LUMEN ET VIRTUS

Work-related mental disorders: A current overview in Brazil

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Gabriela Stocco Rodrigues[1], Guilherme dos Santos Lara[2], Nicolas Jose Suek Cechelero[3], Mariana Michalski Fagundes Cunha[4], Mariana Vieira Zanatta[5], Eliane Ferreira da Silva[6], Andressa Márjorye Amaral Krauss Hansen[7], Naiana da Silva Castro Rodrigues[8].

ABSTRACT

Common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety have a significant impact on the workplace and are the second leading cause of work-related illness. Work-Related Mental Disorder is characterized by symptoms such as easy crying and insecurity, caused by work-related risk factors. The relationship between work and health is complex and can influence quality of life and professional performance. Work-related mental disorders are a major cause of absence from work in Brazil, resulting in a need for health monitoring. The aim of this study was to identify the epidemiological profile of work-related mental disorders in Brazil. The time frame was the incidence of notifications from 2018 to 2023. A quantitative, retrospective and epidemiological methodological approach was used, showing the number of notifications of work-related mental disorders. The data was collected through the SUS Information Technology Department (DATASUS). For data collection, the variables in this study were distributed according to chronology, region of residence, age group, gender, color/race and schooling. The study reinforces the need to implement programs

[1] Graduating in Medicine from Estácio IDOMED College in Jaraguá do Sul
E-mail: gabrielastocco@outlook.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1902-965X
[2] Doctor, graduated from the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR)
E-mail: guilherme.slara@outlook.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2413-3905
[3] Doctor, graduated from the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR)
E-mail: nicolascechelero@hotmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4992-8300
[4] Medical student at Campo Real University Center
E-mail: marianafagundescunha@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2998-8847
[5] Graphic Designer, Graduated from the Federal Technological University of Paraná (UTFPR)
Graduating in Medicine from the Brusque University Center (UNIFEBE)
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4380-4585
[6] Master's degree in education from the Universidad Europea del Atlántico
Physiotherapist from Centro Universitário São Camilo
E-mail: nigredos@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0252-2952
[7] Physiotherapist studying for a master's degree in Educational Sciences with specialization in Adult and Paediatric Intensive Care at the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP)
Graduating in Medicine from Estácio IDOMED College in Jaraguá do Sul
E-mail: andressa.krauss@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-5451-9475
[8] Graduating in Medicine from the Souza Marques Technical-Educational Foundation
E-mail: naianacrodrigues@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5959-1321

and public policies that promote mental health at work, including prevention measures, early identification, appropriate treatment and professional rehabilitation.

Keywords: Work-related mental disorders, Workers' health, Mental health, Descriptive epidemiology.

INTRODUCTION

The International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), a global reference for classifying diseases and health conditions, covers mental and behavioral disorders. It defines mental disorders as a wide variety of conditions that affect people's psychological and behavioral functioning (1).

Common mental disorders (CMDs), such as depression, anxiety and substance use disorders, have a significant impact on the workplace. They represent the second leading cause of work-related illness and the leading cause of sickness absence. These conditions are frequent and can be disabling, leading to absenteeism and reduced productivity. In the context of occupational health, the psychosocial aspects of work have been the subject of studies, identifying factors that can lead to suffering and illness in the professional environment (2).

Work-Related Mental Disorder is characterized by symptoms that cause emotional distress. These symptoms can include easy crying, sadness, excessive fear, agitation, irritation, nervousness, anxiety, tachycardia, sweating, insecurity and others. These disorders are caused by work-related risk factors, which can be the result of the organization and management of the professional environment or exposure to specific toxic agents. Chronic exposure to psychosocial stressors at work is associated with psychosomatic complaints, psychiatric symptoms and changes in well-being (3).

The relationship between work and health is complex and depends on the psychosocial environment in which workers are inserted. These relationships can influence health, quality of life and work performance. When occupational stressors imbalance the demands of work with the resources available to cope with them, occupational stress can emerge as an adaptive mechanism. However, prolonged stress can lead to significant changes, affecting quality of life and resulting in serious functional disabilities (4).

Work-related mental disorders (WRMS) are an important cause of absence from work and have significant impacts on the personal and professional lives of workers in Brazil. Often, this situation results in an existential void for individuals, leading to the need for follow-up by health services. It is essential that the worker is listened to and can restore their identity and biopsychic conditions, in order to resume their work activities or even redefine their professional path (5).

Given the above, in order to clarify correlations between the emergence of psychiatric disorders and work activities, this study aims to establish relationships between the variables of the epidemiological aspects of TMRT notifications between the years 2018 and 2023.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive epidemiological study of reported cases of mental disorders caused by work in Brazil between 2018 and 2023. Its sources are the Notifiable Diseases Information System (SINAN), stored in the system of the IT department of Brazil's Unified Health System (DATASUS).

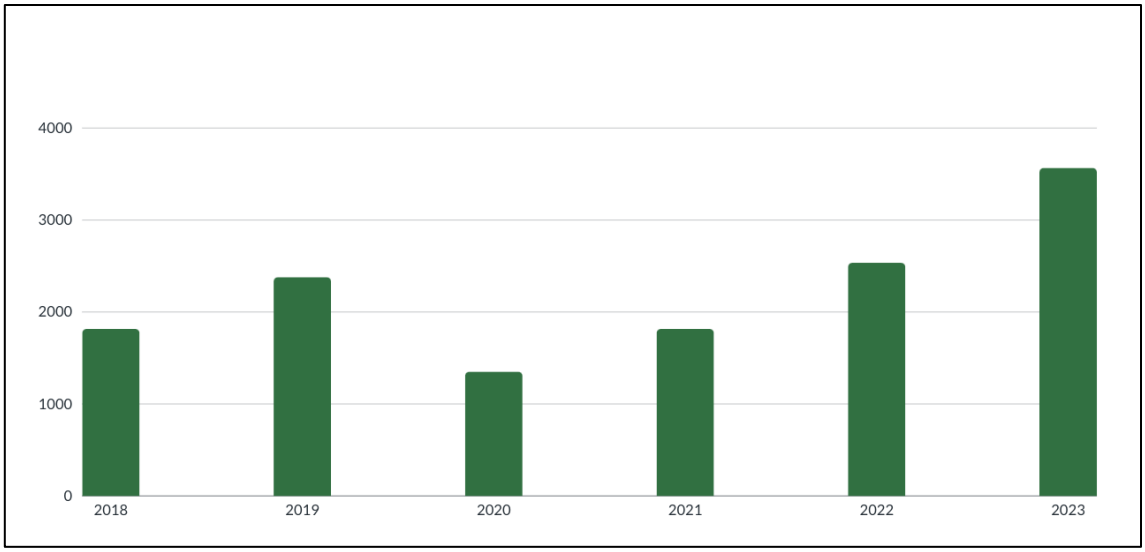
For data collection, the variables in this study were distributed according to chronology, region of residence, age group, gender, color/race and schooling. The data obtained from SINAN was compiled into new tables in the Microsoft Excel program for later analysis. Information was also obtained from the SCIELO and GOOGLE ACADÊMICO databases, using the keywords “work-related mental disorders”, “epidemiological profile” and “observational study”.

Since secondary data in the public domain was used, in accordance with item III of Resolution 510/20168, there was no need to submit the project to the Research Ethics Committee.

RESULTS

There were 13,464 notifications of work-related mental disorders in Brazil between 2018 and 2023. The highest number of diagnoses was recorded in 2023, at 3,567 (26.49%). The year 2020 represented the lowest number of diagnoses with 1,351 (10.03%).

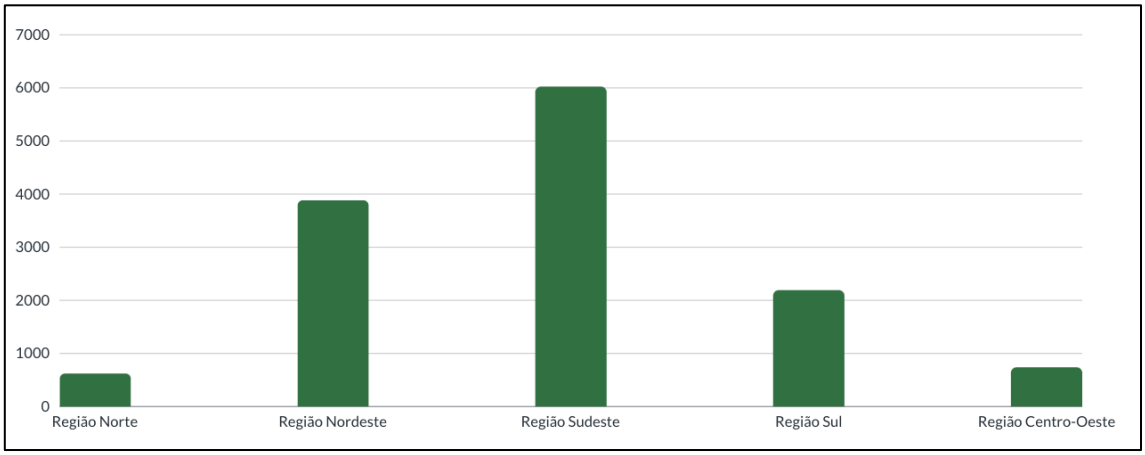
NOTIFICATIONS SECOND YEAR OF NOTIFICATION



Source: Ministry of Health/SVSA - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net

The region with the highest number of residents diagnosed was the Southeast, with 6,025. The total number of cases of work-related mental disorders in the Southeast of Brazil, which is made up of the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo, corresponds to 44.7% of the total number of reported cases. However, the region with the lowest number of cases for the same period was the North, with 623 cases, representing 4.62%.

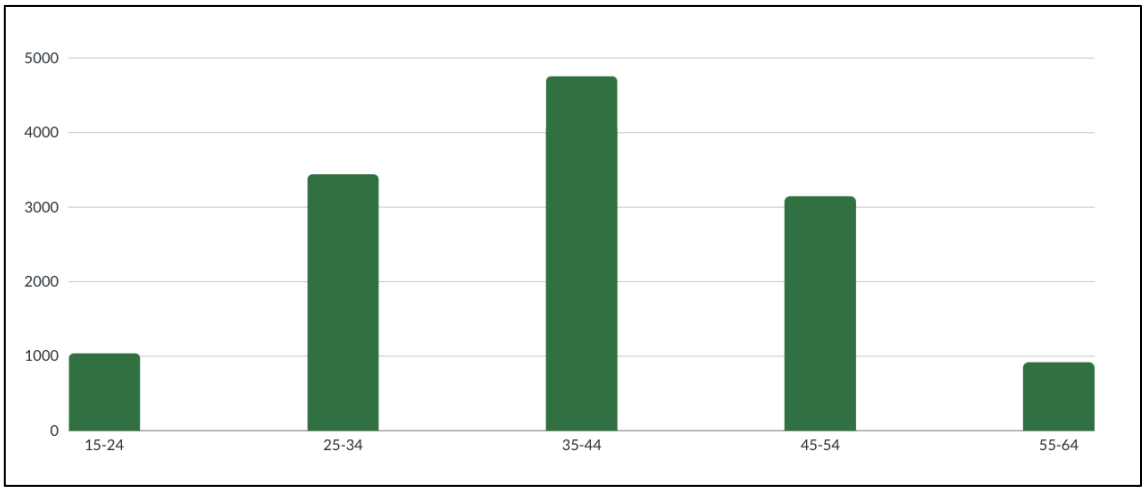
NOTIFICATIONS BY REGION OF RESIDENCE



Source: Ministry of Health/SVSA - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net

The age group with the highest number of notifications was 35 to 44 years old, with 4,759 cases (35.34%). This was followed by the 25 to 34 age group, with 3,443 cases (25.57%), and then the 45 to 54 age group, with 3,147 cases (23.37%).

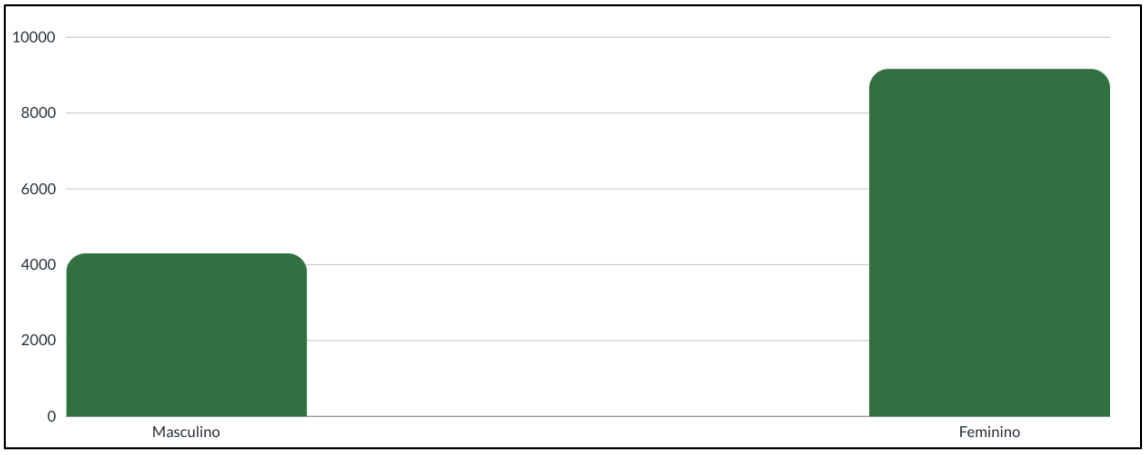
NOTIFICATIONS BY AGE GROUP



Source: Ministry of Health/SVSA - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net

The most affected individuals were female, with 9,164 cases, representing 68.06%. Males had 4,299 cases, representing 31.94%.

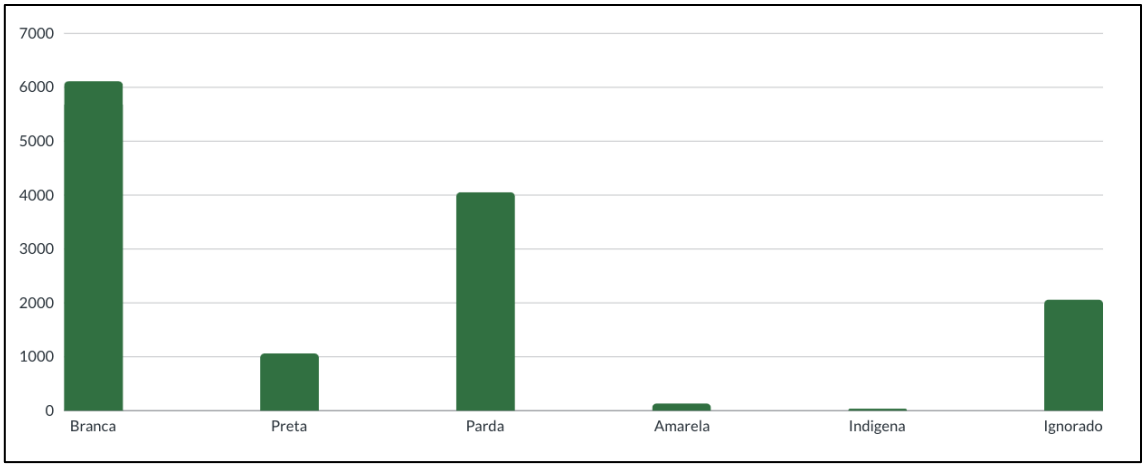
NOTIFICATIONS ACCORDING TO GENDER



Source: Ministry of Health/SVSA - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net

White people registered 6,114 cases, representing 45.40%. This data shows the prevalence of work-related mental disorders in mainly white individuals, followed by brown individuals with 4,054 notifications, making up 30.10%. However, there were 2,062 cases in which no information was obtained as to the color/race of the patients affected.

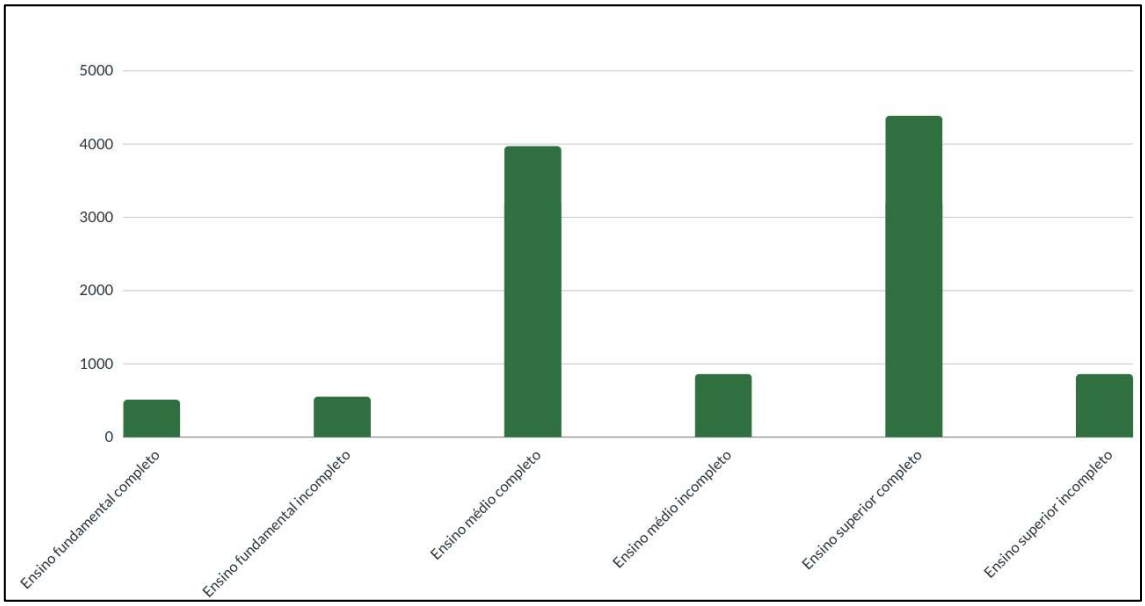
NOTIFICATIONS ACCORDING TO COLOR/RACE



Source: Ministry of Health/SVSA - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net

According to the level of education, the most affected individuals were those with completed higher education, totaling 4,387 (32.58%). This was followed by individuals with completed high school education, totaling 3,947 (29.31%). However, there were 2,399 cases with no identification of education level.

NOTIFICATIONS ACCORDING TO EDUCATION LEVEL



Source: Ministry of Health/SVSA - Notifiable Diseases Information System - Sinan Net

DISCUSSION

In the last five years, Brazil has recorded 13,464 notifications of work-related mental disorders, with a significant increase of 165% between 2018 and 2023. The year 2023 stands out with the highest number of cases (3,567), while 2020 had the lowest (1,351). Despite the improvement in reporting, the numbers are still underestimated, highlighting the need for greater attention to mental health in the workplace.

The Southeast has the highest number of cases (44.7%), while the North has the lowest (4.62%). This disparity reflects the different socio-economic realities and specific challenges of each region.

The most affected age group is 35 to 44 years old (35.34%), followed by 25 to 34 years old (25.57%) and 45 to 54 years old (23.37%). This shows the impact on the country's economically active and productive population.

Women are the most affected, accounting for 68.06% of cases, compared to 31.94% of men. This disparity may be related to various factors, such as work overload, structural sexism and gender inequalities in the labor market.

White people have the highest prevalence of cases (45.40%), followed by brown people (30.10%). It is important to note that the intersectionality between gender, race and other factors must be taken into account when analyzing the data.

Individuals with completed higher education are the most affected (32.58%), followed by those with completed secondary education (29.31%). This relationship may be associated with the higher level of demands and pressure at work, as well as responsibility for leadership positions.

CONCLUSION

This study, based on notification data for work-related mental disorders in Brazil between 2018 and 2023, provides a comprehensive overview of cases in the country, highlighting their prevalence, geographical distribution and patient profile.

Based on the results obtained, we can conclude that work-related mental disorders continue to be a public health problem in Brazil. Between 2018 and 2023, 13,464 notifications were recorded. The year 2023 had the highest number of cases.

The Southeast concentrated the highest number of notifications, accounting for 44.7% of the total. This suggests that the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo face a mental health challenge.

Demographic data is also relevant. Women were more affected, accounting for 68.06%. The white race was the most prevalent among the patients, with 45.40% of the cases. The most affected age group was 35 to 44 years old, with 35.34%.

The data from this study reinforces the need to implement programs and public policies that promote mental health at work, including prevention measures, early identification, appropriate treatment and professional rehabilitation. Combating the stigma associated with mental disorders and ensuring access to quality mental health services for all workers are essential measures to reduce the impact of work-related mental disorders on the lives of individuals and society as a whole.

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