



PSYCHOLOGICAL ILLNESS AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN PUBLIC SECURITY

ADOECIMENTO PSÍQUICO E SAÚDE OCUPACIONAL NA SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA

ENFERMEDAD MENTAL Y SALUD OCUPACIONAL EM LA SEGURIDAD PÚBLICA

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the challenges and impacts related to the occupational health of public security agents from a legal-social perspective, emphasizing their connections with human rights and constitutional principles. The research, theoretical and critical in nature, is based on the analysis of classical references, such as Foucault and Goffman, and contemporary studies on mental health and working conditions. It identifies that continuous exposure to risk, the culture of institutional invulnerability, and the absence of preventive public policies constitute a scenario of violation of fundamental rights, such as the right to health and dignity, guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of 1988. The lack of effective measures within the institutional scope not only compromises the psychological integrity of agents but also violates international worker protection norms, affecting the legitimacy and efficiency of corporations. It is concluded that strengthening public policies aimed at occupational health is essential to ensure a dignified work environment compatible with constitutional principles, in addition to promoting the effectiveness of the public security system. The study reinforces the urgency of an integrated approach that articulates prevention, psychological support, and the valorization of human rights.

Keywords: Occupational health. Public security. Human rights. Federal Constitution. Public policies.

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RESUMO

O artigo examina os desafios e impactos relacionados à saúde ocupacional dos agentes de segurança pública sob uma perspectiva jurídico-social, enfatizando suas conexões com os direitos humanos e os princípios constitucionais. A pesquisa, de natureza teórica e crítica, baseia-se na análise de referenciais clássicos, como Foucault e Goffman, e estudos contemporâneos sobre saúde mental e condições laborais. Identifica-se que a exposição contínua ao risco, a cultura de invulnerabilidade institucional e a ausência de políticas públicas preventivas configuram um cenário de violação de direitos fundamentais, como o direito à saúde e à dignidade, assegurados pela Constituição Federal de 1988. A falta de medidas eficazes no âmbito institucional não apenas compromete a integridade psíquica dos agentes, mas também infringe normas internacionais de proteção ao trabalhador, afetando a legitimidade e a eficiência das corporações. Conclui-se que o fortalecimento de políticas públicas voltadas à saúde ocupacional é imprescindível para assegurar um ambiente laboral digno e compatível com os princípios constitucionais, além de promover a efetividade do sistema de segurança pública. O estudo reforça a urgência de uma abordagem integrada que articule prevenção, suporte psicológico e a valorização dos direitos humanos.

Palavras-chave: Saúde ocupacional. Segurança pública. Direitos humanos. Constituição Federal. Políticas públicas.

RESUMEN

El artículo examina los desafíos e impactos relacionados con la salud ocupacional de los agentes de seguridad pública desde una perspectiva jurídico-social, enfatizando sus conexiones con los derechos humanos y los principios constitucionales. La investigación, de naturaleza teórica y crítica, se basa en el análisis de referentes clásicos, como Foucault y Goffman, y estudios contemporáneos sobre salud mental y condiciones laborales. Se identifica que la exposición continua al riesgo, la cultura de invulnerabilidad institucional y la ausencia de políticas públicas preventivas configuran un escenario de violación de derechos fundamentales, como el derecho a la salud y a la dignidad, garantizados por la Constitución Federal de 1988. La falta de medidas eficaces en el ámbito institucional no solo compromete la integridad psíquica de los agentes, sino que también infringe normas internacionales de protección al trabajador, afectando la legitimidad y la eficiencia de las corporaciones. Se concluye que el fortalecimiento de políticas públicas orientadas a la salud ocupacional es imprescindible para asegurar un ambiente laboral digno y compatible con los principios constitucionales, además de promover la efectividad del sistema de seguridad pública. El estudio refuerza la urgencia de un enfoque integrado que articule prevención, apoyo psicológico y la valorización de los derechos humanos.

Palabras clave: Salud ocupacional. Seguridad pública. Derechos humanos. Constitución Federal. Políticas públicas.

INTRODUCTION

Public security represents a fundamental pillar for preserving order and guaranteeing the fundamental rights provided for in the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988. However, the work of public security agents, who daily face highly complex and risky situations,

exposes these professionals to adverse psychosocial factors, often resulting in negative impacts on psychological and occupational health (Back, 2021; Minayo; Souza, 1997). Such conditions have implications not only for the individuals directly involved but also for the effectiveness and legitimacy of institutions in fulfilling their social function.

In this context, the present study proposes a critical analysis of the occupational health conditions of public security agents, with special emphasis on the psychological impacts resulting from the exercise of their activities and the gaps in public policies aimed at promoting mental health. This is an approach that articulates the dimensions of work, health, and fundamental rights, promoting an interdisciplinary reflection on the need to strengthen the protection of these professionals, in accordance with the principles of human dignity and administrative efficiency (Brasil, 1988).

The study is based on a theoretical and critical review, based on a doctrinal analysis and relevant academic productions on the factors influencing psychological illness and the responsibilities of public institutions in mitigating these risks. Furthermore, it aims to understand how the absence of adequate preventive mechanisms can constitute a violation of human and labor rights, aggravating the vulnerability conditions of these workers.

Structured in three parts, the article initially presents the psychosocial factors that contribute to psychological illness in the work environment. Next, in the second topic, it analyzes the challenges faced by public institutions in promoting occupational health, focusing on normative and organizational gaps. In its third topic, it discusses the relationship between occupational health and fundamental rights, highlighting the importance of a legal-institutional system that ensures the dignity and protection of public security professionals.

1 PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS IN THE WORK OF PUBLIC SECURITY AGENTS

The work of public security agents is inserted in a context of high complexity, where psychosocial factors play a central role in shaping an adverse work environment. These conditions are marked by the interaction of emotional, social, and institutional elements that often converge towards psychological illness. Among the main factors, the following stand out: constant exposure to risky situations, pressure for results, the culture of institutional invulnerability, emotional isolation, lack of adequate psychological support, and the stigmatization of seeking professional help (Back, 2021; Minayo; Souza; Constantino, 2007).

In addition to compromising individuals' mental health, the psychosocial impacts resulting from the work of public security agents have direct effects on organizational efficiency. Psychological illness, manifested through disorders such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, reduces the

responsiveness and productivity of professionals, negatively interfering in the provision of services to society. High turnover, the increase in the number of medical leaves, and absenteeism are organizational symptoms of a system that neglects comprehensive care for its workers. This reality not only weakens the legitimacy of corporations but also overloads agents on duty, generating a continuous cycle of vulnerability and inefficiency (Santos; Saturnino, 2023).

The organizational culture of public security corporations is marked by tacit norms that value emotional invulnerability and physical strength as indispensable attributes for professional performance. This view, still rooted in many institutions, reinforces the idea that demonstrating fragility or psychological suffering is incompatible with the role played by agents. This environment contributes to the silencing of emotional manifestations and hinders the early identification of signs of illness, perpetuating a cycle of psychological exhaustion (Cunha; Souza, 2022).

As described by Goffman (1974), public security corporations can be interpreted from the perspective of total institutions, in which disciplinary control and behavioral conformity are organizational imperatives. The depersonalization of the individual, necessary to meet institutional demands, promotes the emotional isolation of agents, who often find themselves deprived of interpersonal support networks and the ability to express feelings related to suffering. This isolation is aggravated by the disciplinary logic of constant surveillance described by Foucault (1999), which, although essential for maintaining order, creates an environment of continuous tension, harmful to mental health.

Moreover, many agents need to accumulate functions or perform informal work to supplement their income, reducing the time available for leisure activities, family life, and physical and emotional recovery. This dynamic aggravates psychological exhaustion and hinders the maintenance of a work-life balance (Minayo; Souza, 1997).

Traumatic experiences lived by agents, such as the death of colleagues on duty or the need to intervene in situations of great emotional impact, profoundly affect not only the individual but also their family and social relationships. Many professionals report difficulties in separating work experiences from the domestic environment, generating tensions in relationships and affecting family dynamics. This cumulative impact contributes to the worsening of psychological illness conditions and the perpetuation of psychological suffering within the family nucleus (Back, 2021; Futino; Delduque, 2020).

The search for psychological support within public security corporations is still marked by stigmas, making it difficult for professionals to access mental health services when necessary. The fear of reprisals, judgment by peers, and career setbacks are significant barriers that discourage seeking help. The insufficiency of structured institutional programs to deal with psychological

suffering contributes to the lack of assistance for agents, amplifying the negative consequences of their exposure to risk factors (Cunha; Souza, 2022).

The perpetuation of working conditions that neglect the psychosocial factors faced by public security agents represents an affront to the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of 1988, especially the rights to health and human dignity (Brasil, 1988). The absence of effective and preventive public policies not only aggravates psychological illness but also compromises the efficiency of security institutions, harming the fulfillment of their social function.

The analysis of psychosocial factors in the work of public security agents reveals the need for an intersectoral and interdisciplinary approach to face the problem. It is imperative that corporations advance in the implementation of institutional policies that integrate preventive actions and continuous support, recognizing the complexity of the work context and the need to preserve the physical and psychological integrity of their professionals. Only through an effective commitment from institutions and the State will it be possible to ensure dignified working conditions and full respect for the fundamental rights of these agents.

2 INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

The promotion of occupational health within the scope of public security is marked by structural, cultural, and administrative challenges that reveal institutional limitations in protecting the fundamental rights of agents. The right to health, enshrined in the Federal Constitution of 1988, is an inseparable element of the principle of human dignity and the valorization of work, ensuring workers conditions that preserve their physical and mental health (Brasil, 1988). However, the realization of this right in the work environment of public security agents faces significant barriers, resulting both from the absence of preventive public policies and from the perpetuation of an institutional culture that neglects care for the mental health of its professionals.

One of the main obstacles to promoting occupational health lies in the organizational culture of public security corporations. These institutions, historically oriented by the valorization of physical strength and emotional invulnerability, reinforce stigmas that inhibit the search for psychological support. For many agents, demonstrating vulnerability is interpreted as a sign of weakness or inability to perform their function, which generates silencing of manifestations of psychological suffering (Cunha; Souza, 2022). This culture, rooted in the rigid hierarchies of corporations, hinders the creation of spaces for reception and dialogue that could favor the early recognition of psychological disorders.

The lack of preventive strategies aimed at mental health constitutes a central problem. Most institutional initiatives are limited to reactive actions, aimed at assisting agents already in crisis, without systematic planning to prevent psychological illness. Such an approach disregards the cumulative nature of the risk factors faced by agents, such as continuous exposure to violence, chronic stress, and exhausting work hours. Studies indicate that the absence of preventive public policies amplifies the impact of work on mental health, compromising not only the quality of life of professionals but also the efficiency of corporations (Back, 2021; Futino; Delduque, 2020).

Even in corporations that offer psychological support programs, the availability of these services is limited by issues such as the inadequate location of care units, the insufficiency of specialized professionals, and service overload. These practical difficulties are aggravated by the cultural stigma associated with psychological care, which leads many agents to avoid seeking help, even when they show obvious signs of illness (Sousa, 2022). The absence of an accessible and inclusive system contradicts the constitutional precepts that determine that the work environment must respect human limits, preserving the physical and mental integrity of the worker (Brasil, 1988).

Public security institutions face significant difficulties in implementing public policies that meet the specific demands of occupational health. The lack of integration between mental health programs, the insufficiency of resources allocated to preventing psychological illness, and the absence of effective strategic planning reflect administrative weaknesses. Bureaucracy and the lack of training for managers hinder the execution of actions that promote the well-being of agents, reinforcing negligence in fulfilling institutional obligations (Back, 2021; Futino; Delduque, 2020).

The disciplinary logic described by Foucault (1999), characterized by constant control over the bodies and minds of workers, is reflected in the institutional environment of public security corporations. This control, associated with continuous surveillance and the imposition of rigid conduct norms, creates a permanent state of alert which, although necessary for the fulfillment of operational functions, is profoundly harmful to psychological health. Likewise, Goffman's theory of total institutions (1974) illustrates how the behavioral conformity demanded from public security agents promotes depersonalization and emotional isolation, factors that intensify the negative impacts of work.

Furthermore, the lack of specific training for managers and institutional leaders on the recognition and management of psychological suffering represents an additional obstacle. The lack of training prevents hierarchical superiors from identifying signs of illness in their subordinates, perpetuating negligent organizational practices. The lack of awareness also hinders the implementation of integrated actions that prioritize mental health as an essential component of institutional management (Futino; Delduque, 2020). This gap highlights the need for an intersectoral

approach that articulates occupational health care with the principles of efficiency and dignity provided for in the Brazilian legal system (Brasil, 1988).

In the legal field, the omission of corporations in implementing measures to protect mental health may constitute a violation of workers' fundamental rights. Negligence in ensuring a healthy work environment not only contradicts constitutional precepts but can also generate administrative and judicial liabilities. Labor lawsuits resulting from occupational illnesses are examples of how the absence of effective public policies entails significant costs, both for professionals and for the institutions themselves. The perpetuation of adverse working conditions compromises the legitimacy of corporations, weakening public trust and administrative efficiency (Back, 2021; Minayo; Souza; Constantino, 2007).

Given this scenario, it is essential that the State and public security corporations assume their responsibility in promoting occupational health, implementing comprehensive and accessible public policies. Such policies must prioritize the prevention of psychological illness, the strengthening of psychological support networks, and the creation of work environments that respect the dignity of workers. Only through structural and cultural changes will it be possible to overcome institutional challenges and guarantee working conditions compatible with the principles of dignity, efficiency, and justice that underpin the Brazilian legal system.

3 CONNECTIONS BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Occupational health, as an essential dimension for quality of life at work, finds its ethical and normative foundation in human rights. In the context of public security, the intersection between these two fields is particularly relevant, given that working conditions often expose agents to risks that compromise their physical and mental integrity. The Federal Constitution of 1988, in its article 1, item III, enshrines human dignity as a foundation of the Republic, establishing a legal framework that requires public institutions to commit to the comprehensive protection of workers' health, including in the occupational sphere (Brasil, 1988).

From this perspective, the occupational health of public security agents must be understood as a fundamental human right, intrinsically related to the principle of dignity. The adverse conditions faced by these professionals, such as exhausting work hours, exposure to violence, and the lack of adequate psychological support, constitute not only organizational challenges but also human rights violations that demand structural and normative responses. Negligence in ensuring dignified working conditions compromises the effectiveness of corporations and perpetuates a logic of devaluation that

contradicts constitutional and international precepts on human rights (Minayo; Souza; Constantino, 2007).

The protection of occupational health in the context of public security transcends national borders, being widely recognized as an obligation of States under human rights principles. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) affirm the right to decent work and health protection as fundamental pillars for social justice. Non-compliance with these norms not only weakens security agents but also compromises the international image of public institutions and society's trust in their legitimacy. The omission in promoting a healthy work environment perpetuates violations that reflect the disconnection between the legal commitments assumed by the State and daily institutional practices (Back, 2021; Brasil, 1988).

However, the reality faced by public security agents reveals a disconnection between the legal system and institutional practices. Studies indicate that the absence of effective public policies for promoting the mental health of these professionals reflects an omission by the State in fulfilling its obligations to ensure the right to health. Negligence in implementing preventive programs and continuous support constitutes a violation of the right to dignity, aggravating the psychological illness of agents and jeopardizing the efficiency of the public security system (Back, 2021; Futino; Delduque, 2020).

The protection of the occupational health of public security agents is also a matter of social justice, considering the essential role these professionals play in guaranteeing the fundamental rights of society. The contradiction between the institutional mission to protect rights and the working conditions that violate the rights of the agents themselves is a problem that highlights the need for structural reforms. The institutional logic that prioritizes operational results over the mental health of workers reinforces inequalities and perpetuates an unsustainable organizational model (Cunha; Souza, 2022).

From a theoretical point of view, the Foucauldian analysis of disciplinary practices offers a critical framework for understanding how public security institutions, by exercising rigorous control over the bodies and minds of agents, end up neglecting their subjectivity and vulnerability. Constant surveillance and the imposition of rigid norms, although essential for maintaining order, generate a work environment that compromises mental health and violates fundamental rights (Foucault, 1999). This organizational model, associated with the depersonalization described by Goffman (1974), intensifies the emotional isolation and dehumanization of agents, constituting a systemic violation of human rights.

At the international level, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and subsequent treaties recognize the right to decent work and health as essential pillars for the realization of social justice. These principles reinforce the obligation of States to adopt measures that ensure the comprehensive protection of workers, especially those who, like public security agents, work under high-risk conditions. In Brazil, the lack of alignment between institutional practices and international norms reveals a mismatch that compromises the legitimacy of corporations and public trust in security institutions.

The connection between occupational health and human rights becomes even more evident when considering the impact of agents' psychological illness on the efficiency of the public security system. The precariousness of working conditions not only violates the rights of professionals but also harms the quality of service provided to society. The psychological suffering of agents is directly reflected in their ability to perform their functions, generating consequences that affect both the individual and the collective (Minayo; Souza, 1997).

Nevertheless, it is imperative that public policies aimed at the occupational health of public security agents are structured based on human rights principles. The creation of preventive programs, the provision of accessible psychological support, and the awareness-raising of institutional leaders are fundamental measures to guarantee a work environment that respects the dignity of professionals. Thus, it is necessary for the State and corporations to assume their legal and moral responsibility in protecting the health of these workers, promoting an organizational culture that values the life and integrity of agents.

Therefore, the connections between occupational health and human rights in the context of public security highlight the need for an integrated and interdisciplinary approach that promotes the comprehensive protection of workers. By ensuring dignified and fair working conditions, institutions not only fulfill their legal and ethical obligations but also strengthen the efficiency and legitimacy of the public security system. The adoption of policies aligned with human rights principles is, therefore, an imperative for building a more just and balanced society.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of psychosocial factors and institutional challenges in the context of public security reveals a scenario marked by the precariousness of agents' occupational health and the absence of effective public policies to mitigate the psychological impacts resulting from professional practice. This study reinforces that occupational health must be understood as a fundamental right,

intrinsically related to human dignity and the State's constitutional obligations to ensure fair and safe working conditions.

The results of this work revealed that the institutional culture, strongly oriented by hierarchical norms and the valorization of emotional invulnerability, perpetuates practices that silence psychological suffering and hinder the implementation of preventive measures. The lack of accessible psychological support, combined with exhausting work hours and constant exposure to risk, constitutes a cycle of negligence that not only compromises the health of agents but also affects the legitimacy and efficiency of corporations. These factors reinforce the need for structural and cultural changes that privilege the comprehensive care of public security professionals.

From a legal perspective, the omission in guaranteeing working conditions that respect human limits constitutes a violation of fundamental rights, such as the right to health and dignity, provided for in the Federal Constitution of 1988. Negligence in implementing public policies aligned with the principles of social protection established by national and international legislation compromises the compliance of institutions with their legal obligations, generating administrative and judicial consequences.

This study contributes to the academic debate by highlighting the importance of integrating occupational health and human rights in the formulation of public policies aimed at public security agents. From a theoretical and critical review, it was possible to identify the main obstacles to promoting the mental health of these professionals, pointing out paths to overcome these barriers. Although the work was limited to a theoretical analysis, its conclusions reinforce the need for empirical investigations that deepen the understanding of the relationships between occupational health, institutional efficiency, and fundamental rights.

The protection of occupational health within the scope of public security is not only a matter of social justice but also an essential condition for the legitimacy of institutions and the effectiveness of their functions. The strengthening of institutional policies aimed at the mental health of agents must be a priority for the State and corporations, as a way to ensure not only the dignity of workers but also the full functioning of the public security system for the benefit of society.

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