny of the pernicious ways power can be used to produce death beyond the deployment of weapons to include how political and economic decisions, along with their pragmatic implications, can be oftentimes more subtly used to subjugate life to death, especially in countries, like Brazil, where the ominous and multilayered consequences of coloniality, mostly created by our shameful history of slavery and racism, are still in full effect.

For the purpose of the sociopolitical discussion initiated in this paper, which will hopefully inform other language and discourse studies, across diverse fields of knowledge, we propose a coupled conceptualization of biopolitics and necropolitics that we call *necrobiopolitics*, much in line with previous interdisciplinary studies (BENTO, 2018; LIMA, 2018; NEGRIS, 2020), in order to position our discussion in the Brazilian context as mainly geared by our local experiences, where the governance of life and the production of death occur in ways that are contingent with our local histories, thus allowing us to question and denounce governmental (in)actions as part of a greater system of oppression that dictates – by action and/or omission – whose lives matter and whose deaths do not.

5 Results and discussion

In this section, we describe the results of the transitivity analysis of the global news items selected and discuss emerged language patterns

that may be indicative of the particular ways in which the Brazilian federal government has (not) addressed the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic in our country. To that end, the language analysis is organized in thematic subsections and followed by a sociopolitical discussion of the data results.

5.1 Remarkably high death rates

Among the many headlines announcing the high number of COVID-19-related deaths in Brazil, the mark of 300,000 deaths on March 24 and 400,000 deaths on April 29 were found in all websites investigated. The two most frequently found transitivity choices in the data were the relational processes *pass* and *top*, with Brazil as Possessor and the number of deaths in the position of Possessed. These possessive representations, thus, indicate that Brazil now has 400,000 people who have died of COVID-19. Other relational processes used were *reach*, *approach* and *hit*. The following occurrences illustrate the news about the 400,000 deaths found in the selected data.

BBC 23 – England - 29 April
|| Covid: Brazil **passes** *400,000 deaths* amid slow vaccination. ||
ABC 10 – Australia - 29 April
|| Brazil **passes** *400,000 COVID-19 fatalities* with death toll to remain high for months. ||
NEWS24 10 – South Africa – April 30
|| Brazil **passes** *400 000 Covid-19 fatalities* with high death toll to plateau for months. ||
FRA 38 – France – April 29
|| Brazil **passes** *400,000 Covid-19 deaths* as vaccine rollout stalls. ||
BN 8 – Ireland – April 29
|| Brazil **tops** *400,000 virus deaths* amid fears of renewed surge. ||
SCMP - China – April 30
|| Brazil **tops** *400,000 coronavirus deaths* amid fears of renewed surge. ||
DW 17 – Germany – May 1
Bolsonaro criticized || as Brazil **tops** *400,000 COVID-19 deaths*. ||
ALJ 12 – Qatar - April 30
Families mourn || as Brazil **hits** *400,000 COVID deaths*. ||
Brazilians struggle with pain of losing loved ones to coronavirus || as country **reaches** *sombre milestone*. ||

FRA 4 – France – March 5
Bolsonaro tells Brazilians to 'stop whining' || after <u>Covid-19 deaths</u> **hit**
record high. ||
CBC 11 – Canada – April 13
|| Bolsonaro refuses to lock down || as <u>Brazil</u> **approaches** *grisly milestone*. ||

5.2 Death of children and pregnant/post-partum women

Among the dreadful impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in
Brazil, reported by various news agencies selected for this study, was
the loss of babies and young children. Some of the possible reasons
given by health experts for these deaths include the collapse of hospital
infrastructure, the unequal access to treatment, and the more aggressive
P.1 variant. The most common transitivity realization found in the data
shows infants as Actors of the material process *to die* followed by the
prepositional phrase *of/from Covid* as a circumstance of Reason indicating
the cause of death. In other cases, Covid is represented more explicitly
as the agent of death in the participant function of Actor in the material
process *kill*, while the dead children take the role of Goal, as shown in
the following examples.

NYT 11 – United States - May 16
BBC 18 – England - 14 April
Coronavirus: The babies and children in Brazil's Covid ICU.
|| Since the start of the pandemic in Brazil, <u>hundreds of babies</u> **have died**
<u>from</u> <u>Covid-19</u>. ||
BBC 19 - 15 April
|| Why **are** <u>so many babies</u> **dying** <u>of</u> Covid-19 in <u>Brazil</u>? ||
As the pandemic rages in Brazil, || <u>hundreds of babies and young children</u>
are dying <u>of</u> Co<u>vid</u>. ||
BBC 20 - 16 April
Why **is** <u>Covid</u> **killing** *Brazil's babies*?
|| <u>More young children</u> **have died** <u>from</u> Co<u>vid-19</u> in <u>Brazil</u> than <u>anywhere</u>
<u>else</u> <u>in the world</u>. ||
NEWS24 15 – South Africa – May 17
|| <u>Children</u> in Brazil **are dying** <u>from</u> Co<u>vid-19</u> <u>at</u> ala<u>rmingly</u> hi<u>gh</u> ra<u>tes</u>. ||
<u>Children</u> **are dying** <u>from</u> <u>Covid-19</u> <u>in</u> B<u>razil</u> <u>at</u> hi<u>gher</u> ra<u>tes</u> <u>than</u> in <u>the</u> <u>US</u>. ||

|| Brazil **recorded** *832 deaths in children below 6*, || while the US had 241 deaths in kids of all ages.
Doctors told The New York Times the P.1 variant could be causing the higher death toll.
|| Why **Is** Covid **Killing** *So Many Young Children* in Brazil? || Doctors Are Baffled.
Experts believe Brazil's overloaded hospital system and uneven access to health care are among the reasons || babies and small children **are succumbing** *to the virus* at a high rate.||

Tragically, COVID-19 has taken the lives of not only babies and children but also of many pregnant and post-partum women. According to Bulhões (2021), based on data from the Brazilian Obstetric Observatory for COVID-19, from March 2020 to May 2021, 1.204 women died of COVID-19 in Brazil. Another alarming fact is that the number of deaths among pregnant and post-partum women in 2021 was 66% higher when compared to the same period in 2020. Alarmingly, one out of five pregnant and post-partum women infected with the new coronavirus did not have access to intensive care units, with 33% not having access to intubation either.

The most common transitivity structure used to represent the deaths of these women is similar to the one used for expressing the death of children, with women taking up the role of affected Goals of the new coronavirus, which is represented in the position of Actor or Circumstance of Manner: Means. The following examples illustrate these structures.

SCMP - China – May 8
Brazil faces 'risk of a generation of orphans' || as coronavirus **kills** *pregnant and post-partum women*. ||
|| *Over 4,000 pregnant women or women who gave birth* **were infected** with coronavirus just in the first four months of 2021, with 494 deaths. ||

In addition to the structures mentioned above, the analysis also revealed one case where the death of pregnant women was represented in a non-congruent way by the use of the adjectivized nominalization *maternal mortality* in a relational: identifying: circumstantial clause. This kind of non-congruent representation regrettably mitigates the dire reality that the more congruent representation would reveal: that pregnant women are dying because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

DW 15 – Germany – April 04
Brazilians urged to postpone pregnancies in pandemic.
|| <u>The pandemic</u> **has led to** *a rise in maternal mortality* in Brazil. ||

Following the numerous deaths of babies and their mothers, Brazilian health authorities decided to issue an alert to women warning them to postpone pregnancy. The analysis revealed that the most common transitivity pattern used to represent the case of delayed pregnancies is composed of a clause complex with one verbal clause with health authorities in the position of Sayer projecting a material clause with women represented as Actor. The most frequent verbal processes used are *urge*, *call on* and *ask*, and the most used material processes are *postpone* and *delay*.

CNA – Singapore – April 17
|| <u>Brazil</u> **asks** || <u>women</u> **to delay** *pregnancy* <u>over</u> <u>new</u> <u>COVID</u>-19 <u>variant</u> <u>fears</u>. ||
DW 15 – Germany – April 04
|| <u>Brazilians</u> **urged** || **to postpone** *pregnancies* in pandemic. ||
|| With new infections increasing, <u>health officials</u> **are calling on** || <u>women</u> to **postpone** *planned pregnancies* || until the country gets a handle on the situation.

5.3 Hospital and health system collapse

Another damaging consequence of the pandemic in Brazil, making the headlines around the world, was the overwhelming impact on hospital infrastructure as hundreds of thousands of sick people rushed to health care units in search of treatment. Among several headlines, the word *collapse*, whether in its more congruent material form or its nominalization, was the preferred choice to represent the shocking scenario that took over Brazilian hospitals.

BBC 14 – England - April 7
|| <u>Brazil's health system</u> **has 'collapsed'** <u>with</u> <u>Covid</u>. ||
An intensive care doctor at a hospital in Brazil says wards are full and many are dying at home.
DW 12 – Germany – April 8
|| <u>Brazil's health system</u> **has** long since **collapsed**, || says doctor

An infectious diseases specialist in Rio de Janeiro says <u>the situation in Brazil's hospitals</u> **is** *catastrophic*. (…).
BBC 4 – England - March 10
|| BBC OS: <u>Brazil Covid hospitals</u> [**are**] *'close to collapse'*. ||
ALJ 15 – Qatar - May 10
Brazil's Amazonas state braces for another COVID surge.
Health officials in the Brazilian Amazon, still reeling from health system **collapse**, fear a third wave is on the way.
BBC 10 - England - 24 March
Covid: Brazil's daily deaths surpass 3,000 for first time.
The virus is spreading rapidly, with <u>many hospitals</u> close to **collapse** and nearly 300,000 deaths.
NYT 4 - March 27
A **Collapse** Foretold: How Brazil's Covid-19 Outbreak Overwhelmed Hospitals.
RT 6 – Russia - March 3
Sao Paulo to enact Brazil's strictest Covid-19 measures as governor warns state on 'verge of **collapse**'

5.4 Hunger

Alongside death and hospital collapse, another impact of the pandemic worsened by the accompanying economic crisis was the increase of hunger and food insecurity that has affected millions of Brazilian families. The transitivity configurations used to represent this aspect of the pandemic usually occur either through the relational process (*to go hungry*), or through the relational: attributive process (*to face hunger*). The analysis also found a relational clause with the nominalization (*hunger*) functioning as Carrier of the relational process *to worsen*.

ALJ 8 – Qatar - April 11
|| 'Tragic combination': <u>Millions</u> **go hungry** amid Brazil COVID crisis. ||
|| <u>19 million Brazilians</u> **have gone hungry** during the pandemic, || new study finds, as food insecurity is also on the rise.
NYT 9 – United States - April 23
|| Ravaged by Covid, <u>Brazil</u> **Faces** *a Hunger Epidemic*. ||

|| <u>Tens of millions of Brazilians</u> **are facing** *hunger or food insecurity* || as the country's Covid-19 crisis drags on, || killing thousands of people every day. ||

BBC 21 – England - 18 April

|| Covid in Brazil: <u>Hunger</u> **worsens** in city slums.||

<u>The country struggling to contain a Covid-19 surge</u> **faces** *a possible explosion of poverty*.

Our focus has thus far been on the grim consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. At this point, we turn our attention to reporting media representations involving the actions and/or omissions of president Jair Bolsonaro. His objectionable handling of the pandemic has been the center of attention in various clauses in the data collected for this study. The main events discussed here are: the refusal to adopt safety and lockdown measures; his telling people to "stop whining" about the pandemic; his changing the health minister four times; his purposeful delay in purchasing vaccines; and the Senate inquiry created to investigate his (in)actions.

5.5 Refusal to adopt safety and lockdown measures

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Bolsonaro has refused to accept the gravity of the situation and deterred any firm actions to stop the spread of the new coronavirus. As a matter of fact, he has repeatedly done the exact opposite of what health officials have since recommended to prevent contamination. On several occasions, he appeared in public events not wearing a mask and gathered thousands of people to rally against opposing politicians and health authorities who defend lockdown measures. The following instances show some of the tens of news items denouncing his inapt behavior, where he is represented as Actor in material processes such as *reject*, *oppose*, *refuse*, and *ignore*, while lockdown and safety measures take the position of Goal. This pattern can be seen in the following occurrences.

BN 6 – Ireland – April 7

|| Bolsonaro **rejects** *lockdown* <u>despite Brazils' record Covid-19 death toll</u>. ||

BBC 16 - England - 7 April

Hospitals are overcrowded, || but <u>President Bolsonaro</u> **opposes** *any lockdown measures*. ||

CBC 11 – Canada – April 13
|| <u>Bolsonaro</u> **refuses to lock down** || as Brazil approaches grisly milestone || As COVID-19 cases continue to surge, experts say Brazil's death toll from COVID-19 will likely exceed that of the U.S., || but <u>President Jair Bolsonaro</u> **refuses to implement** *a lockdown*.
ALJ 6 - Quatar - April 7
|| <u>Bolsonaro</u> again **refuses** *lockdown* || as Brazil COVID crisis drags on.
DW 5 - Germany – March 12
Infection rates and death tolls have been rising drastically. Soon, Brazil could have more deaths than the US.
|| However, <u>President Jair Bolsonaro</u> still **rejects** *tough restrictions*. ||
CNA 48 – Singapore – May 23
|| <u>President Jair Bolsonaro</u> **ignored** *state Covid-19 safety regulations* || when he met with hundreds of supporters at an unscheduled visit to the city of Senador La Rocque in Maranhao state, (…).

5.6 Stop whining

Among the many verbal abuses inflicted by Bolsonaro during the pandemic, his telling the people to "stop whining" became headlines in most of the investigated news agencies for this study. In these cases, Bolsonaro is represented as Sayer of the verbal process *tell* in a projecting clause complex with the Brazilian people represented as Behaver in the process *whine*.

ABC 1 - Australia - March 6
|| <u>Brazilian President</u> **tells** *citizens* || to 'stop **whining**' || <u>as COVID deaths hit record highs</u>.
|| <u>Brazil's President Jair Bolsanaro</u> **tells** *citizens* || to "stop **whining**" <u>about the pandemic</u> || — despite his nation recording two straight days of record deaths from COVID-19.
CNA – Singapore – March 5
|| After record COVID-19 deaths, <u>Bolsonaro</u> **tells** *Brazilians* || to stop '**whining**'. ||
DW 3 - Germany – March 5
|| <u>Brazil's Bolsonaro</u> **tells** *people* || 'stop **whining**'. ||
President Jair Bolsonaro's comments came amid record death rates.
BN 2 – Ireland – March 5

|| After record Covid deaths, <u>Bolsonaro</u> **tells** *Brazilians* || to stop '**whining**'. ||
CBC 5 – Canada – March 19
|| <u>Bolsonaro</u> **tells** *Brazilians* || to 'stop **whining**' || <u>as</u> C<u>O</u>V<u>ID</u>-<u>19</u> d<u>ea</u>th t<u>o</u>ll r<u>is</u>e<u>s</u>.
NEWS24 1 – South Africa – March 6
|| <u>Brazil's president</u> **told** *people* || to "stop **whining**" || <u>as</u> it <u>ba</u>ttle<u>s a</u> <u>de</u>va<u>s</u>t<u>a</u>ting <u>cor</u>o<u>n</u>a<u>vir</u>u<u>s</u> o<u>u</u>tb<u>rea</u>k.
FRA 4 – France – March 5
|| <u>Bolsonaro</u> **tells** *Brazilians* || to 'stop **whining**' || <u>af</u>ter <u>C</u>ovid-19 <u>deaths</u> <u>hit</u> rec<u>or</u>d h<u>igh</u>.

5.7 Change of health ministers

Aiming to keep his position towards the pandemic unchallenged, Bolsonaro also changed health ministers whenever they showed any sign of dissidence, which cause the country to have had four health ministers since the outbreak of the pandemic. The next news items refer to the announcement of his fourth health minister, Marcelo Queiroga, who replaced General Eduardo Pazuello. Pazuello came to office on May 15, 2020 and left on March 23, 2021. During his administration the number of deaths skyrocketed from 14.817 to 278.229 as he obediently followed Bolsonaro's orders to ignore safety regulations and to slow down vaccination programs. However, according to Traumann (2021, par. 7), the main reason that led Bolsonaro to replace Pazuello came when his terrible handling of the pandemic began to attract criticism from political and financial allies who threatened to start supporting former president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva in the upcoming presidential election. As can be seen in the following occurrences, Bolsonaro is represented as Actor of the material processes *pick*, *choose*, *change*, *replace*, *name*, and *overhaul*, while the new minister occupies the position of Goal.

CBC 4 – Canada - March 15
|| <u>Brazil's president</u> **chooses** *4th health minister* || as pandemic rages.
|| <u>Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro</u> on Monday **picked** *his fourth health minister* || since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, amid the worst throes of the disease in the country yet and after a series of errors decried by public health experts.
DW 6 – Germany – March 16

|| Brazil: <u>President Bolsonaro</u> **to replace** *health minister* yet again. ||
FRA 13 – France – March 16
|| <u>Brazil's Bolsonaro</u> **picks** *fourth health minister* <u>since start of pandemic</u>. ||
CNA 8 – Singapore – March 16
|| <u>Brazil's Bolsonaro</u> **picks** *4th health minister* <u>as COVID-19 rages</u>. ||
KWT 6 – Kwait – March 16
|| <u>Brazil</u> **named** *its fourth health minister* <u>since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic</u>. ||
SCMP - China – March 30
|| <u>Brazil's Bolsonaro</u> **overhauls** *cabinet* || as coronavirus pressure mounts.
|| <u>The far-right leader</u> **changed** *six cabinet members including the foreign minister* || as he faced rising pressure over a deadly surge of Covid-19.

5.8 Purposeful delay in purchasing vaccines

Besides downplaying the severity of the pandemic and refusing to take action to avoid the spread of the new coronavirus, the news regarding Bolsonaro's government purposeful delay in acquiring vaccines also appeared in several headlines and leads of the data under analysis. These pieces of news were mainly represented through the relational process *be* with either the government or its vaccination program in the position of Carrier and the adjective *slow* in the position of Attribute.

DW 17 – Germany – May 1
Bolsonaro criticized as Brazil tops 400,000 COVID-19 deaths.
Though the rate of coronavirus infections is slowing down, April was Brazil's deadliest month so far.
The vaccine rollout is also lagging because || <u>Jair Bolsonaro's government</u> **has been** *slow* to buy vaccines. ||
ABC 14 - Australia - 1 May
<u>Brazil's coronavirus disaster</u> **reached** *a new milestone* this week and experts fear what lies ahead.
As <u>Brazil</u> **passes** *a COVID-19 milestone*, a key issue now is making sure <u>vaccine distribution</u> **outpaces** *the spread of the virus*. || But <u>the inoculation effort</u> **is** *slow* || and in some places <u>it</u> **has stalled**.

The government's slow pace to get vaccines for the Brazilian population was aggravated by Bolsonaro's irrational political attitudes and crude accusations against China, at the time one of the main suppliers

of inputs for vaccine production in our country. Bolsonaro, then a close ally of the Trump administration, joined Donald Trump's defamatory campaign in falsely blaming China for creating the new coronavirus in a laboratory. This theme was publicized mainly in the Chinese newspaper *South China Morning Post* included in our investigation. There were two occurrences found in the same news report issued on May 6. In the first one, Bolsonaro is represented as Assigner of the relational process *link*, while, in the second, he is shown as Sayer of the verbal process complex *say*.

SCMP 10 - China – May 6
|| China critic Bolsonaro **links** *coronavirus pandemic* to 'biological warfare' || as Brazil's death toll soars.
|| Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro **said** || *the novel coronavirus* **may have been made** in a laboratory, || in the latest comments likely to strain his relations with China.

Bolsonaro's comments caused the Chinese government to delay sending key inputs for the production of vaccines in Brazil. His comments were also viewed negatively by several Brazilian senators during the Senate inquiry hearings aimed at investigating his conduct during the pandemic. They openly accused him of harming relations with China and making the acquisition of vaccines more difficult as the following example shows.

SCMP 11 - China – May 19
Coronavirus: senators say || anti-China views **hurt** *Brazil's access to Covid-19 vaccines*. ||

Besides accusing China of creating the virus and causing the delay in the acquisition of important inputs for vaccine production, Bolsonaro's government and his Health Ministry also contributed greatly to the delay in getting vaccines by purposefully avoiding contact with several pharmaceutical companies, especially Pfizer. The following examples show Pfizer as Actor of the material processes *offer* and *supply* and the vaccines in the position of Goal, while the government's refusal to reply can be seen in the clause where Brazil is in the position of Actor of the process *ghosted* and Pfizer is the Goal. Another way of representing Brazil's failure to reply is found in the two clauses where Pfizer is represented as Actor of the process *got*, while the locutions *no response* and *an answer* appear as Goal.

NEWS24 16 – South Africa – May 29
|| <u>Brazil</u> **ghosted** *Pfizer* || when <u>it</u> **offered** that country *70 million vaccine shots*.
|| <u>Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer</u> **offered** Brazil *as many as 70 million dosed of its Covid-19 vaccine*, || but [<u>it</u>] never **got** *an answer*. ||
CNA 41 – Singapore – May 14
|| <u>Pfizer</u> **got** *no response* to offers || **to supply** *COVID-19 vaccine* to Brazil last year, || says executive.

5.9 Senate inquiry

After much debate and political struggle, on April 27, the Senate finally managed to start an inquiry to investigate the role of the federal government in the disastrous handling of the pandemic[6]. Bolsonaro's exiguous management is represented by means of several transitivity configurations. The following clause describes his anti-China views as Actor of the process *hurt*, while the next represents him and his inner circle as Target of the verbal process *blamed*.

SCMP - China – May 19
Coronavirus: senators say || <u>anti-China views</u> **hurt** *Brazil's access to Covid-19 vaccines*. ||
|| In parliamentary inquiry into president's handling of coronavirus, <u>senators</u> **blamed** *Bolsonaro and his inner circle* for vaccine ingredient delays. ||

The next piece of news refers to Bolsonaro's much criticized insistence on prescribing a cocktail of unproven drugs such as the lice medication ivermectin, the antimalarial chloroquine, and the antibiotic azithromycin not only to sick patients but also to healthy people as a

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[6] As Vieira (2021) reported for the Senate Agency, the final Senate Inquiry Report was presented and approved on October 20, 2021, calling for nine charges against president Jair Bolsonaro: malfeasance, quackery, epidemic with death results, violation of preventive sanitary measures, irregular employment of public money, incitement to crime, forgery of private documents, crimes of responsibility (violation of social rights and incompatibility with dignity, honor and decorum of office), and crimes against humanity (in terms of extermination, persecution and other inhumane acts). Having been delivered to Prosecutor-General Augusto Aras on October 27, 2021, over 100 days later not one individual inquiry had been set up based on the report to investigate high-ranking members of the federal government (see shorturl.at/cdjBU).

form of early treatment. The first one shows the inquiry as Actor of the material process *focuses*, while chloroquine is the Goal.

NEWS24 13 – South Africa – May 10
|| <u>Brazil COVID-19 inquiry</u> **focuses** *on chloroquine*. ||
<u>Brazil's former health minister</u> **told** *a parliamentary inquiry* on Tuesday that || <u>President Jair Bolsonaro's right-wing government</u> **knew** full well || that <u>the treatment they were advocating for COVID-19 patients</u> **had** *no scientific basis*.

The second representation is composed of a clause complex with three processes. The clause complex shows the former health minister, Luis Henrique Mandetta, as Sayer of the process *told* when reporting to the Senate inquiry (Receiver) that Bolsonaro, Senser of the mental process *knew*, had full knowledge that the chloroquine-based treatment (Carrier) was not supported by the scientific community.

Some of the news reported by the international agencies in our data also focused on the political damage that Senate inquiry may cause Bolsonaro. The following clause shows this by representing him as Goal of the material process *pressures* with the probe in the role of Actor.

CNA – Singapore – April 13
Brazil COVID-19 death toll rises by 1,480 || as <u>probe</u> **pressures** *Bolsonaro*. ||

The political dimension is stated more clearly in the second clause complex of the next example, where the material process *weaken* explicitly indicates that Bolsonaro's chances of winning the next presidential elections can be affected by the negative publicity created by the Senate inquiry.

SCMP 6 - China – April 28
Coronavirus: <u>Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro</u> [**is**] under pressure || as <u>Senate</u> **probes** <u>handling of pandemic</u>. ||
|| <u>The investigation</u> **could weaken** *the president's chances against his chief political rival, Lula da Silva*, in October's elections. ||

5.10 Sociopolitical discussion of emerged language patterns

Based on the significant data described in the nine preceding subsections, the transitivity analysis of global news items has revealed strong patterns of (in)action by the federal government, particularly

influenced and/or spearheaded by president Jair Bolsonaro, in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. Such patterns are now discussed further as regards the coupled conceptualization of *necrobiopolitics* as indicative of particular ways in which governments may exert power to control institutional, discourse, and regulatory practices in order to produce and sustain the inequitable balance between worthy lives and inconsequential deaths.

The remarkably high overall death rates themselves are enough indication of the dismal governance over the pandemic in our country, but the data analyzed have provided further evidence of how discriminatory the realities experienced by different sectors of the population have been as regards the unequal access to treatment, more specifically to intensive care units, particularly for those in need of intubation. The discourse disseminated initially that all Brazilians were "on the same boat" in the fight against COVID-19 could not withstand the stark economic implications that impacted the lives of poor citizens much more harshly, whose living conditions were severely worsened by job insecurity and meager welfare (OLIVEIRA; BEZERRA, 2021).

The idea of a nation fighting a common enemy illustrates how necrobiopolitics works quite pervasively in the micro dimensions of individual and social experiences, as we are led to believe there is a greater good to be achieved by a coming together of people from all walks of life, creeds, and political affiliations. However, reality strikes certain people quite differently in times of intense crises such as this, with minoritized groups (in terms of social class, race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, and disability) suffering the consequences of the pandemic in dehumanizing ways.

The lived experiences of millions of people in Brazil have sadly confirmed that COVID-19, as the alleged common enemy to be defeated, has long been replaced by another notion of multiple common enemies, fueled by misinformation as a *profitable commodity* (TIBURI, 2020), who need to be silenced and annihilated. Among these so-called enemies of the nation are left-wing politics, communism, feminism, gender ideology, LGBTQIA+ groups etc., all believed to be lurking in the dark waiting to destroy what authoritarian governments, such as the present federal administration in Brazil, paradoxically call democracy.

What these governments truly aim is to weaken democracies so they can implement and sustain their ultimate anti-democratic goals, such

as press censorship, the subjugation of minoritized groups, the decimation of indigenous and traditional peoples, as well as the production and exploitation of poor people to create the riches they so eagerly attempt to multiply and control. In this respect, the Brazilian philosopher Marcia Tiburi urges us to consider the dangers of resentment and how it relates to authoritarian regimes as follows:

> O ressentimento esconde o ódio e é a origem do fascismo que pesa sobre nossa cultura atual. No gesto de todo fascista – seja o homofóbico, o machista, o racista, o que defende a desigualdade de classes ou a natureza superior de uns contra outros, ou o fascismo sutil do capitalista que diz que as coisas não podem ser diferentes – está o ressentimento, sinônimo de ódio, marca da impossibilidade de ir além de si mesmo, de produzir um mundo melhor para todos. (TIBURI, 2020, p. 164)[7]

In a resentful war against an invisible enemy, the federal government, particularly Jair Bolsonaro, has repeatedly demonstrated how necrobiopolitical decisions can quite effectively dictate whose lives matter – generally white, (upper) middle class, educated, straight, gender conforming people without disabilities – and whose deaths are tolerated, or even celebrated,, especially when seen as threats to the neoliberal capitalist system – generally black, poor, uneducated, non-straight, gender unconforming people with disabilities –, thus producing what Tiburi (2020) identifies as a *fascist spark* against social change, democracy and human rights.

This subjugation of (the) life (of some) to death, especially those who have been historically marginalized from social inclusion, from health care, and from economic stability, is aligned with the neoliberal *raison d'être* according to which people ought to be self-made, have to achieve success on their own merit, and must overcome any obstacles by playing into the existing systems of oppression – not against them. The idiosyncrasies of such an unequal form of sociopolitical and economic

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[7]   English translation: "Resentment hides hatred and is the origin of the fascism that weighs heavily on our culture today. In the gesture of every fascist – be it the homophobic, the sexist, the racist, the one who defends class inequality or the superior nature of some against others, or the subtle fascism of the capitalist who says that things cannot be different – there is the resentment, synonymous with hate, a mark of the impossibility of going beyond oneself, of producing a better world for everyone."

organization bespeak the failure of a stagnant focus on loose regulations of the economy and declining promotion of social programs as the chosen path to "progress" made abundantly clear in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil.

The collapse of the hospital and health systems is also directly related to the herd immunity strategy defended by president Jair Bolsonaro – contradicting the widely publicized guidelines from health authorities the world over. This strategy, as a form of exercising his necrobiopolitics in the management of the pandemic, has been enforced by his refusal to adopt safety and lockdown measures, his telling worried citizens to "stop whining" as they criticized his unlawful (in)actions, his changing health ministers four times as a way to avoid dissenting opinions, and his purposeful delay in acquiring vaccines, despite repeated attempts from the pharmaceutical company Pfizer to supply vaccine to Brazil, for instance.

Finally, as a direct consequence of the necrobiopolitical (in) actions of the federal government, hunger has worsened nationwide as reported by a cover story in national magazine IstoÉ (ed. 2701), with the headline "Um país em estado de barbárie"[8] and a horrific image of people digging for food in a garbage truck in the city of Fortaleza. According to a recent national survey entitled *Insegurança Alimentar e Covid-19 no Brasil* conducted by *Rede PENSSAN – Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional*[9] (2021), 19.1 million people experienced hunger in 2020 in a total of 116.8 million Brazilians who live in some degree of food insecurity – an alarming 55.2% of households.

By choosing to avoid providing prompt answers to the dangers posed by the new coronavirus, the federal government has actively pursued a necrobiopolitics that has ultimately been responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of people who could have otherwise survived this pandemic had the lives of all citizens mattered equally.

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[8]   English translation: "*A country in a state of barbarity."*
[9]   English translation: "Food Insecurity and Covid-19 in Brazil conducted by Rede PENSSAN – Brazilian Research Network on Food and Nutrition Sovereignty and Security."

6 Concluding remarks

In this paper, we aimed to describe global media representations of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil and to discuss whether emerged language patterns may reveal particular ways in which life and death have been controlled by the federal government.

Overall, the transitivity analysis revealed that the main themes covered by the media agencies have been the remarkably high death rates, the death of babies and mothers, the collapse of hospital and health service, the spike in hunger, the dismissal of the severity of the pandemic, and the purposeful delay in purchasing vaccines particularly by president Jair Bolsonaro.

Such results indicated language patterns signaling towards a necrobiopolitical agenda of the Brazilian federal government in which citizens whose individual and social experiences are intersectionally minoritized by aspects of social class, race, gender, and age have suffered the devastating consequences of the pandemic more severely, thus unveiling the rather inequitable ways different parts of the population have had access to food and health care in such challenging circumstances.

Notwithstanding the limitations of a small-scale study, the results obtained have been unequivocal in demonstrating how the global media perceive the sociopolitical and economic measures implemented by the federal government that have led to the catastrophic consequences exemplified by exceedingly high death rates in Brazil, second only to the USA.

The role of education in imagining and creating a brighter and more just future becomes decidedly more crucial in such barbaric times. Critical and emancipating pedagogies will necessarily observe Adorno's (1997, p. 11) warning that "the premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again", highlighting the fact that there is no actual democracy if/when the lives of all people are not equally protected and nurtured.

We hope this study will illustrate not only how language analysis can contribute to social change, but also how seemingly ordinary political and economic decisions may actually instrumentalize a vicious necrobiopolitical system that continues to tip the balance between life and death in favor of the more privileged. Let us all be vigilant and proactive in denouncing antidemocratic (in)actions that threaten our own humanity.

Authorship statement

Both authors contributed to all parts of this project. Fábio Bezerra wrote the following sections, which were then revised and/or edited by Anderson de Souza: introduction; theory on necrobiopolitics; sociopolitical discussion of the transitivity analysis results; and concluding remarks. Anderson de Souza wrote the following sections, which were then revised and/or edited by Fábio Bezerra: methodology; theoretical part on transitivity; and transitivity analysis. Both authors were involved in data collection and manuscript revision.

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RT – Russia Today
https://www.rt.com/news
NYT – New York Times
https://www.nytimes.com/section/world
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https://www.aljazeera.com
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https://www.news24.com/news24/World
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https://www.dw.com/en/top-stories/s-9097
CBC – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
https://www.cbc.ca/news/world
ABC – Australian Broadcasting Corporation
https://www.abc.net.au/news/world
KWT – KWT Today
https://kwttoday.com
SCMP – South China Morning Post
https://www.scmp.com

In memory of all COVID-19 victims in Brazil and worldwide.