“Not even if I worked seven days a week, 24 hours a day”: the health of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic

“Nem se eu trabalhasse sete dias por semana, 24 horas por dia”: a saúde dos professores durante a pandemia de COVID-19

“Ni siquiera si trabajara siete días a la semana, 24 horas al día”: la salud de los profesores durante la pandemia de COVID-19

DOI: 10.55905/revconv.17n.6-307

Originals received: 05/20/2024
Acceptance for publication: 06/10/2024

Carlos Eduardo Carrusca Vieira
PhD in Psychology
Institution: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais
Adress: Belo Horizonte - Minas Gerais, Brazil
E-mail: carlos.carrusca@outlook.com
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9284-3018

Andrúzia Gomes Pereira
Graduated in Psicologia
Institution: Universidade Federal de São João Del Rey
Adress: São João Del Rey - Minas Gerais, Brazil
E-mail: andriziagomespereira@gmail.com
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3802-1379

João César de Freitas Fonseca
PhD in Psychology
Institution: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais
Adress: Belo Horizonte - Minas Gerais, Brazil
E-mail: joaoesesar.fonseca@yahoo.com.br
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3286-1812

Mara Marçal Sales
PhD in Psychology
Institution: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais
Adress: Belo Horizonte - Minas Gerais, Brazil
E-mail: milmaravilhas2002@yahoo.com.br
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6463-4044
ABSTRACT

In this paper, we contemplate the well-being of higher education faculty during the Covid-19 pandemic, a period marked by the adoption of Emergency Remote Teaching. We conducted a predominantly quantitative study concerning the health of professors in Higher Education Institutions in Brazil. Data were collected through the administration of a questionnaire comprising 52 questions pertaining to the working conditions and health of educators in the second semester of 2021. In addition to the analysis of aspects quantified through the questionnaire on the daily work of teachers, we highlight some of the dissertative answers given by teachers to an open-ended item of the questionnaire. The results suggest a close association between working conditions, the intensification and extension of work hours, and instances of illness. In the conclusions, we highlight the need for a continuous evaluation of the work models that genuinely incorporates educators, valuing their experiences and perceptions. This approach aims to facilitate transformations in the conditions and modes of management and organization of work. Despite the societal significance of technological and digital resources, we assert that ongoing changes are occurring within social and economic contradictions that warrant attention and necessitate proactive resolution.

Keywords: teaching work, COVID-19 pandemic, remote teaching, workplace health.

RESUMO

Neste artigo, refletimos sobre a saúde dos trabalhadores docentes do ensino superior durante o período da pandemia da Covid-19, no qual adotou-se o Ensino Remoto Emergencial (ERE). Realizamos um estudo de natureza predominantemente quantitativa relativo à saúde dos professores de Instituições de Ensino Superior no Brasil. Os dados foram coletados mediante aplicação de um questionário composto por 52 questões atinentes às condições de trabalho e saúde dos docentes no segundo semestre de 2021. Além da análise de aspectos quantificados por meio do questionário sobre o cotidiano de trabalho docente, destacamos algumas das respostas dissertativas dadas pelos docentes a um item aberto do questionário aplicado. Os resultados indicam uma estreita relação entre as condições de trabalho, os processos de intensificação e dilatação das jornadas laborais e os quadros de adoecimento. Nas conclusões, destacamos a necessidade de uma avaliação contínua dos modelos de trabalho, que integre efetivamente os docentes, valorizando suas experiências e percepções, a fim de viabilizar transformações nas condições e nos modos de gestão e organização do trabalho. Apesar da importância dos recursos tecnológicos e digitais para a sociedade, afirmamos que não podemos ignorar que as mudanças em curso têm sido gestadas no interior de contradições sociais e econômicas que merecem atenção e que precisam ser enfrentadas.

RESUMEN
En este artículo, reflexionamos sobre la salud de los trabajadores docentes de la enseñanza superior durante el período de la pandemia de la Covid-19, en el cual se adoptó la Enseñanza Remota de Emergencia (ERE). Realizamos un estudio de naturaleza predominantemente cuantitativa respecto a la salud de los profesores de Instituciones de Enseñanza Superior en Brasil. Los datos fueron recopilados mediante la aplicación de un cuestionario compuesto por 52 preguntas relacionadas con las condiciones de trabajo y la salud de los docentes en el segundo semestre de 2021. Además del análisis de aspectos cuantificados a través del cuestionario sobre el cotidiano del trabajo docente, destacamos algunas de las respuestas descriptivas dadas por los docentes a un ítem abierto del cuestionario aplicado. Los resultados indican una estrecha relación entre las condiciones de trabajo, los procesos de intensificación y dilatación de las jornadas laborales y los cuadros de enfermedad. En las conclusiones, destacamos la necesidad de una evaluación continua de los modelos de trabajo, que integre efectivamente a los docentes, valorando sus experiencias y percepciones, con el fin de viabilizar transformaciones en las condiciones y en los modos de gestión y organización del trabajo. A pesar de la importancia de los recursos tecnológicos y digitales para la sociedad, afirmamos que no podemos ignorar que los cambios en curso han sido gestados en el interior de contradicciones sociales y económicas que merecen atención y que necesitan ser enfrentadas.

Palabras clave: trabajo docente, pandemia de COVID-19, enseñanza remota, salud en el trabajo.

1 INTRODUCTION

Illness in teaching work has been an object of reflection for some time within the scope of scientific research, particularly in workers' health. Specialized literature reports adverse and harmful working conditions for workers' health and indicates that the illness processes experienced by this category are systematically veiled (Penteado; Neto, 2019; Elias; Navarro, 2019). However, teaching work is considered by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as an activity that generates stress and is associated with Burnout Syndrome.

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, profoundly affected the entire world. Against the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes the disease, prevention measures – for example, social distancing and the use of face masks – have been recommended and adopted by several countries. This, however, did not occur without raised controversies and objections, mainly by political representatives and social actors linked to the political spectrum of the extreme right and the policy of scientific denialism (Duarte; César, 2020) through "the use of technological bases that they speed up communication and algorithms that modulate and direct the supply of content to individuals, affecting their
perceptions of reality and their behaviors” (Vieira; Gonçalves, 2022, p. 24). As a consequence of the pandemic, a slowdown in economic activity and the collapse of health systems was noted, while an increase in the number of cases and deaths from the disease was also observed. The different sectors of the economy – and, consequently, workers – experienced abrupt changes in the forms of work in different ways, depending on their integration into the world of work.

Teachers at all levels of education – and, here, in particular, teachers who work in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – experienced these changes when educational institutions adopted the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) regime, intending to ensure the continuity of their professional activities and, at the same time, prevent the spread of the disease. Given this scenario, to analyze the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work and health of HEI teachers, we conducted a study whose main results are analyzed in this article.

2 METHODOLOGY

To analyze the impacts of teleworking on the health of HEI teachers during the second semester of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, we conducted research of a predominantly quantitative nature regarding their health in Brazil. The data were collected after applying a questionnaire consisting of 52 questions relating to their working and health conditions. Based on data from the last Higher Education Census available at the time (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019), we considered 386,073 working teachers and, following sampling calculations, we estimated 384 respondents to reach a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. We received 429 responses to the questionnaire that we sent to educational institutions, departments and contact networks of teachers working in higher education. Of this set, 399 responses were considered valid since the participating subjects met two basic criteria: being a practicing higher education professor in the ERT modality and agreeing to participate in the study under development. In the following tables, we present the profile of the respondents, considering color/race, gender (table 1) and age group (table 2).
The questionnaire was answered by teachers from various regions of Brazil, working in public institutions (42.1%), private (54.4%) or both (3.5%), with a predominance of the Southeast region, which represented around 71% of the total. In the sample profile, the low representation of black and indigenous people in teaching in higher education was noted, which is one of the effects of structural racism on which Brazilian society is founded (Oliveira, 2021). Regarding sex/gender relations, the greater presence of women in the sample does not mean, however, that we have overcome these inequalities since the most prestigious and powerful positions continue to be occupied mostly by white men (Santos; Matos; França, 2020).

In this article, in addition to the analysis of aspects quantified by the questionnaires, we highlight some of the dissertation responses given to the item "If you wish, record your perception of your current health and work conditions" to discuss the impacts of teleworking on the HEI teachers health during the pandemic. Below, we present the main results of this study.

First, we explain the historical, socioeconomic and health context in which the adoption of teleworking and ERT occurred on a large scale. After that, we analyzed the collected data, divided into four categories that summarize the most relevant themes: a) material and environmental working conditions; b) configuration of teaching-learning processes and the meanings of work in ERT; c) work overload; d) suffering and illness work-related.

One of the analyses deals with the possible association between the performance of managerial roles and painful work-related experiences. For this purpose, the independence Chi-square test was realized based on contingency tables to evaluate the existence of an association between two categorical variables, with a significance level of 5%.

This research was approved under the opinion number 4.480.427 by the Research Ethics Committee of the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, responsible for evaluating the ethical aspects of research involving human subjects.
3 RESULTS AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

The pandemic imposed a reorganization of the different productive sectors of society. The WHO and other health authorities recommended adopting important preventive measures, including social distancing and the use of face masks, to reduce the spread of the virus that causes the disease. Although these measures were those most recommended by international health authorities and endorsed by scientific studies, especially before the development and availability of immunizing vaccines, adherence to these recommendations did not occur unanimously or smoothly.

In Brazil, for example, we witnessed a denialist and necropolitical management by the federal government under the mandate of former president Jair Bolsonaro (Giovanella et al., 2020). As Castilho and Lemos (2021, p. 271) highlight, the necropolitics of this government used the State "to subjugate any possibility of life to the power of death" through "political actions that became the rule and not the exception, which they define who matters and who is unimportant, who is essential and who is disposable." The former president, political agents and supporters of his administration spread the mistaken idea that Brazil could adequately face the pandemic – minimized by Bolsonaro as a "little flu" – using "herd immunity".

The thesis defended was that the population should get on with their lives and work, exposed to the virus, so that contamination could reach a high percentage of the population, generating "natural immunity". Denied several times, the fallacious idea continued to be propagated by the federal government, which continued to act against social distancing measures and vaccination, as determined by the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito - CPI) set up by the Federal Senate (Brazil, 2022), which investigated the actions and omissions of the Federal Government in dealing with the pandemic and the collapse of healthcare in the state of Amazonas.

Such management, located in the extreme-right political spectrum, was characterized by a denialist stance against science, the dissemination of misinformation, lethargy, negligence and omission (Giovanella et al., 2020; Brasil, 2022), which made it difficult to face the health crisis and led Brazil to witness dramatic scenes and around 694,000 deaths from the disease, recorded up to the last day of the former president's term in office, according to data provided by Our World in Data (2022).
In this scenario, in March 2020, when the WHO pandemic was triggered, HEIs had to adapt to the requirements imposed by the contingency. Through Ordinances No. 343 of March 17, 2020, and No. 345 of March 19, 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture authorized, on an exceptional basis, the holding of remote classes, replacing in-person courses. However, given the exponential increase in contamination cases and its consequences, the validity of remote teaching was extended by ordinance no. 473, of May 12, 2020, and no. 544, of June 16, 2020, "while the new coronavirus pandemic – COVID-19 lasts" (Brazil, 2020).

The urgency of the pandemic required sudden transformations in teaching activity in the fields of teaching, research and extension, demanding adaptation from the protagonists of this process: students and teachers. The establishment of the ERT modality occurred through the large-scale adoption of Digital Information and Communication Technologies, which made it possible to conduct classes in teleworking at home (home office) and imposed challenges.

3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND WORKING MATERIALS

Teachers executed their professional activity in domestic environments that had to be adapted to tasks previously developed in person, thus being subject to common complications in these spaces, such as noise, interruptions, lower brightness than necessary for online transmissions, problems associated with supply of electricity and internet connectivity and other specific demands, arising from the domestic context. In the process of transition to digital platforms, a large proportion of teachers incurred expenses related to obtaining basic equipment and tools to perform their work, including computers (39.85%), internet data package (56.14%), webcam (29.32%), microphone (41.60%), IT technical services (42.11%) and even chairs (50.88%).

Furthermore, they listed other difficulties in the process of adapting to the ERT – reconciling classes with daily life at home (55.10%), adapting class content to the virtual model (46.40%), connection problems (44.10 %) – which contributed to a deterioration in the relationship with work, according to reports:

In 2021, the situation is better than in 2020, when there was more wear and tear due to the necessary adaptations to the home office and remote teaching (Teacher's report)”. And another teacher reports: “We weren't prepared. So, everything is new and more difficult”
The reduction in time and costs related to transport from home to work and the possibility of closely managing some family situations were perceived as positive, although not without contradictions. The teachers emphasized that the loss of this displacement coexisted with the loss of contact with the school community, the intensification of work and infrastructure problems,

I've managed to develop my career, but it has come at a high cost regarding my health. No longer having to deal with 4 hours of traffic a day seemed very good at first, but the institutional demands have grown greatly, to the point of having 8 hours of meetings in a row. I feel that, in person, they didn't abuse us like that because they had to consider the displacement. So, despite the traffic, I've thought it would be better to return to in-person classes (Teacher's report).

Although the commuting hours have been positive, I miss the in-person interaction with people and the academic environment. At times, noise from the neighborhood and internet problems interfere with activities. Spending more time in front of a computer can also be considered negative (Teacher's report).

A lot of fatigue, too many activities and messages. But there are positive points, such as being with the family, not having to move because of traffic, saving on food and transportation, being able to sleep right after evening classes, not having to wake up so early for morning classes, managing household chores in between classes (Teacher's report).

Almost all the teachers (90.2%) performed their work sitting down for the entire working day, 8.3% remained seated for more than half the time, and 1.5% alternated between the two positions. As will be seen, this situation contributed to musculoskeletal health problems and lumbar and cervical spine pain.

Besides adapting to the new work tools, the context in which the ERT was established required teachers to mobilize themselves strongly to deal with the situations posed in this scenario, such as managing pedagogical interactions mediated by digital platforms.

3.2 A THE CONFIGURATION OF TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESSES AND THE MEANINGS OF WORK IN ERT

It was identified that 84% of the participants in this study stated that they had experienced "less student participation" in classes, and 69.90% expressed feeling alone during classes. The damage to pedagogical interaction noticed by teachers affected the teaching-learning process. The data presented, as well as the experiences verbalized by the teachers themselves, indicate
that there has been an important rupture in the "constitutive circuits" of teaching activity. From the perspective of Pereira et al. (2022, p. 161),

From the point of view of the psychological analysis of the activity, in the context of virtual classes, the loneliness of teachers in virtual classes did not only mean a lack of interest on the part of the students but also the feeling of loss of the recipients of the activity, the rupture of a circuit of intersubjective mediation constitutive of the work activity itself and, even more so, the degeneration of the meanings of the activity and the teachers power to act, as evidenced by the collected data and reports.

The ERT model brought teaching-learning processes to a logic very close to "banking education", which sees the teacher as the transmitter of content and students as the passive receivers, a model criticized by Paulo Freire (2019). In the understanding of Pereira et al. (2023, p. 162),

The artisanal fabric that constitutes a class and which is based on debates and collective constructions has been reduced or replaced, on a large scale, by videos and broadcasts often marked by one-sidedness and the focus on the final product to be delivered (objectified knowledge), and not in the process (pedagogical interaction).

In this sense, the loneliness experienced by teachers synthesizes and reveals, from a clinical perspective of work, the weakening of bonds between teachers and students, the latter being the main recipients of teaching production and work, and, also, in certain situations, the loss of the work recipients, the degradation of the meanings of professional activity. The reports express this understanding and the discomfort experienced. A teacher says the following: “Discouraging. We waste time when the student doesn't care about learning, only completing the stage” (Teacher's report). And others teachers reports that:

The distance makes it difficult to create bonds with students and prevents the development of the human relationship necessary for the teaching-learning process. Very large classrooms do not allow for interaction. Finally, the idea that this system will replace in-person teaching is frightening and saddens us. Thanks for taking part in such important research (Teacher's report).

Remote education was the only thing that could be done during the pandemic. However, the paradigm shift is not trivial for those with a lot of experience in the field. I miss the eye-to-eye contact with students. Education necessarily involves affection. There is no teaching without affection. And the virtual model greatly reduces interaction and interpersonal relationships (Teacher's report).

Greater difficulties: ergonomic working conditions, wearing out my equipment (CPU, headphones) for the institution's work, classes that have been "inflated" by combining
Notably, the interaction between the teachers was also impaired, as indicated in the last report, which may have enhanced the loneliness for many. At the same time, they sought to build alternative courses of action in the face of adversity. Since the professional collective is not just a group of individuals but a resource for activity and health (Clot, 2010), it can be observed that the disruption of the social interaction circuit at work is, in certain circumstances, a potentially harmful factor.

3.3 OVERLOAD: A HALLMARK OF TEACHING WORK

HEIs are inserted in a context where the capitalist mode of production and neoliberal rationality prevail in the political and social mainstream (Maia, 2022). They do not, therefore, escape the pressures exerted by market logic. According to Laval (2019), education has increasingly experienced a "progressive monopolization" presided over by neoliberal ideology. Note the incorporation and reproduction of management models guided by the rules and needs of the market, which propagate the productivism ethos, albeit under the guise of "flexibility" and "modernization". Sociologist Richard Sennet (2004, p. 54) had already grasped the meaning of the "flexibility" vaunted in work contexts presided over by the logic of flexible accumulation: "Society today seeks ways to destroy the evils of routine with the creation of more flexible institutions. However, flexibility practices focus more on the forces that bend people."

Therefore, it is important to highlight that if, on the one hand, the issuance of the ordinances that authorized and extended the ERT occurred contingently, in the specific context of the pandemic, on the other hand, these decisions were in line with the interests of several educational conglomerates, who see education as a commodity among others, and who have already expressed a strong interest in expanding their profit margins, converting education into an asset increasingly capable of generating financial dividends, at the price of teachers precarious working and health conditions.

The interest of these conglomerates was already noted even before the pandemic (Bielschowsky, 2020; Ilha, 2020; Reis, 2021; Poder 360, 2022). The decision of the Ministry of Education and Culture, contained in Ordinance No. 2117/2019, to allow the adoption of curricula...
with up to 40% of the workload in distance learning in face-to-face undergraduate courses is not only explained by the trend toward virtualization of processes, although this may be a factor – not just because of the pandemic, but has its roots in the powerful business lobby exercised over public authorities and in the real interest of making the capital of these conglomerates viable.

In this way, although this historical context has enhanced and exposed several problems experienced within the teaching activity, as we will see later, work-related overload and illness are not entirely new issues in the teaching category, being present in scientific studies, as highlighted by Neme and Limongi (2020) in a systematic review on the topic. All the above reveals that this category has been facing an excessive workload for a long time, which, among other factors, is related to the "vocational" and "sacrificial" logic of this profession, constituted since the beginning of its history, and perpetuated to this day (Tardif, 2013).

Under the influence of "sacrificial" logic, even before the pandemic, high productivity was demanded from these workers combined with the growing need to take on various demands, such as bureaucratic ones (Lemos, 2011), characterized by the imposition and expectation that they are versatile, flexible, and resilient to respond to different demands and assume different roles. Thus, we can progressively observe the adoption of management and evaluation parameters in educational institutions, which follow the logic of trying to quantify the reality of work and the profitability of capital as an imperative. Clinical sociologist Vincent de Gaulejac (2007) characterized this type of management, in contemporary times, as "managerialist" and "quantophrenic" due to the expressive obsession with metrics, figures, and numbers.

From a perspective based on clinical approaches to work and, in particular, ergology (Schwartz, 2010), we understand that, far from translating the reality of work and teaching activity, the parameters established "from outside" by management protagonists, by their exteriority, do not adequately understand the dramas of real work, carried out in specific material, social and historical circumstances, marked by the variability inherent to real situations. Debates on values, norms, and knowledge invested in teaching, as well as the contradictions and "dramatic uses of self" experienced by teachers, are relegated, affecting their health and work quality.

Regarding work demands, observing the responses of the participants in this research, there was an overlap in work demands (Graph 1):
As for working hours, there was an increase during the pandemic, marked by the multiplication of tasks and short-term demands. Teachers had to adhere to new forms of interaction with their peers and students, established predominantly through digital means, and recreate, even if partially, work methodologies in the areas of teaching, research and extension, besides accepting difficulties from students (including socio-emotional) and respond to the institutions demands. The lengthening of working hours is related to the increase in the task volume and work intensification, which generated a feeling of insufficiency, a teacher says: “Even if I worked seven days a week, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, I wouldn't be able to handle it” (Teacher's report). And other teachers report that “Increase in all types of demand and the emergence of new demands, in addition to the several that already existed” (Teacher's report); “Certainly, the home office brought greater work demands, expanding a form of overexploitation of teaching work even more extensive than the traditional one” (Teacher's report).

The extension of the working day caused harm to the health of teachers, increasing anxiety, impotence, stress and fatigue, as well as affecting the limits of hours dedicated to work, with negative repercussions for the enjoyment of rest and leisure. In graph 2, we can see the increase in working hours during the pandemic period.
Added to this is the use of technological means to communicate, demand actions and organize teaching work processes, which, on the one hand, was relevant for maintaining education but, on the other, caused the feeling of an uninterrupted journey, which systematically elided the barriers between work and private life.

The feeling of “not turning off my mind”, with consecutive demands to be answered, causes me the greatest discomfort. I believe that the use of communication technologies, especially WhatsApp and the large number of emails, makes the routine very heavy and reinforces the feeling of being available 24 hours a day (Teacher’s report).

An important element is the unlimited use of cell phones and WhatsApp. [...] There isn’t a day/shift where I don’t receive student messages, even on weekends. If I don’t answer, they call. We lose the right to rest and to have a private life. It is impossible to disconnect from the worries of work. Therefore, there is no longer a working day (Teacher’s report).

We must always respond to messages outside business hours, including on weekends, and if I fail to respond, I suffer moral harassment and bad jokes from my immediate supervisor. WhatsApp has become an institutional billing platform, but the university doesn’t pay for my cell phone. People stop sending emails. They always send...
messages on WhatsApp and ask you to follow everything in real-time. There are no more holidays, and all demands are always urgent (Teacher's report).

Sense of urgency, work under pressure, feeling of insufficiency, uninterrupted working hours, time constraints for carrying them out, exacerbated volume of tasks and rupture of barriers between work and private, domestic and family life constituted some of the characteristic features of way and experience of working at ERT, with consequences for the workers' health.

3.4 WORK-RELATED SUFFERING AND ILLNESS

Work is a central category in the analysis of health and illness processes, configured as a premise in the field of Occupational Health since the ways of living, getting sick and dying are related to the production sphere of material and social life. In this sense, a look interested in the health and illness of teachers cannot, under any circumstances, ignore the analysis of their work activity and the material and social conditions in which it develops or is constrained. The fact that Burnout Syndrome has been associated with the category and recognized as an "epidemic" problem (Carlotto, 2011) is, therefore, not fortuitous but arises from the interaction between workers and their objective conditions for exercising their roles.

It is known that the pandemic, in its different forms of expression, significantly impacted the population, producing and worsening suffering and psychological illness (Pereira et al., 2020). Its harmful effects, associated with working conditions, were also reported by teachers,

A year and a half of the pandemic, social isolation, and remote learning caused mental and physical fatigue for the entire family. Accelerating vaccination against COVID-19 and promoting the controlled re-opening of parks, gardens, squares, and open-air events is crucial [...] (Teacher's report).

Thus, if the effect of the pandemic on mental health cannot be underestimated, neither can the impacts of the lengthening of the working day, intensification and degradation of the meanings of work on the teachers' health be ignored – aspects highlighted by this study. It is noteworthy, for example, that 42% of participants reported having developed an illness during their home office period. Among the participants, symptoms associated with Burnout Syndrome, a disease linked to work, marked especially by the feeling of exhaustion, were also noticed, as shown in Table 3.
The reports from the teachers are also compelling regarding the relationships between their work and the illness processes they experienced,

In short, home office work has not been beneficial to me. Physically, I am sick from the time spent in front of the screen, with dry eyes, hoarseness, headaches, and body aches. Performing stretches have had little result. But above all, the feeling of "not turning off the head". [...] Answering this survey made me realize how unwell I am and how much I need help, especially when faced with question 34 (Teacher's report).

The teachers also reported on their health: “Health: more anxiety and tension, discouragement in the face of remote classes, tendonitis in the wrist, more frequent headaches, anticipation of menopause, and difficulties in adapting to classes using remote tools” (Teacher's report); “Worsening sleep, eating. Low professional expectations due to reduced class hours at the current HEI, with no prospect of improvement. Worsening relationships with spouse and family. Most frequent episodes of stress” (Teacher's report); “Lots of fatigue and emotional exhaustion” (Teacher's report), and finally “Burned out!” (Teacher's report).

It is noteworthy that, even though these reports highlight the relationships between work and psychological suffering, there is still an underreporting of illnesses in this category (Silva, 2015; Penteado; Neto, 2019). This means that, even if symptoms can be recognized, there is a tendency to deny these signs and hide them, which is not only explained by individual aspects

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>The energy depletion feeling</th>
<th>The feeling of being an observer of one's activity</th>
<th>The ineffectiveness feeling</th>
<th>The lack of accomplishment feeling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by the authors
but results from historical and social dimensions related to how teachers and their activity are seen. As mentioned, the "vocational" and "sacrificial" logic inhibit recognizing illness processes. Added to this is an uncritical cult of the idea that workers must develop even greater resilience – as it already exists – in the face of adversity situations at work, which requires them to suit and adapt to precarious and degrading conditions, all of this without reducing efficiency and "delivery".

The analysis also showed a statistically significant association between performing managerial duties and certain adverse experiences related to work, such as a) not being able to complete the tasks planned for the working day due to other work demands; b) feeling exhausted; c) difficulties in responding to messages related to work; d) level of institutional pressure; e) level of peer pressure; f) time to plan activities; g) time to meet other institutional demands; h) time to reflect on their practice. This can be seen, for example, in the following two tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you perform any academic and/or administrative management roles?</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $\chi^2=27.3$; gl=3; p-value<0.001, $\alpha=0.05$; Statistically significant association (p-value < $\alpha$).
Source: Prepared by the authors
Table 5 – Relationship between the management role and the feeling of exhaustion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you perform any academic and/or administrative management roles?</th>
<th>Exhaustion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $\chi^2=14.0$; gl=3; p-value=0.003, $\alpha=0.05$; Statistically significant association (p-value $< \alpha$).

Source: Prepared by the authors

The results of the analyses showed, therefore, that the performance of the managerial role during the period of teleworking and the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with significant work difficulties, making it impossible to conduct planned tasks and being linked to the feeling of professional exhaustion. The exercise of management in the context of higher education can, therefore, be considered a condition that worsens the problems already experienced by teachers.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Adopting teleworking within the scope of educational processes is a reality and, in certain circumstances, represents a valuable resource for society. Despite this, the difficulties identified in this study show the need for a continuous evaluation of work models, which effectively integrates teachers, valuing their experiences and perceptions, to enable transformations in the conditions and methods of management and work organization. An approach that is truly committed to preventing illness and promoting professional health cannot avoid reflecting on the experiences lived by workers. It cannot be ignored that the ongoing changes generated within social and economic contradictions deserve attention and need to be tackled.

As much as this article has focused on the experiences of teachers during the pandemic period and the relationship with the ERT, it can raise hypotheses for analysis and contribute to discussions regarding the teachers' health and methodologies mediated by technology in education, such as the theme of Distance Education, still little present in literature, but constantly growing in the Brazilian reality.
Furthermore, compared to publications on the subject discussed here, it is observed that this article presents more generalizable results, as it is based on a hybrid methodology, that is, qualitative and quantitative, and that it represents a significant sample of HEI teachers in Brazil. The investigation into their forms of individual and collective resistance and creation developed during the pandemic period – and, in the face of the precariousness imposed by the neoliberal regime – presents itself as a relevant issue that must be considered in future studies.
REFERENCES


FREIRE, Paulo. Pedagogia da Autonomia – saberes necessários à prática educativa. São


