

## **We are unconformed: theoretical investigations to explain haitian hunger<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this article is to investigate how hunger and poverty in Haiti is being discussed in the scientific research already carried out. Theorizing the subject, We adopted as methodological strategy for literature review the demarcation of the following descriptors: 1) Hunger and poverty in Haiti, 2) Brazilian program Zero Hunger, 3) Social programs and 4) Cultural Hunger in the period from August 17 to 23, 2021. We used two databases, of dissertations available online: the Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD) and the Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações of the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). The linguistic technique called skimming was used to read the theses. It is concluded that the analyzed theses did not provide enough theoretical and conceptual indexes about Haitian hunger. It is considered a separate case that deserves exclusive dedication, discussion and pondering, besides the ideas of social programs, since these would imply in investments of scarce funds. It is, therefore, time for another approach to understand the root of hunger and poverty in Haiti.

**Keywords:** Cultural Hunger; Hunger and Poverty in Haiti; Zero Hunger Program; Social Programs.

## **Somos inconformados: investigações teóricas para explicar a fome haitiana**

### **RESUMO**

O objetivo deste artigo é o de investigar como está sendo discutido o tema da fome e pobreza no Haiti em pesquisas científicas já realizadas teorizando a temática, adotou-se como estratégia metodológica, a partir de uma revisão bibliográfica, demarcar os seguintes descritores: 1) Fome e pobreza no Haiti, 2) Programa brasileiro Fome Zero, 3) Programas sociais e 4) Fome Cultural no período entre 17 a 23 de agosto de 2021. Utilizamos dois bancos de dados, de teses e dissertações disponíveis online: a Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD) e o Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). Usou-se a técnica linguística denominada skimming para a leitura das teses. Concluiu-se que as teses analisadas, não forneceram índices teóricos e conceituais suficientes sobre a fome haitiana, considera-se um caso a parte que merece uma dedicação, uma discussão e reflexões, além das ideias dos programas sociais, já estes implicariam em investimentos, verbas que o governo não detém, é hora de outro caminho para compreender a raiz da fome e pobreza no Haiti.

**Palavras-chave:** Fome Cultural; Fome e Pobreza no Haiti; Programa Fome Zero; Programas Sociais.

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<sup>1</sup> Dear editor and lecturers, this theoretical research work already has an online version available, due to the participation in an international internship of scientific cooperation between Brazil and the Czech Republic. Link to access the smaller published version: <https://www.incbac.org/pdf/UNIGOU%20Remote%20-%20Publication%202022%20-%20Ethol%20Exime.pdf>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Haiti<sup>2</sup> is about 27,750 km, a relatively small country with an economy based on agriculture. The economic, political, and governmental problems, components of an all-inclusive package that include the lack of food in the world and the few possibilities to obtain food in a given society. In the case of Haiti, besides the aggravating political crisis in the country, the lack of food has become a culture of permanent destruction in "*Koupe Tèt, Boule Kay*". This famous phrase in the streets of Haiti, in school books, in the thoughts of those who were born and live on the island, is part of this package that makes hunger and poverty unbeatable. A hunger for rice, for medicine in hospitals, for drinkable water in homes, for daily wear, and so on. Defining hunger in Haiti is a big challenge, because the Haitian hunger is the lack of everything, it is the lack of perspective of nothing for today neither tomorrow.

This definition can be understood as a replication of the Haitian situation through writing, further elaborated by Ribeiro (2016, p. 64), who understood, "to hunger, is malnutrition," being a worrisome situation of millions of Haitians going hungry. In this interpretation, hunger is considered as an aggravating condition for malnutrition (MONTEIRO, 1995; 2003). There are some words and expressions that lead us to realize that hunger is present, as Santos (2018, p. 72) cites, "need" and "hunger" in the first periphery, "humble", "humiliation", "no money", "it's the devil", "struggle", "have nothing", "beggar", and "lack of opportunity". They are understood as expressions that guide the life of those who plunge into misery.

Haitian poverty<sup>3</sup> can also originate from the lack of care for the environment, practices that affect nature, also by the corruption naturalized in every corner of the country, in the political, social, and economic spheres, directly implicating the

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<sup>2</sup> The original name of Haiti is "Ayiti", which means mountainous land, because the relief of the Republic of Haiti is very rugged. More than 50.0% of its territory is made up of slopes greater than 40.0% and less than 30.0% have slopes between 0 to 10%. Located in the Caribbean basin, the Republic of Haiti is the second largest of the Greater Antilles. It is bounded on the north by the Atlantic Ocean; on the south by the Caribbean Sea; on the east by the Dominican Republic and on the west by Cuba (90 km) and Jamaica (190 km). With its approximately 1,530 km of coastline, 386 km of border with the Dominican Republic and its five (5) small islands, it occupies the western third of the entire island shared with the Dominican Republic (IHSI, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> To better understand Haitian hunger and poverty, see the next two references:  
DELORME, Demesvar. *La misère au sein des richesses: réflexions diverses sur Haïti*. E. Dentu, 1873.  
THOMAZ, Omar Ribeiro. *The earthquake in Haiti, the white world and the Lougawou*. *Novos estudos CEBRAP*, n. 86, p. 23-39, 2010.

productions of agricultural products to supply the needs of people in vulnerable situations who live in extreme poverty (EXIME, 2021; EXIME, 2022). As Fontana (2014, p. 53) reports, poverty has typically "associated environmental degradation [...] the dissolution of their collective identities, their social solidarities, and their traditional practices." The political and economic culture of deforestation become laws that legitimize hunger based on the Haitian culture and little is done to get out of this situation.

From the Brazilian perspective, the evolutionary capacity of social programs in Brazil in the constructions of public policies, such as the Zero Hunger<sup>4</sup> program in 2002, which later became the Brazilian *Bolsa Família* program, with the objective of combating hunger and poverty, are examples in the fight against misery. Already at the beginning of the Zero Hunger program, 46 million people who were in a critical situation were assisted (PLEIN, 2012).

The actions of these programs were, for example, the distribution of emergency food baskets, donations of food and money, facilitating the creation of jobs, etc. (SILVA, 2003; SUPLICY, 2003). In light of the research, this article aims to investigate how the issue of hunger and poverty in Haiti is being discussed in scientific research already conducted, theorizing on the subject.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This article is characterized by a literature review study from dissertations produced between 2003-2021 in Brazil, with aspects of qualitative and quantitative elements that were carried out through a survey, called "State of the art" of dissertations related to the theme, Cultural Hunger to eradicate hunger in Haiti, taking into account the following descriptors. We used as criteria to choose each descriptor the importance of the theme of hunger and poverty in the Haitian context, the connection with the purpose of this article from each key word of initial

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<sup>4</sup> In this way it is understood that the *Fome Zero* program was used as a basis for discussion in a national and international perspective to think about this article, because it is an example of a successful program in the fight against hunger and poverty. In the Haitian context, attempts to propose social programs have always failed, such as the income transfer program called "Ti Manman Cheri" in the following link <[https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/4050/S2013067\\_es.pdf](https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/4050/S2013067_es.pdf)>.

discussion. In addition, each one helps to theorize the issue of hunger in Haiti bringing as an example the perspectives of social programs, by which, we take as an example the Brazilian case, initially with the Zero hunger program.

- Hunger and poverty in Haiti;
- Zero Hunger Program;
- Social programs; and
- Cultural Hunger.

For this article, two online databases of theses and dissertations were used. The first is the *Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD)*<sup>5</sup> and the *Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações*<sup>6</sup> of the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES)*. The search for works to compose the field of analysis of this article was carried out, considering the years 2003, which is characterized in a year after the beginning of the Zero Hunger program in Brazil to 2021.

That said, this bibliographical review article, based on secondary sources, includes all scientific bibliographies available on the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and especially theses and dissertations that are part of the analytical body of this article. In this way, the bibliographical research allows us to find diverse materials to better understand the subject being researched, besides providing a range of opportunities related to the ways in which other research on the same theme has been carried out. (MARCONI; LAKATOS, 2003).

## 2.1 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

We searched two databases, the first entitled *Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações* and the second the *Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações*, for postgraduate works related to the research theme. In the first moment of this

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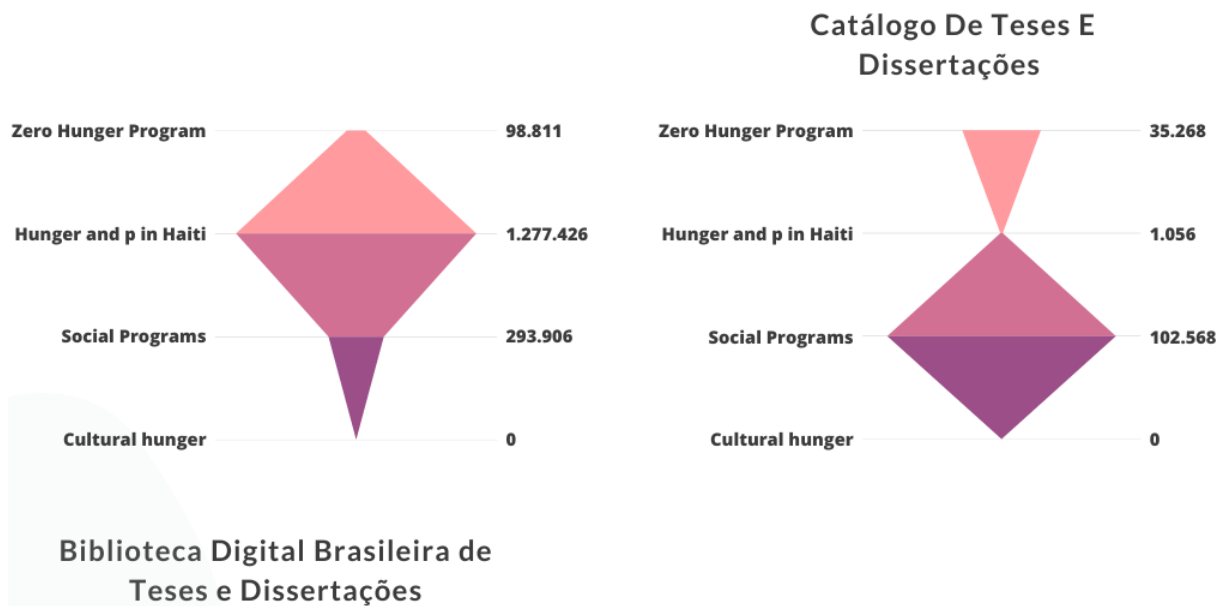
<sup>5</sup> Brazilian dissertation database, available with 686,311 documents. Link: <<http://bdtd.ibict.br/vufind/>>.

<sup>6</sup> Link to access the catalogue of dissertations and theses: <<https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/catalogo-teses/index.html#!/>>.

methodologically-regulated search from the 4 descriptors, we present figure 1, entitled: The numbers of theses and dissertations found in the databases used, below.

**Figure 1-** The numbers of theses and dissertations found in the databases used

### Theses & Dissertations



**Source:** Prepared by the authors (2022), From the two databases in Figure (1)

Initially, the amount of documents found were presented in figure 1, before applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, it is considered a characteristic of data cleaning. The documents in question referred to the dissertations that make up this work, the descriptor with the most documents found in the first database is "**hunger and poverty in Haiti (1,277,426)**", while for the descriptor **Cultural Hunger** had no document was found. When doing the same search in the second database, the descriptor with the most documents found is "**social programs (102,568)**", in the same circumstance as in the first database, the descriptor **Cultural Hunger** does not appear in any of the searches.

Five steps are used for the inclusion and exclusion criteria: 1) Remove all dissertation texts to compose the analysis, leaving in the corpus only the texts that discuss the theme of hunger in Haiti; 2) Consider the theses produced between the years 2003 - 2021; 3) Apply in the database search the area filter of the humanities

and multidisciplinary, with the objective of finding dissertations aligned to the research theme, apart from the interdisciplinary character that involves the construction of this article that encompasses areas such as sociology, social sciences, anthropology, economics, among others in the multidisciplinary context; 4) Choose for readings the abstracts of the theses on the theme; 5) Use the descriptors of each work that are related to the dissertation's theme, in addition to reading the final considerations.

Finally, from the searches made in the two mentioned databases, a total of 24 dissertations were found for the construction of this article, after the inclusion and exclusion process. Given the above-mentioned, at this first moment, it is confirmed that the descriptor "Hunger and Poverty in Haiti" has 13 theses, being the largest number of works produced per descriptor and also presents the most recent research produced over the years. When grouping the these of each descriptor, we obtained the following works by descriptor, Zero Hunger Program (4), Hunger and Poverty in Haiti (13), Social Programs (7), Cultural Hunger (0), totaling 24 dissertations that make up the analytical *corpus* of this research. Thus, the use of dissertations in this article is due to the importance of working with research with more theoretical and empirical depth that undergo rigorous evaluations of qualifications and defenses, without limitations, characteristics that do not offer other types of documents such as academic papers.

### **3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the discussion of the results is presented in 3 topics. The first one deals with the works found based on the descriptor Zero Hunger Program, the second one discusses the findings of Hunger and Poverty in Haiti, and the third one based on the descriptor social programs.

#### **3.1 THE MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE FINDINGS FROM THE ZERO HUNGER PROGRAM**

The idea of reducing hunger in any underdeveloped society becomes a weapon of combat in almost all spheres of local and national policies of countries, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. The challenge of doing something concrete and enduring, thinking about the most vulnerable, is mostly related to what can be gained, for example, from the votes of those who are in misery. Social programs, such as Zero Hunger in Brazil, should not belong to a government, but to the State, in order to give continuity without depending on a proposal for 4 or 8 years of governments.

The Zero Hunger program emerged exactly at this juncture,

One of the most important elements of Lula's campaign was the Zero Hunger Program, which placed the issue of poverty at the center of the political debate. The materialization of this program was mainly through a non-contributory conditional cash transfer policy (POMPEU, 2011, p. 112).

The Zero Hunger program was used as a political proposal, but it reached many Brazilians who lived in poverty, in particular those who were part of excluded groups, such as those in the Brazilian Northeast, communities or slums in large metropolises in Brazil. Thus, the main objective of this program in 2002 was to decrease social inequality and allow access to income for a group that had previously been abandoned. Looking from this perspective, it can be said that it was an important milestone in the fight against hunger and poverty in Brazil that served as an example at the national and international levels.

With this descriptor, one finds 4 theses, (BICHIR, 2011); (AZEVEDO, 2013); (FONTANA, 2014); (MELO, 2016). It is understood that social programs in Brazil were proposed to reduce hunger in fact, but especially to allow access especially education, professional training, as well as access the labor market to the excluded, that is, people living below the poverty line in the reflections of Suplicy (2003). Looking at it this way, those who receive an income from these public policies to eradicate poverty have had the chance to build a new life, and it is worth remembering that it was not just about incomes, but, access to food, public schools among others (BICHIR, 2011; FONTANA, 2014).

### 3.2 THE MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE FINDINGS FROM THE DESCRIPTOR OF HUNGER AND POVERTY IN HAITI

The Haitian conjuncture can no longer be considered as a novelty when it comes to extreme poverty: there is hunger in every corner of the country. This discussion can be considered recurrent in the international arena, that is, the permanent existence of hunger or the fight against it. In dealing with this situation, considered fragile and delicate, it is understood that,

The constant struggle of Haitians has been debated in the international context in search of solutions to implement measures that can help the government in the mission to take the country out of extreme poverty. In the national context, the discussion about confronting hunger becomes more and more a struggle for power and political debates, and many plans remain on paper due to lack of resources and a long history of corruption that aggravate hunger in the Haitian territory. (EXIME, *et.al.*, 2021, p. 10).

The struggle for power in Haiti is only a millimetric aspect, which prevents the proposals to reduce hunger or alleviate poverty. As it is said there, "lavi a di wi"<sup>7</sup>, "souf nou ap koupe"<sup>8</sup> and "chay la lu, nou paka pote l"<sup>9</sup>, are some common phrases that portray how difficult it is to live and be Haitian in Haiti. The 13 authors who discuss this descriptor are presented, (POMPEU, 2011); (AVILA, 2013); (MARINS, 2013); (RISSATO, 2015); (PINTO, 2016); (FIGUEIREDO, 2016); (RIBEIRO, 2016); (MARQUES, 2017); (DALLMANN, 2018); (CARVALHO, 2018); (SANTOS, 2018); (MONTEIRO, 2020); (NINA, 2021).

As a result, hunger and poverty in Haiti, as in other countries in the world, usually has as consequences acts of corruption, the lack or non-existence of public policies to combat poverty. Being poor does not specifically mean not having an income or financial resources to meet needs. According to Dallmann (2018, p. 213), poverty does not only have by definition the "lack of access to everything that society produces that is best for us to live with dignity". It is thought to access to hospital, common goods that everyone should have access, it remains the obligation of the

<sup>7</sup> t means: Life is hard, usually when you say this in Haiti it's because you don't have enough to eat, clothes, etc.

<sup>8</sup> It is when a person is on their last breaths, in a nutshell, they are on the verge of death.

<sup>9</sup> It's like carrying a cross, when someone can't take it anymore, all that's left is to surrender and accept whatever comes, such as death, permanent hunger, and so on.



States the proper functioning of these areas in the lives of the population, which in turn should charge and demand compliance with ongoing public policies, as the role of the agents and attendants responsible should get inspections in order to ensure the services they were assigned. (SANTOS, 2018; RISSATO, 2015; MARINS, 2013).

With all that said, it is useless to fight poverty without joint efforts of measures in the fight to decrease absolute poverty among those who live in deprived communities, in municipalities far from large centers, which become poorer due to lack of investment in local infrastructures.

### 3.3 THE MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE FINDINGS FROM THE DESCRIPTOR SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Social programs created over the years in a society may have political, electoral motivations, however, an important fact that cannot be denied is the intention of providing improvements in the quality of life for low-income populations. It is clear that, in order to obtain funding for government projects, to bear the costs of providing incomes for millions of people, political consent is needed, and to be sure that the public coffers will be able to meet the demands.

It is justified that the programs are proposed and created in consensus to reach the population, in order to help overcome inequality, thus allowing more inclusion in society (SILVA, 2003). In dealing with this understanding, it is clarified that the issue of social programs was already being discussed before 1997, in view of other Brazilian programs such as *Bolsa Escola* or *Programa de Renda Mínima vinculada à Educação*<sup>10</sup>. (SUPLICY, 2003, p. 65).

From these 7 authors, (MOREIRA, 2012); (KINPARA, 2013); (CAMARA, 2014); (MACEDO, 2015); (SILVA, 2017); (MENEZES, 2017); (SORDI, 2019); who discuss this descriptor, it is noted that education serves as one of the parameters to

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<sup>10</sup> Created initially in 1997, through the Law 9.533/97 and expanded in 2001, with the Law 10.219/01, which provides families with children from 6 to 15 years old, with income below R\$ 90.00 or half salary per capita (in April 2001) a monthly benefit of R\$ 15.00, R\$ 30.00, or R\$ 45.00 per month, depending on whether the family has one, two or three children attending school. At the end of 2002, there were about 5.7 million families registered in this program, involving about 10.7 million children in 5,545 municipalities, almost all of Brazil's 5,561 municipalities. (P. 65).

know if the programs have had impacts on society, since from this there can be constant improvements to increase the families' qualifications and soon having an increase in income, making room for professional and personal growth. From the legal point of view, it represents a key action in the perspective of allowing citizens to establish a relationship, a bond to end the historical inequality.

The definitive permanence of social programs must always present a new design of evolutionary thoughts surrounding their existence linked to the first needs of the subjects in poverty. From the angle that social policies should alleviate hunger and poverty, allowing a way out of misery towards empowerment for definitive progress and away from social registries to obtain basic incomes, that is to say without total and defined dependence on Federal and State government programs to live without hunger. (SILVA, 2017; KINPARA, 2013; CAMARA, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to establish a partnership between the Federal Government and state managers, that is, with municipalities in harmony with private entities that work to implement, facilitate, and contribute to the success of the programs. With all that said, in the following paragraph, the descriptor Cultural Hunger will be explained.

Considering the previous discussions that summed up the results of each descriptor searched in two official databases (*Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD)* and *Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações*), which accommodate hundreds of theses made in Brazil by grad school programs, no dissertations of the descriptor in question were found. It is inferred, therefore, the need to research deeply the Cultural Hunger, which, from an investigative point of view, was only an investigative hypothesis of the study.

To better understand the descriptor Cultural Hunger, it is necessary to separate the two words (Hunger and Cultural), in search of a complete definition. To define hunger, there is a consensus among researchers who discuss the subject, defining it as "the lack of food that leads a person to be malnourished without being able to look for or have anything to eat", a fact that makes hunger a conscious feeling, wondering if it is possible to survive without eating for many days, (MONTEIRO,1995; MASSEYEF, 1956; CASTRO, 1967). In this way, the system reaches its limits because it has used up all its energy, which can lead to serious

health problems, which encourage weakening, weight loss, often leads to depression, and finally can cause the death of a person, whether child or adult.

The researchers cited in the previous paragraph demonstrate that hunger has always been a problem of lack of food or total lack of access to quality food, where society cannot produce to avoid the lack of supply of nutritious products. Also, according to Monteiro (2003), even though hunger is defined as a lack of food, we cannot confuse malnutrition with hunger, since malnutrition is not only caused by hunger, but also by a lack of other specific diets or vitamins.

Taking these definitions to the Haitian context, which is the central interest of this work, it is still difficult to explain the Haitian people's hunger; therefore, it should be considered a product of permanent unemployment with the common natural disasters, poverty, and esoteric governmental and cultural corruption that lead to hunger in the country.

It is thought that each society has its own peculiar culture, even in the times of global modernity, in which some societies have a hybrid culture due to the sharing and access to information that was impossible in the early times. But, in fact, culture helps us think about society as a whole, on the basis of social justice of what is right or wrong, in addition to the reality that each persons' lives (HALL, 2011; DOS SANTOS, 2017).

At the same time, culture can be defined as a collection of principles, values, practices, conceptions, and beliefs of a people. One then seeks to understand the cultural acts, practices, and ideas that make the representation of that place (DOS SANTOS, 2017). One imagines the dominant cultures that hold a people, from generation to generation, that become laws of society and questions arise such as, is that cultural or is it not cultural? Facts that may be questionable from the understanding and belief of a subject, but it is still necessary to seek the understanding of society's problems from culture from the point of view of social hunger, in addition to political and cultural aspects, which led to the junction of the two words, for its version of what is considered as Cultural Hunger.

Finally, the Cultural Hunger in the Haitian perspective, which can be understood from the following statement. For example, the born culture of a person from Haiti, who lives and lives in misery, sleeps and wakes up looking for food, and

the challenge of having money and not finding food in the supermarkets. That is, extreme poverty, a hunger beyond what can be explained, already thinking of Cultural Hunger, which is summarized in hunger since forever, a customary situation that turns into something cultural, going hungry and accepting that there is no food, but without worrying about the hunger in the future beyond them, so the cycle of hunger remains.

Now, considering the previous discussions, which were the sum of the results of each descriptor researched in two official databases (*Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD)* and *Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações*), which host hundreds of dissertations made in Brazil by postgraduate programs, not one dissertation was located on the descriptor called Cultural Hunger, thus it is not necessary to discuss this descriptor like the others, but to explain the emergence and point out the need to produce research work on it.

#### **4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It is affirmed that the Zero Hunger Program has been of great help in diminishing, eradicating, and alleviating extreme poverty, since it has served as a basis for other social programs such as the *Bolsa Família* Program. In fact, in the years 2002, in assignment for the economic growth of the cities, for which its citizens were plunged into hunger, from the creation of jobs, access to education, thus allowing personal and professional advancement for a dignified life of less inequality

It is understood that Haitian hunger is a particular case that deserves dedication, discussion, and pondering, beyond the ideas of social programs, since these would imply investments, funds that the government does not have, it is time for another way to understand the root of hunger and poverty in Haiti.

It is affirmed that it is necessary to establish a partnership between the federal government and the state managers, that is, with the municipalities in harmony with the private entities that work to implement, facilitate, and contribute to the success of the social programs.

In light of the above, it is stated that all 24 theses analyzed were important for thinking about hunger in Haiti, helping to understand what it means to be poor and its

characteristics in society, even though most of the theses were produced from the Brazilian perspective. Theorists and concepts linked to the construction and proposal of social programs, capable of serving as an example in other societies like the Haitian one, are used. Throughout the analysis, there is an absence of themes and concepts intertwined with Cultural Hunger, as it was used as the guiding key-word and object of this research.

Some limitations of this work are listed, due to the use of dissertations produced only in Brazil and to the discussion of all the instruments used in the research. As future work, a deeper theoretical discussion is recommended based on other theories about Cultural Hunger as a concept, conducting work that can discuss all Brazilian social programs and seek the application of the understanding of Cultural Hunger in societies and communities.

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