TIME AND WORK IN ORGANIZATIONS: A PSYCHOSOCIAL STUDY WITH WORKERS WHO HAVE FIXED AND FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS IN A PASTA FACTORY

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ABSTRACT

This study is about how workers who have fixed and flexible schedules created meaning for their working time, and how they related both in a medium-size pasta industry. Time concept was used as a psychosocial construction that guides subjectivity and defines daily practices of society into work and leisure activities. Field Theory from Kurt Lewin was used to set multiple methods of accessing these meanings and enter the dynamics of time and work. Phase 1 of the research consisted of weekly visits to the industry during three months, recorded in a Field Diary. Phase 2 consisted of the application of a Time Questionnaire with the Sales Department of the company. Phase 3 consisted of six long interviews (two hours) with workers who have fixed schedules and six with workers who had flexible hours (same length of time). The Field Diary provided the context in which questions about time emerged in the company. The Time Questionnaire brought proverbs and meanings attributed to time in everyday situations. By comparing the interviews of the workers with fixed and flexible schedules, it was demonstrated that time and activity are correlated and impact caused the subjectivity of workers differently. It was concluded that time, work, and production is related and play a central role in the daily life and subjectivity of workers, influencing them differently according to their schedule. Questions about the impact of working remotely and with flexible working hours are raised especially after the impact of Covid-19.

KEYWORDS:

Time, work, organization, Social Psychology, remote working time, Covid-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Whoever does not have two free hours a day is a slave," Nietzsche

Time is by far more than its dictionary definition (Ferreira, 1975). Although it is stated as 1) succession of years, days, hours; 2) notion of the present, past, and future; 3) a time or occasion conducive to one thing being realized; 4) period in which one lives, time, century; 5) weather conditions; 6) spatial coordinate required to locate a physical occurrence; 7) flexion indicative of the moment to which the state or verbal action is referred to; 8) each of the parts that share certain musical pieces such as sonata, suite, quartet; 9) progress, movement; 10) duration of each unit of the compass, among many other settings.

In ancient Greek, Chromos-time means division. However, there are two words to designate it: Aion, the present time from which the other times are born, and Kairós, the right time to decide and do something (Cintra, 1987; Spantidou, 1987).

In humanities, time has also been divided into psychological and social time. Psychological time is subjective, relative, and set by the subjective experience of events whilst social time is marked and decoded according to social scales that may vary from one society to another.

By paying attention to the speeches and expressions associated with time in our daily lives, it was possible to discover there is more than diversity being added to it: "time of fat cows and lean cows", "give time to time", "killing-time", "leisure-time", "time when a dog was tied with sausage", "dead-time", "time will prove who is right", among others. As a language construct, there is multiplicity and diversity present in the most different speeches and contexts. For example, "I'm out of time", "I wish the day had twenty-four hours", "I have to find time to do this", "Do you have time?", "Give me a break", "Let's take a break in our relationship", "Tidy up a little time", "I've got plenty of time", "What a crazy time", "This is taking me a lot of time," and the list goes to infinite.

This seems to happen, not only because time aggregates values and meanings constructed through our relationships, but because it also is created and creates a common ground to interdependence. Time has accompanied the history of humanity. Thus, anthropologist Hall says, "Time speaks. He speaks more rarely than words. The message he conveys comes loud and clear. Time is manipulated less consciously; it is subject to less distortion than written language. You can shout the truth, where the words are," (Hall, 1959:23).

Moreover, time seems to be directly linked to the context where relationships are produced and signified. The temporal system of each society, group, and the member may constitute a link for communication, integration, resistance, and power among its members. When Peter Spink (1996) defines Organizational Psychology from the perspective of Social Psychology, he takes the dynamics and creativity of organizational phenomena as being produced and negotiated in different, multiple, and complexity of organizational skills. Furthermore, time is also a product and producer of dynamic and complex networks, which are constructed interactively.

Thus, time is taken here not as a division, but as something present in our relationships, activities, consciousness, and feelings. Organizational time is the object of this research, but using Field Theory to understand how working time plays such an important role in a person's life.

Industrial, capitalist time - which is extracted as productive time from workers and collaborators carries more meaning than the profit made out of it. It brings a network of complexities and it would be superficial simply to say that workers sell their hours for a salary. There is much more in working hours than it can be assumed from out of factories and other working organizations. This study seeks to understand the multiple relations between working time and other times and if there was a pattern in workers who had fixed

or flexible working shifts. A possible correlation between these two themes that are frequently associated in everyday life - working time and flexible and fixed working shifts.

This topic becomes central and important in nowadays discussions when global organizations are all working from home. This study brings many aspects to this discussion, which is now more important than ever as workers are having breakdowns due to excessive working time.

The present study was conducted at a pasta factory industry, which uses 600 tons of flour per day to produce pasta. This is one of the leading pasta factories in the South of Latin America.

The procedure to understand working time from the point of field theory was especially fruitful to understand how workers defined and organized time according to their work. Many differences and similarities between these workers who followed fixed and flexible working hours were found. On top of them, it is the fact that workers are continuously struggling to have a more meaningful time at work, and yet, the working system has found other coercive forces to make workers even more productive.

1.1. Research goal

"Of all that exists, nothing is more uncaptured, physically speaking, than time," Laymert Garcia dos Santos

Fraser's inquiry (1990), "How does someone study something so familiar and yet so strange, so present, and as multi-faceted as time?" led this research to use multidisciplinary methods and approaches to studying time. It was observed that time has been an inexhaustible source of research and discussion in the different areas of knowledge and under the most diverse approaches. However, none of these studies seems to exhaust the richness that this theme presents, much less the methods used in their investigations. Moreover, according to Norbert Elias (1994:l6), still, "... we lack conceptual models and a global vision, through which we can take understandable, in thought, what we experience daily in reality." This is the case of those who decide to research time.

The Field Method originated in empiricism and pragmatism. As an inductive method, it is based on the observation of the empirical to establish compilations, reflections, and theories from this. Thus, a more procedural and contextualized approach would be obtained. This method also privileges the gradual production of knowledge, basing it on the data and relationships found (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Adding to this, sociologists like Glaser & Strauss with the publication of "The discovery of grounded theory," in 1967, promote the study of meanings and social interactions in the context where they occur (Pidgeon, 1996:75).

In the Grounded Theory, the theory is constructed from empirical data that will be processed during the various phases of the research, and not a priori. The research is seen as a dynamic process of establishing relationships between data and not as a mere application of theories to the social context. It is through the comparison and analysis of the data that concepts and categories are constituted and defined, evidencing the context and meaning constructed through social interactions. For Strauss, Corbin (1990:23), knowledge

in GT is "inductively discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic collection and data analysis." Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory should remain in reciprocal relationships with each other. It all starts with an area of study and what is relevant to that area allows you to emerge.

2. METHODOLOGY

"Tempus Fugit. Time flies", Ovid

A - APPROACH AND INSERTION IN THE FIELD OF RESEARCH: A medium-sized pasta company in the city of Londrina, with 350 employees was chosen from a list of local companies. From their total of employees, approximately 100 workers were in administrative positions, and 250 were in the production and distribution of products. This phase was the establishment of a connection with the company and its workers.

The insertion in the field was based on informal conversations with workers of the most different shifts, schedules, and organizations of the time. The objective of this phase was to understand how time and work were related to the daily life of the individuals and company. During this period, thirty-eight visits were made with an average duration of three hours each. During the visits, the researcher was able to participate in the various company activities developed by the workers. At the same time, it was possible to observe them, listen to them, and even question them on how to understand the relationships established between time and work from their perspective. Consequently, the Field Diary made it possible to bring the contexts and situations in which time themes arise in their daily living.

B - THE RESEARCHER AS AN ACTOR IN THE FIELD: The company requested a survey to be applied with its Sales Department. The company assumed that the sellers - because they had not achieved their sale goals, were not using their working hours properly. The company's goal was to make their working time more effective. Therefore, a Time Questionnaire was elaborated based on some data already collected in the Field Diary, and their request. This questionnaire was applied to thirty sales representatives. Our goal was to understand how they organized their working time, and their time outside their working hours. The Questionnaire contained 14 questions with open and closed questions, as well as sentences to be completed. The 1st part of this instrument covered personal data: gender, age, marital status, time in the company, function, and education. The 2nd part dealt with the average daily time occupied by them to perform work and leisure, their planning and organization of working time, factors of influence in the organization of working time and free time, working hours as fixed or flexible, preference for a certain organization of time, autonomy in the organization of time and work and current concerns of people around time issues. Finally, sentences were placed to be completed. For instance, "The phrase I hear and talk the most about time is...; Time for me is...; If I could have more time, I would like to have more time to...; For me, time could...," and others. The answers were organized, returned, and discussed with the entire sales team. It was found through the Questionnaire that the sales group did not have enough time as the company's management supposed and that they were highly skilled and productive.

C - DEEPENING THE INVESTIGATION. A random selection of six (6) workers who have fixed working hours and six (6) who have flexible hours was made. With these workers, we conducted individual interviews. The objective in phase 3 was to complement data and deepen issues related to time and work from these two groups. The division of these two groups of workers arose from experiences and reports found in the previous phases of the research. The interview script contained open questions about time, work, and subjectivity. By preparing the interviews, we sought to take into account the individuality of each worker. At the beginning of each interview, there was an introduction explaining its objectives, use of the material for research, and personal data plus ethical agreement (age, marital status, work, schooling, and family). In a second moment, questions were asked about working hours (fixed or flexible); preferences and justifications for certain times; concern about time in today's world; use or not of clock and alarm clock; differences in work rhythms; distance from home to work; time in and out of the workplace; concern about past, present or future; irreversibility of time; popular talks and sayings about time and messages about time. The result was an interview that resembled an informal conversation between researcher and worker about the issues of time and work. Through this less formal interview, there was confidence and dialogue with each participant. Pidgeon, Henwood (1996:89) called this "interview-conversation". The analysis of the interviews had the following procedure: first, a reading view extracting common themes from the interviewees' statements and then, comparison between groups with fixed and flexible schedules.

2.1. Ethics

This research adheres to the ethical principles of scientific research. Therefore, all the data collected had the agreement of the workers to participate. Besides that, all participation was anonymous throughout the research period and in all material produced. The data of this research follow integrity, honesty, and objectivity required for scientific research, avoiding bias. It was interesting to note that the three phases of data collection and analysis were equally important to understand time and work in a factory and beyond it.

3. RESULTS

"Whoever works, I think is a slave, a modern slave, because look, you dedicate the best years of your life working", Worker interviewed

By studying the relations between time and work in the company, it was possible to obtain data that express the relationships established by the factory and that are often reproduced, boycotted, and questioned by the workers from their perspective and conceptualization. "When you're in the car, you're walking and have a radio that beeps all the time. Amazing! Because it conditions you too much the things: hours and hours and hours, understand?" interviewed worker.

It was observed that, in the production sector, which kept going 24-hours a day, workers were scheduled in different shifts to keep the industrial plant in continuous progress and the production on at all times. This pointed to the fact that the organization of time and pace of work was given according to the needs of production, delivery times, and sale of products. In this sense, workers generally did not question the schedules or work schemes, which

were determined by the company, but adapted their activities outside of work according to the time in the company. This way, they used the time left to rest, take care of the house, children, and study, and take courses. On the other hand, workers who followed business hours complained about the lack of time to carry out activities during the week, such as going to the bank, paying bills, shopping, among others. It is noteworthy that the commerce of the city of Londrina also follows the same business hours, making it impossible to perform these activities outside of working hours.

Production workers who followed one of the mornings, afternoon, or night shifts did not complain about working hours because they had a free period to carry out banking, trade, and other activities. It is interesting to point out the criteria used by workers to assess working hours as being good or that is the possibility of performing activities out of their work scope.

The use of a control card by workers who have fixed working hours, especially in the production sector, is the mean for the company to control the fulfilment of the schedules and pay the workers according to the hours worked. That is, recounting delays, absences and benefiting those who work overtime. In the production sector, time control is a priority, since absences and delays can hinder the pace of production, causing losses for the factory (justification given by the company). Absences and delays were also used as criteria for the company to evaluate its employees, and a good employee is someone who is never missing or late for work. Workers reported that they always tried to arrive on time and not miss any second of working time. Some even express pride in being always available to the company.

The workers allocated in management positions and managers did not need to follow the card rules and followed flexible working hours since their activities were more tied to the fulfilment of tasks and deadlines than defined by schedules and shifts. In addition, they did not receive any extra hour payments, and were not under supervision when they arrived late, nor went away for a period or resolved personal issues during office hours.

Something similar happened to commissioned workers, whose earnings were linked to productivity and performance, not needing to keep the working-hour card controlled or follow rigid working hours. To illustrate this, some sellers had to reach the monthly sales quota stipulated by the company for each region. In this case, there was no control of working time, because it was in the seller's interest to sell more to meet his/her quota and increase his commission. In this group, we also found drivers and helpers of drivers who did not use control hour cards and received per ton of merchandise delivered. However, when they were not traveling, they should stay in the company and fulfill their working hours.

We realized that the "flexible" schedule can be used ideologically within the capitalist logic to increase the hours worked and save the company from having to pay extra for its employees. Our data also indicate that the organization of working time as fixed or flexible tends to come more from the production needs and interests of the company, than a product of the trust and autonomy granted to workers.

In addition, for both workers who have their time control card and those who do not have time card control, working time is defined as a "dead" time, wasted and devoid of meaning. They preferred to work in shifts and times when time "passed faster" so that the working time also ended faster. From these reflections, two central themes were extracted from the observations in the factory: the time of the company, considered here as time dedicated to production, profit, and the time of the workers, focused on the expression of subjectivity and sociability.

Therefore, the company's time is synonymous with productive time focused on capitalist logic. This was related to the weekends that workers worked "directly" in the factory without the right to rest even on holidays and weekends; speed and acceleration of the work rhythm according to production demand; work rate dictated by the speed of the production line; minimum interval for meals (mainly in the production sector); insecurity by the threat of unemployment, of being discharged at any time; infernal time of the "furnace" (pollution, steam from the production sector) that makes workers feel sick and have to take serum for liquid replacement; time of the point card that conditions workers never to be able to sleep late again for fear of losing time; flexible hours for workers to rent more, without the company having to pay overtime; working time that should never be wasted, not even to look away from the production and look at a colleague's face during a small conversation; among so many others.

On the other hand, the time of the workers was correlated with the expression of subjectivity in the organization of time and work in the company. For example, the time of the bathroom in which after meals, workers rest and talk on the floor of the factory bathroom; nap time, when the flour production sector take a nap lying on cardboard boxes on the corner of the factory – it was considered a time of escape. During this time, some workers managed to spend some time hidden without being noticed and then justify his absence by saying that he was in the bathroom or drinking water. There was also a highly estimated time of pregnancy, in which a pregnant worker can be transferred to a quieter sector, with a slower production pace, and can sit and where there was air conditioning.

In addition to all of the above, there was a time of the revolt, when workers push or scrub noodles into the furnace to have fewer noodles to pack, among others.

It is noteworthy that, company time and workers' time do not exist as two isolated aspects, but as interests that are sometimes grouped, and other times, in a conflict in the daily relationships at work. For each type of work context, it seems that there is one own time logic, with its advantages and disadvantages. In the logic of the work conflicts, it was observed that there was a certain preference for faster working rhythms because this gave the impression that time was passing faster, and sooner it could be time to go home. In this sense, there was a subjectivity, whose expression and realization seem to happen more outside the local of work than during the realization of work - although those workers spend most of the day and life based on work and business.

4. DISCUSSION

"I think so should use time with what you like, that the short life, enjoy time very well because it spends a lot fast, huh? I think life is too short, it's brief, right, it's an existence very brief, we do not know in two minutes if we give a collapse and you die, something I think I had to enjoy time with what you like, but don't fail to grow with culture, spiritually, professionally, enjoy well even, " worker interviewed.

Meanings of time and work acquired by workers are directly related to the context that each worker is inserted in their daily relationships. It was in this way that the Field Diaries ended up providing the context in which questions about time and work emerged in the company. The Time Questionnaire provided examples, data, and sayings that illustrated meanings of time and work for the sales group, which had flexible working hours. The Interviews made it possible to compare two groups of workers (fixed and flexible hours) and to point out how time and activity are correlated in daily life and subjectivity. With the methodology of Grounded Theory, we find our ways to enter participate and understand the dynamics of time and work in this factory using an interdisciplinary approach. The adoption of various approaches and multiple techniques in the collection and analysis of data also allowed this.

Gradually, it was realized that the multiple organizations of time and work comprised complex networks that integrate the company's dynamics. To understand some of them, we had to redeem, understand the impacts of time, and work upon the subjectivity of the worker, at the same time, they pointed out strategies created to face and signify them. Each worker's speech ended up composing a puzzle, where each piece was unique, but it could only be visualized together with the others. Hall (1959, 1989) called this dynamic of multiple temporalities the dance of life, Ferrarotti (1990) called the music of life and for Levine (1997), and it composed the step of life. This is because, perhaps, time presents a way to provide less manipulated material on the dynamics of powers, conflicts, and disputes present in the factory. At this point, we agree with Hall (1989), time speaks. It does not only speak, but it allows giving a voice, promoting reflections, and establishing comparisons between the complex relationships between workers, time, and life.

In this study, it was possible to capture some logic between time and work that was built in the interactions of workers. It was observed that such correlations compose lines of reasoning and explanations constructed and applied by the workers themselves in the daily affairs of industrial relations. These logics, somehow, integrate different perspectives in the apprehension of time and work and are intertwisted with different views of the world. What it was found was that no logic is better than another is, but each worker creates, inter-subjectively, his way of dealing with working time according to his own experiences and gives meaning to it in order not to suffer too much. Thus, it was possible to understand that for some workers, the work schedule and shift provided by the company - whether or not with a time card. Working at the weekends; the hustle and bustle of everyday life; a time marked on clocks; the weekend that passed too quickly; the Saturday, which was very slow; the holidays; among other temporalities, meant joy for some, and the sadness for others.

However, there were common aspects in the speech of these workers. As an example, working time occupies a central position in their daily lives and organizations. Mainly, when the factory's productive logic was extrapolated to other social times, making leisure time: a time focused on production, optimized by the search for its good use. In the logic of the company and society today, doing nothing, having a slower pace of time, and wasting time can be considered as synonyms of laziness, disability, and even used as social exclusion.

With time dedicated to working and production, workers live for work, home, children, recovering strength and energy to get back to work. On this point, fundamentally, it is possible to agree with Whitrow (1993); people are governed by working time and we are constantly concerned with it and its demarcations. With little time left to live, some call themselves modern slaves.

In factory relations, the worker is not only alienated from his activity, but also from his own time. This expropriation was approached by Kurz (1999) and related to the meaningless dead time, sold to the factory, together with the activity, pace, and speed required for production. Although the idea of modern society was to offer more free time to men, it is not what we find in the day-to-day of the company. With the increasing number of demands imposed on the human being in the same time interval, the sensation of a scarcity of time is constantly produced. In general, workers are always running, in hurry, and complaining that there is little time left for fun, rest, study, walking, or even taking breaks. Because they are always available to the company, they report that they would like to have more time for themselves, to enjoy life better.

However, these different timeframes do not always coexist without conflicts within the company and within themselves. If, on the one hand, from an administrative and managerial perspective, it sought to optimize production time, reduce the time spent and have a minimum number of employees to keep the company going; on the other hand, workers and managers entered into a dispute about the length of time spent in the furnace, meal breaks, weekend work, among others. In the furnace, for example, the company demanded that workers stay an hour a day in this place that is extremely hot and unhealthy and workers claimed only half an hour. This demonstrates that workers are not very passive in the face of the imposed organization of time and work. When necessary, they manage to extract a few minutes of rest and socialize, even on the production line. They complain, give their opinion, and ask for a change in their schedule, and so on.

In the end, the research concludes that fixed time and flexible time cause different impacts on each group of workers. This is not the only factor that must be taken into account when addressing time and work. Each time scheme organized by the factory has particularities that have advantages and disadvantages. This shows that the logics of time sometimes integrate, others, conflict with industrial relations. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there is 'no' better working time to be followed. Nevertheless, it is possible to mention that the meaning of working time is relative, dynamic, historical, and political, and as such, it can only be understood – interdependently - in the daily field of the ones who work and live.

4. CONCLUSION

"The best way to fill time is to waste it", Marguerite Duras

This poem about time, work, and life summarizes several phrases from workers during this research,

KALEIDOSCOPE: TIME AND WORK
Wake up without an alarm clock,
Proud of the morning conditioning.
Take driving and fly to work.
Hit the card or do not hit the card,
It is neither a question nor a solution: it is Production,
Of modern slavery
Of time and work.
No time to live,
Life goes faster than the pasta box.
Take the pasta; put it in the box,
Take the pasta; put it in the box,
At a breakneck pace
Work-time and pain run.
For a moment: think,
 what would it be like if you had studied? Better not to think.
If not, it makes you want to cry.
Better to let the furnace burn
And don't panic over time.
You have to master it, but with what strength? Walking back home, he thinks:
In the home service, that awaits you.
Without knowing, that another day is gone,
She sleeps sitting: whoever thought she was watching television.

This may be one of the challenges of contemporary society: some with too much time and others with too little time. Now, everyone with remote time and new issues arise as Nadine (2021) mentions, and which are even more challenging, "... people live a lot due to work, and end up not having time, mainly, to live." If this is a reality that we cannot escape, we can at least transform it.

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