



SCHOOL VIOLENCE: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ADOLESCENTS IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Objective: analyzing the structure and content of social representations of students of a public school regarding violence in school. **Method:** a qualitative study, anchored in the Theory of Social Representations and Theory of the Central Nucleus. Data production took place in May and June 2022 through the technique of free association of words, whose free evocations were analyzed and processed by the Software *Ensemble de Programmes Permettant L'analyse des Évocations* – EVOC version 2005. **Results:** the study included 54 adolescent students enrolled in high school in a public school, who associated words through the use of inductive terms, with the central core for the term *violence* the element physical violence; for *school violence* the element bullying; and on *violence in the teaching and learning process* there was no figuration of any central element. The peripheral zone was composed of the elements: verbal violence, abuse, pain, mockery, intrigue, school dropout, disinterest and psychological shock, respectively. **Final thoughts:** the possible representations reinforced the need to insert the theme violence and bullying more broadly in the discussions of school planning, as a way to recognize its importance and promote its combat and prevention.

Keywords: Violence. Adolescent. Educational Status. Nursing. Social Representations.

INTRODUCTION

Violence has established itself in humanity in a relationship of submission and power between aggressor and victim, directly affecting their biopsychosocial integrity. In less distant times, this phenomenon has been associated with marginalized groups and places, which has increased the gap of inequalities of a capitalist society and, only over the years, its occurrence has become explicit to a range of circumstances and interpersonal relationships, no longer restricted to geographical boundaries and social classes⁽¹⁾.

The different forms and intensities of violence give it a multidetermined and complex meaning. Among its different manifestations, it is possible to perceive cases of physical, psychological, symbolic and virtual violence, motivated by issues of religious intolerance,

prejudice and discrimination, xenophobic discourses and improper play, especially against children, adolescents, women and the elderly⁽²⁾.

In adolescence, it can hatch as a reflection of the numerous organic, psychological and social transformations to which adolescents are susceptible, both as victims and promoters of violence. For this reason, it is necessary to value the subjective and social dimension of adolescents at all levels of care, combating the lack of access or/and loss of rights, inequality, discrimination, neglect and exclusion, to ensure the protection of this clientele from risk and violence⁽³⁾.

Adolescence is a period of the life cycle marked by biological, psychological and social transformations. At this stage, several potentialities and vulnerabilities stand out, accentuating characteristics that delineate

*This article was extracted from the Doctoral Thesis entitled "Social representations of adolescents in the public school system about school violence", defended in 2023, under the Graduate Program in Nursing of the State University of Maringá (PSE/UEM)*Enfermeiro. Doutor em Enfermagem. Maringá, PR, Brasil. E-mail: raonediego@gmail.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7633-2085>

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individuals with unequal profiles that, in turn, will influence the way in which each one will experience this period of discoveries, curiosities, experimentations and disquiets⁽⁴⁾.

These changes, sometimes received with resistance and denial, are conflicting with pre-established patterns, leading adolescents to comparisons and conflicts about their own image, at a time when they tend to reproduce patterns and seek recognition in their peers. The fact that some curiosities and findings represent potential risks does not justify reducing them to groups or attributing risk behaviors to them^(5,6).

Since the 1980s, violence has been constant in the daily lives of young Brazilians, with a high rate of homicides and mass attacks. As of 2014, the country has recorded 218,580 murders of children and adolescents and violence has focused on black boys, aged 17 and over. In this period, more blacks died than whites, the equivalent of three black children and adolescents for each white. In 2017 alone, 35, 783 young people were murdered in Brazil^(7,8).

A 2019 study revealed that violence, involving body fighting, was prevalent in the school environment, double among boys. The weapon, even in small numbers, was considered as frequently used object, accentuating the risk to his own life. And with regard to psychological violence, girls were the ones who suffered the most bullying, in the form of skits, mockery, hurt, intimidation and humiliation, motivated by body appearance, face appearance and color or race⁽⁹⁾. It is estimated that, each year, about 246 million children and adolescents suffer from school violence and bullying worldwide⁽¹⁰⁾.

The school can be understood as a physical and social space conducive to manifestations of violence and, at the same time, crucial for the development of interventions to prevent and combat this phenomenon. It is necessary to have a more comprehensive look at a reality as complex as the school scenario, overcoming the reductionist view of a heterogeneous environment and potential trigger of violence for a space whose role goes beyond the educational dimension, able to guarantee the integral right to life, health and citizenship⁽¹¹⁾.

This study addresses a complex reality of

conflict situations experienced by adolescents who share the school setting. The Theory of Social Representations⁽¹²⁾, as a path to a comprehensive look at this phenomenon, is favorable to the unveiling of the historical and social construction of violence, because, in addition to explaining the meanings created by them, exercise of reflection and awareness, positively influencing their behaviors.

In this sense, the following question is problematized for research: what is the understanding of school adolescents about violence in the schooling process? From there, the objective is to analyze the structure and content of social representations of school adolescents in a public school network of school violence.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study, anchored in the Theory of Social Representations and the Theory of the Central Nucleus, proposed by Moscovici (1961)⁽¹²⁾ and disseminated by Abric (1994)⁽¹³⁾.

The Theory of Social Representations incorporates concepts about behaviors, conceptions, images, words, among other elements that strengthen its plurality. A representation is structured in a figurative part and a signification part, considering that each figure has a meaning and each meaning is linked to a figure, allowing assigning meaning to an object, to social phenomena, to contexts in which they are inserted, by means of a representation⁽¹⁴⁾.

The Central Nucleus Theory, in turn, groups the possible social representations established between the subject and society in a system formed by a central nucleus and a peripheral system. Thus, the central core has a rigid value, which does not change easily, figurative of a representation, while the peripheral system is formed in its surroundings and, at the same time, has greater flexibility and adapts to the immediate environment, protecting the central core⁽¹⁵⁾.

This study was developed with adolescents of the third year of high school of a state school, located in the northern region of the State of Paraná. This institution is located in the

central region of a medium-sized city in the interior of Parana and has a total of 1,235 students enrolled in elementary and high school, operating in the morning, afternoon and evening. Despite its central location, the school also welcomes students from more distant and peripheral neighborhoods. Such characteristics subsidized his choice for field of research.

Participants were chosen according to the criteria: to be regularly enrolled in school; to have frequent attendance in class. Adolescents who missed class at the time of the invitation to participate, and who did not express interest after two attempts to contact, were not part of this study. The selection of third year students occurred due to their longer experience in the school community.

Data collection was performed in the months of May and June 2022 through the technique of free association of words, in two distinct moments of clarification of doubts and application of the consent documents provided for in the current ethical standard. In the second moment, the sociodemographic questionnaire and the Free Word Association Instrument (FWAI) were applied⁽¹⁵⁾. The meetings were held in person, in a private place provided by the institution, as planned by the pedagogical coordination.

The instrument was composed of three inductive terms with the objective of provoking the free association of words, being: 1) if I pronounce the word "violence", what comes to mind? ; 2) if I use the expression "school violence", what comes to mind? ; 3) if I say the words "teaching", "learning" and "violence", what comes to mind? Therefore, participants were asked to assign five words that came to mind at each stimulus, prioritizing isolated words or expressions, in order to give agility in the answers, also pondering the order of importance of each word.

The associated words were distributed, organized and treated using the Microsoft Office Excel®, 2016 version, in accordance with the following principles: introduction of the study participants' serial number and the words triggered by them; transcription in lower case, singular, being vetoed "ç" and accents; joining of words composed of a hyphen; and transformation of synonymous words into a

single category.

The Excel file was imported into the *Ensemble de Programmes Permettant l'Analyse des Évocations* (EVOC), version 2005, in which the data were processed and analyzed in its subprograms, in the following sequence: vocabulary definition (LEXIQUE); cleaning of typing errors (TRIEVOC) and useless words (NETTOIE); distribution of words according to their frequency and order of position (RANGMOT); and definition of the central core, intermediate and peripheral elements (RANGFRQ).

The evoked words were grouped according to their frequency order (F) and mean order of evocations (MOE), being distributed in a "four-house table" or Vèrges Diagram resulting from the EVOC software itself, that enabled the design of the central nucleus and peripheral elements of the possible social representations of school adolescents about the object in question. This analysis procedure was performed separately with the three inductive terms applied.

Informed consent was requested from legal guardians and participants of legal age and informed consent to the adolescents themselves. The study sought to meet all regulatory guidelines of Resolution 466 of 2012 of the National Health Council (NHC) and was authorized by the Permanent Committee for Ethics in Research involving Human Beings (COPEP) of the State University of Maringá (UEM), according to approval opinion 5.385.842 and CAAE 57997422.4.0000.0104, on 3 May 2022.

RESULTS

The study included 54 adolescent students enrolled in the third year of high school (100%). Of these, 29 were female (53.70%) and 25 were male (46.30%). The prevalent age was 16 to 17 years (66.67%) and 18 students were older (33.33%). Regarding the activities, 28 adolescents reported only studying (51.85%) and 26 studying and working (48.15%), and spent most of school life in public school (94.44%). About 36 adolescents (66.67%) came from unconventional families - those run by parents and/or with the presence of

grandparents and uncles.

Regarding the results that deal with the central theme of the study, school adolescents associated words that quickly came to mind through the terms "violence", "school violence" and "violence, teaching and learning", giving rise to the structure and content of possible social representations about the object under study, which will be presented in a "four-house chart" or Diagram of Vêrges. The weighting of the most important words by the participants was defined from the order of association of each inducing term.

The first quadrant groups' elements that were evoked more frequently and that promptly came to the memory of the participants, constituting the central nucleus of possible

representations. In the second and third quadrant, it is possible to visualize the evoked words in high frequency and those that occupied the last positions, in low frequency evoked first, forming the intermediate elements. In the fourth and last quadrant there are peripheral elements and further away from the central core.

Thus, with regard to the word "violence", the adolescents associated 270 words, 74 different. After its grouping, it is possible to observe in the first quadrant that "physical violence" obtained higher frequency and low average order of evocation, constituting the central nucleus of possible representations, according to Chart 1.

Chart 1. Distribution of words associated with the inducing term "violence".

Central elements – 1 st quadrant			Intermediate elements – 2 nd quadrant		
High frequency and low mean order of evocations $F > 10$ and $MOE < 2.5$			High frequency and high average order of evocations $F > 10$ and $MOE > 2.5$		
Physical violence	70	2.42	Verbal violence	35	3.00
			Psychological violence	15	3.13
			Bullying	15	3.00
			Fear	11	2.81
Intermediate elements – 3 rd quadrant			Peripheral elements – 4 th quadrant		
Low frequency and low mean order of evocations $F < 10$ and $MOE < 2.5$			Low frequency and high average order of evocations $F < 10$ and $MOE > 2.5$		
Abuse	7	1.85	Pain	8	3.25
			Death	6	2.50
			Racism	6	4.00
			Trauma	6	2.66
			Threat	5	3.80

Source: Own elaboration, 2022.

In the second quadrant appear the words "verbal violence", "psychological violence", "bullying" and "fear" in high frequency and high average order of evocation, followed by "abuse", in the third quadrant, with low frequency and low average order of evocation, as intermediate elements. In the periphery, the words "pain", "death", "racism", "trauma" and "threat" were associated in low frequency and high average order.

Then, the adolescent students proceeded to the association of words that best illustrate their possible representations about the expression "school violence", totaling 270 words with 75 different among themselves. Thus, it was

possible to verify that "bullying" was the type of violence evoked in high frequency and low average order, representing the expression that immediately came to the memory of the participants, according to Chart 2.

The second quadrant consists of the words "physical violence", "psychological violence" and "verbal violence", in high frequency and high average order of evocations, as intermediate elements of representations. Regarding the third quadrant, there was no grouping of words in low frequency and low average order of evocations as intermediate elements.

Chart 2. Distribution of words associated with the inducing term “school violence”.

Central elements – 1 st quadrant	Intermediate elements – 2 nd quadrant	
High frequency and low mean order of evocations $F > 10$ and $MOE < 2.5$	High frequency and high average order of evocations $F > 10$ and $MOE > 2.5$	
Bullying 42 1.66	Physical violence 36 3.08	
	Psychological violence 15 3.40	
	Verbal Violence 15 3.00	
Intermediate elements – 3 rd quadrant	Peripheral elements – 4 th quadrant	
Low frequency and low mean order of evocations $F < 10$ and $MOE < 2.5$	Low frequency and high average order of evocations $F < 10$ and $MOE > 2.5$	
	Mockery 8 2.62	
	Intrigues 7 2.71	
	Prejudice 6 3.83	
	Disrespect 6 3.00	
	Racism 6 2.83	
	Threat 6 2.66	
	Abandonment 5 4.20	
	Fear 5 3.40	
	Discrimination 5 3.20	
	Authority 5 2.60	

Source: Own elaboration, 2022.

In the periphery, the words "mockery", "intrigue", "prejudice", "disrespect", "racism", "threat", "abandonment", "fear", "discrimination" and "authority" were grouped, in low frequency and high average order of evocations. The distribution of these words presupposes a certain interaction between the central core and the peripheral elements, one in the condition of rigid to changes and another as modifiable, enabling transformation.

In seeking to establish possible relationships

between violence and the schooling process, adolescents were provoked to associate words that represented "violence, teaching and learning", resulting in 270 words, and 104 identified as different. In this stage, it was observed that the number of evocations in high frequency and low average order of evocations was insufficient to configure the central nucleus. However, this did not preclude discussions about the possible representations of this phenomenon.

Chart 3. Distribution of words associated with the inducing term violence, teaching and learning.

Central elements – 1 st quadrant	Intermediate elements - 2 nd quadrant	
High frequency and low mean order of evocations $F > 10$ and $MOE < 2.5$	High frequency and high average order of evocations $F > 10$ and $MOE > 2.5$	
	School dropout 21 2.85	
	Disinterest 20 3.20	
	Physical violence 12 3.00	
	School damage 12 2.66	
	Psychological shock 11 3.09	
	Depression 11 2.54	
Intermediate elements – 3 rd quadrant	Peripheral elements – 4 th quadrant	
Low frequency and low mean order of evocations $F < 10$ and $MOE < 2.5$	Low frequency and high average order of evocations $F < 10$ and $MOE > 2.5$	
School 6 2.16	Addictions 8 3.75	
	Laziness 7 3.57	
	Fear 7 3.00	
	Anxiety 7 2.57	
	Pedagogue 6 2.83	
	Pain 5 3.60	
	Prejudice 5 3.60	
	Teaching 5 3.00	
	Bullying 5 3.00	

Source: Own elaboration, 2022.

This result makes it possible to understand that adolescent students do not have a homogeneous representation about the implications and consequences of violence in the teaching and learning process, making the development of activities and interventions of anti-violence awareness a fruitful strategy to change paradigms and of paramount importance for the transformation of behaviors.

As intermediate elements of word association, "school dropout", "disinterest", "physical violence", "school loss", "psychological shock" and "depression" were listed, presenting high frequency and high average order of evocation, followed by "school" with low frequency and low average order of evocation. In the distant periphery, there was a predominance of the words "vices", "laziness", "fear", "anxiety", "pedagogue", "pain", "prejudice", "teaching" and "bullying", with low frequency and high average order of evocation, thus composing the peripheral elements.

Due to the semantic proximity, some words were converted into a single term or expression: punches, slaps, kicks, beating, beating, pulling hair, pushing, catching, bruises and injuries, which were agglutinated through the use of the expression "physical violence"; lack of education and outrage were replaced by the term "disrespect"; arguing, shouting, cursing and nicknames were condensed by the expression "verbal violence"; and words such as gossip and provocation were converted into the word "intrigues".

In addition, the term "school injury" was used as a substitute for low grades, learning difficulties and absences; the words anguish and emotion were converted into "psychological shock"; the word "addictions" incorporated the words alcohol, smoking and substance abuse; and the word "prejudice" replaced the word homophobia.

DISCUSSION

Physical violence and bullying constituted the central core of the possible representations of school adolescents about violence and school violence, respectively. Feelings of fear, abuse and racism were also attributed to violence and

mockery, intrigues and threats to school violence, according to the peripheries of possible representations. Regarding violence in the teaching and learning process, representations of depression, anxiety, disinterest and abandonment were described by school adolescents.

The violence practiced among school-age youth can not only be recognized when manifested physically, that is, by episodes of jerks, punches and kicks, but also by more subtle manifestations such as threats, intimidation, inappropriate play and harassment, characteristics of psychological violence (bullying). The school assumes a dubious role, because at the same time it presents itself as an integrating, pluralistic and diverse environment that brings together unequal individuals from the biopsychosocial point of view in the same physical space, also becomes a stage for the occurrence of different forms of violence, since differences and inequalities often potentiate conflicting situations and intolerance⁽⁵⁾.

The evidence showed that school is an important scenario of living these individuals and conducive to the exercise of various behaviors and practices of adolescence. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize how the school is organized and established as a space for education and training, the way it plays its role in the socialization of individuals, the way it prepares them to deal with the pluralities and the measures it has adopted (or may adopt) to guarantee their rights and protection, observing the condition of vulnerability of school clientele⁽¹⁶⁾.

Besides being seen as a space of belonging and identity for adolescents, because it is the place where they spend most of their time and preparation for adult life, the school can also highlight other aspects of human life. Thus, inequalities, weakened relationships, family and systemic neglect, intra-family violence, illegal entry of licit and illicit substances and falling school performance are increasingly present problems in the school reality that increase the likelihood of violence, efforts for their identification, coping and prevention⁽¹⁷⁾.

Among the factors that motivate violence are notorious prejudice, racism and

discrimination, which, in most cases, relate to issues of body conformation, aesthetic and marketing standards and sexual orientation that does not fit the heterosexuality. This propagates the idea that the fat body is the result of inadequate habits and lack of food control, while the slender body is invariably associated with the aesthetic ideal and synonymous with adequate health. Similarly, gender issues are always related to a pseudo heterosexual normativity, in order to consider people who do not follow these standards as unworthy and depraved, granting others the false right to promote hatred, repulsion and phobia to these people⁽¹⁸⁾.

In corroborating with the findings, with the evocation of words such as depression and psychological shock, studies indicate that possible signs of sadness, low self-esteem, social isolation, psychic disorders, self-mutilation and psychosomatic problems can arise sharply, prolonged and recurrent among adolescents who suffer violence. The repercussions of violence transcend physical integrity and extend to the emotional sphere, through feelings of shame and humiliation, and to the social sphere, represented by lack of interest in school life, losses in interpersonal relationships and antisocial behaviors⁽¹⁹⁾.

Studies show a large number of adolescents out of school, especially black boys, of low economic condition, due to the inequalities present in society. Although underreported, these rates are not very different among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transvestite, transsexual, Queers, intersex, asexual, pansexual and more people (LGBTQIAP+), considering the high number of disapproval, dropout and dropout in this portion of the population. The narratives of those who experience this reality, bring up situations of ridicule, discrimination, prejudice and violence, favoring increasingly their segregation and denial to school, especially among trans and transvestites⁽⁷⁾.

For this reason, the school must understand more deeply the intricacies of this problem, so as to seek to build more effective means for its confrontation, instrumentalizing its human resources; adding strategies and didactic alternatives capable of combating violence;

acting in a conscientious manner to respect differences; addressing themes related to violence and bullying from the perspective of their prevention; mechanisms that stimulate the involvement of the community and the family to discuss and combat intra and extraschool violence⁽¹⁶⁾.

The results of this study assert the role of school, along with other sectors of the community, as a link in the network of protection of children and adolescents against the impacts of violence on society. In this context, the action of health and education services, in an intersectoral, articulated and multidisciplinary way, is a basic component to manage conflicts and defend the rights of this population. The proposition of a curriculum that values the culture of peace, through fruitful extracurricular activities; promoting respect for differences; and valuing the self-esteem of various people, consolidates a path to extinguish violence in these spaces of formation of future citizens^(19,20).

FINAL THOUGHTS

The present study makes it possible to delineate the contours of violence in school, from the social representations of adolescents who experience the daily school life. The evocation of words brought to light the emphasis of physical violence, given the easy detection of this phenomenon on the objective plane, the manifest behaviors in the form of aggressions and other forms of conflict. The presence of this form of violence did not preclude the consideration of other types of violence, but, on the contrary, allowed to highlight the existence of a network of different behaviors that make up a mosaic of violence, including more subtle forms, psychological violence, represented by bullying situations.

The absence of physical confrontation can lead to a false diagnosis of absence of violent events and, at the same time, makes it possible to mask and mitigate other forms of violence and compromise actions to combat such situations. In this perspective, the school must transcend its role beyond the educational profession and enable actions and strategies in collaboration with other sectors of society, in

order to promote the exercise of respect, tolerance and culture of peace. The lack of a central nucleus on violence and the teaching and learning process reveals that adolescents do not have a representation of its repercussions or consequences in the process of schooling, which inspires even more conscious interventions for the transformation of realities.

The study brings contributions to education professionals and related areas in promoting practices of good coexistence and respect in school, highlighting it as a fruitful locus for the

development of actions to combat and prevent violence. In the course of the study, the most preponderant limiting factor was the temporary suspension of face-to-face classes during the Coronavirus pandemic period, which made it impossible to study this phenomenon from the perspective of other individuals and education systems. Although the study has its potentialities and weaknesses, it is a population cut, therefore, it suggests new perspectives to reach other realities.

VIOLÊNCIA ESCOLAR: REPRESENTAÇÕES SOCIAIS DE ADOLESCENTES DE UMA ESCOLA PÚBLICA

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a estrutura e o conteúdo das representações sociais de alunos de uma escola da rede pública de ensino a respeito da violência no âmbito escolar. **Método:** estudo qualitativo, ancorado na Teoria das Representações Sociais e Teoria do Núcleo Central. A produção dos dados aconteceu em maio e junho de 2022 mediante a técnica de associação livre de palavras, cujas evocações livres foram analisadas e processadas pelo *Software Ensemble de Programmes Permettant L'analyse des Évocations* – EVOC, versão 2005. **Resultados:** participaram do estudo 54 adolescentes escolares matriculados no Ensino Médio de uma escola pública, que associaram palavras mediante o uso de termos indutores, tendo como núcleo central para o termo *violência* o elemento violência física; para *violência escolar* o elemento *bullying*; e sobre a *violência no processo ensino e aprendizagem* não houve figuração de nenhum elemento central. A zona periférica foi composta pelos elementos: violência verbal, abuso, dor, zombaria, intrigas, abandono escolar, desinteresse e abalo psicológico, respectivamente. **Considerações finais:** as possíveis representações reforçaram a necessidade de inserir a temática violência e *bullying* de forma mais ampla nas discussões de planejamento escolar, como forma de reconhecer sua importância e promover seu combate e prevenção.

Palabras clave: Violência. Adolescente. Escolaridade. Enfermagem. Representações Sociais.

VIOLÊNCIA ESCOLAR: REPRESENTAÇÕES SOCIAIS DE ADOLESCENTES DE UMA ESCOLA PÚBLICA

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la estructura y el contenido de las representaciones sociales de alumnos de una escuela de la red pública de enseñanza con respecto a la violencia en el ámbito escolar. **Método:** estudio cualitativo, anclado en la Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales y Teoría del Núcleo Central. La producción de los datos ocurrió en mayo y junio de 2022 mediante la técnica de asociación libre de palabras, cuyas evocaciones libres fueron analizadas y procesadas por el *Software Ensemble de Programmes Permettant L'analyse des Évocations* – EVOC, versión 2005. **Resultados:** participaron del estudio 54 adolescentes escolares matriculados en el Ensino Médio de una escuela pública, que asociaron palabras mediante el uso de términos inductores, teniendo como núcleo central para el término *violência* el elemento violencia física; para *violência escolar* el elemento *bullying*; y sobre la *violência no processo ensino e aprendizagem* no hubo figuración de ningún elemento central. La zona periférica fue compuesta por los elementos: violencia verbal, abuso, dolor, burlas, intrigas, abandono escolar, desinterés y abalo psicológico, respectivamente. **Consideraciones finales:** las posibles representaciones reforzaron la necesidad de insertar la temática violencia y *bullying* de forma más amplia en las discusiones de planeamiento escolar, como forma de reconocer su importancia y promover su combate y prevención.

Palabras clave: Violência. Adolescente. Escolaridade. Enfermagem. Representações Sociais.

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Submitted: 19/06/2024

Accepted: 06/08/2024

Financial support

This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (Capes) - Finance Code 001