

"HANDS TIED" – STRATEGIES FOR MEDIATION OF THE SUFFERING OF ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE BRAZILIAN FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE



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ABSTRACT

Organizational and work psychologists have a strong potential to contribute to workers' health, given the nature of their activity. Despite this, the literature lacks investigations on their subjective work experience. The objective of this study was to analyze their strategies of mediation of suffering in the face of the resistance of the real of work. A qualitative research was carried out through semi-structured interviews with nine organizational and work psychologists working in Brazilian federal agencies. The data were submitted to content analysis based on two theoretical categories arising from the psychodynamics of Dejours' work, which guided the study. The results demonstrate that POT servers are in a defensive movement, significantly adapted and, to some extent, contributing to the adaptation of the others. Denial and rationalization are the most used defense strategies, in addition to the search for support in the collective and the use of jokes in the workplace. To face reality, they use practical intelligence to transgress and divert from the direct attendance of the impositions of the organization of work; they collaborate with each other much more to resist than to transform the elements of the organization of work that give rise to suffering; they use the public space to exchange and find solutions, without rebelling against the potentially sickening elements of the organization of work. In addition, the recognition of beauty by peers is incipient, with a greater record of recognition of usefulness by managers and clients. Subjective mobilization appears limited by managerial precariousness and, thus, the strengthening of work collectives for a counterpsychology that confronts the managerialism that crosses contemporary work is called.

Keywords: Public Administration, Mediation Strategies, Organizational Psychologist, Suffering.

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INTRODUCTION

Brazil is one of the 10 countries with the longest workweek in the world (MONITOR MERCANTIL, 2023). It means that a good part of our time is invested there, in labor. For the psychodynamics of work (PDT), more than producing a service or product, working is producing oneself and living together, in a tangle of intra and inter-psychic relationships that engage the body (physically, affectively and cognitively) to face the real and meet the prescribed, entering all spaces of life – beyond work (DEJOURS 1999, 2012, 2013, DEJOURS *et al.*, 2016, GERNET; DEJOURS, 2011). Even in poetry, the impact of work on the production of oneself becomes a stanza: "And if today I am fortunate, I owe to work what I am!", says Olavo Bilac (1929, p. 107).

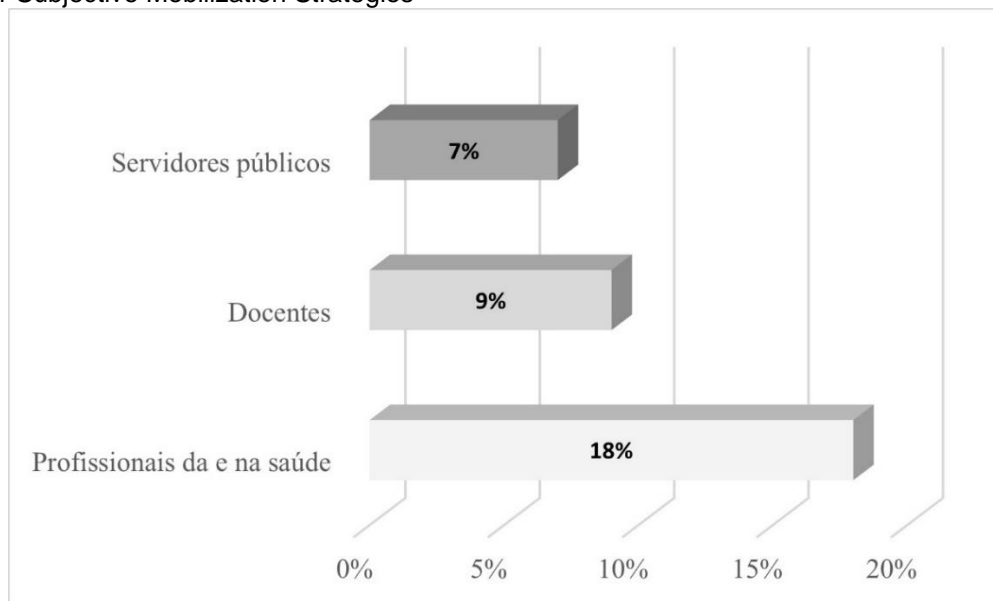
In this way, in the encounter with work, suffering and pleasure walk together, in a dialectical perspective, making living work the construction of the self, transformation of the world and objectification of man's intelligence and ingenuity (DEJOURS, 1998, 2011, FREITAS; GHIZONI, 2024). In filling the gaps between the prescribed and the real and in the face of suffering, the subject uses strategies, consciously or unconsciously, to protect the psychic apparatus and ensure balance (MORAES, 2013c). When the strategies aim to minimize the perception of the factors that affect suffering, contributing, to some extent, to better support them, we have defensive strategies; conversely, when strategies are aimed at transforming the elements that give rise to suffering, engaging the body in the sense of its transformation into pleasure, there are coping strategies – notably, subjective mobilization, a basic element for the psychodynamics of work (MENDES; DUARTE, 2013a; MORAES, 2013c).

Investigating how workers mediate suffering to avoid illness and maintain health is a strong source of interest in studies based on PDT. An example of this is that the first *stricto sensu graduate conclusion works* on subjective mobilization or defensive strategies date back to 1997 (almost three decades ago). When it comes to subjective mobilization, there are 46 papers available in the theses and dissertations database of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES: <https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/catalogo-teses>); As for defensive strategies, there are 142.

When analyzed separately, as a professional category, public servants (not including teachers) are the most studied in the theme of "subjective mobilization", representing 24% of the total number of studies identified. Health professionals, including nurses, community

agents, emergency staff, and the like, represent 21% of the total studies on defense strategies. Looking globally, health professionals are the most studied category in terms of strategies for mediating suffering, followed by teachers and public servants. Figure 1 illustrates the data.

Figure 1 - Distribution of the Three Most Studied Categories in *Stricto Sensu* Graduate Term Papers Involving Defensive or Subjective Mobilization Strategies



Source: Adapted from the CAPES Thesis and Dissertation Catalog (<https://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/catalogo-teses>).

From this perspective, it deserves our special attention that, in almost 30 years, only three studies that touch on mediation strategies address professionals who work in people management (ANDRADE, 2022; BARBIERI, 2012; LÚCIO, 2022). Refining the look at the category of organizational and work psychologists, only Lúcio (2022), who addresses subjective mobilization, and Barbieri (2012), who approaches defensive strategies, have this professional as a research subject. Lúcio (2022) provided the opportunity to listen in order to identify the impacts of technological advances in the design of the function for the performance of the most traditional processes – recruitment, selection, training, and development. Barbieri (2012) addressed the subjective experiences of psychologists who work in private companies, from the perspective of psychodynamics.

Therefore, it is justified to enable listening and dialogue to organizational and work psychologists, given their strong potential to contribute to workers' health, since, when assigned to people management units, their performance crosses the work of the other members, as a whole, in view of the nature of their training, directed to care, and their

prescribed work (FEDERAL COUNCIL OF PSYCHOLOGY, 2022, RODRIGUES; FREITAS, 2023).

In addition, as can be seen from figure 1, the Brazilian public service is a fertile field for investigation when it comes to the relationship between man and work. In our case, particularly, the interest is due to the impacts of the Administrative Reform, which began in the late 90s and introduced strong changes in the management model, with the introjection of techniques characteristic of the private initiative for efficiency gains (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 2008). It is natural that the transformations in management would have resulted in a change in the way people are managed, with the reformulation of policies (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 1998), modulated by the neoliberal ideals of productivity, seduction and self-responsibility (GAULEJAC, 2007; HAN, 2014).

Moved by the illusion of freedom and towards hyperproduction, the neoliberal subject undertakes itself, with the mind being its productive force, in an unrealistic perspective of permanent optimization of the self, which produces exhaustion (HAN, 2014; PINEDA, 2021). Precisely because of this context, from a critical perspective, it is necessary to call on the organizational and work psychologist to problematize the tensions in subjective work experiences, in an action that goes beyond the mere technical performance of maintaining the organizational devices that alienate work (PINEDA, 2021).

In line with this critical perspective and directed to the reality of the Brazilian public service, Rodrigues and Freitas (2023) identified that the prescribed work of the organizational psychologist in Brazilian federal agencies includes the management of health, quality of life, and safety at work, even if, crossed by managerialism, in a function design with an adaptive bias and seduction to self-coercion. The subjective experiences of these professionals also present the crossing of managerialism in the real organization of work, which subsidizes a performance that maintains organizational devices, contributing to the adaptation of those assisted through the immediate relief of suffering (either by moving the assisted person to another area of assignment, or by enabling their leave for health treatment) – without direct intervention in organizational factors (RODRIGUES; FREITAS, 2024).

In order to broaden the understanding of the subjective experience of the civil servant in the POT area in the Brazilian federal public service, the objective of this study is to analyze the mediation strategies used in the face of the resistance of the real work.

MEDIATION OF SUFFERING AT WORK IN THE LIGHT OF DEJOURS' PSYCHODYNAMICS

When we talk about mediation strategies, we are signaling two types of movements used by the worker in the face of reality: the defense movement in which, unconsciously (individually or collectively), efforts are made to minimize the perception of suffering, promoting adaptation to the organization of work; and the coping phase in which, intra and intersubjectively, efforts are made to transform suffering, promoting change in the real organization of work (DEJOURS, BÈGUE, 2010; MORAES, 2013c). In time, the organization of work, a fundamental concept for psychodynamics, refers to the description and division of tasks and mechanisms of control and inspection of their execution – including the hierarchization of men at work (ANJOS, 2013).

For Dejours, living work is related to the production of mental health, since it is in this movement (of resisting the domination of the prescribed organization) that man is fertilized, acquiring skills, developing intelligence, experiencing the expansion of feeling and the enjoyment of pleasure that mediate self-fulfillment, recognition, the construction of identity and, therefore, of mental health (DEJOURS, 2008a; DEJOURS *et al.*, 2016). And, if living work – and the processes of subjectivation engendered in it – contributes to the production of mental health, in the opposite sense, the suffering, inherent to work, can also contribute to illness, when experienced in a pathogenic way.

In the management of strategies – defense or coping – the worker ends up finding ways to go through suffering (DEJOURS, 2011; MORAES, 2013c). Therefore, when suffering mobilizes the subject to solutions to the impasses that arise, there is creative suffering that enables the resignification of the work relationship and with work, promoting pleasure. On the other hand, when the resistance of the real overcomes the subjective processes that underpin work, making mediation with the organization of work and the exercise of ingenuity unfeasible, the experience of failure enhances suffering and can compromise the worker's health – pathogenic suffering (MORAES, 2013a).

Thus, the suffering that the reality of work brings with it summons the subject to action, either to adapt and submit to the pressures of the organization of work – which, in the medium and long term, can lead to illness – or to resist and transform it (DEJOURS, 1998). The movement of adaptation is brought about by defensive strategies. Dejours (1994, p. 128) clarifies that they operate by "euphemizing" the perception of the reality that causes suffering, in the sense of ensuring that it is endured; occur unconsciously,

individually or collectively, and, in some way, lead the subject to believe that he is in an active position in the face of reality, even if he does not transform it – either by provoking or minimizing its elements. Thus, they provide a precarious balance between suffering and the defenses that disguise it, contributing to resistance to change and to conforming to the organization of work and its pressures (DEJOURS, 1998).

In another sense (that of transforming), subjective mobilization is the process of creating the subject, of rescuing the meaning of work through the engagement of the body (affective, physical and cognitive) to cope with reality and maintain mental health; it is a process that is based on the use of subjective resources, on the collective work and on the dynamic contribution-retribution (MENDES, DUARTE; 2013a). According to Mendes and Duarte (2013b), it is made up of four elements that are conditioning factors between them: practical intelligence, public space for discussion, cooperation and recognition.

Practical intelligence is the intelligence that results from cognitive and affective engagement for the transgression of what is prescribed, in a work organization flexible enough for the exercise of autonomy. She is ingenious, cunning, creative; it is based on experience and, beyond it, creates the new, rationalizing energy and suffering in achieving the objectives of the work (VASCONCELOS, 2013).

The space for discussion, in turn, is the one made possible by the work collective, free of censorship and based on a relationship of trust, in which the worker can reflect, problematize and elaborate on his experience, supporting the construction of the bond, solidarity and cooperation that subsidize the collective mobilization for health at work and the change in the organization of work (MERLO *et al.*, 2013). The collective is this social construction, founded on cooperation, based on the practical intelligence of each one and the formatting of agreements, pacts, rules and commitments to solve the problems of the activity arising from the real (LIMA, 2013a).

Thus, cooperation, as collective mobilization, is this spontaneous commitment to do together, to collectively find solutions integrating individual intelligences and contributions; it is, therefore, based on deep relationships of trust and exchange that are unveiled in the public space of discussion (LIMA, 2013a; GHIZONI, 2013).

Finally, recognition has the power to strengthen the worker's identity and works as symbolic retribution for the subject's engagement. It is made possible through judgments about the usefulness of the worker's contribution, conferred by the boss, subordinates, customers, recognizing the doing; and by beauty, conferred by peers, attesting to the

conformity of the work, with the consequent belonging to the professional group, and also the uniqueness of the worker's contribution through originality, recognizing the being (LIMA, 2013b).

Therefore, it is in the light of this theoretical contribution that the mediation strategies in the face of reality used by organizational psychologists in the work in the Brazilian federal agencies were described and analyzed, contributing to the understanding of the coping with suffering by this professional category.

METHOD

It is an applied research with a qualitative approach (FLICK, 2004; TRIVIÑOS, 1987). It is a work that met the standards of Resolution No. 466/12 (MINISTRY OF HEALTH, 2012) and is under the umbrella of the project "Work, Mobilization and Subjectivity", submitted to the analysis of the CEP/UCB and approved under protocol No. 2,397,958.

The inclusion criteria established to compose the participants were:

- Be a psychologist in a specific position in the organizational and work area;
- To act in bodies and entities of the direct, autarchic and foundational federal administration, subject, therefore, to the statutory regime and part of the Civil Personnel System of the Federal Administration (SIPEC).

The choice of participants was made with the interference of the researcher's judgment, characterized as non-probabilistic (MATTAR, 2001). The first step was to locate agencies that had held a contest of this nature and, for this, extensive research was carried out on an open portal on the internet, specialized in the theme of public tenders. The second step was to publicize the survey to the employees of the agencies that had held a contest that could be included, sending an invitation by e-mail to the personnel management units. The third step was the wide dissemination of the study on social networks (WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Instagram), clarifying the objectives of the research, methodology and communication channel for the expression of interested parties – that is, an e-mail created specifically for this purpose (vivenciaspotservicopublico@gmail.com).

Once we received the manifestations of the interested parties, we articulated the signing of the Informed Consent Form and the scheduling of the interview, carried out by videoconference, with audio and video recording. Thus, nine semi-structured interviews

were conducted (GIL, 2019), whose research theme and triggering questions are expressed in table 1.

The data collected resulted in the recording of almost 12 hours, submitted to transcription with scientific rigor, followed by content analysis by BARDIN (2011). The interviewees report their work experiences in nine public organizations, most of them (eight of them) higher education institutions, and in the average time in office of six years.

For content analysis, the data were categorized by semantic criterion, into categories defined *a priori*, arising from the theoretical contribution of the psychodynamics of work (BARDIN, 2011), which are: defense strategies and subjective mobilization. For the purposes of the survey, the interviewees will be named E 1, E 2 and so on, respecting the order in which they were heard.

Table 1 - Correlation Theme Object of Investigation *Versus* Questions Formulated in the Interview

Theme	Question
Strategies for mediation of suffering at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a typical working day. • What do you think and feel about your work? • How do you cope with difficulties at work? • Do you have a collective or support network that helps you cope with issues related to your professional activities? • How does this collective act in support? • What is the organization's expectation of your work (delivery and behavior)? And what is your expectation? • What factors lead you to believe that you have achieved the results of the work?

Source: Prepared by the authors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SUFFERING AND DEFENSE STRATEGIES

According to Moraes (2013b), defense strategies act through the denial of the elements that cause suffering, in the sense of psychic protection and maintenance of the subject's functioning, ensuring performance and some level of balance and calibration, which maintain the *status quo*. This means that the worker uses subjective resources, individually and collectively, to disguise the perception of suffering, to maintain normality – and not illness.

In the case of organizational and work psychologists, suffering crosses work twice: by the nature of the activity – analyst of men's behavior at work; and by its human nature – a working being, subject to organizational and managerial issues (PINEDA, 2021):

It's not always easy, because we get swallowed up in relation to the demands and the organization expects you to deliver. (E 2)

A very welfare-oriented, very paternalistic thing. He (the assisted) wants to talk, talk, talk. "I just wanted to let off steam!" They get up and it's okay, that's what he managed to do. At times it is very frustrating and at other times you become "perplect" (as the meme says), "perplécta" with what is happening, in the year it is happening. (E 9)

The PDT advocates that, in the face of suffering, denial and rationalization are the most frequently employed defense strategies. The first trivializes the obstacles and blames the individual for failure, promoting subjection to the organizational discourse; and the second justifies the obstacles, ensuring the protection of the organization of work (DEJOURS 2008b; MORAES, 2013b). Thus, one of the first strategies observed in the discourse of organizational and work psychologists was rationalization, through the normalization of factors that generate suffering.

I think there are many factors involved in this that have nothing to do with the choice of requirement or not of the institution, I think we have a question of lack of personnel, chronic, right? (E 1)

Be aware that things are not so fast and that everything is fine, as long as we are walking. (E 8)

It is possible to perceive a movement to justify factors of suffering as resulting from the nature of the public service (bureaucratic slowness, the overload resulting from the lack of personnel caused by scrapping, among others), safeguarding the civil servant from the burden of intervention in the organization of work, as if the action were out of his reach – which, ultimately, contributes to the maintenance of organizational devices.

Management is a difficult place to be, sometimes you have to show the server in something that is not your fault, it is not because of your malice, but... (E 7)

It should be noted that rationalization goes hand in hand with negation, since justifying reality collaborates, in some way, to the denial of suffering:

I'm not going to die for this, it's not just me who has this difficulty. (E 1)

[T]he people are sucked in a lot, for doing many operational activities, which are not the strategic psychologist's... I think this generates frustration in many people, for me it's easy, I have no problems doing operational activities. (E 5)

So, being in people management is knowing that you won't make it, that you'll have a negative return, a lot of people will complain to you about a lot of things. And sometimes, you really know how to deal with it, right? ... I'm aware of that and that's very good, because I don't get frustrated [laughs]. (E 8)

The defense, therefore, ensures adaptation, maintaining the psychic balance to meet the performance standard recommended by the organization (DEJOURS, 1994). In any case, it is a tenuous balance, like a fragile line between not getting sick and alienation, which is far from the production of health. And regarding health, it should also be noted that denial and rationalization seem to have an adaptive role at the intra- and interpsychic level, that is, not only in the work collective, but reaching the assisted people themselves.

To explain better, since the prescribed role of the psychologist places him in the attribution of intervention in the situations of suffering experienced by the other workers, in this state of adaptation, he ends up contributing to the adaptation of the attendees:

Many times we can't, the person is still there, the conflict that existed continues to exist, but we managed to dialogue, we took this other view. (E 4)

And our hands are tied, there's not much to do, it's nothing illegal, so if it's not illegal and the manager tells us to do it.... Then we show it here came from a superior, who we may disagree with, but not necessarily, it's harassment. (E 5)

So, for example, I don't know... if the person brings up that she's going crazy there in the sector, she's tired because her manager asks her to comply with X schedule and she doesn't work that way, every day she arrives at a real time, because that's hers, you know? Her nature [laughs]. There's a person like that there. And then I tell her: "Wow, but what should this manager of yours be like, right? So, you don't know what day, what time you can count on here, right? I keep putting myself in that person's shoes too, have you thought about that?" (E 8)

By rationalizing and denying, an environment of conformation to the organization of work is created, in which, collectively, the actors cooperate to maintain the organizational devices, in a managerialist bias of maintaining the productive pattern with a view to permanent optimization (GAULEJAC, 2007; HAN, 2014). In this way, the collective becomes the core of the action of defensive strategies, through mutually agreed agreements and rules for the protection of the group in the face of suffering (MORAES, 2013b):

... Everyone goes through these problems, obviously this is already known, but when you change and talk about how you do it there in your area, how you deal with it in the other area, there is always a way for you to improve. At least your perception of that thought like, "the world is falling on my head", right? When you have this feeling of sharing "the world is falling on everyone's head", the weight decreases a little. (E 1)

It's funny. It is curious, a team that proposes to think about improving the relationship between people in the organization's work teams, but has this internal resistance. Of how much we would need an internal team to work with us, so that we can listen to each other more and, finally, exchange more. (E 9)

Dejours (1994) problematizes the role of the collective defense strategy in maintaining the subjective relationship of the individual with the organization of work, fostering a resistance of the group to change, based on adaptation. In the case of these psychologists, the adaptation, intra and intersubjective, is also supported by the collective defense of belief in impotence. Therefore, although they perceive elements of the organization of work that would be subject to intervention – such as aspects related to the distribution of people and management of processes, for example – rationalization promotes the modulation of the perception of suffering, ensuring psychic balance and the standard of performance, in compliance with the managerial agenda:

What we can suggest is not always what is within reach, but we are invited to give our opinion, to think together and together. (E 3)

There has been a time when the director of the college says that he does not want an old server, because he is full of vices, he just wants a new server. We are obliged to accept and send a new server. (E 5)

I feel that a large part of what the organization requires of me is by force of law. It's like that, there's no way she can demand me in any other way, she can't demand me any other way, so I need to follow that there.... It is not an institutional choice for you to stop doing this to do something more interesting, more strategic, because we are imprisoned by force of law, by force of... finally. (E 1)

I see a lot of overload in many places and it's something that we don't know how to improve, because at the same time that some places have a lot of overload, there are also some places that have people who are sometimes almost idle. So, balancing this is a challenge, right? It is a very big challenge, which also generates, not only generates restlessness.... generates a perception of injustice. (E 2)

Managerialism, which is the practical manifestation of neoliberalism in contemporary organizational management, dialogues with many of the elements that POT employees manifest in their defensive narratives. The perception of overload; the need to perform; this self-absorption of the subject, which absorbs failure in itself, self-coercing itself to production (GAULEJAC, 2007; HAN, 2014) is, in essence, the mind moving the body to meet organizational devices, leading the subject to swallow the embarrassment to perform, without succumbing.

"... I also feel worn out, I can't help but be anxious and thinking, even after working hours, you know, about the people who are there experiencing problems that, whether you like it or not, are depending on you to find a solution" (E 3).

This intimacy that is created in working with the body (physical, cognitive and affective) requires the full engagement of the individual and, almost surreptitiously, the work

enters the other spaces of life (DEJOURS *et al.*, 2016). To escape this reality, as well as other professional categories (MORAES, 2013b), psychologists defend themselves by using games in the workplace and seeking support in the collective. Regarding the use of games, E 2 brought an important report on how play in the most intense moments of suffering protects from reality, taking (metaphorically) the worker out of the adverse situation, even if he (effectively) does not get out of it:

The social worker and I sometimes play, right? We keep saying that we keep running away from reality, because we laugh a lot, laugh.... It is often a... An issue that is even more difficult, right? An issue that we... We elaborate it and in a little while we'll be laughing, we're laughing, she's laughing, I'm laughing and no one understands. It's something that's kind of weird.

In this same sense, E 2 complements by bringing the defense of search in the work collective, demonstrating the importance of living together for the psychic balance of these psychologists:

So we have this connecting link... Thus, these are situations that we come up against in our limitations, in the delay in the process of solving that is felt by everyone. But we're there and we're looking at each other. And he laughs at something else. He laughs and comes back, "let's come back here".

The search for comfort and support from the group, as we have already highlighted, is a commonly used defensive resource, sharing anxieties, resolving specific issues and fostering mutual support (CANO; MORÉ, 2016; DEJOURS *et al.*, 2018; TUNDIS *et al.*, 2018; VALADÃO; NETO, 2019; VIVIAN *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the support of co-workers, whether in sharing responsibility – with the services always carried out in pairs, the reports signed jointly and the decisions deliberated and shared; or in the psychological comfort that the protection of the group provides, positions denial and rationalization as maintainers of exploitation:

The reports are signed by everyone, right? So there is no personal weight for anyone. (E 2)

So, ideally we always work in pairs ... that strengthens us too. From the practical element of two people working they also share this burden, but also from the point of view of dialogue. (E 3)

"Sharing the load" is a movement that, contrary to managerialism, brings subjects together in the construction of a defensive network; we say the opposite direction because this management model individualizes the subject and dismantles the collectives, fostering

exploitation (PINEDA, 2021). Here, although still explored, organizational and work psychologists find (as a defense) comfort in the collective, which ends up favoring adaptation, subsumption, and exploitation, as illustrated by E 9:

It was very difficult, I saw that the team was very resistant, because I was only six months old, so for me it was very calm: let's think about other things. The girls who were already doing this nine, 15 years old resisted a lot to adapt things, to think about things.... My team – and it's not a thing of the boss, it's a thing of those who are there with me – try to suffocate, prevent, "put down" any attempt that is made to something different, new.

The resistance to change manifested in the research findings is addressed by Dejours (1994) as inherent to collective defense strategies, since they involve the rationalization of the effort to adapt to pathogenic factors at work, in an attempt to achieve psychic balance. Thus, given the investment for the installation and maintenance of defenses, which are the result of the rules established by consensus by the group, it is costly to give them up to make new adaptation investments. It can be inferred from the above that, as in the theory of evolution, camouflaging oneself by subjecting one's desires to the impositions of the organization of work is a possible path for the survival of these organizational and work psychologists.

In this area, with the neoliberal crossing, imputing failure to the subject becomes natural and, in the same way, dealing with the consequences of failure is also an individual demand (HAN, 2014), as the interviewees demonstrate:

I think that sometimes the person, he gets the feeling of blaming the organization for the way things are happening and... And sometimes we're talking about something very punctual, it doesn't show the whole, you know? There are other things (E 8)

There are civil servants, who in certain areas, we don't even put the person in anymore, because the person has already been stressed so much, already has a tendency to be very bad, with a lot of suffering. We are afraid that some people will get some kind of stress or some crisis, really. (E 5)

What you can do is guide, show the available channels, but you don't have much to intervene there, only in the sense of strengthening the person, so that the person has the courage to "put forward" the complaint. We are as spectators, cheering for the person to be able to make that movement. (E 9)

From the analysis revealed here, in the effort to maintain balance in the midst of the pressure between the subject's desires and the impositions of the organization, the defense and the group formed by the co-workers of organizational and work psychologists are instrumental, since they collaborate for the adaptation and conformation to the organization

of work, ensuring the continuity of performance in the least onerous way possible, from the psychic point of view, for the subject. However, as Dejours (1994, 2011) and other PDT studies recognize, by reinforcing the elements that give rise to suffering (since they contribute to adaptation), defensive strategies open space for the growth of contradictions in work – which, consequently, enhances the situation of suffering and limits the very functionality of defense, making the imbalance imminent (MORAES, 2013b), as E 8 demonstrates, although in denial:

It was a physical, physiological illness, because I really like my work, so psychologically he didn't... I didn't get sick.

Finally, psychologists have brought strategies that involve self-care, such as ways to defend reality. It is interesting to observe that self-care appears in other professional categories as individual defense (VIVIAN *et al.*, 2019).

Therapy and other things outside, which I think help, doing physical activity. Other things, right? For you too... have hobbies. (E5).

Therefore, while their defenses and engaged in crossing the resistance of the real of work are not exhausted, the analysis showed that these organizational psychologists and the work psychologists of the federal agencies rationalize the elements of the organization of work and the constraints of the real resulting from it in order to deny suffering and continue performing. The suffering arising from overload and managerial impositions aimed at acceleration and hyper-production, despite precariousness, are attenuated through rationalization, denial, support from colleagues and jokes. Thus, it culminates in an action that helps to promote the adaptation of others and the achievement of work objectives, under the belief of impotence in the transformation of work organization. Consequently, in compliance with managerial precepts, organizational and work psychologists assume the role of "process facilitators" (E 1) in the adaptation of themselves and others to organizational objectives.

SUFFERING AND SUBJECTIVE MOBILIZATION

Living work is woven in transgression of what is prescribed; in ingenuity in the face of unforeseen events; in living and doing together based on relationships of trust with such complicity that it allows them to transgress, collectively, finding new operating ways to account for reality and transform the organization of work. It happens intra- and

intersubjectively in the scene of the public space of discussion and is fed by recognition, strengthening identity and rescuing meaning (DEJOURS *et al.*, 2016). This is how practical intelligence, a public space for discussion, cooperation and recognition walk, together, in confronting the reality of work – in subjective mobilization (MENDES; DUARTE, 2013b).

For PDT, based on the recognition – and the rescue of the meaning of work that it provides, suffering gains the power of creative because the subject invests (individually or collectively) energy to add new elements to the organization of work, transforming suffering into pleasure through sublimation (MACÊDO, 2013).

From the analysis of the data, it was possible to apprehend that the ingenuity of these organizational psychologists and the work of the federal government lies in the adoption of strategies to transgress the elements of the organization of work related to the delimitation of the task, especially when they go against their personal values or what they understand ethical, from the professional point of view. In the interviewees' discourse, the tricks range from exercising autonomy, defining areas of action and operating modes; to use the legislation as a support for the refusal of the operative mode in some activity; and even get a medical certificate to be absent and not condone a certain decision:

There were meetings that I left so exhausted, I scheduled it until the end of the day so I wouldn't have to work anymore later, so I could come home. (E 8)

Look, the extreme that has already happened, a real extreme, was when I shared it with the coordination and they didn't buy my noise and then I thought: I'll have to solve it alone and my way of solving it alone was the only way I had not to sign the damn thing that was, anyway, A clean bill of health, that's what I got. (E 1)

I'm not going to do something that goes against my professional ethics, my own – my career really, right? And even for personal reasons too, because a superior is demanding it, right? Like this... That goes against the legislation itself, so... I use legal means even to protect myself in this sense. (E 6)

Practical intelligence, according to Dejours (2011), resides in transgression, in the ingenious and creative know-how that comes from the encounter with the prescribed, on the margins of what the latter could not foresee. From the analysis of the experience of organizational psychologists and work in the Brazilian federal public service studied here, it is possible to infer that transgression provides some resistance, as it rationalizes the effort to manage exhaustion (see E 8); it ensures transgression to avoid complete subsumption (E 1) or provides normative support to minimize alienation (E 6). Even so, although astuteness makes coping possible, it does not effectively transform the organization of

work, ensuring resistance that does not break the action of the organizational device, maintaining the factors that give rise to suffering.

Facing reality, organizational and work psychologists find ways to seek pleasure and build mental health. In addition to the elements of the organization of work related to the prescription of the activity mentioned above, the structure is also addressed. As an example, we bring the report of E 7, which, in an ingenious way, structured the work environment in the pandemic:

This remote thing made me look for various equipment to be able to do my job better, so I have a pedestal that sometimes I put some... Some script, there is a higher bench, which I discovered in my remote practice, that in the beginning I led the workshops, now, as I am talking to you, sitting, and I don't remember how I had this *insight*, but it came from that if I led the workshops standing, I would have another energy and then I started to do it.

The excerpt described above demonstrates that, in the precariousness gap left by the organization of work due to the absence of support for the server for the ergonomics of the environment when in the remote modality, astuteness manifests itself by filling spaces for improving the experience. In the same sense, the study and updating to cope with unforeseen demands was recurrently manifested by the group of civil servants researched as a strategy: "I went after studying what I did not master in order to do a good job, and I started working with these expertise" (E7) and "I had to go back to study, not that this was not necessary in any other area that I was, even if it was for training, I would need to be always renewing myself" (E4).

All the strategies discussed above demonstrate the ingenious effort to resist the pressure to impose the organization of work in the way it was prescribed, but not in the sense of transforming the ends, but rather in the feasibility of paths to care with less subsumption, within the possibilities of each one. However, two of the interviewees reported going beyond what is stated, proactively intervening to reverberate some change:

... to see what is being very recurrent and to think about actions on top of that. Then, seeing that these demands were emerging a lot, I was researching what we could do to improve this scenario in the institution. And then I decided to develop a booklet on moral and sexual harassment at work. (E6)

These difficulties, I think they always me... At least the vast majority of them have always inspired me to find a way, either for me to do something different, or for me to propose something different to the other or, I don't know, to step back. When it gets too hard, try to back off and try again in another way. (E9)

It should be noted that the movement, in these two examples, is one of transgression in order to transform, sowing changes in the organization of work – even if it is necessary to "retreat" in order to advance. However, as rescued by Amaral *et al.* (2019), contemporary organizations limit the possibilities of subjective mobilization, since, by calling for excellence, they dehumanize the subject, forging them into subjection. Managerialism, which is in the bowels of public service and fosters individualism, reinforces this scenario, making subjective mobilization a utopia restricted to a few, in the face of the widespread adaptation of the others.

In this context, in order for individual practical intelligences to be able to transit in the collective, enabling cooperation, with a shared interpretation and agreements that give rise to living together – and transgressing together – it is necessary to build a public space for discussion, where this confrontation between individual interpretations and operative modes is possible, for the construction of collective agreements and rules to cope with work (AMARAL *et al.*, 2019; DEJOURS *et al.*, 2016).

For the organizational and work psychologists of the federal agencies studied here, although the collective functions as a support for adaptation, as illustrated in the previous section, it is possible to perceive that there is a public space for discussion – even if deliberation has not effectively (yet) contributed to mobilization: "Support is listening, welcoming, and, Also, try to solve the problem together. 'I'm in this problem and I don't know how to solve it!'. How are we going to do it? We will try to support each other to solve the problem together" (E5); "... we sit together, talk about the case and try to outline a strategy to address the situation, which is where the intervention comes in" (E9); and "We managed to build that very safe space, we talk about everything, talk about everything, without fear, concern about the other's judgment or leaking the information outside the team. So it's a safe space and makes a lot of difference" (E1).

Vasconcelos (2013) highlights that the relationships of trust that enable the exposure of individual transgressions that will subsidize the construction of collective agreements and operating modes for the transformation of reality are instituted in cooperation. In this respect, organizational and work psychologists demonstrate an effort to resist together – to find ways of transgression that, although they do not achieve the ethical-political transformation of the organization of work, ensure the achievement of the objectives with rationalization of suffering and effort:

... There are only walls here yet, because the building is whole and you can't tear it down [laughs]. But more and more of our work is to happen in this collective that transcends the sectors, right? (E3).

... She helps me a lot, because she is from the outside, from above, she can see things that I am not seeing and she can ask questions. (E9)

... But we "don't care", this doctor demanded that we not finish the report, that we talk about everything, but not give our opinion at the end, and we pretended not to listen and continued to give our opinion, and it's passing.... We defined that our reports, from psychology and social work, would not be included in the process, but that if the servers were interested, we would make them available directly to them, but it would not be attached to the process.... It was the only thing we defined, which met a little what the doctors wanted, but we remained "rebellious", putting our conclusions in the report. (E4)

And so (rationalizing effort), suffering is managed and transgression is materialized by the direct imposition of the organization of work for self-fulfillment. The "rebellion", as one of the interviewees mentions, although materialized in a negative, does not impact the determination of the organization of work, since the adaptive bias in the performance prevails. In other words: when one observes the example above, in the case of the psychologists' technical report (in which they continue to insert the conclusion – regardless of the determination of the head of the forensic examination for them to omit it), by removing the document from the records, they ensure that the head of the forensic examination has the discretion to decide (without further constraints) what is most feasible for the institution – and that is, after all, what was apparently intended when asked that the conclusion not be included in the report.

Analyzing in the light of PDT (DEJOURS, 2017; MENDES; DUARTE, 2013a), means that, although the managerial agenda prevails, transgression materializes, resulting in a new way of operating, the result of cooperation in the collective, for the rationalization of effort and suffering in the struggle for mental health. There is a glimmer of mobilization, even in the midst of so much adaptation. Another point to consider is that, in addition to self-fulfillment, work entails validation by the other. Therefore, when we talk about recognition and the importance it has for the strengthening of identity, we are talking about the judgment of peers, subordinates, bosses and clients contributes significantly to the transformation of suffering into pleasure, producing mental health (DEJOURS *et al.*, 2016).

Only one of the interviewees mentioned the recognition of beauty, directed to the being and its unique contribution (DEJOURS, 2013), fostering belonging to the group, by peers:

Sometimes at the time of an argument, I put things that are not even in my area of psychology, but that are in the area of the physiotherapist, the nurse, the social worker, and that many times they were so involved in the problem, that they could not see that way out, for example. (E 4)

The others refer to the recognition of utility (DEJOURS, 2013), that is, of know-how, in gratitude for the service provided, conferred by customers and superiors, as shown in the following excerpts:

Say: oh, so-and-so went to you, she told me, after that we need to see how things have changed. (E 8)

And a lot of people have always admired our team a lot in this sense, that, like, when we believe that what is being demanded or the way it is being, right, placed, is not our role, we... So, it's not even in the sense of saying "oh no, we're not going to do it", we show other possibilities, other ways that we can achieve that goal, in a way that is ethical, committed, and that actually has an effectiveness. (E 6)

About two weeks later, the server came here, found out what time we were, came here and then she... I never forget that, she thanked me very much, because she said that she had felt seen and heard in this whole process that she was living, and that she had succeeded, that she was looking for, that her health was better. (E 3)

Dejours (2013) highlights how the judgment of utility permeates the social, economic or technical contribution of the subject to the organization of work and its impacts on the social insertion of the subject and on the legitimacy of his contribution. The judgment of beauty, in turn, permeates the analysis of the conformity of the work performed to the rules of the trade by those who dominate it: the peers. It is the recognition of beauty that fosters the feeling of belonging to the group and, even more, removes loneliness (DEJOURS, 2013). In the neoliberal scenario and in the quicksand that is the permanent optimization of the self characteristic of the subject-company, the recognition of peers gains even more symbolic relevance for the struggle for emancipation and rescue of meaning. Therefore, it is worrying to note that, from the data presented, it is the recognition of usefulness that prevails, in the midst of the weakened, adapted and subsumed collectives of the managerialist civil service.

Therefore, when we analyze the elements as a whole, permeated by the managerialist crossing and by an action with a strong adaptive bias (RODRIGUES; FREITAS, 2024), it is possible to see that recognition has little impact on strengthening identity, since there is little room for contribution to changes in the organization of work (AMARAL *et al.*, 2019). Organizational and work psychologists are so adapted that they do not advance in critical depth about work, without even rebelling against the aspects of work

organization that contribute to suffering, seeking its transformation – which ends up interfering in the other constituents of subjective mobilization. The interviewed civil servants themselves cannot perceive effectiveness in the performance. See:

It's still small, which we reached, if you compare the 4,000, but compared to the lecture it's much higher. (E7)

We can't achieve much today, before we achieved little, because the demand is great, but today I see that it is very little, because of this transfer, because there is no area within people management, so if the server is suffering, he has to look for a health service that is for every institution and, The community is immense, we are a city (50,000 people, in general). It is not able to specifically address the demand for health at work. (E 5)

Thus, it is possible to perceive that the engagement of the subjectivity of the civil servants in the POT area of Brazilian federal organizations, based on the analysis of the group studied, involves the use of practical intelligence to avoid the impositions of the organization of work, meeting the prescribed with less suffering – either by moving away so as not to sign a document; studying to meet demands; or rearranging processes and methods to minimize wear and tear. The measures do not enhance the being for the transformation of the performance, which remains adapted and in compliance with the managerial agenda.

Although there is a public space for discussion and an environment of psychological safety in multidisciplinary teams (including immediate supervisors), problematization is still centered on defense, with adaptive purposes – without reaching the confrontation with the elements of the organization of work that give rise to suffering. In the same sense, cooperation is made possible by the effort to resist together, rather than to transform together, and recognition is much more directed to know-how, than to being, in a vertical line, provided by superiors and clients, when the prescribed objectives are achieved. For all these reasons, subjective mobilization is limited and restricted, curtailed by the managerialist seduction that produces adaptation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

After analyzing the mediation strategies used in the face of resistance to the reality of work by organizational psychologists and the work of Brazilian federal organizations, it was found that the impact of managerialism and its intersections on the work of these professionals fostered their adaptation, which is based on defensive strategies, limiting the space for subjective mobilization.

Metaphorically, as the title and excerpt of one of the speeches say, organizational and work psychologists are "with their hands tied": tied to each other, using defensive strategies to avoid getting sick, and, at the same time, their hands are tied because they perceive themselves to be powerless, with no possibility of intervention in the face of the organizational macrostructure, in adapted and exploited collectives, under alienation. And if, as Amaral *et al. point out*. (2019, p.4), subjective mobilization implies "subverting the harmful effects of the organization of work, negotiating, pressuring and appropriating the rules of a work collective or rejecting them", it is possible to see that the existence of this type of ethical-political movement is incipient, given the great adaptation to managerial pressure and the precariousness of the federal public service.

Subjected to suffering in two ways – due to the activity they perform and the condition of working subjects – the POT servers resist, as they can, making use of defense to, at least, maintain some psychic balance, in the maintenance of mental health. At the same time, in the struggle for health, they use practical intelligence to transgress, rationalizing effort and suffering. Thus, we have a conformed POT, which reinforces the organizational devices in the face of the pressure to perform – which, inevitably, is in line with the managerialist ideology.

When we analyze the social position of civil servants in the face of the broad scenario of precariousness in the world of work, it is almost as if they were at the top of the production chain. This element, associated with a subsumed, seduced and self-absorbed contemporaneity, disempowers subjective mobilization.

Furthermore, it is curious to observe the similarities between the subjective experiences of psychologists at work in private companies (SILVA; MERLO, 2007) and in the public service. The excessive workload, the restrictions on the organization, the satisfaction with recognition, the low intervention in the institutional vision (and, consequently, in the organization of work), as well as in the health of the assisted workers, were maintained – even in another economic sector and almost two decades later.

It is therefore urgent to summon the type of critical psychology referred to by Pineda (2021) – a counterpsychology that fosters the confrontation with managerialism and utilitarianism in contemporary organizational environments, promoting action that rescues the dignity of workers and opposes the impositions of capital.

Space is launched for studies that apply the PDT methodology, performing the clinic in groups of POT professionals, to (re)weave the ties shattered by neoliberal individualism,

contributing to the return of the subject and the collectives in which he is inserted to the power of being and acting. This possible path, of rescuing the work collectives, is the road to recognition among peers and, finally, to the opening of space for sublimation, based on cooperative relations that effectively confront the organization of work for its transformation.

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