

**LABOR ANALOGOUS TO SLAVERY: THE IMPORTANCE
OF THE PSYCHOLOGIST'S ROLE IN THE WORKER'S MENTAL HEALTH**

**TRABAJO ANÁLOGO A LA ESCLAVITUD: LA IMPORTANCIA DEL PAPEL DEL
PSICÓLOGO EN LA SALUD MENTAL DEL TRABAJADOR**

**TRABALHO ANÁLOGO À ESCRAVIDÃO: A IMPORTÂNCIA DA ATUAÇÃO DO
PSICÓLOGO NA SAÚDE MENTAL DO TRABALHADOR**



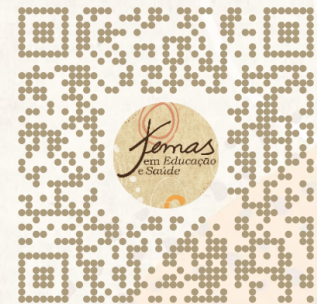
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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to critically analyze and reflect on how the lack of a more humanized look and actions towards the worker can contribute to causing severe damaging consequences to mental health. Although we have abolished the slave system, we still see reflections of that dark past, marked by degrading conditions, cruelty, and total affront and violation of the human rights of individuals. The present research aims to carry out an investigation-research through a descriptive and qualitative bibliographic review for reflection and criticism on the historical trajectory of slave labor, in addition to exploring the context of the mental health of the worker up to the present moment. As a result, to point out the large number of workers that, throughout history, have been submitted to situations of work analogous to slavery, to analyze mental health and the importance of the psychologist in this context.

KEYWORDS: Labor analogous to slavery. Mental health. Humanized look.

RESUMEN: *El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar críticamente y reflexionar sobre cómo la falta de una mirada y actuación más humanizada hacia el trabajador puede contribuir a provocar graves consecuencias nocivas para la salud mental. Aunque hayamos abolido el sistema de esclavitud, aún vemos reflejos de ese oscuro pasado, marcado por condiciones degradantes, crueldad y total afrenta y violación de los derechos humanos de las personas. La presente investigación tiene como objetivo realizar una indagación-investigación a través de una revisión bibliográfica descriptiva y cualitativa con el propósito de reflexionar y criticar la trayectoria histórica del trabajo esclavo, además de explorar el contexto de la salud mental del trabajador hasta la actualidad. Como resultado, señalar la gran cantidad de trabajadores que a lo largo de la historia han sido sometidos a situaciones de trabajo análogas a la esclavitud, con el objetivo de un análisis de la salud mental y la importancia del psicólogo en este contexto.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Trabajo análogo a la esclavitud. Salud mental. Visión humanizada.

RESUMO: *O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar criticamente e refletir sobre como a falta de um olhar e ações mais humanizadas para o trabalhador podem contribuir para causar graves consequências danosas à saúde mental. Apesar de termos abolido o sistema escravocrata, ainda vislumbramos reflexos daquele passado sombrio, marcados por condições degradantes, pela crueldade e total afronta e violação dos direitos humanos dos indivíduos. A presente pesquisa tem como objetivo realizar uma investigação-pesquisa através de uma revisão bibliográfica descritiva e qualitativa para fins de reflexão e crítica sobre a trajetória histórica do trabalho escravo, além de explorar o contexto da saúde mental do trabalhador até o presente momento. Como resultados, apontar a grande quantidade de trabalhadores que, ao longo da história, foram submetidos a situações de trabalho análoga à de escravo, com o objetivo de uma análise da saúde mental e da importância do psicólogo neste contexto.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Trabalho análogo à escravidão. Saúde mental. Olhar humanizado.

Introduction

Work analogous to slavery is the clearest antithesis of dignified and humane work that exists, the current forms of slavery violate the precepts of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), instituted in 1948 after the end of World War II. Brazil abolished the slave system in 1888 through the *Lei Áurea* (Golden Law) signed by Princess Isabel, which definitively prohibited slavery, the slave trade, punishment, and inhuman and degrading treatment; however, in Brazil, it is still possible to find people in situations analogous to slavery, under the most varied forms of exploitation, living inhumanly.

According to a publication on the Ministry of Labor's website, in 2022, approximately five hundred workers were rescued in conditions analogous to slavery, from the most diverse regions of Brazil, who received severance pay and compensation for the inhumane way in which they were treated, even though many still live in this situation (BRASIL, 2022a).

The present work aims to carry out an investigation-research through a bibliographic review for reflection and criticism about the historical trajectory of slave labor, its subsistence, and degrading conditions that many still live in today; also to explore and analyze the socio-historical context of the mental health of the worker until now, highlighting the importance of the psychologist's role in the valorization of the mental health of the worker and the humanized look of the companies for the same. The basis of this research is to analyze the socio-historical context of the worker's mental health in the country through the understanding of the contributions of relevant authors in the theme, highlighting the importance of the figure of the psychologist in the work context and in the worker's life to try to prevent possible somatic disorders and diseases arising from the oppressive and unequal relations in the work context, as well as to promote a better quality of life given their physical and mental health.

As for the methodology of this work, qualitative research was carried out using the literature review method according to the researched theme. The development of this research is presented in chapters; in the first chapter, we discuss the history of labor since its emergence until today. In the second chapter, we seek to emphasize labor analogous to slavery, punctuated by publications in the news media and actions by public authorities, situations, and facts that prove the existence of the slave system today and of people subjected to it in all kinds of degrading, inhumane, and undignified labor. In the third chapter, we bring contributions from two authors who are references on the subject: Karl Marx and Michel Foucault, who portray the organizational mechanisms and power relations that permeate the world of work, as well as the suffering and physical and mental illness resulting from it, respectively. The fourth chapter

presents proposals and experiences of some professionals, such as José Bleger, on the possibilities of interventions in the prevention and promotion of mental health until we get to the psychologist's role before a model of integral care that he calls Psycho-Higiene. Finally, we end with the final considerations and claims emphasizing the need and importance of the work and performance of the professional psychologist with such demands and the list of references that guided this work.

Revisiting the history of work

Work originates in man himself, integrating his needs for survival as a human being. During prehistory, especially in the Chipped Stone Age, man improved his work by learning to make tools with stone splinters, tree bark, and large thorns, and he became able to transform nature and seek multiple forms of food and satisfaction with other basic needs. As new forms of work emerged, new power relations also emerged, and those who held this power introduced slave labor, which subsisted for several centuries, being entirely exploited since the construction of the pyramids in Egypt, during the Roman Empire, in colonial Brazil, for example, and in other various parts of the world where the economy was based on extraction and the logic of profitability. It is worth clarifying that the word work, acquires some meanings throughout history, according to Albornoz (2017, p. 9, our translation):

In Portuguese, although there is labor and work, it is possible to find in the same word both meanings: that of performing a job that expresses you, that gives social recognition and remains beyond your life, and that of routine and repetitive effort, without freedom, of consumable results and inevitable discomfort.

The author attributes two meanings of the word work; on one side, positive expresses joy, and on the other, a routine and repetitive situation in which many workers live. While for some, work is just a form of subsistence, for others, it is an opportunity to do something that will bring personal and social satisfaction. But regardless of the direction, it can offer conditions for personal growth or psychological illness.

In this sense, bringing it into the context of our language, the word work originates from the Latin *tripalium*, an instrument with iron tips used by farmers who beat wheat, ears of corn, and flax (ALBORNOS, 2017). Work has always existed in our society, only differing in each stage of life. In the first stage, it brings with it the effort of nature to gather fruit from trees, catch fish from rivers, and hunt animals for the sustenance of man and his family. In the

secondary stage, men invented or discovered agriculture, the conquest of new areas for planting, thus arise the notion of property and product, and in this case, conditions are created for the existence of social classes, which separates the one who owns the work from the one who is idle, (ALBORNOZ, 2017).

Also, according to Alborno (2017), this separation of labor was the practice of war, in which the people conquered in battle, that is, the defeated were enslaved by the winners, being subjected to the lowest category of the hierarchy of the winning people. Thus, in ancient times, slavery began as one of the first forms of worker exploitation.

Thus, the "slaves" were not considered subjects, but objects, subjected to hard work, without considering their physical and mental health, which their owners could sell them, trade them, or even take their lives. At that time, there was still nothing to discuss regarding the worker's mental health. In this way, the conception of work was molded in each historical context. As Villela (2010) states, the historical path of work began with slavery, one of the forms of human exploitation, until it reached the industrial revolution, work went through several transformations until it acquired the nature of rights close to those we have today.

The evolution and consolidation of labor laws in Brazil and in the world

The period of labor law in Brazil began with the abolition of slavery and the proclamation of the republic (1889), contributing to the subsequent emergence of Brazilian labor legislation (NASCIMENTO, 2007). In the period of transition from slave labor to wage labor, the formation of Labor Law (DT) suffered many internal and external influences, which were of great importance for this evolution to occur in Brazil. The internal influences can be highlighted in the labor movement, which had anarchist inspirations, such as numerous strikes in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when there was an industrial upsurge as a consequence of World War I, this upsurge occurred due to the increase in the number of factories 12,000 and 300,000 workers; and the labor policy of Getúlio Vargas (1930) (NASCIMENTO, 2007). Due to the influences of the transformations that occurred in Europe in the labor field, Brazil and other countries promoted the development of labor laws and specific legislation to protect the worker. In 1919 Brazil joined the International Labor Organization (ILO), created in the Treaty of Versailles, to verify the labor standards (NASCIMENTO, 2007).

During this period, our country was still suffering from the aftermath of the end of World War I. Many European immigrants also arrived at this time, bringing with them a desire to

change their lives, new opportunities, and better working conditions. The Crisis of 1929, also known as "The Crash of the New York Stock Exchange," spread to the world's four corners. This crisis hit the Brazilian economy hard, generating unemployment and financial difficulties for the population all over the country. Such events aroused the Brazilian people's desire for change in work and quality of life; thus, the regulations on Labor Law came soon after the revolution of 1930.

From the 1930s on, Brazil went through significant changes until the promulgation of the constitution in 1934; this was the first Brazilian charter to deal with Labor Law. The 1934 Constitution brought important social advances for workers: it established the minimum wage, the eight-hour workday, weekly rest periods, paid annual vacations, and compensation for dismissal without cause. About the 1934 constitution, Sérgio Pinto Martins (2013, p. 11, our translation) points out

The 1934 Constitution is the first Brazilian constitution to deal specifically with Labor Law. It is the influence of social constitutionalism, which in our country only came to be felt in 1934. It guaranteed freedom of association (art. 120), wage isonomy, minimum wage, eight-hour work day, protection of women's and minors' work, weekly rest, and paid annual leave (§ 1º of art. 121).

In 1937 the new constitutional charter was granted, marked by an interventionist posture of the State before it adopted a liberal stance towards labor organizations. Beyond this period, in 1943 was promulgated the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT), approved by Decree-Law No. 5452 and sanctioned at the time by President Getúlio Vargas, CLT was the result of a long process of struggle for labor rights, which endured terrible working conditions. According to Sérgio Pinto Martins, the CLT only brings together the existing norms in an orderly manner (CEZAR, 2008, p. 19). In 1966 it was created the FGTS-Severance Indemnity Fund, under Law No. 5.107 on September 13, after that came the 1967 constitution, without many changes, kept labor rights.

In 1988, the National Constituent Assembly promulgated the Federal Constitution of Brazil, known as the Citizen Constitution, establishing the dignity of the human person, and labor rights, among other rights. The 1988 Constitution guaranteed and ensures Brazilian workers social rights and the exercise of citizenship, highlighting the protection against slave labor, degrading forms of work, as well as the workload, and the freedom of any work exercise. The employee who previously had no law that ensured their rights is now supported by the constitution, as described by Delgado (2019, p. 928, our translation):

In an exemplary way, the Constitution of the Republic seized this new reading about the working day and working hours and the role they play in the construction and implementation of a consistent occupational health policy. That is why the 1988 Constitution wisely listed the "reduction of risks inherent to work, using health, hygiene, and safety norms " as a workers' right (art. 7, XXII).

It is understood, therefore, that the worker, who before was considered just an object, without value, without dignity, acquires greater importance, being seen as a human being in their totality. The new constitution gave prestige and strengthened union autonomy and freedom of organization, extended to public servants. It also made the right to strike constitutional for private and public sector workers and weekly paid Sunday rest.

Modern-day work in conditions analogous to slave labor and the mechanisms to combat it

As we saw earlier, we currently have laws that guarantee the protection of labor rights; according to the "International Labor Organization (ILO), we must promote opportunities for men and women to have decent work, quality, equity, security, and human dignity. Slave labor was one of the forms of exploitation, where blacks and Africans were brought to work on the plantations as enslaved people, as reported by Camino (2004, p. 39-40, our translation):

The history of Brazil is marked, in the colonial and imperial periods, by the slavery of black Africans, brought through trafficking, in its most degrading page. The importance of blacks in the economy and, fundamentally, in the cultural formation of the Brazilian people. They are generously present in everything, although the submission of more than three centuries still reverberates in the segregation of poverty and veiled racial prejudice.

One can infer, then, that in that period cited by Camino (2004), the enslaved people lived in the most degrading living and "work" situations, there was intense suffering and humiliation, and they were submitted to the cruelest and most critical forms of treatment possible. According to the ILO, labor analogous to slavery is the newest form of modern slavery and can include debt bondage, human trafficking, and other forms of forced labor; putting an end to this problem requires the commitment of the authorities, and the engagement of workers, employees, as well as international organizations and civil society. Thus, the most common form of contemporary slave labor is found in rural areas, where the so-called "cats" lure workers for labor. At first, those who go to the fields find themselves in precarious subsistence conditions; hunger, misery, and the lack of basic sustenance for their families make them

desperate and eager for any activity that can provide them with any kind of improvement, so they are easily lured into the fatal trap:

These cats recruit people in regions far from where they will provide services or in boarding houses located in nearby cities. In the first approach, they show themselves as pleasant, with good job opportunities. They offer work on farms, with a guaranteed salary, room, and board. To seduce the worker, they offer "advances" for the family and guarantee free transportation to work. The transportation is done by buses in terrible conditions or by improvised trucks without any security. When they arrive at the job site, they are surprised by situations entirely different from those promised. To begin with, the cat informs them that they are already in debt. The down payment, transportation, and food expenses during the trip have already been written down in a "notebook" of debts that will remain in the cat's possession (SUZUKI, 2016, p. 246, our translation).

Thus, after being deceived and contracting debts impossible to be paid, they are subjected to inhumane conditions of health, hygiene, stay/ dwelling, and safety. Often far from their families, these workers are more fragile and more likely to be dominated. Therefore, it is observed that the denomination of work analogous to slavery still permeates our national territory, as explained by Audi (2006, p. 76-77, our translation):

Contemporary slavery in Brazil then persisted and still insists, more cruelly and subtly than the one abolished by Princess Isabel in 1888. Modern enslaved people are disposable people with no added value to production—simply they cost nothing, are worthless, and therefore do not deserve, according to purely economic logic, any care or guarantee of their lives.

As cited by Audi (2006), this new model of slavery brings devaluation to the worker and, for the employer, the guarantee of fewer costs since they represent mere objects for profit. Slave labor has been molding itself to the new economic realities, no longer as it used to be, but still in a degrading and violent way; it presents itself in various forms of violation not only of the worker's freedom but also of his physical health and especially his mental health.

In an article by the Ministry of Labor (MT), many of the workers who are subjected to slavery come from rural areas, from very low-income families, and from regions far away from those where they are enslaved. These men and women follow such paths because they face countless difficulties due to their precarious education and technical knowledge, resulting in the impossibility of their inclusion in the labor market in commercial and industrial centers, including areas of civil construction. Even so, many people suffer daily and continue in this life analogous to slavery until someone denounces it or the Ministry of Labor inspectors finds them, the following transcript, as an example, was extracted from the Inspection Reports of the

Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE) and illustrated the modes of exploitation of the worker submitted to the work model that we can call "modern slavery": "Labor Inspection Auditors of the Regional Superintendence of Labor in Pernambuco (SRTb/PE) rescued a domestic worker submitted to conditions analogous to slavery for 43 years, she was delivered to the employing family when she was 11 years old, around 1979, the father agreed with the employing family that in exchange for his daughter he would receive a monthly sum of money. The worker cleaned and organized the house and washed clothes but later became a nanny; the worker reported that "She dedicated part of her childhood to working in the house and says that she never received toys as presents on her birthday or at Christmas. Her entire adolescence was also dedicated to caring for the home and the employer's children, a fact that permeated her adult life when, in addition to the previous jobs, she began to accumulate the function of nanny to the grandchildren of the employer couple and to care for the family dogs.

Article 149 of the Brazilian Penal Code identifies work in conditions analogous to slavery through four specific conducts; they are a) subjection of the victim to forced labor; b) exhaustive work day; c) subjection of the victim to degrading conditions; d) restriction of any means of locomotion of the victim due to a debt contracted with the employer or representative.

The Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE) has the institutional mission to promote the development of citizenship in labor relations, striving for excellence in carrying out its actions and aiming for social justice. Article 626 of the CLT establishes that "The competent authorities of the Ministry of Labor and Employment, or those who exercise delegated functions, are responsible for inspecting the faithful fulfillment of the labor protection norms.

Contributions of socio-historical authors

Karl Marx's Alienation of labor

Karl Marx built his approach on how social and historical processes occur that result in structural societal changes. Thus, the social division of labor is central to his analysis. Marxist thought analyzes the concept of alienated labor when a man does not identify himself in human labor relations, and there enters the process of alienation; so according to Mészáros (2017, p. 20, our translation):

In the alienation of the object of work, it is only summed up the alienation in the activity of work itself [...] the result is external to the worker [...] it does not belong to his nature; therefore he does not firm himself in work, but denies himself [...] he does not freely develop physical and mental energies, but

exhausts himself physically and ruins his spirit. Consequently, the worker feels himself only outside of work, while he feels himself outside of himself at work. Thus, his work is not voluntary but imposed it is forced labor.

Marx states that the worker is alienated and estranged in his activity of productive activities, it is evident that the product of labor becomes alien to its producer since he has no access to it. "If his activity is martyrdom, then it must be fruition for another and joy of living for another. Not the gods, not nature, only man himself can be this strange power over a man" (MARX, 2015, p. 86, our translation).

For Marx (2015), this relationship of labor with the worker also develops the appropriation relationship of capitalism (owner of work) with the products of labor, in the same way, Marx understands the relationship of wages with labor, "for wages are only a necessary consequence of the estrangement of labor" (MARX 2015, p. 88, our translation). Therefore, according to the author, in capitalism, a contradiction is expressed by producing use values and exchange values, capitalism appropriates the surplus labor time produced by the working subjects, converting this part of the labor time performed, beyond what is necessary, in what Marx names "surplus value"; the wage never corresponds to what the worker produced, it only serves to the worker to supply his basic needs with goods to be able to continue working. In the work *Capital*, Marx analyzes production processes and points out a situation that was noticeable at the time of the industrial revolution; in capitalism, "surplus labor" is formed, that is, a portion of labor given to the boss, "surplus value" resulting from the increase in the work day beyond what the worker needs to survive; Marx describes the surplus value in two modalities: absolute surplus value which is summarized as an increase in the work day and relative surplus value resulting in a decrease in the time spent to perform the work, in short, surplus value is the expropriation of labor, how the bourgeoisie accumulates capital.

In the chapter titled "*Machinery and Big Industry*," Marx describes the technological process through machinery in the means of production, which, he says, made it possible for women and children to enter the factories. The author states that the machine system recovers losses and obtains surplus value. Thus, under the judgment of the capitalist, machinery is employed systematically to "squeeze" the subjects in the face of the volume of work in the same period, the speed of the machines, and the addition of machines under the responsibility of the same worker (MARX, 1996, p. 20).

The importance of looking at Marx from the perspective of Mészáros (2017) is that in capitalism, man is nothing but a fraction of himself, where work, being his only possibility of

objectification, does not belong to him. So that all work is fragmented, exploited, and alienated. We understand that the concept of alienation, as conceived by Marx, is difficult to apply today, but this does not mean that alienation has disappeared. On the contrary, we believe that it has been accentuated.

The Power Relationship in Michel Foucault's Work

In this sub-chapter, we will address the context of the power relations that emerge from the reality of work analogous to slavery in Brazil; such a relationship takes place between the employer and the employee, and the focus is on the experience of many Brazilians who still live under exploitation and deprived of their dignity; work analogous to slavery "is no longer defined by racial exploitation nor do whipping chains symbolize it, and the senzala, but it equally diminishes the dignity of the human being" Mello (2005). According to the same author, the floggings and chains were replaced by mistreatment, poor working and hygiene conditions, deprivation of freedom by the threat of weapons, and the senzalas (accommodation for the enslaved people) by lodgings made of straw, canvas, and hammocks. An artifice typical of the present day to keep the worker in a system of captivity - "the debt."

However, to understand this power relationship, Foucault, in his works *Watch and Punish*, as well as in *Microphysics of Power*, gives a narrative about the history of prisons and the power established first by the control over the supplicated body and, later, modified by the most severe punishments. In the XVI and XVII centuries, the forms of punishment appeared as pain and suffering, exposed to physical pain on the body, at that time when the person condemned for some situation was sentenced to death, before death, he was tortured and killed criminals in a public square to propagate the power of the king before his subjects; (BONIN; PANATTA; ABELO, 2016). Corroborates with this narrative Foucault (2013, p. 31-32, our translation):

What is torture? Painful corporal punishment, more or less atrocious, added: "it is an inexplicable phenomenon, the extension of the imagination of men to barbarity and cruelty. [...] Punishment is a technique and should not be equated with the extremes of a lawless rage. A punishment, to be a torture, must [...] in the first place produce a certain amount of suffering which one can, if not measure exactly, at least appreciate, compare, and rank; death is a torture insofar as it is not simply deprivation of living, but the occasion and the final term of calculated graduation of sufferings.

It is understood that, since the 16th century, the way to exercise power over other people was by causing suffering and pain; physical pain, and torture, thus, the punishments revolved around forced labor, the condemned always bound by chains, demonstrating the power of the state over the body. Nowadays, the scenarios have changed, however, the power relations remain the same, at that time, the bourgeoisie and the sovereigns controlled and ruled over the proletariat; today, we have people with a specific power who dominate a group of people. In the situation in which we live today, we see the employer dominating the employee, who finds himself in a position where he needs to work to support his family, or because he is in debt or even because of hunger. Foucault, in his book *Microphysics of Power*, according that one cannot have power over the subject through the mind if there is not already power over the body, a body that generates the wealth of capitalist production:

[...] society's control over individuals does not operate simply through consciousness or ideology but begins in the body, with the body. It was in the biological, somatic, and corporal that capitalist society invested first of all [...] (FOUCAULT, 1979, p. 80, our translation).

The middle ages have the body as a source of wealth; an example is the industrial revolution. With the arrival of machines, people were forced to work for long periods, while those who were in power earned a lot, while those who only produced earned little. In addition, they suffered from physical exhaustion and poor health, besides emotional losses. Still, about the power mechanism, Foucault (1979, p. 119, our translation) points out:

A "political anatomy," which is also equally a "mechanics of power," is being born; it defines how one can have dominion over the bodies of others, not simply so that they do what one wants, but so that they operate as one wants [...]. Discipline thus manufactures submissive and exercised bodies, "docile" bodies. Discipline increases the body's strengths (in economic terms of utility) and decreases those strengths (in political terms of obedience).

According to Foucault (2013), power relations are a plot, a mechanism of power ("mechanics of power") that makes them submissive subjects, as he refers to "docile" that translates into "discipline that increases" production and profit decreases in very high proportions what he calls "politics of obedience" and that we can call psychosomatic-emotional suffering; which in the short term become physical symptoms resulting from the imbalance between demands and effort made.

There are still many Brazilians who are submitted to work analogous to slavery, dominated and submissive to such mechanisms because their bodies have already surrendered to this form of work, either by hunger or by debt, which makes them think that the only way to

pay their debts to the employer is to continue to work for him, even without pay, without adequate housing and food for a human being to live; in this context, a fundamental point arises: it is "necessary" that the State educates not only the body but also the mind of its citizens. Foucault points out that everything can be shaped by reason, by the discipline of the mind about its body, thus:

This universe leads us to understand that there is no "power in itself," but rather a power relation over the body and mind and that when it comes to the subject of this study, such power relations should contemplate that the psychic sufferer, the working subject, should be seen as a citizen, and as such, needs to experience ethical-solidarity power relations and social inclusion; and to understand that the worker who is subjected to slave-like conditions is a subject-citizen with rights and duties, but, above all, a human being. To close this text on Marx and Foucault, we can make an analogy between labor alienation and power relations, using the documentary "Island of Flowers" (1989) by the Rio Grande do Sul filmmaker Jorge Furtado, who presents the trajectory of a tomato from the cultivation field, its arrival in the intermediary commerce, its acquisition by the consumer who discards it in the garbage because it is spoiled; From the trash, it goes to the landfill on a plot of land on Flores Island, a place where several families live in conditions of social vulnerability and where guards guard a private pigsty.

What is extremely shocking is that the organic material dumped in the landfill is sorted, and the items in the best condition are fed to the pigs that are raised there; what the pigs don't eat is then given to low-income families who, although they are also human beings, are below the pigs on the preference scale simply because they don't have any money; the documentary illustrates a step-by-step how unequal the relationship between human beings is in the capitalist system. The analogy woven there is a triple alienation beginning with the pigsty owner for "expropriating" the organic content of the waste and using violence to dominate it; the workers who guard the pigs are heavily armed and prevent their impoverished human counterparts from having access to food through intimidation and fear. The low-income families that feed on the dirt are subjected to mockery, contempt, and humiliation since they are incapable of even fighting for their freedom and dignity, perhaps even preferring death to the degrading subjection and reduction of their human value to less than a pig; this is the picture many find when we are faced with working human beings in a situation analogous to slavery in our country.

Slave labor and psychological suffering

Addressing issues related to worker health has been a constant concern for the social sciences in recent decades. Laurell and Noriega (1989) and Dejours (1987) address the issue of worker attrition, premature aging, pathological fatigue syndrome, sleep disorders, fatigue on sexuality, chronic stress, and other effects attributable to the organization of work in the capitalist mode of production.

When we talk about illness, we think of something associated with something more serious, like depending on medical help or a hospital. For Tamanini (1997), the category of suffering is used in different senses and may have antagonistic meanings. On a concrete level, suffering means physical illness, headache, and high blood pressure. At the abstract level, it is allied to psychic aspects, goes beyond the limits of experience of physical illness, and provides cognitive elements. In this sense, suffering acquires multiple meanings, "strength" and "weakness", vulnerability, determination, fear or courage, awakening positive or negative emotions.

Santos (1999), in a study about the crew embarked in the Merchant Navy, verified that the family assumes a role of utmost importance in the life of the worker, the main defensive mechanism used by workers to face it being its distance the primary source of psychological suffering and the focus on work, such fact is proven in many workers in situations analogous to that of enslaved people who, away from their families, tend to suffer psychically. Initially, stress arises with manifestations of anxiety and nervousness, later, in the face of powerlessness to transform such conditions, physical and mental diseases arise as ways of stress expression; Prado (2016, p. 287, our translation) describes the phases of stress and the symptoms of each phase until the onset of the disease:

[...] stress produces defense and adaptation reactions to the stressor agent, classified into alarm phase, resistance, and exhaustion. The alarm phase begins with the stressful stimuli that provoke a quick response from the organism (fight and flight). [...] In this phase, the changes observed in the organism include increased heart and respiratory rates, blood pressure; contraction of the spleen; release of glucose by the liver; blood redistribution, and dilation of the pupils. In the resistance phase, the individual tries to adapt to the new situation to reestablish the internal balance because the organism presents greater wear and tear, memory difficulties, and is more vulnerable to diseases. The most commonly observed symptoms are muscle tremors, physical fatigue, discouragement, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and emotional instability. Finally, the exhaustion phase consists of the extinction of resistance due to failures in the adaptation mechanisms. It is considered the most critical condition related to stress because, after repeated exposure to the same stressor, the organism can develop serious diseases or even collapse.

Another occupational disease well recognized is the burnout syndrome (ICD 10 - Z73); the Ministry of Health (BRASIL, 2022b) defines it as "professional burnout syndrome, an emotional disorder with symptoms of extreme exhaustion, stress, and physical exhaustion resulting from stressful work situations, which demand a lot of competitiveness or responsibility". The symptoms of Burnout reported by Zanatta and Lucca (2015) can be psychosomatic, psychological, and behavioral and generally produce negative consequences at the individual, professional, and social levels.

Results showed the occurrence of Burnout in people with apparently adjusted and balanced personalities until they came into contact with specific work environments. The author's Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) reported that Burnout is defined as a psychosocial phenomenon; Maslach and Leiter (1997, p. 18) stated that "Burnout is not a problem of the individual but of the social environment in which he/she works".

According to Carlotto and Câmara (2008), burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low work performance are the three dimensions that develop and can be characterized as a syndrome. Burnout syndrome is only one of the occupational diseases, many others can be developed as a reaction to emotional stress. When working on issues related to psychological suffering and, consequently, the pathologies resulting from it, we want to point out that contemporary slave labor is potentially this source of "pain and sickness"; some report that the term "slave labor" should be used only to designate a model that is about effectively obtaining the right to property over others. And even in institutional spaces, the term "slavery" can be fought by authorities who bring the idea of slavery from the colonial period, of the use of chains, whips, and forms of punishment and prohibition of people leaving their work environments, accepting only the picture of absolute subjection.

However, as Kevin Bales (2012 *apud* BARROSO; PESSANHA, 2018, our translation) states, the "new contemporary slavery" is natural and is all around us. For these authors, poverty is still the common denominator. Among the criteria are these individuals' vulnerability, weakness, and deprivation. "Give certain, we can see that the enslavers are fully aware of the weakness of the enslaved, and, in their actions, end up adapting an old practice to the new global economy" (BALES, 2012 *apud* BARROSO; PESSANHA, 2018, p. 234, our translation).

When we talk about the psycho-physical-emotional elements that generate pain, suffering, and illness in the worker, we want to highlight that this reality of the world of work is enhanced to workers in conditions analogous to slavery. In finalizing this theme, we want to

highlight an excerpt from the preface of the book *Psychodynamics of Work: Theory, Methods, Research* by Ana Magnólia Mendes (2007) by Christophe Dejours, the pioneer in studying and presenting the issues "silenced" by the worker in the realm of psychopathology and psychodynamics of work, problems that permeate the daily lives of men, women, and children in conditions of existence and work analogous to slavery.

Practices to promote the mental health of the worker

The issue of workers' mental health is currently one of the most pressing demands for worker health services. According to Leão and Gomez (2014), there is an increasing number of complaints about moral harassment and psychological violence, as well as reports of constant and lasting dissatisfaction, fatigue, uneasiness, and suffering, and more severe and acute manifestations that lead to depression, post-traumatic stress, professional neurosis, and even suicide.

Given the above, the World Health Organization (WHO) created 2007 a Global Worker Health Action Plan (2008 - 2014), "which had as its centrality to raise applied health policies, develop epidemiological indicators, create mechanisms for collecting and studying evidence in the area and articulate intersectoral policies and pacts in the field of worker health" (LAVOR-FILHO et al., 2021, p. 492). Indeed, there are many concerns when talking about worker mental health, and therefore as a proposal to integrate worker health, one strategy is the implementation the Worker Health Surveillance, understanding that suffering and emotional illnesses arise in the corporate relations of work with the subjects. For example, Leão and Gomez (2014) point to the issue of mental health, which can be the main factor of an intervention action or one of the dimensions to be contemplated in the surveillance process, the central focus is mental health, and the processes of interventions aim to evaluate the entire work system, considering the environment, processes, equipment, worker characteristics, activities, flows, management, organizational culture, among others; all these skills are fundamental and a performance that aims to reduce the manifestations of suffering.

For Leão and Gomez (2014), a work organization (OT) is understood not as a place, an institution, or an environment but as the ways of composing the work process, the technical and social arrangements that standardize behaviors, establish goals, objectives, targets, culture, values and that mobilizes, frames and forms subjects, mentioning that this way, it is necessary a careful analysis, observations of work relationships, how the management processes work in

each type of sector, if there is a management that cares about the quality of life at work programs. In addition, Worker's Health policies that integrate the integrality principle in the issues concerning Mental Health must observe the current configurations presented for the work. These point to greater risks of accidents, contamination, and diseases, both the classic and the new forms of harassment, production pressures, threats, and job insecurity, that is, they are all forms of "violence that produce psychosocial conditions of worker illness. The Organizational and Occupational Psychologist has been transforming, going beyond the "limits" imposed by the Industrial Psychology developed in the post-war period towards a broader perspective that will face the several challenges imposed by the current world of work. In the same way, Bastos, Yamamoto, and Rodrigues (2013) suggest that the professional psychologist who works in an organization or any other branches within the scope of work needs to deal daily with the worker's health, acting to ensure better working conditions, valuing and promoting prevention practices and promotion of physical and mental health within the scope of humanization and quality of life; and, we can add: with Psycho-Hygiene methods.

When dealing with the issue of work, we understand it as a human activity, directed by his will and by conceptual thinking, which has both individual and collective character, whose purpose is aimed at the transformation of nature to satisfy the basic and complex needs of the subject; however, at the same time, while operating and transforming nature, man is also changed by it.

After a brief analysis of the history of labor and its main forms of exploitation throughout this historical trajectory, from its origin, evolution, and transformations during the French and Industrial Revolutions, the consequent changes that occurred in its division and organization, the conquests concerning labor rights and respective legal norms, we are faced with forms of contemporary slavery, which is no longer classified only as a way to restrict the freedom of the worker as it was in the past; however, currently, it is characterized by the reduction to "slave-like conditions" when men and women are imposed forced and degrading work, without the minimum protection and respect to their dignity as workers.

Labor analogous to slavery is, above all, a violation of the dignity of the human person, because the situations of contemporary slave labor are closely linked to poverty, marginalization, social inequality, lack of public policies to reinsert the worker in the labor market, and the lack of opportunity offered to people to have a decent job. Consequently, in a context of extreme need, men and women, often even consciously, end up subjecting themselves to precarious jobs and being subjected to such inhumane practices. Considering the

study approached here and built through the bibliographical survey and the literature researched, it is clear that it is of utmost importance to debate and discuss the importance of the mental health of the worker in all areas and the psychologist's practice together with state and federal governmental institutions, and with organizations such as "Pastoral da Terra³", "Trabalho escravo nem pensar⁴", through a psychosocial-educational and cultural praxis with emphasis on the integral health of the subjects egressed from the slavery system.

It has been observed that despite the evolution of Labor Laws, which have undergone many changes and transformations, many engage in criminal practices to expropriate and maintain poles of workers subjected to slave-like conditions. These facts are exposed to us through the news media, through denunciations and actions of the public authorities such as the Ministry of Labor, Regional Labor Superintendencies, and the Federal Police in raids and rescues of people subjected to slave-like labor in our country, seen as mere objects, treated without any dignity, inhumanely and having their citizens' rights violated.

In conclusion, it is essential to highlight the role of social-historical psychology, emphasizing the mental health field, whose professionals are not alone, but act in a multidisciplinary team equipped with technical-scientific and psychological knowledge, aiming at the prevention and promotion of the subject's health. Their intervention with the worker, both in the organizations in general and those from the slaveholding field, meets the biopsychosocial model in the aspects of "Psycho-Hygiene," considering the subject in its totality in the spectrum of welcoming and humanization.

³ Supporting and advising rural workers in claiming their rights, guaranteeing access to and permanence on the land sustainably, balancing with natural resources, and reducing violence and impunity in the rural zone were the focuses of the proposal presented.

⁴ It has the objective of decreasing the number of workers recruited to slave labor and submitted to conditions analogous to slavery in the rural and urban areas of the Brazilian territory through education.

Final considerations

After a brief analysis of the history of labor and its main forms of exploitation throughout this historical trajectory, from its origin, evolution, and transformations during the French and Industrial Revolutions, the consequent changes that occurred in its division and organization, the achievements concerning labor rights and respective legal norms, we are faced with forms of contemporary slavery, which is no longer classified only as a way to restrict the freedom of the worker as it was in the past. However, nowadays, it is characterized by the reduction to "slave-like conditions" when men and women are imposed forced and degrading labor without the minimum protection and respect for their dignity as workers.

Labor analogous to slavery is, above all, a violation of the dignity of the human person because the situations of contemporary slave labor are closely linked to poverty, marginalization, social inequality, lack of public policies for the reinsertion of the worker in the labor market, and the lack of opportunity offered to people to have a decent job. Consequently, in a context of extreme need, men and women often even consciously end up subjecting themselves to precarious jobs and being subjected to such inhumane practices.

It has been observed that despite the evolution of Labor Laws, which have undergone many changes and transformations, many engage in criminal practices to expropriate and maintain poles of workers subjected to slave-like conditions. Facts, which are exposed through the news media, through denunciations and actions of the public power such as the Ministry of Labor, Regional Superintendencies of Labor, and the Federal Police in incursions and rescues of people subjected to slave-like labor in our country, seen as mere objects, treated without any dignity, in an inhumane way and having their citizens' rights violated.

In short, it is important to highlight the role of sociocultural and historical psychology, its critical action and praxis aimed at human rights in the face of cultural, ethnical, racial, and gender diversities, and how they enclose the psychologist's action, highlighting here the mental health field, whose professionals are not alone, but act in a multidisciplinary team, equipped with technical-scientific and psychological knowledge. And aiming at preventing and promoting the subject's health, its intervention with the worker, both from the organizations in general and from the slavery field, attends the biopsychosocial model, in the "Psycho-Hygiene" aspects considering the subject in its totality in the welcoming and humanization spectrum.

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