

The Grammar of Silence and Data Voids: Knowledge Governance on Hunger in Haiti

Ethol Exime

eeethol1@hotmail.com

State University of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil (UEMS) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6962-8088>

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Abstract

Countries in the Global South, particularly Haiti, face a void in scientific data. This study examines how regimes of data, publication, and visibility structure, constrain, and silence scientific production on hunger in Haiti. It is a theoretical–methodological study that combines a scoping review with qualitative analysis, considering a twofold process: (1) a database search reported with reference to PRISMA guidance, and (2) an AI-assisted heuristic mapping of authors. The analysis revisits a previously reported corpus of 34 publications. The findings indicate a data void in the Global South and position the Grammar of Silence model as a new epistemological analytical lens. This confirms the argument: the Global South faces a deficit in theoretical, methodological, and conceptual production in international databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, which limits decision-making processes and obscures the population's social reality. It is concluded that, although solutions are identified in the analyzed literature, addressing hunger and poverty requires symbolic, cultural, and epistemological approaches, beyond biological and material dimensions, grounded in theories from the Global South and in processes of social re-education.

1. Introduction

Some research works go beyond the act of research because of what they represent in the lives of those who set out to investigate sensitive problems in a society, such as hunger, poverty, social inequality, and a scientific data void, which are latent in Haiti, where more than half of society faces social calamities that interfere with the well-being of the population (Pierre, 2021; Parker et al., 2017; Author, 2024; 2025). Currently, 60% of the population lives in poverty, lacking the minimum needed to survive (Pierre, 2021; Rasul et al., 2022), which contributes to food insecurity (Beaulière & Flori, 2008; Kianersi et al., 2021).

These socio-economic problems include the education system, due to limited access to educational programs, leading to labor exclusion and producing multiple forms of precariousness (Pierre, 2021). In the same vein, Beaulière and Flori (2008) point out that precariousness extends to other areas such as health, the lack of social organization, and the Haitian political culture, in which chronic corruption reveals a fragile government incapable of guaranteeing the well-being of its citizens (Pierre, 2020).

All these aspects increase the social inequality and misery that have taken hold in Haitian society (François, 2009; Logie et al., 2017), intensifying problems such as unemployment and wage inequality (Aurélien, 2021; Kennedy, 2008). According to Pierre et al. (2012), among Haiti's greatest current needs, the fight against hunger and poverty is one of the most urgent, as this is a nation where eating rice with sauce every day and a little mashed *tom-tom* (breadfruit), which is nutritionally poor, is configured as a bountiful table, revealing an absent and disorganized state (Petter et al., 2020).

This governmental absence calls for new reflections on Haiti's calamitous situation, which is often attributed to the trauma of its colonial past (Boatcă, 2024; Price-Mars, 1966). However, this study does not deny that Haiti has been impoverished for decades. It argues, rather, that access to Haitian scientific production is extremely limited, as is the case in much of the Global South. This limitation reflects a

silenced structural challenge, which is referred to in this study as the *Grammar of Silence*, and is defined as the set of “regimes of visibility” and algorithmic systems that govern which knowledge is recognized as legitimate. This grammar is “fed by a scientific data void that enacts algorithmic discrimination.” It operates through the world’s largest databases, such as Scopus and Web of Science, which “filter and reduce Haitian reality to stigmas of tragedy.” In essence, the *Grammar of Silence* is the infrastructural and algorithmic architecture that determines what can be said, indexed, and legitimized about Haiti, ensuring that the intellectual production of Haitian scholars remains largely invisible and, therefore, unheard.

Exime and Barbosa Filho (2026) described *Collective Anesthesia* as the normalization and internalization of chronic calamities. Here, that notion is extended to the epistemic sphere: indifference to Haitian scholarship may constrain whose accounts of hunger become visible and influential. The symbolic and cultural understanding of hunger developed by Exime and Barbosa Filho (2026) provides the point of departure for this proposed extension. Haiti is kept in a state of inequality in which it “breathes through artificial life-support” of humanitarian aid (Finice, 2025; Schuller, 2023), while its true remedy lies in the appreciation of its sovereignty and in the filling of its historically ignored data void. The final introductory argument is that the solution to intergenerational hunger requires the social re-education and the breaking of this anesthesia, valuing native intellectual production as a tool for governance, justice, and epistemological innovation.

This is a theoretical–methodological study that examines how scientific knowledge about hunger in Haiti is structured, constrained, and silenced by regimes of data production, publication, and scientific visibility. The study is organized into five sections, in addition to the introduction and final considerations: a contextualization of hunger and poverty in Haiti; the methodology; the research findings related to the review topic; an in-depth discussion based on codes and subcodes derived from the analysed works; and the *Grammar of Silence* model.

1.1 Historical Roots of the Grammar of Silence: From Material Hunger to Data Voids in Haiti

The persistence of hunger and poverty in Haiti cannot be understood merely as a sequence of natural disasters or isolated economic failures, but rather as the result of a historical trajectory of political instability, foreign intervention, and structural dependency that has profoundly shaped both the material reality of the country and the way this reality is scientifically represented. As Josué de Castro illustrated in *Homens e Caranguejos* (1967), hunger is portrayed as a daily struggle for survival and dignity, echoing the Haitian reality of food scarcity and chronic deprivation (Castro, 1967). This resonates with the current situation in Haiti, where 60% of the population is malnourished, and the government's budget is destroyed and limited, making it impossible to create plans to reduce inequalities and eradicate poverty. Crucially, this material deprivation is mirrored by an epistemic deprivation: the very conditions that produce hunger also restrict the capacity of Haitian scholars to produce and disseminate knowledge about it on their own terms.

In this context, the Haitian people pay a high price for survival, as food becomes a luxury, as Soares (2009, p. 15) states: "Apart from breathing the air, which is free, the only universal human need is the biological need to ingest enough food and water to stay alive". The Haitian situation is so dire that the biological necessity of food has been transformed into an inaccessible luxury, leaving the population in a constant state of survival. However, there is no way of pointing to hunger and poverty as a Haitian problem without considering the role of international communities and the covert interference of developed countries. This foreign interference extends beyond economic policies; it permeates academic and scientific spheres, where foreign researchers continuously reproduce the narrative of Haiti as a perpetually *failed state*, often ignoring the symbolic and cultural dimensions of Haitian life.

With the invasion of the United States between 1915 and 1934, the Haitian economy underwent a severe structural collapse, culminating in the 1980s crisis when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank did not support the country's investment plan to produce agricultural products, mainly rice, claiming that it was getting everything from the US at no extra cost. In addition, Haitian policy repeatedly turned the country into a war zone, as happened before 2004 with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. During this administration, there was a lack of international cooperation, culminating in increased foreign debt and making it difficult to invest in other sectors of the economy, such as family farming (Seitenfus, 2016). The recurrence of this type of situation led to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a program initiated by UN Security Council resolution 1542 of 30 April 2004, supported and led by Brazil. However, social inequalities and unemployment in the country have increased. These interventions have not only undermined Haitian sovereignty but have also established a framework where international organizations and foreign scholars become the primary voices defining Haiti's problems and proposing solutions, effectively silencing local epistemologies.

In addition to the economic and political instability, Haiti suffered two earthquakes between 2010 and 2021. The first, with a seismic magnitude of 7.3 on the Richter scale, caused more than 250,000 deaths and left 1.5 million homeless, increasing the nation's economic and social problems. The second, on August 14, 2021, with a magnitude of 7.2 on the Richter scale, hit the southern region of Haiti, killing approximately 2,246 people, destroying 137,000 homes and leaving more than 12,763 injured, as well as destroying family farming crops in the south, causing more food insecurity, unemployment, hunger, and poverty (Ciorciari, 2022; IHSI, 2021; IMF, 2023). The impacts of the devastation have created even more inequality, because in an emerging country like Haiti, each citizen must fight to survive strategically in extreme poverty, facing malnutrition and lack of access to health care, which are just a few examples faced by the population. This humanitarian aid, while necessary, functions as the *artificial life-support* mentioned previously, maintaining the body but silencing the soul of Haitian sovereignty.

Before presenting the methodology of this study, it is important to emphasize that historical, economic, and political processes help to explain not only the persistence of calamities (hunger, poverty, food insecurity, etc.) in Haiti but also the limited visibility of these dynamics within dominant global narratives. The constant framing of Haiti through the lens of tragedy and biological necessity by the international community creates a cognitive bias in scientific production. This bias marginalizes Haitian researchers

who attempt to offer more nuanced, culturally grounded, and decolonial perspectives on their own reality. These conditions enable the conceptualization of the *Grammar of Silence* as an analytical framework to explain the existing data void in the Global South, specifically in Haiti, where the structural inability to participate equitably in global scientific discourse is intrinsically linked to the nation's history of marginalization.

2. Methodology

This topic presents data collection and research parameters, as well as the analytical process and the tools used. The purpose of this topic is to introduce the reader to the conditions in which the study was carried out.

2.1 Research Design

This research is characterized as a theoretical–methodological study that analyses the epistemic object from the perspective of absence and restriction in knowledge production (Kuhn et al., 2025). The study combines a scoping review with critical qualitative analysis, primarily for interpretive purposes (De Almeida Biolchini et al., 2007). This study examines whether indexing practices, publication-language patterns, institutional resources, and access barriers contribute to uneven discoverability of Haitian scholarship. Differences in retrieval do not, by themselves, establish that an indexing algorithm discriminates against the Global South. The choice of this methodological approach seeks to broaden the debate on knowledge production in the Global South, specifically in Haiti, by recognizing the structural barriers faced by Southern researchers, considering the limited volume of publications indexed in major international databases. Within this context, the study seeks to answer the following question: How is scientific production on hunger in Haiti structured, constrained, and silenced by regimes of data, publication, and visibility?

2.2 Scoping Review Protocol Based on PRISMA

The research follows an analytical structure, using the PRISMA framework as its reference, which is considered fundamental for transparency procedures that demonstrate the quality of the data collected and included, particularly in systematic reviews and meta-analyses. An adaptable and reliable protocol is employed to produce robust and trustworthy research results and insights (Luchini et al., 2021; Page et al., 2023). Relevant PRISMA reporting items guide the description of search and selection; the nine analytical stages below are the authors' procedures, not a separate PRISMA protocol.

1. Initial mapping of academic production on hunger and poverty in Haiti, using major international databases as reference sources (Scopus and Web of Science), combined with searches that emphasize Global South research and works authored by Haitian scholars.
2. Integration of contemporary search tools, including artificial intelligence systems, to expand the identification of researchers and publications potentially excluded from conventional indexing systems.

3. Verification and validation of authorship by cross-referencing the identified researchers' names through institutional affiliations, publication records, co-authorship patterns, and sustained engagement with research related to Haiti.
4. Supplementary searches and cross-referencing, using keywords derived from the initial mapping to identify additional works, including theses, dissertations, reports, and non-indexed publications.
5. Inclusion and exclusion criteria, prioritizing: (A) Haitian researchers; (B) works with at least one Haitian co-author; and (C) non-Haitian researchers with sustained academic engagement with Haiti.
6. Specific documentation of databases, systematically recording the characteristics of the data collection from each source.
7. Data importation into MAXQDA, enabling qualitative coding, categorization, and analytical synthesis.
8. Interpretive analysis and reporting, focusing on how themes are articulated, repeated, constrained, or omitted across publications.
9. Conceptual modelling and theoretical synthesis, resulting in the formulation of the *Grammar of Silence* as an interpretive framework.

2.3 Study Selection and Strategic Procedures Inspired by PRISMA

The data were selected through searches conducted in international databases, as illustrated in Fig. 1. The searches were carried out between February 1 and March 15, 2023, with the support of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to optimize the search and selection of relevant documents. This is the initial identification window; the related conceptual review reporting the same 34-publication corpus states a broader February-July 2023 survey period Exime and Barbosa Filho, (2026). The latter report should not be portrayed as a second independent discovery unless a separate search is documented. This selection process was conducted through two complementary pathways. The first pathway consisted of bibliographic searches conducted in four languages: Brazilian Portuguese, American English (hunger and poverty in Haiti), French (La faim et la pauvreté en Haïti), and Spanish (hambre y pobreza en Haití) across two traditional bibliographic databases, Scopus and Web of Science. The initial searches identified 826 records, of which 304 duplicates were removed. Subsequently, 219 full-text articles with closed access or unavailable for reading were excluded. This resulted in 303 records, which were screened through the reading of titles, abstracts, and final considerations, leading to the exclusion of 70 studies that did not have hunger and poverty in Haiti as their central focus. At the eligibility stage, 233 records were retrieved, of which 225 were excluded based on the authorship and epistemic inclusion criteria adopted in the study (Haitian authorship, co-authorship with Haitian researchers, or sustained academic engagement through research conducted on Haiti). Within this context, the final inclusion of full studies from traditional databases totalled 8 publications.

The second pathway of an alternative nature was implemented through AI-assisted author mapping, using the GPT-3.5 model, which was available during the data collection period. ChatGPT (OpenAI) was applied heuristically, carefully, and ethically, at stages after the traditional bibliographic search, to generate a list of Haitian researchers whose academic production relates to hunger, poverty, inequality, and related themes. Three rounds of heuristic prompts were conducted (Fig. 1), resulting in a list of up to 100 names (Prompt 1 = 30; Prompt 2 = 27; Prompt 3 = 43 researchers). Subsequently, all suggested names were verified through searches across 11 national and international databases (Table 1). The database totals in Table 1 describe where included texts were ultimately found; they should not be read as independent first-discovery counts. This strategy led to the identification of 26 additional publications, following two exclusion procedures: (1) 32 records were excluded because the authors' names or publications could not be verified; and (2) 42 publications were excluded for falling outside the scope of the study, such as works in the fields of medicine or engineering. These 26 publications were not retrieved by the specified initial database queries; this finding indicates a search-retrieval gap, but does not on its own establish that all 26 were unindexed or algorithmically excluded. This gap reflects difficulties in the visibility and circulation of knowledge produced in the Global South, rather than an absence of academic production.

Fig. 1. Database search and selection process (PRISMA flow diagram, 2020).

Source: Created by the author, 2023.

From this perspective, Fig. 1 illustrates both the traditional and the additional selection processes, together with the application of artificial intelligence, which resulted in the identification of the same 34-publication corpus reported in the related conceptual study (Exime, Barbosa Filho, 2026), with its source distribution shown in Table 1, with 8 derived from traditional databases and 26 identified through an innovative alternative process of AI-assisted and targeted searching. This corpus is considered fundamental for the qualitative and interpretive analysis of the study, functioning as a contextual map of the investigative universe rather than as the analytical totality of all consulted data sources.

Table 1. Databases used to find texts on the subject

DATABASES	N° of academic texts
1. SYNTHÈSE: scientific literature in the French language, dissertations, theses, and scientific articles related to Haiti.	9
2. SCOPUS: bibliographical reference and summary of peer-reviewed scientific literature in several areas.	6
3. REFERENCE TRACKING (<i>SNOWBALLING</i>): documents collected from the reference lists of other works.	5
4. THESES.FR: theses and dissertations defended in France since 1985.	4
5. JSTOR: academic journals, books, and primary sources <i>based in the United States of America</i> .	3
6. <i>OPENEDITION</i> : Platform for journals in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Founded in 1999 under the name Revues.org	2
7. SCIELO: a library of digital scientific journals published mainly in Latin America, Spain, Portugal, and South Africa.	2
8. CAPES: Coordination of Improvement of Higher Education Personnel, maintained by the Brazilian Federal Government, with articles, theses, and dissertations.	1
9. WEB OF SCIENCE: a database of journals and multidisciplinary bibliographic references from Clarivate Analytics.	1
10. DOAJ: Open Access journals with peer review.	1
11. BDTD: Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations with theses and dissertations defended in Brazilian higher education.	0

Source: Database distribution previously reported in Exime and Barbosa Filho (2026), Table 1.

2.4 Artificial intelligence – assisted epistemic mapping

ChatGPT was chosen because it is considered a chatbot, computer software with a vast library of academic and non-academic documents and is trained to provide answers in spoken and written form (O'connor & ChatGPT, 2022). It is an artificial intelligence tool launched in November 2022 and has already been updated to a more powerful version in March 2023 (Ali & Djalilian, 2023; Zielinski et al., 2023). It can contribute to various types of academic or non-academic work and to solving problems related to the search for researchers and research, as was used in this article, including its application in qualitative analytical processes, as discussed in recent methodological studies (Nguyen-Trung, 2025). This tool has its limitations, just like any other, requiring all documents and materials produced to be checked with ethical care, since it is based on existing information, and its output must be critically evaluated by the researcher, particularly in quantitative research contexts (Nguyen-Trung, 2025).

2.5 AI-Assisted Heuristics as a Decolonial Method

In this study, the use of ChatGPT was not a mere convenience but a deliberate methodological intervention aimed at confronting the *Grammar of Silence*. Given the limited retrieval achieved by the specified initial database queries, artificial intelligence was employed as a tool of epistemic diagnosis. The heuristic prompts (listed within Fig. 1) were designed to expose data voids and to identify networks of researchers that remain invisible to conventional search mechanisms. It is crucial to understand that AI was not used as a source of truth, but rather as a means of generating leads that were subsequently rigorously validated across 11 databases. This method enabled us to map an intellectual field that would otherwise remain silenced, rendering the very use of AI a form of methodological resistance to epistemic exclusion. It should be noted that no content was written, analyzed, interpreted, or coded through the direct use of the tool.

2.6 Analytical Procedures and Coding with MAXQDA

The data were analyzed and organized using MAXQDA software, a tool that facilitates the analysis and observation of data collected between February 11 and March 30, 2023. The analysis draws on the 34-document corpus and a coding framework also reported by Exime and Barbosa Filho (2026), shown in Fig. 2; the present interpretation focuses on how knowledge becomes discoverable and visible. In order to ensure transparency in the analyses, codes and subcodes such as *Social exclusion* and *Food insecurity* were subjected to a hybrid process of induction and deduction. Initially, key terms derived from the fundamental research question and the broad theoretical framework were applied as deductive codes. Thus, data from the 34 studies allowed the generation of inductive subcodes to ensure that the categorization reflected the actual conceptual landscape present in scientific and related production. The results and discussions will present data on which some terms will remain in the official languages of the publications, as listed above.

After selecting the publications that would be analyzed and, consequently, subjected to data processing, we identified several keywords that seem to be used as categories for analyzing the topic in question and which are addressed here as codes and subcodes. These analyses are fundamental to the construction of the conceptual model of the *Grammar of Silence*, as they reveal the data void that drives social problems and processes of exclusion within Haitian society.

Fig. 2. The codes and subcodes of article construction

Source: MAXQDA coding of the shared 34-document corpus (Exime & Barbosa Filho, 2026)

The discussions will take place at two levels. First, each database included in the corpus will be presented in table format, covering elements such as authorship, titles, and the contributions of each study. Next, each work will be recorded as an individual reference, as presented in the tables corresponding to each database, which are fundamental to understanding the *Grammar of Silence* proposed in this study. Additionally, a synthetic discussion of the results obtained through MAXQDA will be presented, including frequency analysis and the degree of relevance of the findings, based on four codes and sixteen subcodes. Finally, the construction of the conceptual model will be presented,

highlighting the need to understand the *Grammar of Silence* as a mechanism that intensifies social problems in Haiti.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Thinking Hunger and Poverty in Perspective: A Look at Haitian Research

The ideas of various Haitian and non-Haitian researchers dedicated to the study of Haiti reveal a structured set of explanations regarding hunger and poverty. These contributions converge around interrelated factors such as political instability, corruption, lack of investment in public infrastructure, and economic dependence (Jadotte, 2007; Jorès Mérat, 2019). The research reinforces that European colonialism, and the structural weakness of the Haitian state are not isolated elements, but the central dynamics that amplify recurring crises over time. Rather than presenting studies individually, the literature was analytically grouped into thematic clusters (Table 2), allowing a structured interpretation of how hunger and poverty are conceptualized.

Table 2. Analytical synthesis of Haitian and Haiti-focused research on hunger and poverty

ANALYTICAL CLUSTER	MAIN AUTHORS	CORE ARGUMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS
Structural Causes of Poverty and Hunger	Pierre et al. (2012), Goulet (2006), Lumarque (2020), Kennedy (2008), Graveus (2021), Louis (2010), Jadotte (2007), Montas (2005), Gros (2010), Pierre (2020), Patel & McMichael (2014)	Poverty and hunger in Haiti are shaped by interrelated structural factors, including political instability, corruption, weak state capacity, and limited investment in public infrastructure. These dynamics are historically rooted in colonial processes and reinforced by neoliberal economic policies, external dependence, and the influence of international institutions, which undermine local production and long-term development.
Food Insecurity and Health	Brewis et al. (2022), Dufumier & Hugon (2005), Regan (2004), Rasul et al. (2022), Kianersi et al. (2021), Beaulière & Flori (2008), Muylder (2014)	Food insecurity emerges as a central dimension of poverty, shaped by economic crises, environmental vulnerability, and limited health systems. Hunger is associated with malnutrition, child mortality, and broader social suffering, requiring integrated policy responses that combine nutrition, health care, and economic support mechanisms.
Education, Social Inequality, and Mobilization	Bruffaerts & Simplus (2016), François (2009), Aurélien (2021), Pierre (2021), Parker et al. (2017), Logie et al. (2017)	Haitians' desire to study can help them escape poverty. The education system requires public policies. Liberation theology highlights the dynamics of power. Democratization is a key factor for Haiti. Programs aimed at local economic support strengthen family-level resilience. Internally displaced youth face intersectional violence.
Perception, Culture, and Resistance	Jorès Mérat (2019), Korstanje (2010), Marques (2017)	The "invention of Haiti as a poor society" requires the creation of cultures and relationships. Poverty should not be considered a tragedy, and media can create a "normality of being poor". Haiti is culturally rich but marked by poverty reinforced by colonial rhetoric. Cultural aspects are often overlooked.
Proposed Solutions and Development	Julien (2007), Fleurant (2020), Pierre (2014), Mérat (2018), Kraay & McKenzie (2014), Paul (2008), Rodné-Jeanty (2020)	Collective organization with international support is identified as necessary. Financial resources are needed to address climate change in agriculture. Local development programs do not sustain community-based initiatives. International actors often overlook quality of life. There is no single solution to poverty, highlighting the need for context-specific approaches.

Source: Author's synthesis based on 34 analyzed publications (2023).

The challenge of studying Haiti lies mainly in the need to consider the depth of the Haitian crisis in terms of the relationship between politics, corruption, and well-being (Graveus, 2021; Kennedy, 2008; Lumarque, 2020). The publications presented in Table 2 demonstrate the existence of a consistent body of critical scholarship produced by Haitian studies, which points to the need for a conscious awakening of society that can expand into collectivism (Pierre et al., 2012; Julien, 2007; Pierre, 2014). However, these analyses remain unevenly visible, particularly due to limited accessibility and the exclusion of part of the literature,

which constrains their broader recognition. This dynamic is central to understanding how the *Grammar of Silence* operates in the context analyzed.

Furthermore, the economic crisis is exacerbated by political instability and the impact of international institutions, leading to external dependence and the destruction of local production (Gros, 2010; Montas, 2005; Goulet, 2006). The "invention of Haiti as a poor society" raises global challenges of justice, recognition, and autonomy, tracing the calamity back to slavery and the independence process (Louis, 2010; Pierre, 2020). At the same time, the studies reviewed tend to emphasize the material dimensions of hunger, which limits the consideration of its broader social and cultural aspects. This reduction helps explain the persistence of what is conceptualized here as Cultural Hunger (Exime & Barbosa Filho, 2026).

The limited visibility of these studies, particularly those published in regionally indexed journals, contributes to a *Data Void* that limits the accessibility of local mobilization strategies to global policymakers. As a result, insights into local social inequality, education, and local development are not fully incorporated into international debates and policy frameworks. The exclusion of 219 works due to restricted access further underscores how Global South science is disadvantaged, reinforcing an incomplete understanding of Haiti's internal dynamics. In this sense, the *Data Void* does not reflect the absence of knowledge but the conditions that limit its circulation and visibility.

In these articles, there is an important difference in the roots of Haitian poverty, including infant mortality due to food insecurity (Beaulière & Flori, 2008; Kianersi et al., 2021; Regan, 2004; Rasul et al., 2022). The suffering of the Haitian people through daily exposure to hunger, stigma, and various forms of crime (Brewis et al., 2022). The abandonment of the system of economic growth, especially after the 2008 financial crisis, impacted food prices, requiring broader structural approaches (Dufumier & Hugon, 2005). Insufficient income and access to basic sanitation and health treatment increase health problems, highlighting the need to combat poverty and social exclusion (Muylder, 2014). These findings illustrate how Haitian academic production exists despite the structural constraints imposed by global knowledge infrastructures. This limited accessibility further reduces the incorporation of these studies into international debates.

In this group, there are persistent structural limitations in access to basic resources such as medicines and health treatments. These conditions reinforce dependence on international aid, particularly from the diaspora (Paul, 2008; Rodné-Jeanty, 2020). At the same time, these dynamics contribute to challenges such as the loss of skilled labor. More international organizations and institutions are engaging with Haiti, although structural inequality remains insufficiently addressed (Mérat, 2018).

There is a call for government responsibility in addressing the interconnected problems of hunger, poverty, and social exclusion, but also for the stronger organization of civil society (Aurélien, 2021; Parker et al., 2017; Logie et al., 2017). It should be noted that Haiti's problems are analyzed at the international level, interconnecting the challenges of globalization that affect the country's international trade, so it is clear that one of the elements considered central to the fight against hunger and poverty is

food insecurity (Gros, 2010; Patel & McMichael, 2014). The opening of the internal market weakened local production systems while increasing external dependence (Patel & McMichael, 2014).

The issue of well-being in Haitian society must be understood in terms of the fragility in which this society lives (Muylder, 2014). These conditions have persisted over time and contribute to processes in which deprivation becomes normalized, weakening responses to social problems. Although external interventions are relevant, they often overlook cultural and intellectual dimensions (Marques, 2017), which contribute to the marginalization of these perspectives in international discussions, reflecting a broader process of epistemic injustice. The results of this study suggest that the limitation lies less in the absence of knowledge and more in the conditions that shape its visibility and recognition.

These dynamics also obscure Haiti's historical and intellectual contributions, including its trajectory as the first black republic and its rich intellectual tradition, such as *Anténor Firmin*, *Jean Price-Mars*, *Jacques Roumain*, *Baron de Vastey*, *Louis-Joseph Janvier*, and *Hannibal Price*, among others (Marques & Kosby, 2020). The waves of violence in Haiti are also linked to a lack of justice. The absence of justice leads to impunity, which even affects humanitarian aid interventions, requiring attention to the distribution of food and shelter, as well as to intersectional violence, that is, the intersection of different forms of oppression, such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Logie et al., 2017; Pierre, 2020).

It is understood that the Haitian calamity can be traced back to slavery and the independence process, which play an important role in understanding hunger and poverty in the historical context. Under this logic, past and current intrusions are part of the problem and have an impact on malnutrition, lack of access to basic health services, adequate housing, and social exclusion, which disproportionately affect marginalized groups such as women, children, and people with disabilities (Pierre, 2020). Taken together, the five analytical clusters demonstrate that poverty in Haiti is multidimensional, combining structural, social, economic, and cultural dimensions. Discrimination, unemployment, and violence are associated with limitations in public policy responses (Beaulière & Flori, 2008).

There are significant educational problems and insufficient government investment. The lack of funding and scarcity of resources remain central constraints to reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development (Goulet, 2006; Pierre et al., 2012). In such a context, "the will to learn can even, under certain conditions, stimulate a will to get out of it [...]" (Bruffaerts & Simplus, 2016, p. 9), reinforcing the importance of expanding access to education and basic services.

Overall, the literature indicates that hunger and poverty cannot be reduced to purely socioeconomic and humanitarian perspectives. Haitian thinkers, by articulating dignity, food sovereignty, and cultural resistance (Korstanje, 2010; Marques, 2017; Pierre, 2020), construct an epistemological counter-discourse that challenges external interpretations. Their narratives do not identify hunger as an internal problem or a natural tragedy but place it within broader dynamics linked to coloniality of power and knowledge. In this sense, the unequal visibility of these interpretations reinforces that the challenge lies

not only in addressing poverty itself, but also in transforming the conditions under which knowledge about Haiti is produced, circulated, and recognized.

3.2 Connections between codes and subcodes show the importance of research on Haiti

The aim here is to understand the researchers' thinking and the degree of importance of their research, explaining how they articulate hunger and poverty in other aspects. From the 34 papers, most of which were produced by Haitian-born researchers, a *corpus* of 17 articles, 11 theses, 3 dissertations, 1 document in report format, 1 book, and 1 book chapter is formed. This amount involves 110 researchers in total, capable of driving discussions based on the degree of importance, as shown in Graph 1.

Graph 1. The degree of importance attributed by researchers to the interconnection between hunger and poverty.

Source: Research data and analysis discussion diagram (2023).

An examination of the 34 studies reveals both the identified causes of Haitian poverty and proposed solutions to address this situation. Notably, 88% of researchers associate poverty with issues such as independence, failure of food production, colonization, corruption, and instability (Jadotte, 2007; Jorès Mérat, 2019; Marques, 2017). These factors contribute to the persistence of poverty in Haiti, and 62% of researchers refer to and show concern about extreme poverty, in which more than half of Haitians live (Montas, 2005; Mérat, 2018; Pierre, 2014; Pierre, 2021).

In the context of development, which focuses on social and local development as part of the codes of discussion, it is understood that 46% of researchers see a greater challenge in terms of developmental progress, since Haiti has been marked by social and economic inequality and a corrupt political system since its inception (Fleurant, 2020; Graveus, 2021; Pierre et al., 2012). The terms poor (40%), social (47%), society (32%), and hunger funds politics (30%) are part of the problematization of thinkers who study hunger and poverty in Haiti, functioning as pieces of a puzzle.

These surveys highlight the need for the Haitian people to mobilize to overcome economic instability, invest in agriculture and strengthen environmental care, reduce violence and inequality, and expand production while valuing domestic products to generate greater wealth. The analysis identified 24 studies that reflect the importance of developing, proposing, and disseminating ideas to combat hunger and poverty in Haiti. Fig. 3 illustrates the interactions and interconnections among the areas and components indicated by these studies as pathways to addressing Haiti's challenges.

Fig. 3. The analytical distribution codes used to analyze the published works of Haitian authors.

Source: Research data and analysis discussion diagram (2023).

The codes and subcodes represent the researchers' concern about the topic. They transcend the issue of hunger and poverty in the general context, broadening the level of

understanding to show how Haiti can stop being poor: the figure illustrates that, for example, issues such as precariousness, misery, and unemployment must be addressed before tackling hunger and poverty. Similarly, reducing inequality, political problems, and food insecurity requires plans that involve a network of coalitions.

Most researchers try to demonstrate the elements that are part of hunger, which leads to extreme poverty, and seek to understand how other means influence the calamitous situation in Haiti. The list of thinkers begins with the importance of public policy proposals linked to political transparency and the organization of civil society, emphasizing security for the movement of people, the search for permanent health resources, including those for children and women (Brewis et al., 2022; Beaulière & Flori, 2008; Jadotte, 2007; Kraay & McKenzie, 2014; Muylder, 2014; Pierre, 2020).

One of the authors' most thought-out proposals is the creation of formal jobs that ensure sufficient income, since a country free of poverty is unthinkable without investing in basic infrastructure to stimulate the economy, encourage local production, and strengthen food security (Pierre, 2014; Regan, 2004). Among the solutions proposed by the researchers is also the training of young people capable of playing a key role in rethinking systems for controlling interest rates, curbing inflation, and balancing government accounts. These measures require social programs aimed at training entrepreneurs and fostering small businesses to drive the economy forward (Kianersi et al., 2021; Patel & Mcmichael, 2014; Paul, 2008; Parker et al., 2017; Pierre, 2021). In common, there is agreement on the inequality in which Haiti lives (Fleurant, 2020; Goulet, 2006; Jadotte, 2007; Louis, 2010; Montas, 2005; Muylder, 2014; Pierre et al., 2012; Pierre, 2020), but some researchers stress that the goals of Haitians need to be taken seriously by governments, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, and that Haitian children cannot be left out of school.

These researchers consider education to be the first step out of poverty, as it broadens the possibilities for social democratization, which must be accompanied by policies that promote stability and strengthen national security (Graveus, 2021; Mérat, 2018; Pierre, 2021). Some authors argue that Haiti should not be defined solely by poverty, as this perspective disregards its cultural importance (Marques, 2017). They also emphasize that economic modernization must involve technological innovation (Paul, 2008). On this point, several studies highlight that the liberalization of the domestic market has significantly contributed to the destruction of the economy, while natural disasters have devastated Haiti's food system, increasing unemployment (Brewis et al., 2022; Gros, 2010; Patel & Mcmichael, 2014; Rasul et al., 2022).

We can see that there are several ideas conveyed by these studies, considering their contributions to thinking about Haiti. However, there is still a need for bold proposals with a view to tackling the problem, including the creation of a disaster fund administered by countries with lower rates of corruption, such as New Zealand, Norway, etc.[1], to prevent the corruption of internationally raised funds, and renewable energy sources, such as solar energy, taking advantage of the island's sun to solve the problem of

electricity and blackouts, since *Petrocaribe*, the oil alliance with Venezuela, has been taken over by corruption and is causing revolt among the population.

In parallel, there is a need to consider proposals such as a universal basic income program, as discussed in the literature, administered by the diaspora, which constantly sends money to the country, and to encourage a return to ancestral food roots to avoid food dependency. In view of the structural problem of violence, there is an urgent need to create a community police force with the support of the organization of nations, which was lacking in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), and to consider alternative governance arrangements discussed in policy debate or outsource[2] Haitian politics, without affecting the country's sovereignty, for example, creating an international party capable of running Haiti, even training politicians of character. There is also an urgent need to establish a Haitian research institute on hunger, bringing together both Haitian and non-Haitian researchers who are concerned about the issue. Such an institute would aim to propose new concepts that deepen the understanding of the roots of hunger and poverty in depth, for example, Cultural Hunger.

As expressed by Smiley and West (2012), it is necessary to encourage citizens to take on important political roles from the perspective of equality, considering poverty as a moral problem that demands innovative, bold, and responsible actions, but thought of from the perspective of the population. Rethinking this situation is an urgent matter because poverty is commonplace in many Haitian homes, where families constantly sacrifice to make ends meet. Currently, for example, a family of 10 shares meals, and the parents wait for the children to eat the minimum before eating the rest, since it is their responsibility. Thus, no one eats enough, and food vulnerability remains, which, within the analytical framework in this study, reflects a broader condition in which deprivation operates beyond material scarcity, shaping everyday life and social experience, which translates into hunger that paints the soul like poison that slowly kills its prey. As noted throughout the previous sections, the 34 publications present important solutions for addressing social problems. However, there is disregard, silence, and a lack of access to these ideas, which reflect a political choice embedded in the data system. The dynamics are systematized in the model presented below as the *Grammar of Silence*, which explains how such patterns are produced and reproduced (Fig. 4).

3.3 The Grammar of Silence: A Conceptual Model to Explain the Data Void of the Global South-Haiti

Within the context of the analysed publications, it is argued that there are sophisticated theoretical solutions for thinking about Haiti, particularly about public policies emerging from civil society to address problems of inequality and cultural re-education (Author, 2024; Fleurant, 2020; Graveus, 2021; Mérat, 2018; Pierre, 2021). The findings demonstrate that structured scientific knowledge does exist. However, the primary difficulty lies in the limitation and silencing of these productions. Consequently, the ideas of those who live, engage with, and experience Haiti through their scholarly work become increasingly invisible due to the unavailability of their publications in renowned indexing systems, culminating in what is termed the *Grammar of Silence*. When access to the Haitian context is filtered through the lenses of major databases, it is observed that only 8 of the 34 analysed publications were

retrieved by the specified initial Scopus and Web of Science queries. This lack of accessibility is not necessarily the result of deliberate censorship, but rather a consequence of structural inequalities in academic publishing. Many of these works are published in regional or non-indexed journals that, while possessing rigorous peer-review processes, lack the financial resources and technological infrastructure to meet the indexing requirements of dominant global databases.

In this way, the persistence of the stigma of Haiti as a *failed state* constitutes a framework that constrains solutions, reducing them to actions that fail to take the demands of Haitian society seriously. While it is true that many foreign scholars may simply belong to schools of thought (such as neoclassical economics) that traditionally overlook symbolic and cultural dimensions, the dominance of these specific schools of thought in the literature about Haiti is itself a product of the geopolitics of knowledge. The inability to understand the Haitian situation is thus institutionalized by a system that privileges certain theoretical frameworks over local epistemologies. This concept of *Collective Anesthesia* was previously applied to the normalization of chronic deprivation (Exime & Barbosa Filho, 2026). The present model proposes an additional epistemic dimension: insufficient attention to locally produced scholarship may diminish recognition of Haitian interpretations and policy proposals. For example, the persistent framing of hunger in Haiti as merely material and biological, without consideration of its symbolic and cultural dimensions, reflects previously developed concept of Cultural Hunger (Exime & Barbosa Filho, 2026).

Exime and Barbosa Filho (2026) conceptualize Cultural Hunger in relation to the social normalization of hunger and deprivation, attending to historical, cultural, and symbolic dimensions. From this perspective, the *Grammar of Silence* (Fig. 4), within the context of an existing data void, restricts the dissemination and availability of these solutions, which can indicate pathways to address the country's social problems.

Fig. 4. The *Grammar of Silence* as a Conceptual Model for Explaining the *Data Void* of the Global South-Haiti.

Source: Created by the author, 2026.

Fig. 4 emphasizes the importance of the *Grammar of Silence* model, as justified by the extensive discussions and presentations provided earlier. It should be noted that 26 of the 34 works were initially reached through AI-assisted leads and subsequently checked against documentary sources. This contrast suggests limitations of the specified conventional searches; it does not by itself demonstrate algorithm discrimination. This process is constructive rather than random. Access to major databases is constrained by several factors, including country of origin, the location of the author's institution, institutional prestige, government funding, wage inequality, and access to university resources. The common denominator is that most authors from the Global South have little or no opportunity to publish in prestigious journals hosted in databases such as Web of Science, primarily due to institutional precarity and low salaries. As a result, researchers tend to publish in regionally indexed journals, since open-access publishing options for the Global South increasingly involve high costs and exorbitant

article processing charges (Kaliuzhna et al., 2025). Although there are indeed economics journals that do not charge APCs, the most prestigious journals, those that confer global visibility and academic legitimacy, frequently operate behind paywalls or require high publication fees, effectively marginalizing researchers without institutional funding.

Over the past two decades, efforts have been made in this context through fee-waiver policies; however, obstacles persist, as discounts or waivers ranging from 20% to 50% based on country of origin or income classification are not always granted, even after the submission of extensive documentation. As emphasized by Borrego (2023) and Eneh et al. (2025), such measures do not resolve publication-related challenges and disproportionately harm early-career researchers and those with low incomes. These issues are fundamental to understanding this model and align with the initial argument, confirming that access to Haitian scientific production is extremely limited, as is the case across much of the Global South. The exclusion of 219 articles with closed access from this study's qualitative analysis is a methodological decision that reflects the reality of the data void itself. While these articles exist, their placement behind paywalls renders them inaccessible to researchers, policymakers, and civil society in Haiti. Therefore, drawing conclusions based on the open-access literature accurately represents the knowledge that is available to effect change in the Global South, highlighting how paywalls act as a mechanism of the *Grammar of Silence*.

In this context, it becomes evident that the data void is largely responsible for sustaining an understanding of hunger in Haiti as purely material and biological. This framing transforms Haiti into a locus of humanitarian actions that fail to comprehend the lived reality of its people. As illustrated in Fig. 4, Haiti's condition can be understood as a form of "sovereignty on life support"; Haiti, like a patient breathing through artificial life support, holds within the 34 analysed publications existing remedies, multiple ones, that need to be read and applied. Continuing to ignore the voices of researchers is not merely a scientific failure, but a process that progressively limits the possibilities of a more sustainable and locally grounded future, one capable of eliminating the *Data Void* and the *Collective Anesthesia* affecting the Haitian people. This section has demonstrated the importance of the scholarly work being produced in Haiti, despite its limited availability in major databases that sustain the *Grammar of Silence*.

As illustrated in Fig. 4, the model operates through a cyclical linkage of four integrated concepts. First, the *Data Void* (the lack of indexed Haitian production) feeds into the *Grammar of Silence* (the structural mechanism and algorithms that legitimize only certain types of knowledge). This Grammar, in turn, produces *Collective Anesthesia* (a systematic numbness of the international community to local realities). Finally, the model hypothesizes a feedback relationship between this epistemic anesthesia and *Cultural Hunger*, previously conceptualized as the normalization of hunger and deprivation (Exime & Barbosa Filho, 2026), the resulting marginalization of local voices, may reinforce the initial *Data Void*.

3.4 Research Limitations

This is a theoretical–methodological study that, from its introduction, seeks to discuss a central argument: the existence of a *Data Void* and algorithmic discrimination that generate a *Collective*

Anesthesia regarding social problems such as hunger and poverty. Its limitations are primarily related to the lack of a precise definition of the *Grammar of Silence* as a concept from the outset. Until this study, there had been no research explicitly addressing this model as a means of explaining issues of access, limitations, and availability of publications from the Global South. By the end of the analysis, the model had approached a more mature definition and explanation after engaging with the presentation of the 34 works. To achieve a more comprehensive definition, future research will require fieldwork and the use of statistically testable methods.

Additionally, the exclusion of 219 works due to restricted access highlights how Global South science is disadvantaged by income inequality and unequal access to prestigious journals. This factor should be considered a limitation, as replicating the study may result in a different number of works included in the analysis. For future research, it is recommended to further deepen this topic and incorporate data on issues such as infant mortality and the number of undernourished Haitians across generations and social classes.

[1] According to Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2023," they are among the 10 countries with the lowest corruption rates in the last 10 years. Available at: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023>.

[2] This outsourcing proposal seems strange, as it often proposes breaking with external states and governments, but it is a choice between the worst and the least bad, which marks the desperation to find solutions to the problems facing Haitian society.

4. Final considerations

The paths taken in this study made it possible to answer the central research question: how is scientific production on hunger in Haiti structured, constrained, and silenced by data regimes, publication systems, and visibility structures? From this perspective, the study achieved its objective. It is observed that most researchers address issues such as corruption, political instability, food insecurity, financial resources, inequality, and colonialism as interconnected links within the same chain that undermines Haiti's political, economic, and social development. The analysis demonstrates that there are valid and sophisticated proposals to confront the problem of hunger. However, the stigma of Haiti as a *failed state* and the *Grammar of Silence* restrict access to the solutions produced within the country, a pattern consistent with uneven visibility of research from the Global South within the search strategy examined.

It is argued that scientific production on hunger in Haiti is silenced by regimes of data, publication, and visibility, given that only 8 of the 34 works were retrieved from traditional databases through the specified initial Scopus and Web of Science searches. At the same time, it can be stated that this body of scholarship is well structured, as the studies are distributed across 11 databases and involve the direct participation of 110 Haitian and non-Haitian researchers. It is therefore concluded that the application of ChatGPT in this article constituted an important and innovative methodological approach to the development of the research.

The central contribution of this study lies in the construction of this theoretical-methodological model, which offers a new way of understanding how epistemic exclusion operates and is perpetuated in the Global South. The implications of this work are both theoretical and political. From a theoretical standpoint, the *Grammar of Silence* model advances decolonial studies by providing an operational framework for analysing data governance and epistemic injustice. Politically, the study recommends concrete actions, such as: (A) Building a New Grammar, which entails the creation of a Haitian Research Institute with sovereign funding and an open-access publishing platform as a direct response to the *Grammar of Silence*, to enable Haiti to speak in its own terms; and (B) Addressing *Cultural Hunger* and the proposed epistemic dimension of *Collective Anesthesia*, which involves valuing and funding research that explores the symbolic and cultural dimensions of social problems, rather than focusing solely on their material and biological manifestations.

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Graph

Graph 1 is available in the supplementary files section.

Figures

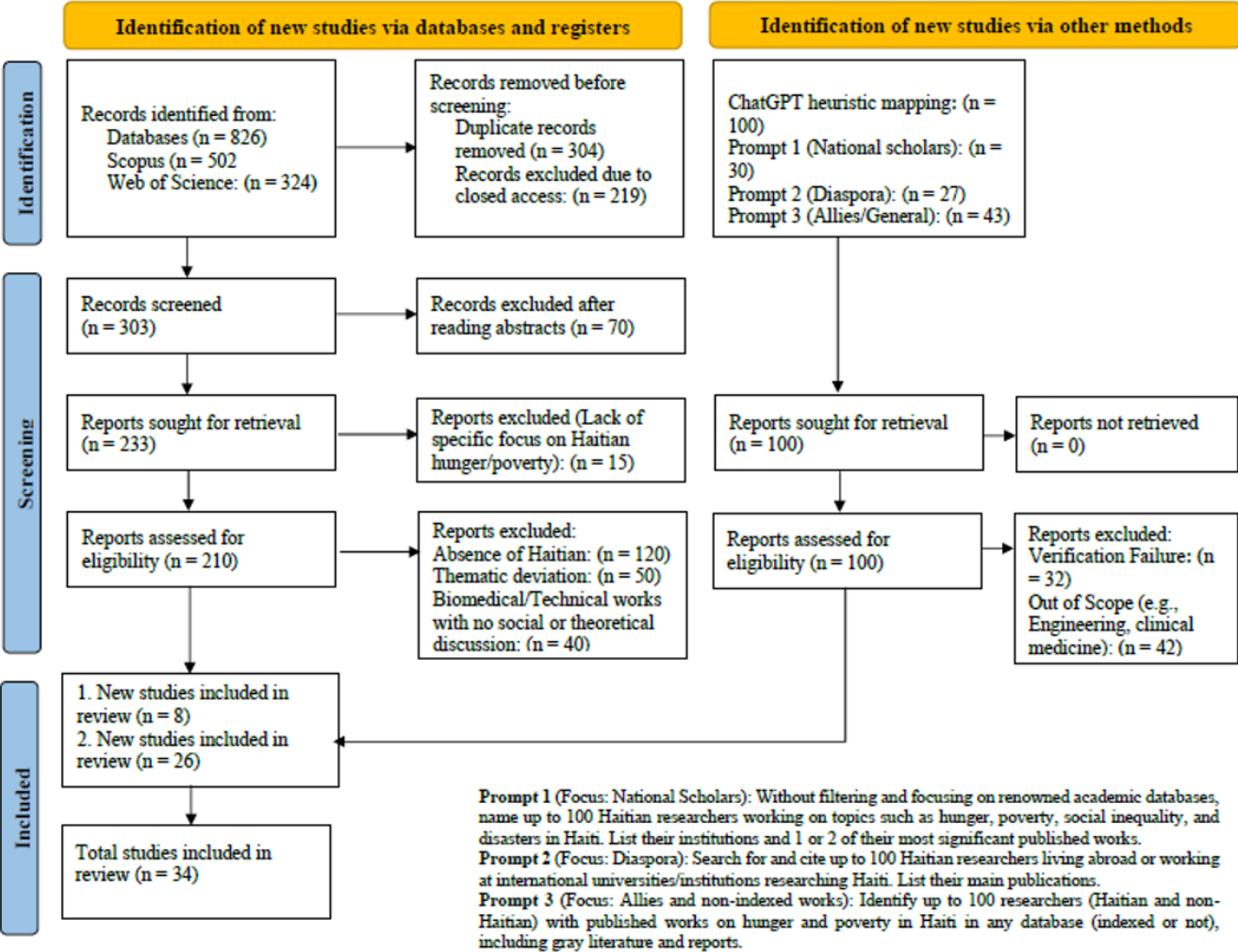


Figure 1

Database search and selection process (PRISMA flow diagram, 2020).

Source: Created by the author, 2023.

Code List	Codes List	Research...	Research...	Research...	Research...	Research...	SUM
Misery							38
Social Exclusion							21
Unemployment							20
Food Insecurity							33
Inequalities							17
Local Development							17
Politics							17
Research							17
Work Titles							17
General Results and Contributions							44
Hunger and Poverty							43
Precariousness							23
Extreme Poverty							24
Conclusions on Hunger and Poverty							23
Contributions on Hunger and Poverty							20
Proposals on Hunger and Poverty							25
Absolute Hunger and Poverty							85
Σ SOMA	21	60	54	20	37	12	854

Figure 2

The codes and subcodes of article construction

Source: MAXQDA coding of the shared 34-document corpus (Exime & Barbosa Filho, 2026)

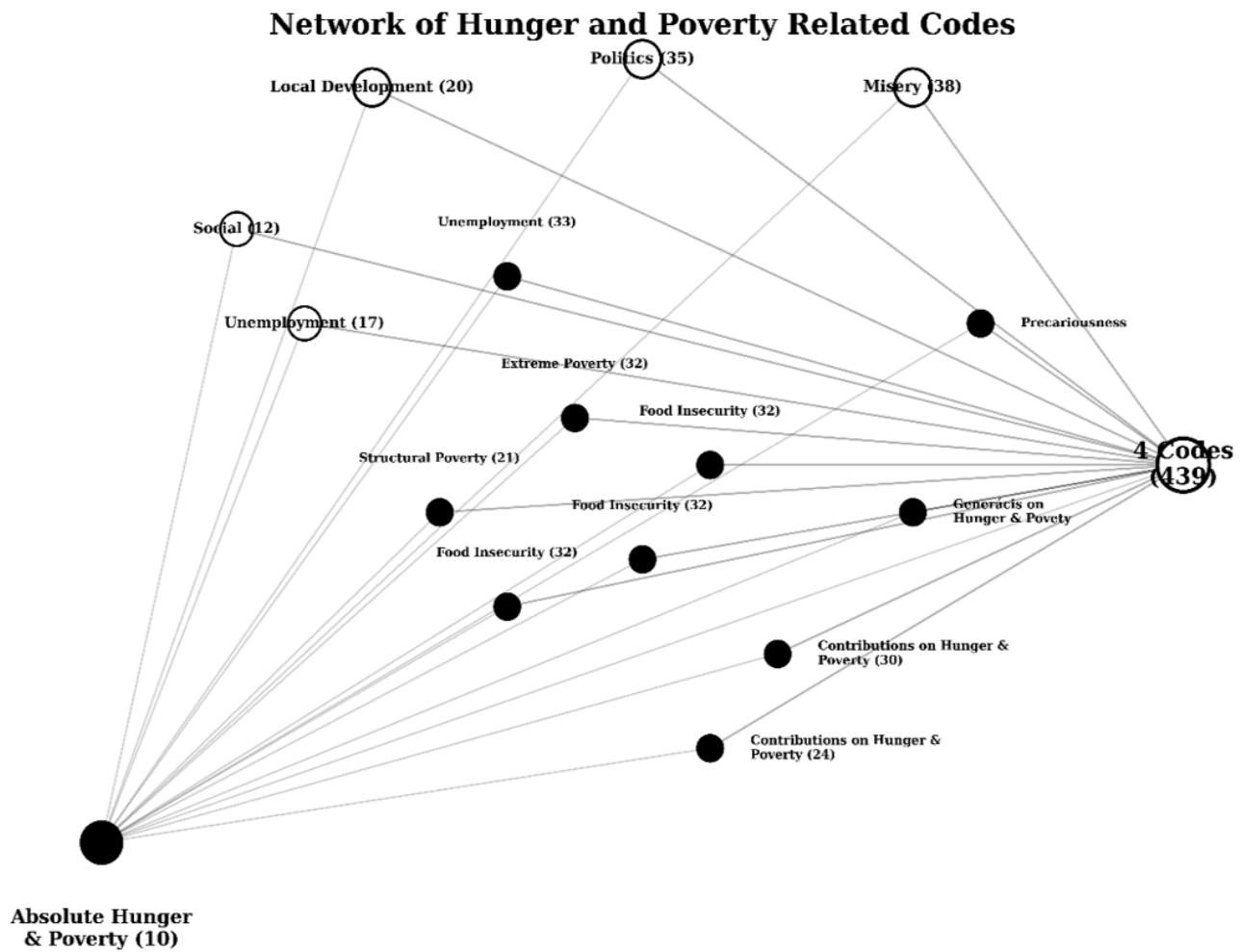


Figure 3

The analytical distribution codes used to analyze the published works of Haitian authors.

Source: Research data and analysis discussion diagram (2023).

The Grammar of Silence Model

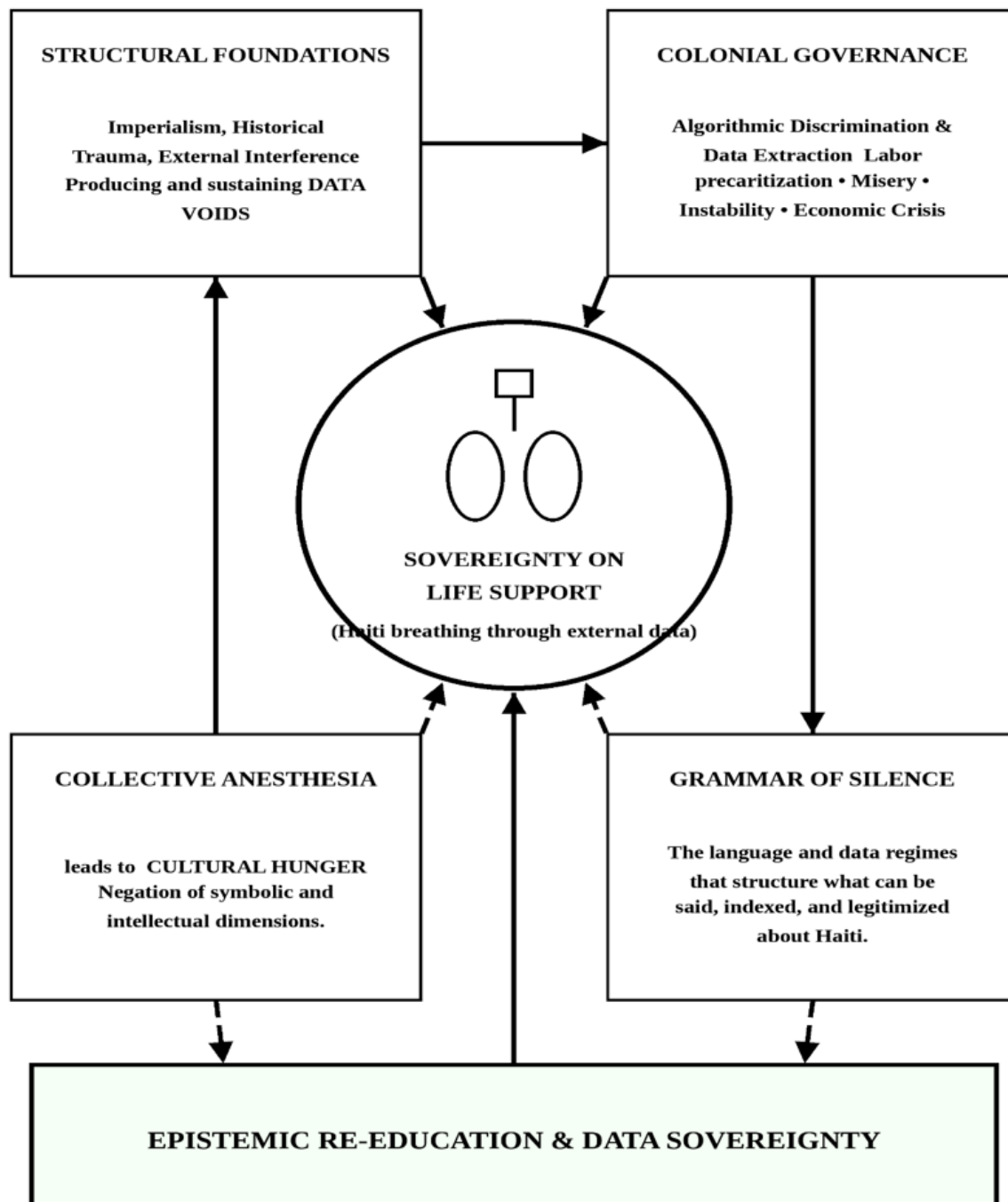


Figure 4

The *Grammar of Silence* as a Conceptual Model for Explaining the *Data Void* of the Global South-Haiti.

Source: Created by the author, 2026.

Supplementary Files

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