



THE MUNICIPAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF THE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY SYSTEM IN BRAZIL

**A GESTÃO PÚBLICA MUNICIPAL DO SISTEMA DE SEGURANÇA
ALIMENTAR E NUTRICIONAL**

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Williany Isis Santos¹ | Silvia Maria Voci² | Sara Eloísa Del Castillo Matamoros³

Cristine Garcia Gabriel⁴ | Adriana Correia dos Santos⁵

Fabian Gilberto Ardila Pinto⁶ | Andhressa Araujo Fagundes⁷

Received: 05/23/2023

Accepted: 03/21/2024

¹ Master in Nutrition Sciences (UFS).

São Cristóvão - SE, Brazil.

Email: willianyisis@hotmail.com

² PhD in Public Health Nutrition (USP).

Professor at the Federal University of Sergipe.

São Cristóvão - SE, Brazil.

Email: smvoci2@gmail.com

³ PhD in Childhood and Youth Social Sciences (CINDE).

Professor at the National University of Colombia.

Bogotá, Colombia.

Email: sedelcastillom@unal.edu.co

⁴ PhD in Public Health (UFSC).

Professor at the Federal University of Santa Catarina.

Florianópolis - SC, Brazil.

Email: cristine.gabriel@ufsc.br

⁵ Master in Nutrition Sciences (UFS).

São Cristóvão - SE, Brazil.

Email: acsnutri@hotmail.com.br

⁶ Master in Public Policy.

Professor at the National University of Colombia.

Bogotá, Colombia. Email: fgardilap@edu.co

⁷ PhD in Human Nutrition (UNB).

Professor at the Federal University of Sergipe,

São Cristóvão -SE, Brazil.

Email: afagundes16@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study seeks to identify the challenges and potential of municipal public administration for the implementation of the Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (SISAN, National Food and Nutrition Security System) in a state in the northeastern region of Brazil. Of observational character and cross-sectional, the study used the triangulation of methods to analyze qualitative and quantitative data. With 46 representatives of the municipal public administration within the state, the analyses identified a high percentage of municipalities that did not adhere to SISAN, together with the low level of establishment of the Intersectoral Chamber of Food and Nutrition Security, preparation of the Food and Nutrition Security Plan and effective social participation mechanisms. From the perspective of the interviewees, the implementation of the system will facilitate access to resources and development at the local level, which also qualify the local indicators. However, the lack of technical support at the state and federal levels for training administrators, financial resources, as well as some vulnerabilities in the articulation of actions were perceived as difficulties for implementation, along with bureaucracy in the adhesion process and lack of interest by public administrators. We conclude that, for the implementation of SISAN, adequate government practices that promote the autonomy of the municipalities are needed, as well as encouragement and support for permanent training processes focused on local public administrators.

Keywords: Public Policy. Intersectoral Collaboration. Qualitative Research. Health Administrator. Food and Nutritional Security.

RESUMO

O estudo busca identificar os desafios e as potencialidades da gestão pública municipal para implantação do Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (SISAN) em um estado da região nordeste do Brasil. De caráter observacional e recorte transversal, o estudo utilizou a técnica de triangulação de métodos para análise de dados qualitativos e quantitativos. Participando 46 representantes da gestão pública do nível municipal em todo o estado, as análises identificaram um elevado percentual de municípios que não aderiram ao SISAN, somados ao baixo nível de instituição da Câmara Intersetorial de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional, elaboração do Plano de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional e efetivação dos mecanismos de participação social. Na perspectiva dos entrevistados, a implementação do sistema facilitará o acesso a recursos e desenvolvimento em nível local, que também qualificam os indicadores locais. Entretanto, a ausência de apoio técnico dos níveis estadual e federal para capacitação dos gestores, suporte em recursos financeiros, bem como a fragilidade na articulação das ações foram percebidos como dificuldades para implantação, aliados à burocracia no processo de adesão e desinteresse dos gestores. Concluímos que para efetivação do SISAN são necessárias práticas governamentais adequadas que promovam a autonomia dos municípios, bem como o incentivo e apoio a processos permanentes de formação dos gestores públicos locais.

Palavras-chave: Política Pública. Colaboração Intersetorial. Pesquisa Qualitativa. Gestor de Saúde. Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional.

INTRODUCTION

The *Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* (SISAN, National Food and Nutrition Security System), conceived by the *Lei Orgânica de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* (LOSAN, Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security) as an intersectoral and participatory management system, seeks to guarantee *Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* (SAN, Food and Nutrition Security) in Brazil and ensure the *Direito Humano à Alimentação Adequada* (DHAA, Human Right to Adequate Food) through the formulation and implementation of public policies, programs, and actions (Nacional Congress of Brazil, 2006).

The SISAN system needs a plan that translates the SAN concept into actions, advocating the articulation of public administration and its government sectors with society to build a *Plano de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* (PlanSAN, Food and Nutrition Security Plan), in order to understand what, how, and when something will be done and with what resources (Nacional Congress of Brazil, 2010; Leão; Maluf, 2012; Machado *et al.*, 2018a). In this sense, public administrators have the role



of planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating SAN actions, programs, and public policies that are relevant (Baptista; Rezende, 2015; Ermel *et al.*, 2011).

The decentralization of responsibilities to local management levels establishes municipal governance of SISAN, guided by the intersectoral and participatory logic of actions (Martins *et al.*, 2023). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reinforces that “the decentralization of food security policies is recommended as it allows a more precise analysis of inequalities and emerging structural issues in each territory” (FAO, 2011).

However, the interactive process through which a public policy is related to its context, as well as the organizations responsible for its implementation, reflects the real potential of the planned actions. As decision-makers, public administrators plan actions, resources, and the timing of the intervention when defining goals and objectives (Baptista; Rezende, 2015).

Since the freezing of public spending for 20 years until the nationwide extinction of each state’s *Conselho Estadual de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* (CONSEA, State Council for Food and Nutrition Security), SAN actions have been increasingly compromised, as a result of the dismantling of public policies in Brazil over the past 5 years (Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, 2019; Vasconcelos *et al.*, 2019; Ribeiro-Silva *et al.*, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed this scenario of food and nutrition insecurity, as shown by several studies, which made the country’s situation even more serious, in the face of hunger and poverty (Gurgel *et al.*, 2020; Ribeiro-Silva *et al.*, 2020; Santos *et al.*, 2021).

Studies in this field have sought to understand the theme from different perspectives the normative adequacy of state PlanSANs in Brazil (Machado *et al.*, 2018a; 2018b), their implementation processes (Vasconcelose; Moura, 2018; Medeiros *et al.*, 2019), or the perception of public administrators about SAN (Santos *et al.*, 2021). The review published by Esposte, Sousa and Barbosa (2023) pointed out important categories as obstacles to the implementation of the SAN policy, as well as its weaknesses, reinforcing the importance of strengthening at the local level, among other factors.

Understanding SISAN from a managerial perspective can contribute to building effective implementation processes. In this sense, the objective was to identify the potential and challenges of municipal public administration for the implementation of the SISAN in the state of Sergipe, Brazil.



METHODOLOGY

This study is cross-sectional, with the utilization of mixed methods of analyzing qualitative and quantitative data and triangulation of methods. The information was collected in the scope of the project entitled “Implementation of the Observatory for Public Policies to Combat Poverty and Guarantee Food and Nutrition Security in the State of Sergipe”, with a sample composed of representatives of public administration who work within the SAN scope in the municipalities of the state of Sergipe, Brazil.

Data collection took place in territorial meetings, an initiative of the state government to raise awareness of municipal public administrators regarding adherence to SISAN. Before the beginning of each event, representatives of all municipal departments responsible for and related to the SAN theme present at the meetings were invited to participate in the study, being aware and signing the informed consent form.

As data collection instruments, an application form and a semi-structured interview were used – these interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. It is noteworthy that the interviewers were trained and familiarized with the instruments used. The form collected sociodemographic variables, data referring to the position held by the respondent, the existence of institutional instruments and SISAN mechanisms (such as the law, council, plan, etc.), and intersectoral and governmental articulation. The interview addressed questions about the importance of implementing SISAN; what could hinder or facilitate this implementation in the municipality; and the difficulties in articulating with other government spheres.

The content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (Bardin, 2016) was used to analyze the qualitative data, where the pre-analysis phase had the transcripts submitted to a “floating reading”, aiming at familiarization with the texts. Subsequently, the coding of the interviews followed the logic of abbreviating the responsible agency and assigning a number in ascending order (Bardin, 2016). In the material exploration phase, the identification of categories was conducted through the semantic analysis of the textual manifestations in accordance with the objective of the questions, removing excerpts from the texts according to the categorization unit (Bardin, 2016; Câmara, 2013). Such categories were constructed considering mutual exclusion criteria, homogeneity of interview



excerpts within the categories, relevance of the transmitted message, and objectivity (Bardin, 2016). Finally, the treatment of results, inference, and interpretation stages were conducted based on the language of the interviewees, seeking to deepen the cultural, social, and historical concepts of the studied population.

Quantitative data were tabulated and analyzed by descriptive statistics of absolute and relative frequency and then triangulated so that it can be crossed with qualitative data, aiming to understand the points that guided the research (Marcondes; Brisola, 2014). According to Marcondes and Brisola (2014), the triangulation technique can favor the perception of the entire object of study based on empirical dialectical articulation with theoretical scientificity. In this technique, the steps following the interpretation of qualitative data proceed to the analysis of quantitative data, which will be restructured in the last phase, that of re-analysis and interpretation. That said, we sought to bring together the dialectical narratives of municipal public managers and dialogue with the quantitative survey carried out, thus building more robust interpretations articulated with the local reality.

The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the *Universidade Federal de Sergipe* (UFS, Federal University of Sergipe), Opinion No. 1.638.951.

RESULTS

46 representatives of municipal public administration participated in the study, distributed in *Secretarias Municipais de Assistência Social* (SMAS, Municipal Social Assistance Secretariats) (n=30) and *Secretarias Municipais da Agricultura* (SMAG, Municipal Agriculture Secretariats) (n=16), whose workers occupied the following positions: secretaries (n=27), social workers (n=4), secretariat directors (n=3), advisors (n=2), among others.

Considering that the state of Sergipe has 75 municipalities, the participation of representatives from 40 municipalities, distributed in all territories of the state of Sergipe, namely Central *Agreste* (n=8), High *Sertão* (n=3), Middle *Sertão* (n=2), Low *São Francisco* (n=8), Center-South (n=2), East (n=4), Great *Aracaju* (n=7) and South (n=6), brings relevant results for the state level, together with the representativeness of all territorial regions and the novelty of the study in the state.



As for the sociodemographic and professional profile of the interviewees (Table 1), the participants were on average 41.6 years old (± 9.4) and 67.4% (n=31) had been in public administration for less than one year. Regarding their educational level, 30.4% (n=14) of them did not have a college degree and, when compared to the secretariats, statistically significant educational levels were found ($p \leq 0.001$) for social assistance.

Table 1 | Sociodemographic and professional characteristics of representatives of the public administration in the state of Sergipe, Brazil. 2017. (n=46)

Characteristics	n (%)	
	SMAS	SMAG
Sex		
Female	25 (83.3)	1 (6.3)
Male	5 (16.7)	15 (93.7)
Age		
<30 years old	5 (16.5)	1 (6.3)
30 - 50 years old	19 (63.2)	10 (62.4)
>50 years old	6 (20.0)	5 (31.3)
Educational level*		
Elementary school – incomplete	-	1 (6.3)
Elementary school – complete	1 (3.4)	1 (6.3)
High school – complete	3 (10.0)	8 (50.0)
College degree	13 (43.3)	4 (25.0)
Postgraduation	13 (43.3)	2 (12.4)
Time in the position		
<1 year	19 (63.3)	12 (75.0)
1 - 10 years	9 (30.0)	3 (18.7)
>10 years	2 (6.7)	1 (6.3)
TOTAL	30 (100)	16 (100)

* $p \leq 0.001$ - Pearson's chi-squared test

Five categories of analysis were identified based on the respondents' answers to the question about the importance of implementing the system in the municipality (Table 1).

Box 1 | Categories identified in the qualitative analysis of the respondents' perception of the importance of implementing the Food and Nutrition Security System. State of Sergipe, Brazil. 2017.

Main categories	Subcategories	Definition/Interpretation
Development at the local level	Means to get resources	Guaranteeing resources from the federal level and, thus, developing actions within the municipality
	Strengthening actions within the municipality	Allowing the municipal administration to reinforce the actions and programs that have already been developed within the community
	Strengthening of local farmers	Offering technical support, raising awareness, and promotion of local family farming
Local indicators	Information and data at the local level	Conducting research and data collection to generate information about the municipality
Food and nutrition education	Public awareness	Informing and raising awareness about healthy eating, providing lectures and other actions
Human right	Guarantee of the right to food	The system is a means to fulfill the right to food
Technical support	Nutritionist training	Offering technical support and guidance to the nutritionist regarding the development of actions with the community

Source: based on the data of this research

The “development at the local level” category reveals the perception of respondents that the implementation of SISAN in the municipality will guarantee resources to come from the federal level and, thus, enable the development of actions within the municipality, also contributing to the collection of information and preparation of “local indicators” of the population:

“Yes. Mainly, that it is a national system, and we know that the resources are all in the federal government and that the problems happen in the municipality. It’s only fair that the federal government transfer these resources to the municipalities so that we can do this job, right?(..).”(SMAG03)



In the “food and nutrition education” category, the interviewees reported that SISAN is a means of conducting actions with the objective of making the population aware of adequate and healthy eating, preventing the onset of diseases and consequently a burden on the State, together with what we call “technical support,” aimed at guiding the nutritionist on the management of actions on the subject.

SISAN was also perceived as a means to ensure the “right” to adequate and healthy food, encouraging and facilitating access to food:

“Yes. Because I think that the right to adequate food is a right and I think that if we do not offer it, we are in the process of violating the right, you know? The right of an individual who needs food...” (SMAS16)

Regarding the components and instruments that are criteria for implementing the SISAN (Table 2), of the municipalities that participated in the study, only 8.7% (n=4) had already adhered to the SISAN and 30.4% (n=14) did not know how to answer. It is observed that 37% (n=17) of the interviewees stated that the municipality had their own municipal laws related to SAN, which were enacted between 2009 and 2015; of the 56.5% (n=26) who claimed to have their own municipal councils related to SAN, 19.6% of these councils (n=9) were not active, and a *Câmara Intersectorial de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* (CAISAN, Intersectoral Chamber of Food and Nutrition Security) had been constituted in only 6.5 % (n=3) of municipalities.

Table 2 | Overview of the implementation of the National Food and Nutrition Security System in the municipalities according to the public administration representatives interviewed. State of Sergipe, Brazil. 2017. (n=46)

SISAN - Components/Instruments	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	DNA* n (%)
Adhesion to SISAN	4 (8.7)	28 (60.9)	14 (30.4)
Municipal Law - SAN	17 (37.0)	13 (28.3)	16 (34.7)
Municipal Council - SAN	26 (56.5)	12 (26.1)	8 (17.4)
CAISAN	3 (6.5)	29 (63.1)	14 (30.4)
Municipal Conference - SAN	13 (28.3)	19 (41.3)	14 (30.4)
Municipal Plan - SAN	3 (6.5)	28 (60.9)	15 (32.6)

*Did not answer

Source: based on the data of this research.



It was possible to identify that the difficulties (Box 2) and facilities (Box 3) categories in the system implementation process were associated, and the answer for the latter was directed to the potential observed by these administrators.

Box 2 | Categories identified in the qualitative analysis of the respondents' perception regarding their difficulties in implementing the Food and Nutrition Security System. State of Sergipe, Brazil. 2017.

Main categories	Subcategories	Definition/Interpretation
Lack of interest by public administrators	-	Failure to recognize the importance of SISAN and its actions compromises the engagement to develop them
Weak intersectoral articulation	Absence of system components	Absence of a municipal-level PlanSAN, council, and CAISAN
	Lack of articulation between sectoral agencies and the government	Lack of communication between government sectors and government spheres to support the implementation of SISAN
Lack of local support	Absence of financial resources	The lack of financial resources for the municipality is a barrier to conducting actions and programs
	Absence of technical support for public administrators	Lack of assistance and technical support to guide public administrators on the development of activities within SISAN
Bureaucracy	-	Difficulty in the implementation processes of SISAN
Misinformation of citizens	-	The population does not have knowledge about SISAN and its benefits

Source: based on the data of this research.



Box 3 | Categories identified in the qualitative analysis of the interviewees' perception of the facilities for implementing the Food and Nutrition Security System, Sergipe, Brazil. 2017.

Main categories	Subcategories	Definition/Interpretation
Committed administrators	-	Administrators who are willing to develop actions and programs within SISAN
Intersectoral articulation	Articulation of actions between government levels	Interaction and integration between actions developed in the three spheres of government
	Insertion of spaces for social participation	Activation of the municipal council related to SAN
Technical support	Training public administrators	Assistance and technical support for conducting actions within SISAN
Financial resources	-	Transferring financial resources to subsidize actions
Orientation to the population	Guidance for the community	Disseminating information about the system and encourage community participation
	Guidance for local farmers	Instructing farmers on how to effectively manage production and strengthen their performance through incentives and technical support

Source: based on the data of this research.

The “Lack of interest by public administrators” category pointed out that the conception of the importance of the system for the municipality is fundamental, since their vision influences the commitment to such actions, since the lack of interest, linked to the lack of resources, limits their effectiveness. In this way, “committed administrators” to the implementation of the system leverage its implementation:



“[it would make it difficult] If the administration had no interest, right? Because we have the administrator and I believe that, when the administrator is interested, I think it makes everything easier, right? Depending on the area, if they are interested in making it [implementation] happen, I think it makes it much easier for the base agencies to work and be able to act.” (SMAS09)

A “weak intersectoral articulation” was identified as a difficulty due to the absence of SISAN-related components and the lack of communication between sectoral agencies and government spheres. Thus, the articulation between the sectors, the existence/activation of a municipal council focusing on SAN and a multidisciplinary team would contribute to the realization of the “intersectoral articulation” that SISAN needs to be effectively implemented.

The “absence of local support” was also perceived as a difficulty, involving both technical support for administrators and the transfer of financial resources. Thus, “resources” for the development of activities and actions, as well as “technical support” for guidance and assist administrators in the implementation of SISAN, as well as their performance, were mentioned as potentialities:

“I think it’s an incentive from the state level to invest in this dissemination policy, to call the municipalities to come to discuss this issue [the implementation of SISAN] (...) The state has to hold municipalities accountable, you get it? So, that is not happening (...) Then I tell you, is it really just the municipalities’ fault? No! It is a lack of assistance, get it? It’s from the teams that have to provide state, federal, or whatever level of assistance to guide the municipalities on how to do the thing.” (SMAS13)

In the speech of some administrators, “misinformation of citizens” was identified as a difficulty based on the perception that the lack of dissemination of the system to the local population and farmers hinders its implementation, as well as the “orientation to the population” through the incentive participation and support for family farmers are perceived as mechanisms that enhance the implementation of SISAN.

Regarding intersectoral articulation, 69.6% (n=32) stated that they work with other sectors to conduct SAN actions and programs and 78.3% (n=36) with the state and federal administrations. When asked about the difficulties for articulation between the government spheres, 36.1% (n=13) of the interviewees reported having no difficulties and 16.7% (n=6) were unable to answer.

From the answers of the other interviewees, it was possible to identify categories such as “lack of technical support”, with the perspective of the difficulty that the municipal administration faces regarding



access to information from other government levels on actions and programs carried out, dissemination of training and lectures, among others, as well as the descending characteristic of policies that do not consider the local context of implementation and do not become effective at the municipal level:

“Sometimes we don’t have access. We are left in the city with our problems. I think it is in policies that do not consider the reality of our municipality.” (SMAS20)

The “partisanship” category was identified through reports on difficulties intrinsic to party politics such as access, interaction, and influence of political groups. The development of actions and approval of projects end up presenting difficulties due to the ‘non-belonging’ between the different political parties, in addition to administration changes that lead to the discontinuity of processes.

“Absence of financial resources” was also identified as a difficulty in articulating with the state and federal governments, in addition to the bureaucracy in the processes for requesting such resources, in particular the credit lines for small farmers.

DISCUSSION

The representativeness of this study is based on the participation of all regions of the state of Sergipe and its thematic novelty in addressing public administration from the SAN and SISAN perspectives. In this sense, the high percentage of municipalities that did not adhere to SISAN and that do not have a CAISAN, reinforced by the high number of municipalities that did not prepare a PlanSAN, corroborates the findings of other studies that, in addition to the low percentage of adherence, identified normative inadequacies about meeting the basic requirements for adherence (Machado *et al.*, 2018a; 2018b; Medeiros *et al.*, 2019).

The review conducted by Esposte, Sousa, and Barbosa (2023), also identified, in most of the published articles, the obstacle of low adherence to the System, reinforcing the potential for implementation of the management of the SAN policy by managers qualified on the subject. CAISAN, as an instance that directs public administrators to develop SAN actions based on the guidelines issued by the city’s SAN Conference and CONSEA, is the main instrument of articulation within the system (National Congress of Brazil, 2006; 2010). Its absence can compromise the budget for SAN actions and, consequently, the formulation of a PlanSAN that does not link resources for its execution.



The weakness in the decentralization of resources may be related to the fact that these were not linked to budget allocation laws through bi and tripartite forums, being an impasse to guarantee sufficient structural conditions for an adequate implementation of SISAN (Machado *et al.*, 2018b; National Congress of Barazil, 2010). Mainly at the municipal level, not guaranteeing resources can influence adherence to it, as one of the reasons reported in the study is the perception that adherence to SISAN can be more burdensome than beneficial, since there is an absence or weakness in financial support and, therefore, joining SISAN may result in expenses for the municipality (Machado *et al.*, 2018b; Vidor *et al.*, 2011).

SAN plans prepared without being linked to budget allocation laws can hinder the system's decentralization process and corroborate with a lower capacity to meet the commitments assumed, pointing to the need to "sensitize actors and allow public administrators and civil society to take possession of this instrument" (Machado *et al.*, 2018a, p. 11). The study by Machado *et al.* (2018b) with the actors involved in the elaboration of PlanSAN in the state of Santa Catarina (Brazil) showed that the support of the federal government, through the guarantee of financing and development of actions, enhanced the structuring of SISAN at the state level.

In addition, the outcome must be the result of participatory and intersectoral constructions, which justifies CAISAN and CONSEA as components of SISAN. However, the implementation of these components has been weakened amid the setbacks and dismantling by the new federal administration which, upon taking office in January 2019, extinguished CONSEA as one of its first measures (Federal Constitution of Brazil, 2019).

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the social and economic impacts were worsened in the context of food and nutritional insecurity, especially in the most vulnerable social strata (Mattos, *et al.*, 2023). The changes that were being made to the SAN policy at the federal level, such as the extinction of CONSEA reverberate in all other components, as the last PlanSAN elaborated was effective until the year 2019 and continued for almost 5 years without perspectives of elaboration and financing of the actions; CAISAN, in turn, remained inoperative and SISAN, affected by the dismantling of its basic structures, continued to rely solely on municipal administration.



We noticed, therefore, that the dismantling in political administration processes had repercussion in disarticulation of structures, mainly budgetary cutbacks, omitting the State's responsibility to ensure the implementation of SAN and DHAA public policies (Ribeiro-Silva *et al.*, 2020).

The administrators who participated in this study have already understood the need to strengthen the system components and technical support for qualification and awareness of the importance of SISAN. As also identified by Santos *et al.* (2021), the information difficulties related to SAN, which was mentioned by public administrators in the state of Sergipe, involved the absence of technical support for training, as well as financial resources and intersectoral articulation to implement SISAN.

The broader sphere (national) has a strategic position in organizing administration and, therefore, it should help the base levels (state and municipal) through assistance and support in terms of administrative organization (Vidor *et al.*, 2011). With the responsibility of leading the process of decentralization and articulation, federal agencies must "encourage, sensitize, and stimulate other spheres" to assume the commitment to build a SISAN (Barros; Costa, 2016 p. 803). Fulfilling this role promotes autonomy and strengthens the responsiveness and commitment of the administrator at the local level (Medeiros *et al.*, 2019; Vidor *et al.*, 2011).

If the municipal level is the closest sphere regarding the population, efforts should focus on its empowerment and autonomy. However, the administrators' reports indicate that the actions of public policies are sometimes defined in a descending way and the answer is given only by compliance with rules, where, according to Vidor *et al.* (2011), the most comprehensive levels (federal and state) 'ask' and the one with the smallest scope (municipal) 'answers', conducting the task.

Policy makers seem to remain at the broader levels, and local levels are solely responsible for implementation, reflecting a top-down management model. A study identified that descending policies hinder the operationalization of intersectorality, as, in addition to reducing social participation, it leads to power disputes at government levels, making SAN actions vulnerable due to the discontinuity of ongoing policies (Garcia *et al.*, 2014).

This discontinuity of actions also influences the loss of references, historical records, and information, highlighted by the interviewed administrators, and, therefore, the political party interest can also be a limitation to the realization of SISAN (Machado *et al.*, 2018b; Medeiros *et al.*, 2019). Partisanship



also brings a fragmentation that influences the dynamics of public administration by the turnover of administrators and changes arising from the elections (Medeiros *et al.*, 2019; Motta, 2013).

In this sense, the identification of actions already taken by the administration could help in the planning of feasible actions that are adequate to the needs and local reality (Machado *et al.*, 2018a; 2018b), an aspect also reported by the interviewees. Since CAISAN is responsible for promoting intersectoral articulation and integration with government spheres (Barros; Costa, 2016), the absence of this component at the municipal level can weaken not only intersectorality, but also impact the construction of a PlanSAN without direction and specificity.

The horizontal coordination exercised by CONSEA and CAISAN, together with the collaboration of different government spheres and sectors through articulations, are structural bases for SISAN and are also seen as potential for the implementation of the system by the participants in this study. Developing intersectoral strategies and actions involves collaborating with different subjects who, through knowledge, build solutions with a view to ensuring the multidimensional approach of SAN (Garcia *et al.*, 2014; Machado *et al.*, 2018b).

As a “dialectical and dynamic process”, intersectorality is operationalized through the creation of a network of commitment between the actors involved to plan and implement actions in an integrated and articulated manner (Garcia *et al.*, 2014, p. 967). The failure to recognize the importance of these pillars also limits exchanges between the administrator and the population. This limitation causes the non-availability of public administration support and encouragement for social participation, and the situation is even more aggravated in municipalities that do not have a council, limiting “knowledge or clarification on the importance of related activities” (Medeiros *et al.*, 2019, p. 122).

It is essential to strengthen the components of SISAN and provide technical support to qualify the process of building actions and implementing the system at the local level (Barros; Costa, 2016; Machado *et al.*, 2018a).

Ensuring SAN public policies involves effectively applying the principles of public administration advocated by the Federal Constitution of 1988, to favor the decision-making process, articulation between government sectors, between public and private sectors, and between mechanisms of social participation (Federal Senate of Brazil, 2016; Machado *et al.*, 2018a; Medeiros *et al.*, 2019).



As limitations of the study, we observed that the non-response rates for some questions may have been influenced by the high percentage of respondents who had been in the position for less than a year, as it interferes with the familiarization of professionals with their attributions, in addition to a lower quantity of information that could reflect a more consolidated performance in the function.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that the challenges for implementing the SISAN in the municipalities of the state of Sergipe are the absence of assistance and support from the state and federal levels, bureaucracy in the adhesion process, and the lack of interest by public administrators. As potential, we observe a reflection of the challenges and the need for training and raising awareness of public administrators about SAN and SISAN.

The good management of SISAN requires the application of appropriate government practices to strengthen the autonomy of municipalities and implement the system at the local level, as well as encouraging permanent training processes for public administrators.

In this sense, more studies are needed to address the issue of public administration in order to broaden the look at the implementation of SISAN, its components and actions, so that the issue and critical points are better understood and the system can fully achieve its goals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was financed in part by the Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa e a Inovação Tecnológica do Estado de Sergipe (Fapitec/SE) - Brasil e the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES - Finance Code 001).



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