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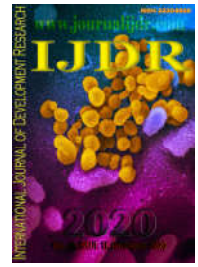
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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HEALTH AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AFTER COVID-19

***Emerson Carlos Visconde de Alencar**

HSM University, São Paulo (SP), Brazil. Postcode: 77015-640.

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ABSTRACT

The Coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic has resulted in changes in the human social behavior. The purpose of this article is to analyze how these changes are influencing the way of thinking of voters in Brazil's largest capital, the city of São Paulo, which is going through a municipal electoral process.

Key Words:

Communication; Marketing; Political Sciences; Public Health; SARS-CoV-2

***Corresponding author:**

Emerson Carlos Visconde de Alencar

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INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 -SARS-Cov2) exceeds 1 million deaths worldwide and became one of the most severe ever experienced in the human history has radically changed the routine of many people across the world. Humanity had to live insocial distancing and with all the infection control protocols recommended by health agencies. The new routine also changes the way people relate to and think about their future. All these changes in social standards occurred in Brazil duringthe municipal electoral process, in which the population chooses future mayors and councilors for the 5,570 municipalities. The first impact that COVID-19 had on the 2020 electoral process was the postponement of election by about a month. Due the pandemic, the Brazilian Congress approved a Proposed Amendment to the Constitution (Proposta de EmendaConstitucional - PEC) changing the electoral calendar and postponing the first round of voting from October 4 to November 15, 2020. For the president of the Superior Electoral Court (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral - TSE), the body that governs the Brazilian electoral process, Minister Luís Roberto Barroso, "the postponement was not a political will of the TSE, but the forwarding of the unanimous understanding of all the physicians and scientists that we could hear" (BRAZIL, 2020).

The impacts caused by COVID-19 also significantly changed the voter's head. Fear of the disease increased voter concerns about the health area. The growth is evidenced in public opinion poll. In the city of São Paulo, the largest in the country, a survey carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística - IBOPE), between 17 and 19 March 2020, a period that marked the beginning of the pandemic in Brazil, showed that 47% of participants said that health was an area that the population had been facing greater problems (IBOPE, 2020a). Months later, IBOPE returned to measuring the popular opinion. Research carried out between September 30 and October 1, 2020, the first released with the electoral process already underway, shows that 63% of participants answered that health would be the area which the population of São Paulo qualifies had been facing greater problems (IBOPE, 2020b). An increase of 16 percentage points over the election pollingperformed six months earlier. Between the IBOPEpollreleased in March 2020 and the other published in October 2020, there is a relevant information that may justify this increase in São Paulo population's concern regarding the health area, which is the difference in the number of confirmed cases of the disease in the period.

In March, 1,438 COVID-19 cases were confirmed in the city of São Paulo and 118 deaths, according to a bulletin released by the Municipal Health Department on March 31, 2020 (MUNICIPAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF SÃO PAULO, 2020a). On October 1, the number of confirmed cases jumped to 334,177 and the number of deaths increased to 12,791, according to the bulletin released by the Municipal Health Department (MUNICIPAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF SÃO PAULO, 2020b). The exponential growth in the number of confirmed cases and deaths caused by COVID-19 in the city of São Paulo, certainly, provoked a fear in the population, transferring this concern to the area most impacted by a pandemic in the public health administration system, which is the health area. Another comparison can be made to reinforce this thesis. Observing the historical analysis of the São Paulo population's concern demonstrated in opinion polls during the electoral process, there is one more point to be taken into consideration. IBOPEpoll conducted between 19 and 22 August 2016, the first released during the municipal electoral process that year, found that for 54% of participants, health was the area of greatest problem for the population in the city of Sao Paulo (IBOPE, 2016). The result is 9 percentage points lower than that detected during a poll conducted between September 30 and October 1, 2020, during the pandemic period (IBOPE, 2020c). The numbers prove the relevance that the debate around the improvement of public health will have in the municipal election in the city of São Paulo. As the number of cases is increasing each day, the municipality public health system is constantly being evaluated by the population, who will have to seek public services for treatment, thus raising the population's concern about this area. It will be up to the candidates for mayor of São Paulo to face the issue as fundamental and dedicate themselves to the presentation of proposals that really bring hope of improvement to the public health system and, mainly, suggest concrete actions that bring effective results in coping with COVID-19.

There is no conflict of interests.

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