



**RURAL WOMEN AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT: INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES
IN NON-SCHOOL SPACES**

***MULHERES RURAIS E EMPODERAMENTO FEMININO: VIVÊNCIAS DE ESTÁGIO
EM ESPAÇOS NÃO ESCOLARES***

***MUJER RURAL Y EMPODERAMIENTO FEMENINO: EXPERIENCIAS DE
PRÁCTICAS EN ESPACIOS NO ESCOLARES***



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ABSTRACT: This study aims to reflect the importance of female empowerment for the empowerment and strengthening, above all, individual, social and economic women. In this perspective, qualitative research was developed with the use of autobiographical narratives, from the activities developed in the internship in non-school spaces. The following instruments were used for data collection: observation and the logbook. Therefore, the research was carried out in the rural perimeter of the municipality of Campo Formoso - Bahia. And, with regard to the research collaborators, they were a group of women who live in Limoeiro. For the theoretical deepening, I sought foundation in the following authors: Minayo (2004), Souza (2006), Davis (2016), Gohn (2007; 2010), Hooks (2018), Tiburi (2018), Louro (1997), Pimenta and Lima (2004) among others. The study indicated that discussions about this theme need to permeate all possible spaces and scenarios, since these are issues that involve the well-being and quality of life, especially for women.

KEYWORDS: Feminine empowerment. Feminist ruralities. Gender equity.

RESUMO: *O presente estudo tem como objetivo refletir a importância do empoderamento feminino para a potencialização e o fortalecimento, sobretudo, individual, social e econômico das mulheres. Nessa perspectiva, foi desenvolvida uma pesquisa de caráter qualitativo com a utilização das narrativas autobiográficas, a partir das atividades desenvolvidas no estágio em espaços não escolares. Foram utilizados como instrumentos de coleta de dados: a observação e o diário de bordo. Sendo assim, a pesquisa foi realizada no perímetro rural do município de Campo Formoso - Bahia. E, no tocante às colaboradoras da pesquisa, foram um grupo de mulheres que residem em Limoeiro. Para o aprofundamento teórico, busquei fundamentação nos/as seguintes autores/as: Minayo (2004), Souza (2006), Davis (2016), Gohn (2007, 2010), Hooks (2018), Tiburi (2018), Louro (1997), Pimenta e Lima (2004) dentre outros/as. O estudo sinalizou que as discussões acerca dessa temática precisam permear todos os espaços e cenários possíveis, uma vez que se tratam de questões que envolvem o bem-estar e a qualidade de vida, sobretudo, das mulheres.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Empoderamento feminino. Ruralidades feministas. Equidade de gênero.*

RESUMEN: *Este estudio pretende reflejar la importancia del empoderamiento femenino para el empoderamiento y fortalecimiento, sobre todo, individual, social y económico de la mujer. En esta perspectiva, se desarrolló una investigación cualitativa con el uso de narrativas autobiográficas, a partir de las actividades desarrolladas en el internado en espacios no escolares. Para la recolección de datos se utilizaron los siguientes instrumentos: la observación y la bitácora. Por lo tanto, la investigación se llevó a cabo en el perímetro rural del municipio de Campo Formoso - Bahía. Y, en cuanto a los colaboradores de la investigación, eran un grupo de mujeres que viven en Limoeiro. Para la profundización teórica busqué fundamento en los siguientes autores: Minayo (2004), Souza (2006), Davis (2016), Gohn (2007; 2010), Hooks (2018), Tiburi (2018), Louro (1997), Pimenta y Lima (2004) entre otros. El estudio indicó que las discusiones sobre este tema necesitan permear todos los espacios y escenarios posibles, ya que se trata de cuestiones que involucran el bienestar y la calidad de vida, especialmente de las mujeres.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Empoderamiento femenino. Ruralidades feministas. Equidad de género.*

Considerations about gender roles

Taking into account the historical process, it is possible to see that, since childhood, we have been learning how to determine functions, tasks, spaces and classify them as “a man thing and a woman thing”, always placing us in a binary and dichotomous position. In this context, women are always considered as fragile, defenseless and incapable of being autonomous (LOURO, 1997), always dependent on the state, the church and the husband, being assigned domestic, family and maternal roles, creating prejudice that work, the action responsible for family income, is a function solely of men, who in turn have intelligence, reason, and decision-making capacity (PERROT, 2001), and this historical relationship of differentiation is a consequence of gender inequality.

However, it should be noted that women have always played significant roles with regard to survival, especially in the family, performing functions ranging from domestic and maternal to field tasks ranging from planting to harvesting (CONTE, 2009), but their functions were not restricted to just doing housework, there are records of women's participation in numerous decision-making spaces, which leads us to think how much women's voice was silenced in the writing of history, attributing this role only to men (SCOTT, 1992). When we refer to women in rural contexts, it is important to point out that even with their participation and performance in rural production, female work ends up being, in most cases, undervalued and not having the recognition it deserves (FARIA, 2009), mainly by the men in the family, in which this action is seen not as work, but as an aid or complement to domestic activities, reinforcing the silencing and devaluation of the work carried out by women.

That said, we present as a concern for the ongoing study the following question: What is the relevance of female empowerment for the construction and/or enhancement of self-esteem, autonomy and personal, social and economic independence of rural women? In this perspective, the present study sought to understand the importance of female empowerment for the potentializing and strengthening, above all, individual, social and economic of rural women.

It is known that this process of empowerment is challenging, as it is not easy to break with existing power relations in society, since from our family base we are taught about the domination of men over women, the male privileges that they culturally give the power to make unilateral decisions, which most often affect us women and the family, superiority, control and even the right to use violence (BATLIWALA, 1994), admitted to men by patriarchy. However, we need to raise the discussion, provoke the emergence of the debate around such issues, so that we can create new narratives and ways of constituting ourselves as women in the multiple

spaces of action. Making cracks in crystallized narratives taken as truth is an important step in the process of weaving stories in which we are the protagonists.

Methodological paths

The present study is characterized as qualitative research, driven by the interest of seeking a detailed understanding of the data and information presented by the research collaborators. Based on this, we opted for this methodology, mainly because it allows the deepening and complexification of the theme. The qualitative approach is concerned with answering very particular questions, and therefore allows for an in-depth analysis of the reality of facts, relationships and processes, which results in a thorough understanding of aspects and issues related to the theme (MINAYO, 2004).

The type of research used in this study was the autobiographical narrative. The autobiographical research aims to form elements of analysis that allow the subjective understanding of a certain individual and/or situation that is involved, allowing to work the past and the present of each person from their memories and experiences (SOUZA, 2006). These narratives allow for a unique and, at the same time, universal understanding, since the narration of the facts present in the history of a subject can also be part of the life history of other subjects.

Rios (2022, p. 28, our translation), points out that (auto)biographical narratives are presented as important research tools in the training process, because: “[...] they show elements of the subjects' subjectivity, their training trajectories and experiences of life, factors that have triggered new perspectives inherent to teacher education”. Thus, we emphasize that the use of this method aims to collaborate with the training processes in different areas of knowledge. In the specific case of this study, the same method will ensure that rural women can talk about their experiences of empowerment.

With regard to data collection instruments, observation and the logbook were used. It is pertinent to point out that the facts that occurred during the observation need to be recorded as soon as possible in the logbook so that the researcher does not forget or introduce elements that did not happen (FALKEMBACH, 1987). Through it, together with observation, which is another relevant instrument in the research (LÜDKE; ANDRÉ, 1986), information was collected for reflection and construction of my data analysis. The research was carried out in Limoeiro, rural perimeter of the municipality of Campo Formoso - Bahia and the collaborators of the study were some ladies of the community.

From this perspective, it is pertinent to emphasize that, with regard to the research collaborators, we chose to assign fictitious names, so that their identities are preserved. In view of this, it is important to preserve and guarantee the anonymity of the people involved in the investigation, since in the course of the investigation the collaborators can bring information that, in some way, are capable of compromising them (MINAYO, 2010). Therefore, during the analyses, I will call the research collaborators by names of planets, namely: Venus, Saturn and Mars.

Internship and teacher training

The internship developed both in school and non-school spaces has, above all, the purpose of providing the student with an approximation with the reality of a group, or even a community (PIMENTA, 2012). In view of this, based on dialogue, the moment of the internship can contribute to people reflecting on their place and role in society (FREIRE, 2014), as well as enabling the emancipation of individuals, their personal transformation and, therefore, therefore social.

Considering that the internship allows the student to have a more direct contact with their area of study, it is possible to think of this period as an opportunity in which teachers in training acquire knowledge for the construction of their professional identity (BARREIRO, 2006). In this sense, during the internship activities, we were able to expand and intensify the knowledge of the aspects that were worked on, especially in the classes of the curricular component Internship in Non-School Spaces, since it allowed me to see in practice how and where the theory is applied.

With regard to the internship in teacher training, Pimenta and Lima (2004, p. 61, our translation) point out that: “it allows working on essential aspects for the construction of identity, knowledge and specific postures in the teaching profession”. During the training period, teachers build their knowledge about issues involving educational spaces, as well as receive preparation to deal with the challenges and situations that emerge in these spaces. From the experiences at the time of the internship, the future educator builds and rebuilds his/her conceptions and posture in relation to teaching.

When we consider that the internship is an activity that promotes a process of transformation of nature and society (LIMA, 2012), it is pertinent to say that it is also extremely important to carry it out in spaces that have had access to the learning processes denied, for do not configure themselves as formal spaces of education. The experiences I obtained during the

developed activities were enough for me to see the importance of the internship in non-school spaces, aiming to contribute to the development of the critical and reflective sense of these people who, most of the time, are placed on the margins of society.

Usually, when we think of a teaching internship in undergraduate courses, the image of the school, the classroom and all the educational apparatus inherent in educational activities soon come to the fore. About this, Rios (2020) argues that the internship in non-school spaces is an important learning moment for future teachers, since it ends up favoring them to experience educational practices in different spaces, provoking the /teachers in training to think about education beyond school spaces. Thus, it is possible to say that the referred internship allows us new perspectives regarding non-school educational practices.

Internship in Non-School Spaces: education beyond the walls of the school

Although education is commonly understood as the result of educational practices developed in classrooms, this cannot be limited to these spaces only (BRANDÃO, 2013). The knowledge, values, habits, among others, that we acquire and share with our families and/or with the social context in which we are inserted is also configured as a type of education, even though it does not happen in educational institutions and in a formal way (GOHN, 2010). Therefore, non-school spaces or non-formal spaces such as museums, libraries, hospitals, associations are also knowledge-producing environments.

From this perspective, we understand that non-school spaces are collective places that intentionally allow the sharing of knowledge, experiences and learning among people who attend them, but who do not have a systematized or pre-established education as in school spaces (LIBÂNEO, 2010). It is important to highlight that education in these spaces is not guided by teachers as in the school context, that is, learning happens spontaneously among people, without the presence of an educator. Rios (2020) argues that in non-school spaces, those responsible for the educational process are the subjects involved, and there is not necessarily an obligation to comply with common protocols in school educational practices, such as: complying with strict schedules or discussing matters decided vertically.

During the internship meetings, even signaling to the research collaborators that I was going through an internship period focused on non-school spaces and was studying the 5th semester of the degree in pedagogy, some of them already saw me as a teacher, as also, that's what they called me. Therefore, it is possible to perceive that even without this presentation, the fact of articulating, proposing and developing activities in that space made me a teacher

(GADOTTI, 2005), reinforcing the traditionalist idea that there is only education and knowledge acquisition if some teacher is at the forefront of the process.

In addition, during the workshop held on 11/24/22, by proposing an interaction dynamic that consisted of all the people present performing gestures that signal affection towards each other as the plot of the text was asking, the image of the being became clear untouchable that people carry in relation to the teacher. Although I still didn't have the training, the idea that I was the teacher meant that I was excluded from most of the activity, the scenario only changed when one of the collaborators made the following comment: "I'm noticing that nobody is doing things there. It's also supposed to be done, right (MARS, 2022)?". It is noted that while someone did not say that it was allowed and signaled my participation in the interaction, people did not approach me, it was necessary to give "permission" so that they understood that they could touch me and come to me.

When we talk about internships in non-school spaces, many aspects must be considered, above all, the adequacy of activities to the reality of the subjects involved in them (GOHN, 2007). One cannot lose sight of the fact that these spaces are made up of people who have responsibilities within a tiring routine, especially when it comes to women, who were the target audience of my internship. In this sense, to better serve them, at times the activities had to undergo changes. As all of them were housewives and had domestic and/or maternal demands, there was a need to adapt the time and in case the workshop on 11/10/22 continued on another day.

As Dubar (1997, p. 29, our translation) points out, "identity is never given, it is always constructed and to be (re) constructed, in greater or lesser uncertainty and more or less durable". In each workshop developed from the internship, we had the opportunity to build and rebuild our identities, however, it is important to emphasize that this reconstruction did not happen smoothly, it was necessary to remember our stories, to understand who we are in fact, in our multidimensions.

The dialogues, the socializations, the orientations of the people who were in charge of the cooking and handicraft workshop instruction, contributed so that we could acquire new ways of thinking and acting as a person and collective, as well as, it made possible the opportunity for these women to share a little of their work with society, at the same time that they carried out an exercise in self-understanding of who we really are: rural women, who seek, through female empowerment, to rebuild their own stories.

In this way, we understand that the moments of discussion, especially in non-school spaces, are essential to promote access to knowledge of issues pertinent to the experiences of women in their individualities, as well as the experiences socialized in the community. In this sense, aiming to reflect together with the women on autonomy and awareness of power relations, the dialogues about female empowerment during the internship activities were indispensable. In view of this, universities need to be even more concerned with education in these spaces, since, in addition to the school environment, there are people who need to know the world and the debates around them.

Female empowerment: necessary reflections

In recent decades, the movement around female empowerment has been gaining more and more visibility in different countries, including Brazil. The individual and collective emancipation of women is one of the attributes that we have historically struggled to achieve. For those of us who are engaged in the agenda of gender equality, female empowerment is a mechanism that helps to advance freedom, in which women individually and collectively can make decisions and make choices without being victims of gender oppression.

Commonly, women residing in rural perimeters are seen as ignorant and uninformed people, culturally and socially backward, who, due to the place where they live, will always have to occupy the space of serving and not being served (PERROT, 2007). It is notorious that the lack of access to knowledge and information further impedes the development of self-confidence, autonomy, independence, as well as contributing to their remaining in that place of inferiority that they have historically been placed.

Empowerment, especially of rural women, is not positive for those who wish to maintain patriarchy, injustices, social and gender inequalities (LERNER, 2019). Therefore, it is more convenient to guarantee that “minorities” do not have access to information that favors the development of critical and reflective capacity, thus the systems of oppression will be preserved. Knowledge is fundamental to freeing ourselves from the shackles of gender oppression that bind us (TIBURI, 2018), and, therefore, understanding for us women has always been unfeasible or limited. Thus, articulating ourselves in order to promote training initiatives that ensure that women, in their different social realities, instruments of autonomy and empowerment constitutes a challenge to be overcome by all of us.

It is important to emphasize that, contrary to what many people think, female empowerment does not seek to encourage women's superiority over men, but rather to

denaturalize the predisposition to servitude attributed to us women from birth, through sexist social practices. and misogynists, who try at all costs to diminish us (TIBURI, 2018). Recognizing yourself as a subject of rights, understanding the importance of taking a stand and expressing yourself freely in the face of situations, occupying spaces in society that for a long time were inaccessible and even prohibited for us women, none of this is related to superiority, but freedom. Freedom that the conservative system never wanted us to have.

Feminist rurality: reflecting on the experiences of rural women

Historically, women, especially rural ones, have had their rights and opportunities denied, as well as being unable to enter certain spaces and play roles, such as political participation and the exercise of citizenship (OLIVEIRA, 1999). One cannot lose sight of the fact that, for a long time, “being from the countryside” was seen, and still is, by many as something bad or shameful, placing us in places considered to have less social and cultural value. Commonly, this space and the people who live in it have no significance for society, everything that is produced by them is questioned or considered irrelevant. The farm is not thought of as a territory for the production of knowledge, culture, senses and meanings, this territory is only attributed to the place of food production, and all processes of subjectivation of gender, race, ethnicity, among others, are disregarded.

When we talk about gender inequalities, we can say that they are a result of the patriarchal social structure that sometimes gives continuity to sexist, sexist, prejudiced and homophobic practices that are present in our daily lives. With regard to the traditional and conservative ideologies adopted by society that contribute to the continuation of prejudice and discrimination, the collaborator Venus (2022) reported: “I went to get my driver's license and they asked me why I wanted it if I was a woman and I didn't have the opportunity”.

In this scenario, it is possible to perceive that, even in the 21st century, there is still resistance to accepting, without questioning, women's choices. Although for a while they needed men to drive and take them to their chosen locations, we have realized that for some this is no longer necessary. However, even with the possibility of learning to drive and acquiring their own means of transport, society still argues and associates this practice with men. The comment directed at this woman also reinforces the idea that people from the countryside, especially women, do not need and cannot have material goods.

Since childhood, we are educated to be subservient to male figures, from our parents to our partners who, in turn, make all decisions, even those that are ours alone (HOOKS, 2018).

This power relationship comes, above all, from the structural machismo that underlies the subjugation of women as being inferior to men, which is one of the pretexts used to achieve submission and dominance (SCOTT, 1995). The silencing and oppression of women are results of these relationships.

From this perspective, the collaborator Saturn (2022) highlighted: “I worked, but he was the one who received the salary, when it was over, he spent all the money on cachaça and women and did not even give me satisfaction”. In line with what has been described, we perceive the level of subordination that we women are conditioned to have in our relationships, as well as the presence of the culture of silencing that exists in abusive relationships. Note that even working, this woman did not even have the chance to receive payment, nor to question or know from her husband how and/or where her money was used. Therefore, the social relationship of unequal power results in abusive practices such as domination, in which, almost always, the subordinate person is the wife.

Of fragile, defenseless and inferior sex, woman has nothing. Although, for a long time, we were forced to believe in this fallacy, day after day we have struggled to deconstruct these stereotypes that incite misogyny, sexism, machismo that are impregnated in society. The education based on oppression, submission, inferiority that many of us receive, especially those who live in rural areas, where the perspective of life is marriage and motherhood, needs to be overcome. We need to continue to be strength and endurance.

Gender equity: a fight for justice

We noticed that, from an early age, men have a predilection for being at the forefront of business and being successful, while women are merely taught and held responsible for domestic and maternal tasks (FARIA; NOBRE, 1997). If we stop to think, consciously or unconsciously, we are constantly being prepared to develop activities related to home and family. It is common, in childhood, to receive toys such as kitchen items and dolls and, in return, boys receive cars, carpentry items, among others, aimed at working outside the home.

Even considering all the advances we have made over the centuries with regard to women's rights, we realize that there is still a delimitation of spaces in which women can act (BIROLI, 2018). It is clear that although the intention is to achieve an equitable society, which promotes fair treatment among people, in which men and women have proportional access to the same opportunities and rights, there is still resistance in deconstructing taboos and stereotypes, especially in the family environment.

The expectations created by society in relation to behavior, especially children, are many. Girls are required to be delicate, obedient, sentimental, and boys the opposite of that. Consequently, people who do not fit into or flee the heteronormative pattern, considered ideal, are excluded, as well as end up being victims of prejudice and violence.

One cannot lose sight of the fact that, unlike the concept of equality, equity does not start from the idea that people only need to have the same opportunities, falling into the mistake of saying that we are “all” equal. It is necessary to think from different contexts, since, over the centuries, access to knowledge and opportunities has moved in different ways and rhythms for some/but in society (DAVIS, 2016). At this juncture, thinking from the perspective of gender equity, so that everyone can achieve the same results, it is essential that, in addition to the same opportunities, resources are provided that make the path fairer for those people who are harmed in the process.

Final remarks: continuing is necessary!

The discussions held during the research resulted in fundamental data and information for my study regarding women and the rural perimeter. In this context, it is important to emphasize the importance of the experiences provided by the internship for teacher training, both for the construction of the personal and professional identity of future pedagogues (LIMA, 2008). The sharing of knowledge, experiences and lessons learned during the internship activities allowed me to expand and deepen my knowledge and horizons on the gender perspective and feminist rurality.

In view of this, the choice of resources, which would be used during the activities, were essential so that they did not cease to be playful and that knowledge was built, but not in a monotonous way, as usually happens in education in school spaces. In this sense, having thought of a didactic that favored learning, while allowing people to feel part of that space and process, contributed positively to the achievement of the project's objectives.

In turn, the workshops promoted important reflections and debates based on the life stories, personal knowledge, places and conceptions of beauty of the research collaborators. Getting to know their struggles as women and residents of the rural community allowed me to further understand the relevance of empowerment for building autonomy, self-esteem and independence. Empowering myself with them in this process was exceptional for my training as a professional and person.

It is concluded, preliminarily, that the dialogues about this theme need to permeate all possible spaces and scenarios. We can no longer allow women to remain without access to knowledge of issues that involve their well-being and quality of life. When it comes to rural women, this scenario is even more worrying because, as we saw in the course of the work, in addition to the subsequent difficulties of gender inequality, they also face mishaps due to social conditions. Given these assumptions, reflecting closely on the female rural community has become important and necessary.

Furthermore, I intend to deepen my studies on the subject with the aim, above all, of continuing the struggle aimed at building a more just, sensitive and humane society. Accordingly, education is still our best tool to break with the culture of oppression, violence and domination that we women are subjected to. In short, discussions and reflections on female empowerment and gender equity contribute to the denaturalization of servitude and the discontinuation of sexist, sexist and discriminatory practices existing in society.

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