The Social Implications of Covid-19 for Nursing Students

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Given that the pandemic generated by COVID-19 has caused much unforeseen havoc, this paper shows how higher education students of a nursing degree program at the University of Guadalajara, Mexico, socially confronted this virus, with an approach to their feelings, attitudes, opinions and experiences during the confinement and the actions lived by them. To answer the question, an online questionnaire of mostly open-ended questions was used, which was analyzed through the technique of thematic content analysis. The findings show social representations that, although very local, were very similar to those found in other parts of the world (sadness, fear, anger, confusion, etc.), which is not too surprising given the vertiginous fluidity of the traditional and virtual media.

INTRODUCTION

In the last two years (2020 and 2021), mainly, the news around the world revolved around a contagious virus, called SARS-CoV-2[1], causing a great pandemic, not seen since the last century, very new for the vast majority and lived with great caution. In Mexico, although at the beginning the population was kept - relatively - away from the contagions caused by this virus, it soon spread despite certain sanitary measures. On March 31, 2020, the extraordinary measures to be taken to address the health emergency were published in the Official Gazette of the Federation (INEGI, 2020), which have persisted but in a more relaxed manner due to the decrease in deaths, people hospitalized in health centers and fewer contagions, even with the different variants of the coronavirus found. However, the virus (with its different forms of manifestation, such as Delta, Omicron, IHU, Deltracron, BA.2, among others that may continue to appear) is here to stay, becoming an endemic disease as several medical specialists have commented, and there is no doubt that vaccination against this lethal virus will become a daily occurrence, just as it has been in the case of influenza.

A question that perhaps many of us have asked ourselves as common citizens is in how many ways, according to the different circumstances, we have faced the pandemic caused by COVID-19 (the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus), as well as the different ways of understanding it, living it and feeling it. But the young people, our university students: how were they informed, felt, acted, studied, worked, etc., in the face of the different events caused by this recent pandemic? What were the most significant changes they experienced in the face of COVID-19? Specifically, for this case study, how did the nursing students of the Centro Universitario de Ciencias de la Salud (CUCS, in Spanish) of the University of Guadalajara (UdeG), Jalisco, Mexico, socially represent the pandemic caused by COVID-19?

There is no doubt that the pandemic caused by COVID-19 has had great repercussions in the different areas in which we move, not only at the local level, but also at the national and global levels. These repercussions were reflected in the economic sector, in the social area, in the educational area, in public policies regarding health issues, affecting intra and extra-family relationships, which in most cases (although not only and solely) were caused by the management of information and the abundant information/disinformation (a phenomenon known as infodemic, or fake news) spread by the different communication media.

Few or no one has been left out of this event that has deeply impacted and caused the reconsideration of many social, economic, political, educational, and everyday events and their various performances for the present time and future similar events. Of course, university students (in fact, students of any educational level) were included in this panorama, but the focus in this work is directed to students of a professional career: those related to the health area, such as nursing students who had and still have more expectations about this virus because of its scope, prevention, repercussions on physical health, treatments, etc.; hence the relevance of studying their social representations about what they have lived and felt in addition to the actions taken from this pandemic caused by COVID-19.

DEVELOPMENT

Theory of Social Representations

Jodelet (2012) aptly specifies part of the theory to which we allude: 1. Social representations are related to the knowledge of common sense, used in daily experience. 2. They are programs of perception, constructions in naive theory that are used as reading grids of reality and guides for action. 3. They are systems of signification that allow the interpretation of the course of events and social relations. 4. They express the relationship that individuals and groups maintain with the world and with others. 5. They are forged in interaction and in the contact of discourse in the public space. 6. They are registered in language, in practice and operate as a language because of their symbolic function that the context provides to codify and categorize everything that occupies the life-universe (pp. 3-4). These brief lines serve to clarify what I am referring to, in general terms, when I allude to the theory of social representations.

I take up again some reflections of Páez and Pérez (2020) on the social representations of COVID-19, as a sample of the scope of this theory and of the existing social influence on the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, images and shared behavioral orientations about the coronavirus that individuals and groups have elaborated. I do not go into the whole theory, this is not the case, I only resort to certain basic elements to understand how it works in the context of the pandemic. Thus, it is known that two socio-cognitive processes are involved in the construction of a social representation (SR from now on): anchoring and objectification.

The anchoring process consists of assimilating the new to what already exists, by making the unfamiliar more familiar, and eventually making it less threatening (Moscovici, 1979). According to Páez and Pérez (2020), in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, its resemblance to the annual flu cycle was raised and the confinement was anchored as a "state of war", since anchoring also serves us to defend collective self-esteem, for example, a typical representation of epidemics is to anchor the disease in exogroups, whether they are foreigners or marginalized groups. The authors mention that according to studies conducted by Smith, O'Connor and Joffe in 2015, the 1918 flu was labeled as Spanish, syphilis as French smallpox and rubella as German measles; on the other hand, they note that research by Eicher and Bangerter, also in 2015, has shown that these exogroups were considered responsible for unhygienic, immoral practices or were guilty of conspiring to spread the disease.

In its beginnings, the issue of unhygienic practices was even applied to the COVID-19 case by accusing it of being a "Chinese virus", a zoonosis or a disease that passes from animal to human. Páez and Pérez (2020) analyze the content of this representation as the Chinese eating "disgusting" things (bats), from which the viruses are transmitted and adapted to humans; these behaviors are a deviation from the Western ethos of self-control.

On the other hand, the process of objectification refers to the schematization and materialization of beliefs, transforming an idea into something tangible, it is like giving form to that thing that we only imagine. In general terms, some attributes of both the anchoring process and the objectification process are selected and integrated into a figurative nucleus. Among other elements, objectification includes personalization, i.e., a person or social group personifies an idea or problem (Pérez, 2004); for example, epidemics are materialized or personified in heroes, villains and victims. The first are scientific experts (researchers, microbiologists, epidemiologists) and health personnel, who are perceived as credible, trustworthy and who bear the burden of curing the sick (Eicher & Bangerter, 2015).

Páez and Pérez (2020) mention that this phenomenon occurred in the case of the coronavirus epidemic: the personified villains of the health crisis are, on the one hand, journalists and the media, accused of using fear for their own interests and of being puppets of the ruling classes and companies. On the other hand, the role of villains is also attributed to businessmen and the pharmaceutical industry, which profit from the overpriced sale of health products. Also, "ordinary people", insofar as they make up "brainless" crowds, end up being an ontologization of the villains.

As can be inferred, the scope and application of SR theory is very relevant to make visible the analysis of COVID-19 in university students, since through this theoretical foundation it is possible to account for the processes of production of meaning of this pandemic, that is, what it meant to them or how the students understood, felt and experienced this phenomenon, which although global, has had local repercussions.

Empirical References, Scopes and Repercussions Generated by COVID-19

The pandemic, already known as an endemic disease generated by this virus, has generated numerous studies in different areas. A simple Google search using the keywords "COVID-19 and college students" yields approximately 9,530,000 results, that is, a little more than nine and a half million notes, articles and other pieces of information[2] in various academic fields on COVID-19. It aroused curiosity about its repercussions -in its different manifestations, among those presented in this book, such as violence, school dropout, subjectivities, for example - in scholars from various scientific disciplines due to the magnitude of the problem worldwide. For this paper, I will focus only on those related to social representations and related areas, as a contextualization of this approach to the stated problem and the affinity with the present study.

Banchs (2007), based on Moscovici (1979) said that the media contribute to the formation of social representations to the extent that they select, disseminate and make relevant topics of interest. The influence and impact exerted by the media in the formation of images, tastes, opinions, attitudes, feelings, among others, about COVID-19, have not gone unnoticed.

For example, several scholars (Bórquez et al., 2020; Segura, 2020; Lázaro-Rodríguez & Herrera Viedma, 2020; Masip et al. 2020; Alfonso & Fernández, 2020; Andreu-Sánchez & Martín-Pascual, 2020; Mejía et al., 2020; Salaverría et al., 2020; Olmos, 2020; among others) have shown how different media, both in traditional and digital formats, particularly newscasts, have gone from abundant information making it overwhelming, to disinformation with different tints, among them, the propagation of fear and terror about COVID-19, particularly through television and social networks, even more so when a critical situation is exaggerated, which has increased stress.

Garcés Prettel et al. (2021) in 80 interviews and 1,068 online surveys in different regions of Colombia, found that social representations associated with negative news meant that journalistic information was understood in at least two ways: as a factor generating stress and discouragement (which affected, in a certain way, the emotional health of the participants), and as an object of doubt or suspicion due to the proliferation of erroneous information, questioning the credibility of the information received, and increasing concerns and uncertainties regarding the evolution of the pandemic. On the other hand, the researchers report that the participants frequently watched series and movies during the quarantine, which favored entertainment, strengthening communication, family integration, distraction and reduction of stress produced by the quarantine, which helped to balance the situation caused by the virus and the sanitary measures.

Vázquez, Pérez-González & Salzano (2020) coordinated several investigations in which the mockery, silence and fear caused by the coronavirus affected many people in Spain and Italy. For Scognamiglio (in ibid), the greater the absence of people's knowledge of reality, the greater the possibility for the media to define the interpretative framework in which the public will act, both as consumers and producers of information. He emphasizes that if the research on SARS had been discussed and applied to COVID-19 previously, a more effective and honest management would have been made, not only of the disease, but also of the flow of information about it, and then the worldwide panic might not have occurred or would have been much more contained. Quite possibly, as Villa (in ibid) says, if schools had taught how to cultivate the inner life, to discover the pleasure of artistic creation, to see death in a different way and to value our elders, everything would have been different during the pandemic.

In an interesting and profound Ecuadorian national analysis, Gross Albornoz et al. (2020) concluded that in the face of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, social representations derived from two paradigms coexisted: the microbial and the magical-religious. From the first, the state declared a national emergency and set out to wage war against an invisible viral enemy, which could infiltrate from anywhere, and thus national decision-makers adhered to the microbial paradigm, preventing anyone from seeing that it was a biopsychosocial process. From the social representations of the second paradigm, processions, masses, prayer chains and other manifestations that appeal to divine mercy stood out. The authors mention that this paradigm is a leitmotiv in social networks and in spectacular acts such as the blessing given by an archbishop who from a helicopter draws a cross while praying for the inhabitants of Ecuador asking for redemption and health. In addition, government authorities, very frequently, closed their public statements with expressions alluding to divine intervention. Thus, social representations of the microbial and magical-religious paradigms come together.

Feierstein (2021) highlights the importance of the study of social representations to understand behaviors, since behaviors do not depend only on the decrees that are signed, but also on how each person explains what is happening during the pandemic. He warns about the so-called "horror immunity (as opposed to 'herd immunity')", that is, when the death figures in 2020 went beyond 15,000 or 20,000 deaths, people started to get scared and to take care of themselves, which caused, in part, the rate of contagion and the death rate to go down. However, as time went by and we saw that this level of concern was not observed in the media or in the statements of many officials, or in general perceptions, death began to be "normalized", that is to say, the dead are just another number and one behaves quite indifferently in front of the number, as if there were nothing behind it.

Boring apocalypse? According to psychologist Adam Grant (2021) we are amidst what risk experts might call a "boring apocalypse". A straightforward (but not simple) explanation can be seen when in late November 2021 the WHO declared the omicron variant of the coronavirus to be of concern; borders were closed, markets were shaken, and warnings spread about how this new threat could wipe out the world's population. But what did the general population do? Almost nothing, that differs significantly to when COVID-19 was first announced; people stocked up on groceries, toilet paper and other items, and only ventured out of the house with full personal protective equipment.

The author mentions that many people are no longer as afraid of COVID-19 (in part due to two therapeutic exposure methods: systematic desensitization and flooding), which of course complicates the efforts of public health authorities to mitigate the spread of the omicron variant:

> "We've all seen this horror movie and, after you've seen the killer jump out ten times brandishing a weapon - even if you've seen them kill - it just doesn't scare you the same way it used to. The same rehash has been playing for 21 months (p. 1) … one thing is clear: thunderously repeating an emergency alert carries its own risks. The last thing you need in a pandemic is a country with a population too bored to pay attention or to act" (p. 3).

This apocalyptic vision certainly generates concern, but it also alerts us to certain behaviors and what lies behind these social behaviors, among them the overwhelming exposure to the many media outlets,

which although they are not the only sources of information, are the ones to which most people resort, particularly virtual social networks. We will see later what the informants had to say in this regard.

Youth Facing the Pandemic (or Endemic)

First, I highlight what some scholars have analyzed about the current generation of young people, known as *crabs* or *boomerangs*, in order to understand one of the phases this age group is going through, and then move on to some research on young people and COVID-19.

The media have baptized the current generation as *crabs* (Morán, 2012) for taking -socioeconomically - steps backwards in relation to their progenitors, and as a *boomerang* generation for not being able to maintain their independence, their homes and for returning to their parents' home (Donat & Martín-Lagos, 2020; Vallejo, 2017); in both cases the regressive nature is evident, hence the names coined[3].

As Olmos (2021) says, based on Sandel (2020), the idea of upward intergenerational mobility, the ability to progress through training, merit and effort - if one starts from a context of equal opportunities -, is one of the foundations of democracies and the social contract; but, as the Spanish researcher adds, studies in various parts of the world such as those of Gil-Hernández, et al. (2020), Breen (2019), Chetty et al. (2017), Barreiro (2017), Estefanía (2017) and Politikon, (2017) (in *ibid*) have shown that social progress between generations has not been a linear constant, as from the 1980s onwards the trend is reversed until present times, with *crabs* presenting more difficulties than their parents in building a stable life project.

The same author conducted a longitudinal study to analyze the changes and continuities in the opinions, beliefs and future prospects of 33 young people during two crises: one economic crisis - In Spain, 2015 -, when they were studying high school, and the other in the 2020 crisis caused by COVID-19, who were completing their university careers. In the first moment there was more optimism, but in 2020 the same students, 57% of them, believed that the future would be negative and that they would live worse than their parents; 24% considered that it would be better, and 19% that they would live the same. That is, pessimism permeated in most of them, who saw themselves in the future with fewer possibilities for growth.

On the other hand, at the local level, the Federation of University Students (FUS) (an organization that depends on the University of Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico) conducted an online survey of 14,876 students (FUS, 2020) from different regional and urban (or thematic) university centers, as well as from the high school system, with a predominance of 24-year-olds. Sixty-eight percent do not work, that is, they are economically dependent on their parents, which makes this population dependent on their family or guardians. Most reported feeling bored and tense during the confinement due to the pandemic, although some felt more active and alert, aspects that seem contradictory, but are somehow complementary because of the diversity of the sample[4]. The young people commented that they were more in need of mental health (they were very worried about dying from the effects of COVID-19), as well as of spaces for leisure or entertainment, in addition to being very anxious about academic issues, particularly the evaluations.

In a press conference, Hernandez & Gonzalez (2021), academics from the University of Guadalajara, stated that they conducted a survey of 918 students from 7 careers of the University Center of Social Sciences and Humanities (UCSSH, UdeG (Universidad de Guadalajara)), highlighting that the participants felt frustration, overwhelm, stress, little hope for the future, etc. This study revealed that students showed signs of fatigue, discouragement and uncertainty about the future caused by the pandemic, including the expectation of receiving the vaccine in the future. These data do not visibly differ from those of the FUS but complement each other to give a better picture of student sentiment.

Given the exposure of these two local studies, the present one ventures into an area of health not touched by the previous ones, which in the future could make comparisons between participating students from the same institution, but also permeated by external influences such as the media in its different forms of manifestation (traditional or virtual, in its various platforms), which expose the pandemic situation in a global way, which together with the local, offer "glocal" visions.

Completion of Questioning

The present study is part of a first phase of a broader investigation. The final goal is to make certain comparisons with students from other disciplines in order to analyze whether the pandemic generated by

COVID-19 was a generalized case, and to observe whether there were variations by context and by discipline. The current study is, at the outset, an exploratory-descriptive study.

Participants

The Bachelor's Degree in Nursing of the University Center of Health Sciences (UCHS) of the University of Guadalajara (UdeG), Jalisco, Mexico, was selected because it is an area that is openly focused on caring for and promoting health, in addition to its concern for the consequences caused by the virus. During the 2020-B and 2021-A school cycles, two groups of 30 students - each - of the first semesters of the morning shift were virtually invited to participate; there was some reluctance to collaborate, despite the fact that anonymity and the importance of knowing their opinions on the matter were emphasized; only 37 out of 60 participants sent their answers, which also incites to reflect on this refusal, which is not incurred on for the moment. This was a targeted sample, from which no findings can be generalized to the rest of the higher education students at the University of Guadalajara.

Data Collection Tool

A questionnaire consisting mostly of open-ended questions was used, which contained 3 sections: General data, Opinion questions and Media, giving a total of 43 questions. For this work, only the most relevant ones are taken, but those presented here are linked to the rest of the answers, so that there is an interconnection between all of them.

Procedure

After having the 37 questionnaires, a general reading of all the answers was made to obtain elements of the information and to accurately assemble a book of codes and categories using the technique of content analysis based on Piñuel (2002) and Flick (2004), finally establishing a thematic content analysis. The information, which was analyzed in Excel spreadsheets, later favored the creation of tables for greater comprehension. It should be clarified that the fact that the results are presented with numbers and percentages does not mean that the study is based on a quantitative logic, but rather that the interpretation and relationship of the data is what makes them more significant to appreciate the social representations of COVID-19 of this group of students.

Most Prominent Findings

I begin by giving details of my informants. It is a group basically made up of women, since of the 37 participants, 30 are women (81.08%). In general, women have predominated in nursing degrees, although little by little men have joined this profession. I will refer to some cases in feminine terms because women prevail and not because of discrimination against the male gender.

The ages ranged mainly between 18 and 19 years, most of them reported not working (23 women and 5 men), that is, they depended economically on their relatives or partners (three said they were married). Due to the pandemic, 2 had to stop working for personal reasons, 2 - unfortunately - were fired; the few who reported continuing to work did so from different places, including their homes. Less than half, 15, practice any sport (13 women and 2 men), which does not make them very sporty, but not inactive either. However, several said that they had to stop practicing their favorite sport because of the sanitary conditions of closure of some gyms or sports fields due to the pandemic.

On the other hand, some of them volunteered in care centers to collaborate in different ways with people who registered symptoms related to COVID-19, which could, in principle, influence their SR of the coronavirus.

With this brief presentation of the participants, we have more of a picture of with whom information was exchanged with their different situations that were not always entirely favorable at the time of the pandemic. When asked about what was the first thing that came to mind when they heard the word COVID-19, from highest to lowest number of responses, the informants said: 1. Disease 2. Pandemic 3. Death 4. Isolation 5. Virus and 6. Contagion. Of course, there were other responses on a smaller scale (one or two mentions), e.g., suffering, stress, chaos, monetary losses, online classes, red traffic lights, extreme hygiene

care, vaccination, masks, people in gowns, statistics. Although it has been mentioned only a few times, the latter (people in gowns, statistics, refers us to a personification and reification of COVID-19), as cited by Páez and Pérez (2020), as a way of giving shape and meaning to this pandemic.

Many of these impressions come from various sources, among them newscasts, which were seen or heard by the majority. The influence of the media is clear, but not only, but also because of personal experiences, since 5 (4 women and 1 man) said that a member of their family had died from COVID-19, and 27 said that at least one of their family members had been infected. For this reason, in addition to the work performed as volunteers in care centers, among other possible reasons, the virus produced feelings of sadness, anger, despair, fear, anxiety, stress and worry, mainly, as we can see in the following chart.

FIGURE 1
COVID-19 GIVES ME FEELINGS SUCH AS…
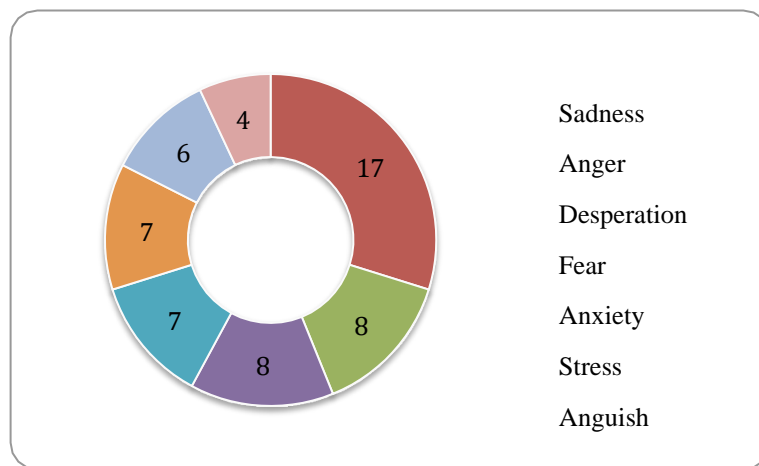
Personal elaboration

Sadness was the predominant feeling for both male and female informants, as seen in the figure above. Some of these feelings were reinforced when asked about what had affected them most by the contagion situation, with the emotional factor being the leading factor, where sadness was combined with fear.

We place these two feelings in a figurative nucleus, - a part of the selected information acquires a structuring character around which the content of the representation is organized - (Moscovici, 1979), as the motor that drives and generates these and other feelings (see figure 2 below), particularly in nursing students who, as they belong to a health-oriented career (whose main objective is the achievement of well-being in the health/illness binomial), were frustrated in this pandemic, at least in its beginnings, especially due to the numerous deaths, generating sadness, despair, anger, among other feelings, among others.

This graphic representation helps to better understand how the nursing students felt about the pandemic (now endemic) experienced by them, feelings that were not isolated, but as in a chain or spiral, sometimes some predominated, sometimes others, but clearly distinguishing the central axis.

FIGURE 2
FIGURATIVE CORE AROUND COVID-19 AMONG THE STUDENTS

Personal elaboration

From the above, two fundamental elements of SR are derived: the lateral social determinants (the particular collectives and the singular individual), in this case those closest to the informants, such as the deaths of family members, together with those infected with the virus; as well as the central social determinants (the quantity and quality of information accessible to represent social objects varies according to the socio-cultural and economic levels of each group), such as external influences, provided, in part, by the traditional and virtual media, are reflected in the feelings expressed by the informants. Moscovici (1979) rightly pointed out that one of the factors conditioning the birth of social representations are these social determinants; the other factors have more to do with the intellectual organization (in which the social is imbricated), manifested in the formation of the figurative nucleus, as already noted above.

Another important aspect consisted in analyzing their reactions to the health measures caused by the pandemic, as follows.

TABLE 1
REACTIONS TOWARD HEALTH PRECAUTIONS DUE TO COVID-19 AMONG STUDENTS

SANITARY MEASURES	Total
Use of face masks (discomfort, annoyance, despair, certain benefit)	19
Staying at home (anger, sadness, despair)	18
Not attending college in person (anger, anxiety, stress, some comfort)	18
Safe distance (it was difficult; it did not bother me).	9
Use of antibacterial gel (discomfort, safety, freshness)	3
Others (I was afraid of infecting my family; I washed my hands beforehand; like in a horror movie[5])	3

Personal elaboration

The use of masks generated different reactions as can be seen in the table above; however, most of them were of discomfort, for example: "Desperation, I felt that I could not breathe and then I would forget to use

it"; "The use of masks is very uncomfortable to this day"; "I found the use of masks beneficial because it prevents not only COVID-19 but also other diseases that are transmitted through olfaction".

Staying at home, together with not attending the university were factors that were undoubtedly related for the students, who expressed absolute contrariness in both situations, for example: "Staying at home for me was very difficult, since I am always away, they rested me at my job so I was all day with the rest of my family which caused constant fights due to stress"; "The fact of being all the time at home, I liked it, because I had more time to be with my family, although sometimes I did feel desperate for not being able to go out as we normally did"; "The truth is that I did not like this modality (virtual classes) at all because it caused me stress due to overload and affected my health a lot, because I stopped doing other activities that I loved, such as sports"; "It really was a waste of time for me, it made me very angry because I don't find this way of learning effective, besides the fact that some teachers don't have the patience to teach in this modality"; "I missed my graduation party, which was horrible"; "Not going to school in a way helped me not to spend money on tickets and also allowed me to take advantage of the time it took me to travel to use it to do other tasks or just relax a little bit".

Staying at home longer than expected, together with the virtual classes, affected, above all, the emotional health of most of these students (an aspect that coincides with Mudenda, 2021; Garcés Prettel et al., 2021; Delgado, 2021; FUS, 2020). The above is supported by the diagram of the figurative nucleus presented in previous pages, and by the following figure and graphic.

FIGURE 3
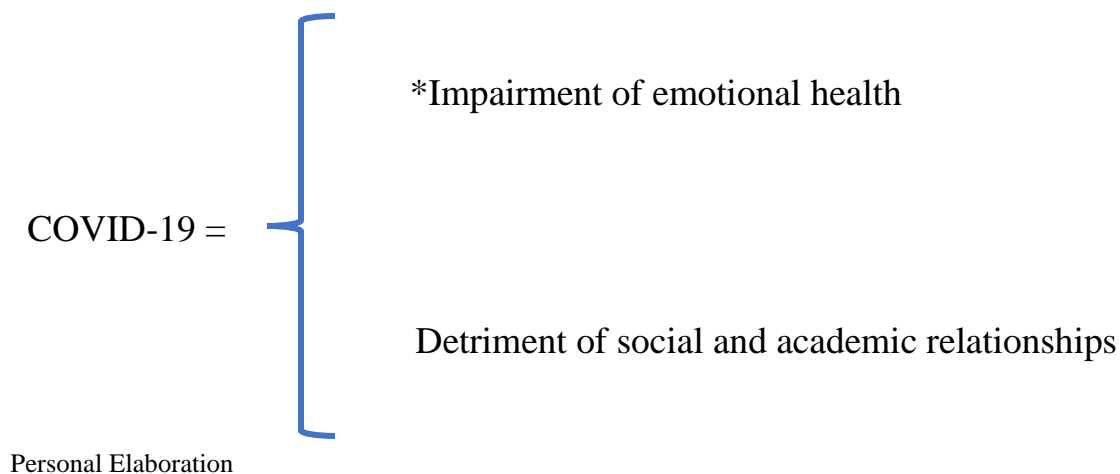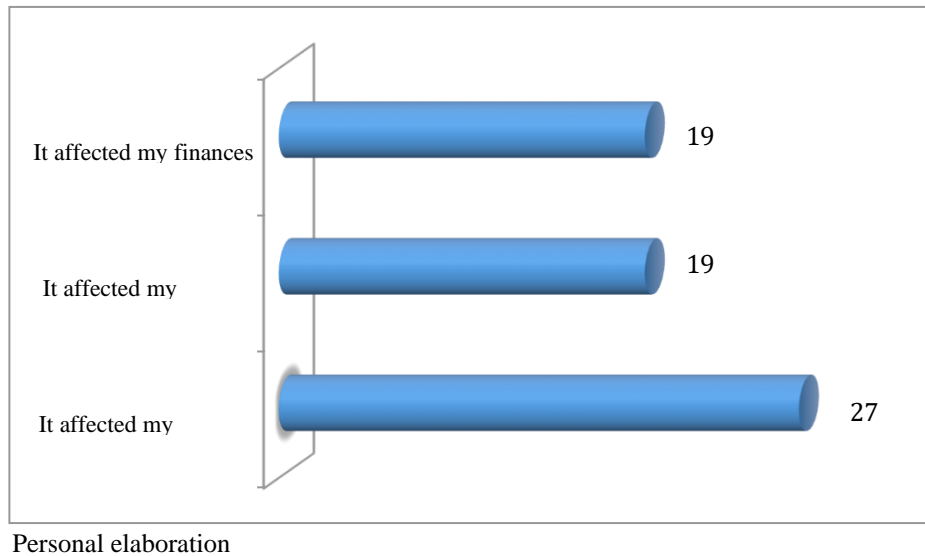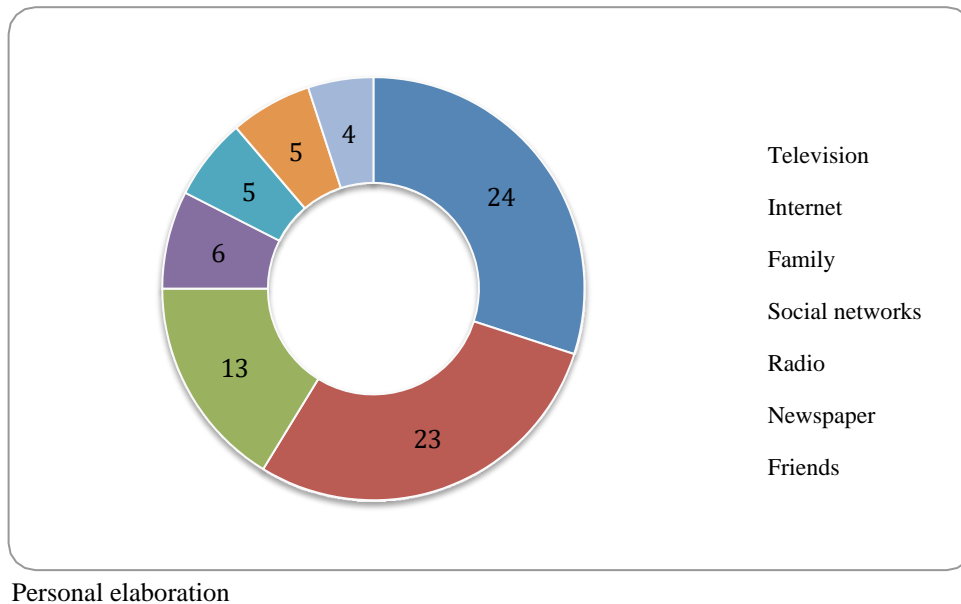**CONSEQUENCES OF COVID-19 AMONG THE STUDENTS**

COVID-19 = {
*Impairment of emotional health

Detriment of social and academic relationships
}

Personal Elaboration

FIGURE 4
ASPECTS THAT MOST AFFECTED STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC
CAUSED BY COVID-19

Personal elaboration

On the other hand, the economic issues due to the lack of work and resources, a situation that was not only local, but worldwide, was strongly felt due to the global and local repercussions already known (loss of jobs, closure of businesses - particularly small companies -, increase in inflation, etc.). In this sense, although social representations are diverse due to the different cultural components of each social group, here we can speak of a somewhat homogeneous social repercussion by COVID-19 in the economic-labor aspect. That is, COVID-19 has been associated with an unstable economy even among students who are dependent on their family members, and even more so for those who had and have the need to work, and who for various reasons had to abandon their studies in search of remedying family economic deficiencies. Therefore, it was not surprising that students expressed that the pandemic affected their finances, although the number who did say so was indeed surprising.

Turning to the media or sources of communication, an essential part of this work was to analyze where the participants received information regarding COVID-19, since in the formation of social representations, the different media are factors that have influenced these conformations, and also serve as guides for action.

24
23
13
6
5
5
4

Television

Internet

Family

Social networks

Radio

Newspaper

Friends

Personal elaboration

Television and the Internet were the media through which the student participants were mostly informed about COVID-19, although the family played an important role in the dissemination of news about the pandemic since it was the dominant theme on which many conversations revolved, partly because of the fear spread, partly because of the health measures to be taken, and because of the incarnations of the contagions and deaths within the family.

In every home there is at least one television set, and it is the medium most accessed by adults, and it is not surprising that young people join a newscast when their parents are watching it through traditional television, as was the case. On the other hand, according to INEGI (2021), in Jalisco 75.6% are internet users (the average in Mexico is 84.1 million users), and students access the network through the service installed at home, and enter the internet through various devices, including a "smart" television (SmartTV), computer and cell phone (also "smart"), the latter being the students' favorite.

Students reported feeling informed about COVID-19, but specifically, what types of news, notes on virtual social networks, face-to-face communications, opinions, etc., did the student participants hear? They reported hearing and reading several things about it; here are the most salient ones:

- *I heard that this did not exist and that it was even a government invention for the pharmaceutical industries to make a lot of money.*
- *That it was a virus that came from China from eating bats.*
- *That it is a virus that has a certain lifetime in places such as metals, so it is important to wash hands or apply antibacterial gel after taking public transportation.*
- *That vaccines are actually bad and are meant to control people or even kill them.*
- *That it was a government invention to keep us under control, that they wanted to get rid of the overpopulation, that it was an experiment to replicate Chernobyl and have toxic soldiers.*
- *Maintaining a healthy distance [is important].*
- *That it was intentional to launch this virus and that it was already coming. That it was not real, that the people who were hospitalized and died from this virus were not because of it, but because the doctors let them die. Also, that if a person went to the hospital for any other illness, that the medical staff invented or diagnosed the patient with COVID-19 to increase the number of deaths.*

- *That they would not get vaccinated, that it was an invented disease, that it was not really that serious, that young people could not catch COVID, that it would stay in China, that you should not get close to someone who had been sick with COVID.*
- *Religious (God's punishment), conspiratorial (new world order), conspiratorial (new world order).*
- *That it was all the work of the government, that it was a lie, that they wanted to do away with the elderly so that they would no longer support retirees, that vaccines would bring things that the government would use to dominate us, and I even heard it said that it was the end of human life.*

One thing is that the students felt informed (or misinformed, as the case may be) and another thing are the opinions heard around COVID-19, and although they themselves said they did not completely agree with such opinions, at first it generated much doubt and uncertainty, coming to believe several of these, such as conspiracy theories, the denial of the existence and immunity for young people of such pandemic, and blaming another country -China - for its origin6. In fact, much of what the students heard coincides with what is reported by the authors cited in this work in relation to the media and COVID-19.

As can be seen, some of these opinions that were circulated in daily life - at least during the first year of the pandemic - through various media, provoked fear, uncertainty, distrust towards the authorities; if these opinions are constantly repeated over time, they can be anchored as true (cf. Gerbner, 1998; Morgan, et al., 2015); but also as expressed by Scognamiglio (in Vázquez, et al., 2020), the greater the absence of people's knowledge of reality, the greater the possibility for the media to define the interpretative framework in which the public will act, both as a consumer and as a producer of information (even, as a punishment from God, cf. Gross Albornoz, et al., 2020). A palpable case is that of vaccines, which a part of the population still refuses to receive.

In this regard, Houlden et al. (2021) comment that since the global COVID-19 pandemic has been simultaneously labeled as an "infodemic", researchers have sought to improve how the general public interacts with information that is relevant, timely, and accurate. They conclude that factors involving the information environments in which citizens participate must be considered, given that those environments are shaped not only by individual interest or choice, but also by broader social, political, cultural connections and trends. The authors propose the development of an ecological approach that will help researchers see why people relate to misinformation and will also help health communicators develop different approaches to reach people with better information. By considering the myriad of influences and how they change over time and interact with technology, it is possible to better understand how to reach people with compelling public health advice during a pandemic scenario in the future.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic has left lessons that cannot go unnoticed, such as the proposals of the previous researchers, and we will have to consider them along with others specific to our particular context, especially to reduce the infodemic that permeates many aspects not only for this pandemic, but in many other areas (particularly in the political sphere).

On the other hand, the opinions expressed by the students participating in this study, support what Páez and Pérez (2020) exposed when the numerous cases caused by the virus had just appeared: the personification - of evil - in: the rulers ("the government is capable of doing anything", said a student), in the pharmaceutical industries (economically benefited), and in medical personnel (erroneous increase of figures on COVID-19), as a form of objectification, that is, giving materiality to the pandemic, with its different meanings, as something non-existent, invented, the young people as infallible in the face of the pandemic, among many of those already mentioned.

Finally, the theory of social representations alludes to actions, that is, the individual or groups have one or more social representations of something, in this case of COVID-19, and act accordingly. Actions are the proposals that students in a health field, such as undergraduate nursing, consider most commendable. They propose, in their own terms: "To be aware of the situation and not be fooled by any type of information that may be fallacious"; "To inform our loved ones well and that they are not in constant fear of the pandemic"; "To keep us informed, updated and have the responsibility to take things seriously so that there

is a favorable outcome for our well-being as a society"; "To inform the population more so that there are not as many altercations as the ones that happened due to lack of information and disinformation"; "Vaccination is a very important topic and the opinion about it as well, so we have to spread more information about it".

In summary, their proposals revolve around better information about the pandemic/endemic and what it entails, such as vaccines, for example. And although the nursing students did not specify the means by which information could be disseminated, they did emphasize that it should be truthful information that needs to be disseminated. As nursing students, the emphasis is also on the welfare of society, avoiding, as much as possible, fear, one of the predominant feelings during the pandemic generated by COVID-19.

CONCLUSIONS

Undoubtedly, the pandemic generated by COVID-19 has been chaotic at the global level; it has been prolonged and persistent (now called "post-Covid syndrome", according to Cantú (2022), and has afflicted and debilitated several thousand people in various ways.

The students participating in this study were not left out of this global situation, despite their own socio-cultural conditions. Much of the information and misinformation that circulated through various media, which was very overwhelming, generated great fear, sadness, anger, despair, worry and stress, congregated in a figurative nucleus that shaped their actions or proposals.

Their social representations of COVID-19 were strongly influenced by the central determinants (the external influences, coming from globalization, which vary according to the socio-cultural levels of each group, as well as the quantity and quality of the information received, in this case the media, which in turn were supplied with both external and internal information), and the lateral determinants (the closest ones, that is, the particular collectives and the individual himself, such as the family, the students' meeting groups, friends, among others).

We see, once again, how clear, reliable, scientifically substantiated information is indispensable in situations such as the one recently experienced by COVID-19. Of course, not everything is due to the information received and disseminated, but how it is provided and assimilated, particularly in the most vulnerable groups. It is well stated by Houlden et al. (2021), that factors involving the information environments in which citizens participate must be considered, given that these environments are shaped not only by individual interest or choice, but also by social, political, cultural and broader trends and connections.

As the saying goes "there is no evil that lasts a hundred years nor a body that can endure it", so several countries - or parts of those countries - have relaxed and eliminated sanitary restrictions, such as the use of masks, the use of sanitizing gel and the healthy distance when not required in certain spaces. We will see, in our country, how we will continue to "coexist" with this endemic, but for the time being, we will have to continue to take care of ourselves (in spite of the decrease in contagions) and, as far as possible, verify any information related to COVID-19 and its variants.

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ENDNOTES

1. According to the WHO (World Health Organization), the disease was given the name COVID-19 from the initials of the words "corona", "virus" and "disease", and the 19 corresponds to the year in which it emerged (on December 31, 2019 when the outbreak was reported to the WHO); derived from the above it is called "coronavirus". In fact, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses called it SARS-CoV-2, as a member of the family of other viruses that were detected earlier, the SARS-CoV, making it clear that this was a totally new virus. (BBC, 2020)

2. As of March 13, 2022, these data were available. The figure is likely to increase as time goes by and as the endemic persists with its possible variants.
3. Young people have been studied from different theoretical perspectives and have been referred to in different ways (cf. Bourdieu, 2002; Reguillo, 2010; de Garay, 2012). In this paper I take up the views of Donat and Martín-Lagos, 2020; Vallejo, 2017 & Morán, 2012, as they explain the situation of the low economic independence of students, which is supported in this study.
4. It is also related to cognitive polyphasia (Moscovici, 1979); we do not have one and only one social representation of the situation, but several social representations coexist, although one predominates.
5. Although only one student made this comment, it brings us back to Grant's (2021) analysis.
6. The movie "Contagion", released in 2011 and directed by Steven Soderbergh, began to circulate in times of pandemic pretending that it was recent, since the film seems a portrait of much of what happened by COVID-19, even with certain stereotypes about its origins.

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