Social security in pandemic times: an analysis on access to emergency Aid at CRAS in Riacho Fundo II

Seguridade social em tempos de pandemia: uma análise sobre o acesso ao auxílio emergencial no CRAS do Riacho Fundo II

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to analyze the access of users of the CRAS (Social Assistance Reference Center) in Riacho Fundo II, Brasília-DF, during the COVID-19 pandemic period (SARS-CoV-2), between 2020 and 2022. It considers the concerns surrounding the Emergency Aid, an urgent measure adopted by the Federal Government, in an analysis of the performance of the so-called social assistance services. The theoretical framework of the research is based on a reflection that follows the guidelines of a qualitative-quantitative approach, meaning a qualitative understanding of the phenomenon through bibliographic research, followed by a quantitative application involving field research and data tabulation. A multiple-choice questionnaire was administered to establish a behavioral profile of the study group. The obtained results led to the conclusion that there were various obstacles to ensuring citizenship and access to assistance rights during a health, economic, and social crisis, which reaffirmed the importance of socially relevant actions in safeguarding the rights of the vulnerable population. With knowledge of these challenges, the Federal, State, and Municipal governments can work to improve their management capacity, reduce bureaucracy for receiving assistance, and consider aspects of support and monitoring for these beneficiaries. This study is justified by recognizing that during the pandemic, providing assistance to the population is considered an essential service and a legally guaranteed right.

Keywords: public policies, pandemic, emergency aid, social assistance, and health.

RESUMO
Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar o acesso dos usuários do CRAS (Centro de Referência de Assistência Social) em Riacho Fundo II, Brasília-DF, durante o período da pandemia da Covid-19 (Sars-CoV-2), entre 2020 e 2022. Considera as preocupações em torno do Auxílio Emergencial, medida urgente adotada pelo Governo Federal, na análise do desempenho dos chamados serviços de assistência social. A estrutura teórica da pesquisa é baseada em uma reflexão que segue as diretrizes de uma abordagem qualitativo-quantitativa, significando uma compreensão qualitativa do fenômeno por meio de pesquisa bibliográfica, seguida de uma aplicação quantitativa envolvendo pesquisa de campo e tabulação de dados. Um questionário de múltipla escolha foi aplicado para estabelecer um perfil comportamental do grupo de estudo. Os resultados obtidos levaram à conclusão de que havia vários obstáculos para garantir a cidadania e o acesso aos direitos assistenciais durante uma crise sanitária, econômica e social, o que reafirmou a importância de ações socialmente relevantes na salvaguarda dos direitos da população vulnerável. Com conhecimento desses desafios, os governos federal, estadual e municipal podem trabalhar para melhorar sua capacidade de gestão, reduzir a burocracia para o recebimento de assistência e considerar aspectos de apoio e monitoramento para esses beneficiários. Este estudo é justificado pelo reconhecimento de que, durante a pandemia, prestar assistência à população é considerado um serviço essencial e um direito legalmente garantido.

Palavras-chave: políticas públicas, pandemia, ajuda emergencial, assistência social, e saúde.
1 INTRODUCTION

The present research aims to analyze the access of users to emergency aid at the Social Assistance Reference Center (CRAS) in Riacho Fundo II during the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. In this context, this research constitutes an exploratory study to understand emergency aid as a social benefit, considering the concerns surrounding this benefit, an urgent measure adopted by the Federal Government, in an analysis of the performance of the so-called social assistance services.

Access involves providing beneficiaries with clarification of their social rights and the means to exercise them, with the priority of facilitating access to benefits and social services. Thus, social assistance, as a public policy for citizen protection, is organized through basic social protection and special social protection, operationalized through the Unified Social Assistance System (Sistema Único de Assistência Social – SUAS), which operates nationally to promote interventions and necessary actions for providing services and benefits to users, in the face of various conditions of vulnerability faced by individuals, which may result from numerous vulnerabilities such as discrimination, violence, victimization, etc. SUAS operates from the perspective of socio-family matrix and develops its work process with the aim of guaranteeing rights and universalizing access to opportunities for citizens.

According to a report from the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV, 2021), social security and social assistance policies during the pandemic have encountered difficulties in their execution, especially in guaranteeing rights and social protection for the population, as well as in the working conditions of frontline service workers. According to a study conducted between June and September 2021 by FGV, there were difficulties in accessing the emergency aid registration via cell phone or the internet for the poorer population. The survey by the Center for Microfinance and Financial Inclusion Studies at FGV indicates that digital exclusion has affected a significant portion of Classes D and E. Conceptually, Class "D" represents families with incomes between two and four minimum wages, i.e., the total income must fall between R$ 2,090.01 and R$ 4,180. Families in Class "E" have incomes up to two minimum wages, i.e., the total income of all residents in a household must not exceed R$ 2,090.

According to data from the TIC Covid-19 panel by the Regional Center for Studies
on the Development of the Information Society (CETIC, 2022), 20% of respondents from
the poorest population segment did not have a cellphone to request the benefit, while 22%
cited a lack of internet access.

In this context, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How
was the access of users at CRAS Riacho Fundo II to emergency aid during the pandemic?

As a research justification, it is observed that the pandemic has highlighted the
importance of public service for the population and has prompted discussions about the
conditions, forms, and preparedness of social work provision. Commenting on this matter,
the United Nations Development Programme (2020) warns that progress made in various
aspects of poverty eradication is at risk due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, studies
indicate that enhancing the provision of basic social protection can mitigate the economic
and social impacts of the pandemic (Paiva, 2020).

However, Torres, Lima, and Breda (2020) and Boschetti and Behring (2021) point
out a trend in Brazilian social assistance based on merely extending social benefits to a
broad contingent of people and on income transfer programs (assistance), to the detriment
of a security-based policy focused on social protection and rights defense.

Regarding this, Torres, Lima, and Breda (2020) write:

What is observed is an accelerated and expanded process of assistance aimed at
absolute pauperism, which differs greatly from the right to social assistance. The latter
can and should be part of a social security policy, based on stable work with rights, social
security, and universal health. As a social right, programs for "universal basic income"
can temporarily complement or replace the loss of labor rights, but they will never have
the capacity to reduce inequalities in access to socially produced wealth.

In this perspective, assistance makes the actions of implementing public policies
effective by providing support and collaboration to beneficiaries in need, helping them
meet their basic needs when they lack the means to do so.

2 THEORETICAL REFERENCE

This chapter aims to introduce the topics to be discussed in this work, focused on
social security during the covid 19 pandemic and is divided into the following social
security topics: social security in times of pandemic, social assistance and the pandemic
families in times of pandemic, emergency aid instituted by law 13,982 of april 2020, importance of apps for requesting and distributing resources and the counterpoint: population without internet access.

2.1 SOCIAL SECURITY

According to the Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988), in chapter II, section I of Social Security, Article 194 defines that “social security comprises an integrated set of actions initiated by Public Authorities and society, aimed at ensure the rights related to health, social security and social assistance”. Therefore, the concept of social security is broader in order to cover contributions and social funding for these three areas and not just for social security.

In Chapter II, section III of Social Security, Article 201 presents the purpose of social security (Brasil, 1988):

Art. 201. Social security will be organized in the form of a general regime, of a contributory nature and mandatory membership, observing criteria that preserve financial and actuarial balance, and will meet, under the terms of the law, the: I - coverage of illness, disability, death and old age; II - maternity protection, especially for pregnant women; III - protection for workers in situations of involuntary unemployment; IV - family allowance and prison allowance for dependents of low-income insured persons; V - pension for the death of the insured, male or female, to the spouse or partner and dependents, subject to the provisions of § 2°.

In this context, social security serves all workers with a formal contract, rural producers of a certain age and those who opt for it, being managed by the National Institute of Social Security (INSS), an autarchy of the Federal Government, linked to the Ministry of Social Security. Its purpose is to raise funds, promote the payment of pensions and benefits to workers who contributed, in addition to other operational procedures related to concessions, review of benefits and record maintenance.

2.2 SOCIAL SECURITY IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

The right to Social Security is a threefold pillar encompassing Social Assistance, Social Security, and Health rights. It became evident during this unprecedented period
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that social security would be the best mechanism for the government to adopt in order to ensure minimum conditions of dignity for Brazilian citizens.

Social security is a right of the entire society, realized through its governing bodies, which demanded actions aimed at a new social security system in the face of the Coronavirus issue.

It was through social security that the Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde) developed prevention and treatment measures for Covid-19, seeking to ensure the provision of social security benefits through organized actions of the Social Security system. This allowed for the allocation of emergency assistance benefits to millions of Brazilians who were unemployed or in informal situations. It is a fact that in the pandemic scenario, many individuals were unable to cover their essential expenses, necessitating the vital support of social security services.

All of these rights come to the forefront in this moment of crisis, where they are fundamental for the survival of those who rely on government support. In this regard, Article 196 of the Brazilian Constitution emphasizes the right to health and the duty of the State:

“Art. 196 - Health is a right for all and a duty of the State, guaranteed through social and economic policies aimed at reducing the risk of diseases and other harm, and providing universal and equal access to actions and services for its promotion, protection, and recovery.”

Therefore, when addressing the issue of Social Security, it is necessary to mention that the referred system is composed of health, social assistance and social security.

2.3 SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND THE PANDEMIC

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified the spread of Covid-19 as a pandemic, with a global impact on public health worldwide. Due to the serious consequences for public health, the Federal Government, through ordinance No. 337 of March 24, 2020, established sanitary measures to address the emergency in public health of national importance. In this context, social assistance and support for the vulnerable population are presented as essential services to users of the Unified Social Assistance System (Sistema Único de Assistência Social - SUAS). The social distancing
measures and restrictions on social interactions taken by various countries aimed to prevent or slow down the spread of the Coronavirus, which altered behavior and the way of relating and interacting, with repercussions on various activities, including work, study, and leisure (Baccelli et al., 2020).

Social Security is a universal social protection system based on the principle of universality. The dimensions of Social Security, namely Social Security, Social Assistance, and Health, are included in the realm of social rights, as inferred from Article 6 of the Constitution of the Republic (BRASIL, 1988).

Social rights are fundamentally oriented toward respecting human dignity (Article 1, Clause III of the Constitution of the Republic). The government committed to ensuring rights related to social assistance for those in need, regardless of prior contribution, through the social security system established by the 1988 Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988).

According to Law No. 12,435 of 2011, which established the SUAS, social assistance is organized through basic social protection, offering services and benefits aimed at preventing situations of vulnerability and social risk, and special social protection, which is materialized through services that seek to rebuild bonds, promote the defense of rights, and individual, family, and community potentials (Brasil, 2011).

Based on the letter of the law, it is the State's duty to ensure basic social provisions for assisting basic rights, including emergency assistance actions and occasional benefits due to temporary vulnerability situations and public calamity (Brasil, 1993). Thus, social assistance is defined as a public service and an essential and indispensable activity to meet the urgent needs of the community's health or safety (Brasil, 2020b).

From this perspective, the position of the Federal Council of Social Work stands out, emphasizing the Professional Regulation Law, Law 8,662 (Brasil, 1993), and the Code of Professional Ethics (CFESS, 1993), which stipulate the professional commitment to providing assistance to the population in a situation of public calamity. Article 3 of our Code of Professional Ethics states that it is the duty of the social worker, in their relationship with the user population, to "participate in programs to provide assistance to the population in a situation of public calamity, in addressing and defending their interests
and needs,” expressing an ethical obligation to continue providing assistance to the Brazilian population brasileira.

2.4 FAMILIES IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

The basic social protection of Social Assistance is aimed at developing individual potential and capabilities, strengthening community and family bonds, and preventing situations of risk. It is intended for the population living in situations of vulnerability due to poverty, lack of income, difficulty accessing public services, or weakened emotional bonds. In the context of the pandemic caused by the spread of the new Coronavirus (Covid-19), the concern arises about how to effectively provide care within the household. These care issues extend beyond the care offered in hospitals during periods of hospitalization or in specialized outpatient centers (Baccelli et al., 2020).

The confinement situation caused by the health situation directly impacts families, given the recurrence of stressful situations that lead to increased stress due to family demands for their responsibility in care provision (Heiborn et al., 2020).

According to Araújo et al. (2021), considering the Brazilian reality, it is known that families today are smaller, have fewer resources, are more fragmented, and have more elderly members. Despite the touted centrality of the family in social policies, the State has been gradually relinquishing responsibilities for over three decades and passing them on to families. According to the authors, families are increasingly less capable of handling all the burdens and responsibilities assigned to them. As a result, the increasing social vulnerability highlights that families are burdened with many demands while the State is absent with weakened and incipient social security policies.

In this context, Mioto, Campos, and Carloto (2015) point out two major trends in the process of incorporating families into social policies: the family identified with the neoliberal project and the protective family. In contrast, they assert that the family's capacity for care and protection is directly related to the protection guaranteed to them through public policies.

In the Brazilian case, legislation also follows the same direction, regulating the role to be played by families and emphasizing their duties and importance for individual development. With the Covid-19 pandemic, this emphasis on family responsibility has
greatly increased. This is evident in the dissemination of informative materials, brochures, media outlets, newspapers, TV, and social media (Araujo et al., 2021).

According to a survey highlighted by Mani et al. (2021), the International Monetary Fund predicts a deep recession for European countries, which has already been confirmed. According to the same survey, each inactive month for non-essential sectors corresponds to a 3% drop in annual GDP. The situation worsens when we examine the data from the 2019 International Labour Organization report, which indicates that 61% of the global workforce is engaged in informal or poorly paid jobs, with low social protection and little guarantee of labor rights. Adding to this, the United Nations warns that the pandemic could push more than 265 million people into poverty and hunger.

Thus, the fear among families regarding uncertainties about accessing services in this pandemic context and ensuring care and other basic rights and conditions of life becomes evident. The assistance provided will largely depend on the responsibility of caregivers and families. They will need to provide food, personal and household hygiene materials, and also worry about supplies and medications, among other care-related requirements (Araujo et al., 2021).

According to the authors, families gain more visibility in this current context, also in social policies that seek to assist them for the success of social programs. Although quarantine was the safest, necessary, and most effective measure to minimize the direct effects of Covid-19, the isolation regime imposed a series of consequences and challenges not only for healthcare systems but also for commerce and those who depend on assistance from Federal, State, and Municipal governments.

The support for these families is provided through CRAS (Social Assistance Reference Center), which is structured and organized in areas of greater social vulnerability. It is a local public unit that provides specialized services to families whose rights have been violated, thereby strengthening broken bonds. The most offered service by CRAS is the Comprehensive Family Protection and Support Service (PAIF).

According to Marins et al. (2021), when regulating the law and implementing the Emergency Basic Income, referred to by the federal government as Emergency Aid, the government identifies three main groups of beneficiaries: families registered in the Single Registry (CadÚnico) for Social Programs; beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família program;
and self-employed workers, informal workers, and microentrepreneurs who are not in the CadÚnico database. According to the authors, the first two groups would not require any new registration, but the third group would need to apply via an app. All three groups would receive funds from Caixa Econômica Federal, either through an existing Bolsa Família account or by opening a digital account.

2.5 EMERGENCY AID INSTITUTED BY LAW 13,982 OF APRIL 2020

As soon as the State of Calamity was declared due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Executive branch began considering means to implement a fixed income to assist the most vulnerable portion of the population. These individuals found themselves in need due to the pandemic's impact, particularly informal workers. This situation led to the creation of Law 13.982/2020 (Brazil, 2020a).

As Bacelli (2020) mentions, within the realm of social assistance, the emergency aid is the primary manifestation of a public income distribution policy. This understanding is shared by Costa, Rizzoto, and Lobato (2020), who argue that the Covid-19 crisis was a pivotal factor that prompted the Brazilian government to recognize the Social Security System.

It is through the pressure exerted by social movements and left-wing political parties, which play a significant role in class struggle and counteracting capitalist logic, that the limitations of the existing social protection system became apparent. This system has faced various challenges in its establishment, such as delays in disbursement (Correia et al., 2020).

The Emergency Aid Program (PAE), established by Law 13.982/2020 (Brazil, 2020), is a financial benefit provided by the Federal Government aimed at informal workers, individual microentrepreneurs (MEIs), self-employed individuals, and the unemployed. Its goal is to provide emergency protection during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Emergency Aid assists Brazilian citizens who meet the established program requirements, recognizing the rights of individuals directly affected by the pandemic, many of whom were in situations of unemployment, vulnerability, and compromised income due to restrictive measures. In this regard, Costa and Freire (2020) emphasize the consequences of the pandemic and the importance of the Emergency Aid (PAE):
The COVID-19 pandemic caused, on the one hand, profound disturbances in the functioning of the economy, and on the other hand, forced the application of a set of public policies to mitigate the impacts on production, consumption and income of the population. Economic activities linked to trade and the service sector were severely affected by the interruption of their activities, forcing companies to postpone investments and lay off millions of formal and informal workers. The “invisibility” of the share of workers and the self-employed who live informally became more evident, as it was not possible to capture, through the available registers, part of the eligible target public of targeted public policies. To solve this problem, the PAE was created and significant resources from the public budget were allocated.

Regarding the emergency aid in particular, approved by the National Congress and initially paid for a period of five months at a value of R$ 600.00 (six hundred reais), which could increase to R$ 1,200.00 if a family member was a woman, it was later extended for an additional three months at a lower value of R$ 300.00 (three hundred reais).

There are still many controversies regarding the number of Brazilians who accessed the benefit, as there are discrepancies in data, also considering that many individuals whose requests were denied pursued legal action. The law, enacted by the Executive on April 2, 2020, includes the following criteria: being at least 18 years old (with exceptions for teenage mothers); not having formal employment; having a total monthly family income of up to three minimum wages or a per capita monthly family income of up to half a minimum wage; not having received taxable income above R$ 28,559.70 in their name in the year 2018 and not receiving other federal government pension or assistance benefits in their name, except for Bolsa Família.

As a social phenomenon, food is intertwined with economic, cultural, historical, and political systems that directly impact various social phenomena. On one hand, hunger cannot wait, but welfare policies have subjugated the working class and forced conformity to their status quo of domination, thus perpetuating the overexploitation of labor that depletes the physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive capacities of the working class (Correia et al., 2020).

According to the authors, it's important to highlight that changes in the world of work have brought about transformations in production processes and labor processes in the country, resulting in the precarization of labor through subcontracting, informality, and the deep expropriation of social rights.
According to data from Caixa Econômica Federal, up until October 2020, a total of R$ 226.4 billion had been disbursed, benefiting 67.7 million Brazilians (Poder 360, 2020).

Marins et al. (2021) conducted a study examining the international panorama of Emergency Aid implementation in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic and concluded that in Brazil, there were challenges associated with this emergency policy, such as long lines for enrollment, leading to crowds; initial difficulties with irregular CPFs; delays in decision-making for aid disbursement; inadequate human resources; and limited familiarity with digital technologies among the most vulnerable population.

2.6 POPULATION WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS

The assistance was made available through a dedicated application, in partnership with Caixa Econômica Federal. It is evident that access to the application greatly facilitated the lives of Brazilians who needed to rely on the emergency aid. However, a portion of the population in need of the benefit was unable to navigate the step-by-step process to claim it, making digital exclusion one of the main barriers to access (Folha de São Paulo, 2021).

The newspaper Folha de São Paulo (Folha de São Paulo, 2021) published a news article on May 27th, reporting on a study conducted by the Center for Microfinance Studies and Financial Inclusion at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation - Cemif. The study revealed that those without internet access or devices with network capabilities faced greater difficulty in requesting the benefit, especially among the "Class D" (income between two and four minimum wages) and "Class E" (income up to two minimum wages) segments. The lack of skill in using mobile phones also exacerbated the problem.

Among the respondents surveyed by Cemif, only 7% stated that they did not have a cell phone. Among "Class D" and "Class E," this percentage increased to 20%. In other words, 20% of internet users from "Class D" and "Class E" who attempted but did not receive government assistance cited the inability to use a cell phone as one of the reasons for not obtaining the benefit. Another issue highlighted by the study is the difficulty in using the mobile device, as even though part of the population possesses the device, not everyone can use it correctly (Folha de São Paulo, 2021).
3 METODOLOGY

To achieve the research objectives, a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, was chosen, utilizing a descriptive bibliographic method. A survey of the relevant literature on the studied topic was conducted. This involved consulting books, scientific articles, and websites. The research was conducted from August to September 2022, involving beneficiaries of the Centro de Referências e Assistência Social (Center for References and Social Assistance) - CRAS, located in Riacho Fundo II, Brasília-DF, 18 km from the federal capital.

For the research, an online questionnaire with 17 objective multiple-choice and mixed questions, as outlined in "Appendix A," was administered using the Google Forms platform to CRAS users between August and September 2022. The questions revolved around the emergency aid program during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this manner, the methodology employed entails gathering data from materials and through the questionnaire distributed to groups via WhatsApp. The goal was to comprehend how these users accessed the emergency aid during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

By analyzing the collected data, it was possible to understand the service provided at CRAS Riacho Fundo II regarding users' access to the emergency aid benefit. Through the use of the questionnaire, responses were obtained from 51 individuals. CRAS is located in the urban area of Riacho Fundo II, in a warehouse provided by the local administration. It has a medium-sized facility and a small team. It holds approximately 9,200 records and serves an estimated recent population of 100,000 inhabitants, averaging around 400 families. Riacho Fundo encompasses a total area of 54.53 km² of urban space and 52.23 km² of rural land, characterized by the typical relief of the Central Plateau (GDF, 2022).

It is important to highlight that 7.41% of the population is unemployed, and 10.79% claim to earn up to the minimum wage. Furthermore, 32.2% of those employed lack social security coverage, and a quarter live in rented accommodation, according to

The online questionnaire, consisting of 17 closed-ended multiple-choice questions, was developed to gather information from a specific group of individuals regarding their access to the emergency aid. It was distributed in WhatsApp groups between August and September 2022. The Google Forms platform was used to compile and present the research results in the form of graphs and percentages for each question.

The questionnaire is attached to this work and was made available for completion on the Google Forms website at the following web address: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1awfCYjZh4DbvW7Lr_OV'SXRompzNgheeFpBuZQlUb3o/edit

After conducting the literature review, the obtained research results were analyzed and are presented in the following sections.

4 RESULTS

A pesquisa conducted by analyzing the information provided by the Federal Government regarding the Emergency Aid, along with other literature, allowed us to examine the importance and necessity of social assistance for the Brazilian population, and how the Emergency Aid program provided essential support to the people during a very challenging time.

In Graph 1, it is observed that 30.8% of the beneficiaries were aged 20 to 30 years.
In Graph 2, the collected data from beneficiaries indicates that a significant portion, 67.3%, are female, who often bear the primary responsibility for family sustenance, while 32.7% are male.

As shown in Graph 3 below, a substantial portion of the participants, 55.8%, are single, 26.9% are married, and 9.6% are in a stable relationship.

In Graph 4, we observe that 69.2% of the participants live with up to three people.
In Graph 4, the number of people in respondents' household is shown. The data indicates that 53.8% live alone, 26.9% live with 1 to 3 people, and 15.4% live with 4 to 6 people. The remaining 3.8% live with 7 to 9 people.

Graph 4 – Number of People in Respondents' Household

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 5, 15.4% of the respondents rated the online service as terrible, expressing significant dissatisfaction, while 30.8% considered the service to be good.

Graph 5 – Quality of Online Service at CRAS during the pandemic

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 6, it was observed that 76.8% of the beneficiaries used the government's app or website to apply for the benefit. Meanwhile, 13.9% were registered users of the CRAS CadÚnico, and 9.3% received Bolsa Família through social assistance departments.

Graph 6 – Means of Access Used to Apply for Emergency Aid

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 7, it was noted that 11.5% of the respondents did not have access to a computer or cellphone for requesting the emergency aid, posing an additional challenge.
during the application process, while 75.0% reported having access to a computer and cellphone.

Graph 7 – Access to Computer or Cellphone for Requesting Emergency Aid

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- I did not need to apply, as I was contemplated by the CadÚnico or Bolsa Família.

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 8, out of the participants, 75.0% indicated that they had access to the internet when applying for the Emergency Aid, while 15.4% did not need to apply due to being already registered in CadÚnico or Bolsa Família.

Gráfico 8 – Acesso à internet quando da solicitação do Auxílio Emergencial

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- I did not need to apply, as I was contemplated by the CadÚnico or Bolsa Família.

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 9, it is evident that the majority of beneficiaries, 53.8%, received a parcel of R$ 600.00 from the Emergency Aid program, with a notable contingent of 17.3% entitled to the R$ 1,200.00 parcel designated for households where the woman was the sole financial provider.

Graph 9 – Value of Parcel Received

Legend:
- R$ 150,00 to R$ 300,00
- R$600.00
- R$ 1,200.00 (For families where the woman is solely responsible for household expenses).

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).
In Graph 10, the majority of participants, 57.7%, indicated that the paid amounts were insufficient to cover their monthly family needs, necessitating supplementary income to cover expenses.

Graph 10 – Meeting Monthly Needs with Received Amounts

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 11, participants evaluated the response time for the benefit, with 34.6% considering it as regular and 11.5% rating it as terrible.

Graph 11 – Response Time for Emergency Aid Benefit

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 12, a significant portion, 59.6% of beneficiaries, were dissatisfied with the lack of information and communication regarding their emergency aid application, whether through the app, CRAS, government website, or the 156 helpline, prompting many to resort to legal action to obtain the benefit.
In Graph 12, 59.6% of users did not face difficulty in claiming unpaid parcels, while 40.4% did.

Graph 12 – Difficulty in Claiming Unpaid Parcels

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 13, 30.8% of users required assistance from third parties to withdraw the emergency aid, lacking the knowledge to utilize the digital platforms.

Graph 13 – Assistance from Third Parties in Withdrawing Emergency Aid

Source: Compiled by the author (2022).

In Graph 14, 92.0% of beneficiaries did not need to pay a fee to withdraw the aid, while 8.0% had to pay a fee for early withdrawal before the stipulated date by Caixa.

Graph 14 – Payment to Third Parties for Emergency Aid Withdrawal

Source: Compiled by the author (2022)

In Graph 15, 75.0% of beneficiaries found it easy to use the CaixaTem app, while 25.0% faced difficulties due to a lack of familiarity with such applications.

Graph 15 – Ease of Use of CaixaTem App

Source: Compiled by the author (2022)
In Graph 16, 61.5% of beneficiaries did not face any difficulties accessing the registration for receiving emergency aid, while 21.2% were unable to use the tool to apply for the benefit, and 9.6% reported no access to the internet.

In Graph 17, 50.0% of participants evaluated the emergency aid as good, while 25.0% considered it excellent, and another 21.2% rated it as regular, given the circumstances of the pandemic.
Through the questionnaire analysis and the presented data from the CRAS users of Riacho Fundo II, it is evident that aspects such as delayed responses and disbursement of the benefit; insufficient amounts; necessary bureaucracy for CadÚnico registration; lack of digital literacy; and limited human resources at the analyzed Social Assistance Reference Center, indicate obstacles to guaranteeing citizenship and access to assistance rights during a period of health, economic, and social crisis.

In conclusion, in line with the findings of Marins et al. (2021), it can be inferred that while the Emergency Aid program reached out to support and sustain the population, accessing the benefit left certain gaps due to challenges in using mobile devices and the internet.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to analyze the access of users of CRAS Riacho Fundo II, Brasília-DF, during the Covid-19 pandemic in the period 2020/2022, considering the concern surrounding the Emergency Aid, an urgent measure adopted by the Federal Government, in an analysis of the performance of the so-called social assistance services.

The economic crisis coupled with social inequality during the pandemic posed significant challenges to public policies, especially those associated with social protection. The Emergency Aid program was designed to address the basic needs of the most vulnerable population.

Among the main results of the research, it was possible to outline a behavioral profile of the study group and observe the importance of the development of the Emergency Aid program by the Federal Government in mitigating the impacts caused by
the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the entire world in 2020. Another relevant result pertains to the inadequacy of the provided services to meet the users' needs. Within the limitations of this study, this observation could be reaffirmed as a trend in a broader research context.

In extreme situations such as a pandemic, it is evident that the most vulnerable population relies on the coordination of public policies for swift crisis management. Social policies are the collective course of action that concretizes the declared and legally guaranteed social rights. Therefore, it is important to highlight that the experienced pandemic scenario underscored the significance of actions aimed at social welfare in safeguarding the rights of the vulnerable population.

As a suggestion for future research, based on the knowledge of these adversities, it will be possible to develop studies at the federal, state, and municipal levels seeking to enhance management capacity, reduce bureaucracy for receiving social assistance, and consider aspects of support and follow-up for these beneficiaries, particularly the most vulnerable ones.
REFERENCES


