Socio-clinical analysis of the work context and its relationship with the mental illness of military police officers in the Federal District

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Abstract

Mental and behavioral disorders are the third leading cause of incapacity in police work. This research analyzes, through Clinical Sociology and Critical Discourse Analysis, the context of the work of the Military Police of the Federal District and its relationship with the mental illness of police officers. This was an ethnographic study. Participant observation notes and interviews contributed to data collection and corpus formation. The analysis explored the representational meaning of the discourses using the following categories: transitivity, representation of social actors, and lexical selection. The results point to the organization of work, interpersonal conflicts, weakening social bonds, and abuse of power as the main triggers of mental illness. Paying attention to the mental health care of police officers must be a continuous action of the corporation and part of the Federal District's agenda, promoting initiatives to protect professionals and, consequently, the safety of society.

Keywords: Work context. Mental illness. Military police. Clinical Sociology.

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Resumo

Transtornos mentais e comportamentais apresentam-se como a terceira maior causa de incapacidade para o trabalho policial. Esta pesquisa objetiva analisar, por meio da Sociologia Clínica e da Análise de Discurso Crítica, o contexto do trabalho da Polícia Militar do Distrito Federal e sua relação com o adoecimento mental dos policiais. Esta investigação foi realizada por intermédio do estudo etnográfico. Notas de observação participante e entrevistas contribuíram para a coleta de dados e a formação do *corpus*. A análise explorou o significado representacional dos discursos, utilizando as categorias transitividade, representação de atores sociais e seleção lexical. Os resultados apontam a organização do trabalho; os conflitos interpessoais; a fragilização dos laços sociais e os abusos de poder como os principais desencadeadores do adoecimento psíquico. Atentar para os cuidados com a saúde mental do policial deve ser ação contínua da corporação, bem como compor a pauta da agenda do Distrito Federal com o fomento de iniciativas de proteção dos profissionais e, consequentemente, da sociedade.

Palavras-chave: Contexto do trabalho. Adoecimento psíquico. Policiais militares. Sociologia Clínica.

Análisis socioclínico del contexto laboral y su relación con la enfermedad mental de policías militares en el Distrito Federal

Resumen

Los trastornos mentales y del comportamiento son la tercera causa de incapacidad para el trabajo policial. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar, a través de la Sociología Clínica y el análisis crítico del discurso, el contexto de trabajo de la Policía Militar del Distrito Federal y su relación con la enfermedad mental de los policías. Se llevó a cabo a través de un estudio etnográfico. Las notas de observación de los participantes y las entrevistas contribuyeron a la recopilación de datos y la formación del corpus. El análisis exploró el significado representacional de los discursos, utilizando las siguientes categorías: transitividad, representación de actores sociales y selección léxica. Los resultados destacan la organización del trabajo, los conflictos interpersonales, el debilitamiento de los lazos sociales y el abuso de poder como los principales desencadenantes de la enfermedad psíquica. La atención al cuidado de la salud mental del policía debe ser una acción continua de la corporación y formar parte de la agenda del Distrito Federal, promoviendo iniciativas para proteger a los profesionales y, consecuentemente, a la sociedad.

Palabras clave: Contexto de trabajo. Enfermedad psíquica. Policía militar. Sociología Clínica.

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of public policies focused on police officers is necessary because of the large number of reports of violence by such individuals in Brazil. However, a large number of them also leave work due to various psychological disorders, highlighting the need to study the relationship between work developed in police organizations and the deterioration of mental health. Concerning the population in general, the national literature points out that police officers are part of the most vulnerable professional class and are susceptible to psychological suffering associated with factors such as risk, including death, pressure, tension, and institutional demands (Dias, 2020; R. O. B. Santos, Hauer, & Furtado, 2019; Winter, & Alf, 2019).

Suicides and suicide attempts among public security professionals add to the death statistics of police officers inside and outside the corps (Dombroski, 2017; M. A. Silva & Bueno, 2017; Violanti, Owens, McCanlies, Fekedulegn, & Andrew, 2019). Licit and illicit drug use, anxiety disorder, mood disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and stress also figure in the clinical records of police officers' mental health (R. O. B. Santos et al., 2019). Additionally, Portela and Bughay (2007) report insomnia, headache, memory failure, apathy, aggressiveness, and bad mood as frequent manifestations in the literature on police work.

Ignoring this reality means a strong social risk once it allows a psychologically unbalanced police officer to commit excesses and act violently in conflict situations. The mental disorder weakens the psychic elaboration capacity of these professionals, as it compromises the mobilization of resources that allow them to find alternatives that distance themselves from the aggressiveness and violence experienced in the profession's daily routine.

Given this context, we sought to anchor ourselves theoretically in a field of study that: a) had both social and psychological concerns to sustain the study and b) placed the subject at the center of the analysis stage. In this sense, we turned to Clinical Sociology to support us in this research. Clinical Sociology studies social phenomena based on the concrete of work, on the unique ways in which subjects construct, signify, and relate the social reality (Gaulejac, 2007; Lhuilier, 2006; Pagès, Bonetti, Gaulejac, & Descendre, 2006). In this field of study, work is responsible for the individual and social constitution of the being, the object of libidinal investment, target of love and recognition (Enriquez, 1991; Gaulejac, 2007; Hanique, 2009), which brings back "the singular dimensions of individual destinies to the position of social determinism" (Hanique, 2009, p. 32). Given this, the subjectivity of the existential dimension of the subject and its psychosociological meanings become the central object of clinical listening, from which the researcher seeks to portray the universe of this subject, especially in the relationship he maintains with his work.

The appropriation of the clinic concept alludes to the approach of the individual who speaks, privileging his understanding of social reality without any pretension of a causal explanation (Lhuilier, 2006). Clinical Sociology foregrounds the existential subject both at a theoretical and practical level (Rhéaume, 2009), helping him to better understand the sources of his actions within organizations (Moreau, 2014).

Studying work from the perspective of Clinical Sociology is an attempt to understand reality based on the worker's interactions and the social structure between him and society, between the social subject and the existential subject (Nunes & P. H. I. Silva, 2018). It means to know the macro taking into account the micro, and understand the organizational grounded in the daily practices of the subject at work.

According to the analysis of the work context, seen as the integration of work organization, the conditions in which it is performed, and the existing socio-professional relations, police work is crossed by two important control devices: the rationality of bureaucratic power and the subjectivity of managerialism ideology. The association of these elements tends to exert heavy pressure on the psychological aspects of the subjects, affecting their mental health.

Paying attention to the specificities and psychosocial risks of labor activities is a demand of first necessity for both police institutions and society as a whole, to increase, on the one hand, safety and, on the other, to guarantee ethical practice in the work performed. However, despite the initiatives of psychosocial care in police institutions, there is an increase in the number of illnesses, leaves, inappropriate use of force, and suicides of police officers for psychological reasons (Bhatia & Pandit, 2017; Dombroski, 2017; Edwards & Kotera, 2021; M. A. Silva & Bueno, 2017; Violanti et al., 2019; Winter & Alf, 2019).

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Considering these notes, this study questions: how does the context of police work contribute to the psychic illness of police officers in the Federal District Police Department (FDPD)? For this purpose, the objective is to analyze, through Clinical Sociology and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the work context of the FDPD and its relation to the mental illness of these workers.

Based on the episteme of Clinical Sociology, this study focuses on the subjective aspects, both at the individual and collective levels, that involve the relationship between work and mental illness. Thus, we intend to break away from the merely instrumental and technicist character to contribute to the critical rethinking of organizational practices. Moving away from this view may help in the understanding and development of mechanisms that help comprehend the organizational reality, from a critical perspective to promote new knowledge and solutions. The few studies of this nature on mental disorders in the police area, which depart from the positivist tradition and orthodoxy, may lead to findings capable of generating new applications to organizational reality and, in turn, changes that reflect a more humanized view of those who exercise the police profession.

ONTO-EPISTEMOLOGICAL PATH: OUTLINING CONCEPTS AND PERSPECTIVES OF ANALYSIS

By problematizing the work context as a source of mental illness in police officers, in light of Clinical Sociology, this research assumes a critical-theoretical perspective by moving away from the hegemonic utilitarian view, which is predominant in organizational studies. Analyzing organizations supported by Clinical Sociology is to lie upon an epistemology of meaning research, taking into account the social dynamics of the subject's intersubjectivity. It involves an individual or collective approach to subjects or organizations dealing with suffering, in which the listening performed perceives the subject in his singularity, alive and desiring (Hanique, 2009). The research object unveils itself according to meanings arising from the subjects' experiences and realities (Grasseli & Salomone, 2012), which is essential in the context of Clinical Sociology.

This field of study is concerned with the subjection of the individual to employment, which has become an exclusive synonym of what work is, fosters conformism, passivity, docility, and the need to remain employed (Lhuilier, 2006, 2013). Work, which should be understood based on a dichotomous perspective (of the positive and the negative), of what is growth and also exploitation and pain, becomes "a factor of mediation, which enriches the world of things and impoverishes the inner life" (Tragtenberg, 2006, p. 69). In this context, we consider that organizations define priorities, values, and the existence of individuals, anchored in economic, psychic, and social dependence (Franco, Druck, & Seligmann-Silva, 2010; Gaulejac, 2011).

Attentive to these perceptions of Clinical Sociology, police work is marked both by the rationality of bureaucratic power and the subjectivity of managerialism ideology. Associated with social changes and the work context, these elements trigger mental health problems in these subjects.

The bureaucratic rationality, seen as a system of domination and conduct control (Ramos, 2006; Tragtenbert, 2006), materializes in police corporations through the rationalization of the social relations that are reproduced therein, evidencing a relationship of submission and subservience, legally and tacitly adopted and obeyed, due to a rigid hierarchy, labor division, formalization of rules and procedures, order, discipline, and command (Motta, 1981; Ramos, 2006; Tragtenberg, 2006). The prescription of rules and regulations can instrumentalize operators, social relations of dependence, and control (Lhuilier, 2013).

The managerialism ideology, in turn, manifests itself based on the use of more subjective forms of control, which, far from neutrality, act in function of the physical, psychological, and affective domain of its members (Enriquez, 1991, 1997; Pagès et al., 2006). This ideology finds fertile ground in the police model of organization because of its capacity to foster idealizations and fantasies of narcissistic desire, seen in the illusion of superpower, heroic vigor, and symbolic power perceived by its members. This set of factors causes a continuous process of silencing, suffering introjection, abandonment feeling, and individualization.

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POLICE WORK CONTEXT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPAIRMENT: REVISITING STUDIES ON POLICE OFFICERS

Clinical Sociology is characterized by criticality – inspired by the first generation of the Frankfurt School and the pragmatic sociology of Luc Boltanski – and clinical, in which attention is very close to the subject. Its action focuses on being on the subject's side, promoting his speech, and providing listening. Thus, in this research, we placed the police officer in the center of the stage and, based on the concrete of work, that is, on what he experiences, we identified the work context of these professionals, the work organization to which he is subjected, the socio-professional relationships established, without forgetting the working conditions. Some categories help systematize the research results obtained from the subject's experiences, the subjective aspects that occupy a unique space. Man is analyzed based on what he lives. He is put into action, analyzed in his contradictions, confronted, and called to systematized reflection.

The organization of police work lies upon two pillars: discipline and hierarchy (Minayo, E. R. Souza, & Constantino, 2008; Owen, 2016). The power of these elements is made explicit in rituals, myths, symbols, and corporate insignia, which tell its members what the police structure is, how it works, who commands, and who obeys. Lhuilier (2013, p. 488), from a socioclinical perspective, draws attention to the fact that more than techniques and instruments, norms carry within them "the mark of social connotations and symbolic charges in terms of hierarchical power and subjection to the logics of the organization" (Lhuilier, 2013, p. 488). The studies of Antunes (2019), Miranda and Guimarães (2016), and Spode and Merlo (2006) illustrate the reflexes of hierarchical and disciplinary relations in the context of police work and mental illness.

Socio-professional relations among peers are fragile, and affections are mostly marked by silencing, poor communication, discredit, persecution, and inequities in regulation application. In social relationships, the police officer finds himself limited to being, at all times, the man of the law, inhibited and limited to allow himself to go beyond prescribed formalities and expectations, conditioned to be demanding and feared. Antunes (2019), Gershon, Lin, and Li (2002), Mattos (2012), and Winter and Alf (2019) comment on the deleterious effects of socio-professional relations in police work.

As for working conditions, Bhatia and Pandit (2017) state that these present extensive working hours, irregular eating habits, inadequate sleep, undefined schedules, and family life and leisure that are not prioritized. Added to this are precariousness and lack of material necessary to adequately perform the functions (Antunes, 2019), irregular working hours, weather conditions that are not always favorable, and postures that are generally uncomfortable (Davey, Obst, & Sheehan, 2000), inadequate facilities, work material, and uniforms, especially for female police officers (Bezerra, Minayo, & Constantino, 2013), and work overload due to the lack of human resources (Winter & Alf, 2019).

Police officers are exposed daily to violence and challenging and dangerous events (Jenkins, Allison, Innes, Violanti, & Andrew, 2018), which forces them to remain in a state of permanent alertness, under intense emotional burden (Ferreira, M. A. F. Santos, Paula, Mendonça, & Carneiro, 2017). The expectation is that they fulfill their obligations, submitted to the legal requirements incumbent upon them, without losing their composure and sensitivity, with complete emotional control, as if that were possible. However, it cannot be omitted that the denial of emotions has harmful consequences on the immune system, compromising physical and psychological health. Emotions and affections are primordial in the scope of Clinical Sociology. They result from the imbrication of the social with the psychic. Thus, in this field of study, emotions, beliefs, affections, and passions have a privileged place in the analysis. The police officer experiences a contradiction that generates conflict as he is encouraged to control his affections and emotions as much as possible.

Given this situation, police work attributes a paradoxical position to police officers, who are sometimes ordinary members of society and sometimes agents of social order regulation. In this relationship, the police officer ends up occupying a non-place by representing the public power for the regulation of society on an uninterrupted basis and, at the same time, being part of this collective (J. H. R. Silva, 2009). This duality, associated with the other elements that make up the work context, can also compromise the mental health of police officers and, consequently, public safety. We can observe that in studies stating that the work context exposes police officers to psychologically aggressive episodes, which compromise mental health and trigger various types of disorders (Barreto, Kusterer, & Carvalho, 2019; Dombroski, 2017; Edwards & Kotera, 2021; Winter & Alf, 2019).

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Doping can be seen as a resource for police officers to improve performance and adapt to the job (Crespin, Lhuilier, & Lutz, 2017). Bhatia and Pandit (2017) and Gershon et al. (2002) point out that the police occupation presents a higher risk of morbidity and mortality. Over time, psychophysiological problems tend to increase once they deal with harmful coping habits that contribute to the individual's self-deterioration. Simpson, Byrne, Gabbay, and Rannard (2015) warn that disruptive events at work may threaten an individual's sense of himself and his identity. In this regard, Dombroski (2017), Miranda and Guimarães (2016), and M. A. Silva and Bueno (2017) report the increase in the number of suicides and ideations among police officers, justified by sociodemographic, institutional, organizational, relational, and individual factors.

Mattos (2012) also identifies the lack of social recognition and the stigma as psychological-aggravating factors of the profession, whether by invisibility, repudiation, or generalizations related to the negative image socially constructed of police officers. Minayo, J. R. A. Souza, Cavalcante, and Mangas (2012) add that the stress of these workers assumes a direct relationship with the hierarchical organization, working conditions, and lack of recognition. Concerning recognition, it is worth mentioning the phenomenon that Gaulejac (2006) identified as the "fight for a place in the sun". The author speaks, first of all, of the search for recognition by the other. Both work and clinical sociologists insist on the relevance of recognition as a fundamental factor for workers' mental health.

METHOD

The theoretical-methodological character of this research assumes a qualitative nature and an ethnographic-discursive method, proposed by Magalhães (2016) and Magalhães, Martins, and Resende (2017). The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was adopted (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003; Resende & Ramalho, 2004), which lies on delineating principles that define it as a theory and a method. That allowed greater depth of reality, dispensing with "numbering or measuring units or homogeneous categories" (Richardson, Peres, Wanderley, Correia, & Peres, 2015, p. 79). This research turned to the universe of meanings of human actions, to the motivations, beliefs, values, attitudes, metaphors, characteristics, and aspirations of the researched ones (Flick, 2009), with the analysis of "how people build the world around them, what they are doing or what is happening to them in terms that are meaningful and offer rich insight" (Flick, 2009, p. 8).

The ethnographic-discursive method, seen as a reflective process, was how data collection was carried out, based on observations, written notes, and interviews. Its differential lies upon the use of ethnography for the study of discourse as a social practice, having as principles the reflexivity of researchers and the constant comparison "between individuals and situations, recording how social actors locate themselves in groups in which identities are constructed and in formal institutions" (Magalhães et al., 2017, p. 117).

The use of the CDA valued the theoretical and methodological potential, which supports the ontological and epistemological debate of this study. This choice made it possible to articulate the linguistic properties of the texts as discursive events, allowing to understand social practices and unveil aspects such as hegemonic power, dominant ideologies, identifications, and identities. The CDA allows to unveil ideologies underlying the discourses (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999), making it possible to "produce and present critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection" (Wodak, 2009, p. 7).

We conducted participant observation notes and interviews to collect and generate data during the field research. We wrote notes during a six-month visit to the Center for Promotion and Quality of Life (CPQL), a unit of the FDPD health system dedicated to psychological and assistance support for police officers. The study was initiated after a positive response from the institution's managers to a protocol request in which the study scope, design, objectives, and ethical requirements were presented. The activities developed included: case discussion meetings, workshops, social events, and informal conversations with police officers and specialists. The interviews, recorded with consent, were based on a semi-structured script, which allowed flexibility to deepen the questions, according to the flow of information and its contributions to the research (Flick, 2009). There was a total of almost 23 hours of recording. At the end of each interview, we wrote notes in a field notebook, with observations of the interviewee's behavior and responsiveness. These notes were used as secondary analysis resources, taking into account the interaction of the researchers with the field and the readings pertinent to the investigation (Magalhães et al., 2017).

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The selection of participants took place by observing and monitoring care services provided by the CPQL professionals and according to their indications (Snowball sampling). Four women and 17 men were interviewed, aged between 29 and 51 years and working in the police between five and 30 years. We used fictitious names to preserve the identity of the participants. The number of respondents considered the saturation of information concerning the study (Morse, 2015).

According to the methodological assumptions of the CDA, after the transcription of the interviews, the construction of the corpus of analysis included three stages: reading the collected material to become familiar with the texts that would reveal the profound aspects of the social practice of the police officer; reading oriented to the selection of clippings to reduce the volume of material to the specificities of the research questions (Fairclough, 2003); and color-coded reading to identify the relevant groups for analysis, making them more "readable" or "analyzable". That allowed the attribution of representations and meanings of linguistic-discursive classes related to how social actors represent the physical and social aspects of the world (Fairclough, 2003). The selection of this meaning was based on the response to the proposed objectives and the frequency and recurrence of the categories that highlight them in the text.

The discursive articulations were analyzed using categories *transitivity, representation of social actors,* and *lexical selection*. The transitivity system was the most prevalent group of analyses. Representing social actors started from identifying their inclusions/exclusions in the speeches. The way they are presented reveals how they get involved in the process of mental illness. The lexical selection considered how the statements mark the particular aspects of the police world, that is, the ways of lexicalizing the entities that comprise it (Fairclough, 2003). These categories made it possible to observe the different ways to represent aspects of mental illness in the context of police work. Recognizing that an exclusive separation between the classes of discourse meaning is not always possible, we analyzed a few times categories *modality* (discursive resource to approach or distance the interviewee from his responsibility for what he says) and *metaphor* (seen as a way the subject expresses particularities of the world that identify him).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The raised theoretical construction shows that different sources in different areas of knowledge identify the organization of police work as the origin of its workers' mental illness. The results presented here corroborate this reality. When analyzing police officers' speeches, we identified in *lexical selection* category that the word "pressure", sometimes followed by the qualifier "psychological", was selected by several interviewees to represent how work compromises police officers' mental health. Resende and Ramalho (2004) describe which aspects of the text and its semiosis can cover ideologies, which reveal themselves according to the meaning of words, metaphors, or presuppositions. The speeches demonstrate the predominance of the word in different articulations.

The word "pressure" takes on different meanings, as a synonym for the force exerted on something, the act of compressing or pressing, or the unit of measurement. Its figurative meaning is associated with the ability of someone to influence, coerce, constrain, or force someone else to do something (Priberam, 2020). The word used in the analyzed speeches suggests that ideological control occurs in the organization of police work, which materializes in the work relations between officers and soldiers. As in the managerialism ideology, the pressure arising from work organization does not relate to strictly physical aspects but also psychological ones, acting as a threat in the police officer's imagination.

In Chrysus' speech (excerpt 1), a 34-year-old soldier, five of them dedicated to the FDPD, the word "pressure" represents the work organization as a trigger for disorders. Asked how work affects police officers' mental health, he answers:

> **Excerpt 1:** It's a lot of pressure. The pressure that you have to be, you have to be […] basically a superhero, right? A lot of demands, demanding everything, from all the surroundings.

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The *transitivity* category analysis observed in excerpt 1 opening sentence "It's a lot of pressure" operates through a relational process reinforced by the intensifier "a lot". Pressure in the work context is responsible for compromising mental health and exists without any action or active actors to exercise it. Giving this semantic nature to a speech exempts the police officer from any commitment to it. Following the excerpt, we can identify modalization concerning the actor's removal by using the pronoun "you", and the obligation carried out through the relational process "have to be". In this process, the adverb "basically" is used to determine the minimum of what a police officer represents, a "superhero".

The "superhero" metaphor acts as pressure to the identity that the subject has to assume. The symbolic and imaginary dimension fantasizes the subjects' desires and plays with their subjectivity (Siqueira, 2009). This co-option of the unconscious manages the identification of the police officer who sees work as the opportunity to be superior. By managing this desire, the work organization takes no responsibility for the pressure once the subject's narcissistic desire is what will lead him to be a reference, building a social imaginary and a disease of idealization (Enriquez, 1997). Being a "superhero" ensures recognition as a subject that promotes social order. However, over time, the frustration of expectations ends up undoing the "superman syndrome" and triggering mental disorders and psychological suffering.

In this process, the pressure leaves the field of disciplinary mechanisms to start operating in the psyche, creating a control system that starts from the obsession that there are "a lot of demands, demanding everything, from all surroundings". The word "charge" assumes a semantic relationship with the representation of the work organization as "pressure", in this case, extended to the highest number of things, people, and places. Although no verb expresses an existential process, the sequential placement of the pronouns "everything" and "all" and the noun "surroundings" gives the word the character of something that naturally exists.

In excerpt 2, soldier Spartacus, 34 years old, five years in the FDPD, reinforces how the work organization affects mental health.

> **Excerpt 2:** Some are drop by drop in a big glass. So he will never make it to the top. He will reach the end of his career, and the glass will have reached only halfway, 70%. But it is unlikely that a police officer will reach the end of his career without a load of stress that will generate consequences. [...] But I think that the institution directly interferes in the psychological issue. I don't think it's so much the violence, the criminality.

The metaphor "drop by drop in a big glass" refer to the illness process. It alludes to gradual-long-term wear. The analogy is consistent with the observations of Gershon et al. (2002) and Minayo et al. (2008) when identifying that illness in the police results from a long process of dissatisfaction and frustration.

The reference that Spartacus makes to the police officer at "the end of his career" assumes a strong connection with the study by Pagès et al. (2006). The lexical selection of the word "consequences" alludes to the result of the police career. In the semantic organization of the sentence, the phrase "a load of stress" is not used as an element that will "generate" "consequences". Its use followed by the material process of the *transitivity* category "will generate" implies that the remnant is the police officer himself. The rest is what is left from the man.

The actor categorically notifies that "the institution interferes directly in the psychological issue" in the discourse, attributing the responsibility for the psychological harm to the institution, in this case, the "stress" through the adversative conjunction "but". The actor seizes the transformative material process "interferes" to evidence the change in the subject's reality, even though he attempts to subjectively modalize speech through the mental process "I think". This is reinforced by the circumstance "directly".

Spartacus' speech reveals that it is not exposure to "violence" and "criminality" that affects "the psychological issue". It is the work organization and its relations, named for the representation of the "institution" as a social actor, which reaffirms the studies by Edwards and Kotera (2021) and Miranda and Guimarães (2016).

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The representation made by Spartacus echoes a relevant social concern to be addressed by the FDPD. By placing the police officer at the center of the stage and promoting his listening, the demand for a readjustment of the FDPD management and how they organize work is latent, based on a subject who seeks to build his history despite all social determinisms and psychic records coming from work. Management practices, however, make the emancipatory process unfeasible, not providing answers or assistance regarding the numerous conflicts experienced based on the contradictions existing in the FDPD's daily work.

For Sergeant Alexandrian (excerpt 3), 47 years old, 26 of them dedicated to the FDPD, some elements of the work organization contribute to police officers' mental illness.

> **Excerpt 3:** I believe that the excess of inspections and the excess of […] of […] of schedules that we concur: the ordinary schedule, the special one, the voluntary service one, and the virtual one. They can call you at any time. Whether you like it or not, if you're scheduled, you have to be there.

Alexandrian assumes a strong commitment to the truth by positioning "I" in front of what he says. He uses transitivity through the cognitive mental process "I believe" to point out two factors that he thinks contribute to mental illness in the FDPD: "excess of inspections" and "excess of schedules". The thought about inspections is consistent with other discourses presented. On the other hand, the excess of schedules evidences the representation of the disciplinary obligation due to the work organization, which ignores the will of police officers and asserts itself.

When describing the different schedules, the interviewee cares to name each one. The interposed intention suggests the need to lead the interviewer to perceive that "excess" occurs. Detailing "virtual schedule" gives it a significant representation in the discourse. Implied in the speech, we can note how mandatory discipline legitimizes the corporation's power over the police officer. The institution regulates control, defines values, and guarantees obedience (Motta, 1981; Ramos, 2006; Tragtenberg, 2006).

The relational process, characteristic of transitivity, explicit in the statement "you have to be there", describes the schedule as something imposing, independent of the police officer's desire, reinforced by the phrase "whether you like it or not". This form of imposition characterizes a control mechanism, and the deprivation of police officers' desires allows the legitimation of the institutional power of the corporation over its members.

In excerpt 4, sub-lieutenant Jade, 47 years old, with 20 years of experience in the FDPD, describes the treatment given to police officers as an "inhuman thing" that leads them to mental illness.

> **Excerpt 4:** I think this inhumane treatment thing makes people sick. This treatment of ordering, a superior orders you to do something and you (pause). Not knowing the sacrifice you have to make, and if you sometimes have difficulties, they don't understand. You have to comply at all costs as if the police officer were a superhero, and it's not like that. The police officer is a human being, who has a family, has a child, and has responsibilities at home too. […] you ask to go to a doctor, you say: "I need it", and they go: "no, now you can't […]".

The lexical selection "inhuman treatment thing" marks the representation of police work as a contributor to mental illness. The inhuman character refers both to the treatment of superiors, marked by repression, authority, and distrust, and to the role of the "superhero" later used to represent the social image of the police officer. The *modality* category observed in the pronoun "you" works as a discursive strategy to reduce commitment to what the police officer reveals. This modalization seems to work as a resource to hide the fear of revealing the social representation attributed to work in the FDPD.

In excerpt 4, we can observe *transitivity* category in the terms "ordering", "to do", "to comply", and "to go". They operate as materializers of the hierarchical power that, invested by the bureaucracy, establishes a relationship of domination and subjection of police officers. *Representation of social actors* category reiterates submission. "A superior" is presented as an agent of the process, occupying an active position ("orders"), while the police officer is placed in a position of subservience ("have to comply"). This actor strengthens the bond of control and domination that makes up the social relations of work. Through regulations, norms, and training, the work organization not only regulates tasks but also the members' conduct. Under the vigor of bureaucracy, malaise sets in and contributes to illness.

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The circumstance "at all costs" reinforces the lexical choice "sacrifice". In the social imaginary, "sacrifice" assumes two representations: the suffering resulting from being a victim and the joy from being recognized as a hero. In this representation, the first meaning ends up disguising the second. By mentioning "not knowing" with the social actor in an indeterminate way ("they"), inducing the generalization of superiors' behavior, it seems that the police officer demands not only sacrifice but also recognition. By contrasting sacrifice and recognition, we observe that the offer of life eliminates the subject for giving up on himself and yields the enjoyment resulting from being recognized. This drive property "aims at the other as the one who can recognize the desire or respond to the desire for recognition" (Enriquez, 1991, p. 17).

The discourse emerges the human side of the policewoman, explicit in the relational process of the *transitivity* category "is a human being". The discursive appeal includes the social actors "family", "child", and "doctor". Including these actors reveals how work crosses social relations and the humanity of the police officer, highlighting work as "the scene where the relationships with oneself, with the other, and with reality confront simultaneously and dialectically" (Lhuilier, 2013, p. 484).

Excerpt 4 also reveals a relationship of "distrust" regarding illness. This representation is displayed both in the lexical choice "distrust", which is reaffirmed in the expression "they do not understand", and in the interdiscursivity by including another actor's voice. Jade articulates her voice to that of a subject suppressed in the text, suggesting someone hierarchically superior who denies her request. In this sense, we emphasize the issue of gender as an additional pressure factor that should not be ignored in the analysis of police work, occupied mostly by men.

According to Amethyst (excerpt 5), a 44-year-old sergeant who has been in the FDPD for 17 years, the continuous state of alert to which police officers subject themselves wears them out and takes them out of the "normal state of being". When asked why she thought police work made its professionals mentally ill, Amethyst says:

> **Excerpt 5:** Because of this day-to-day weariness, of you being all the time, as I said, being attentive because something can happen all the time. […] You have to be looking at everything around you. It's an observation service, and that demands a lot of your mind. You can't sit still or chat looking at your cell phone because at any moment something can happen. […] The posture, people are watching you and will demand of you, of course, that you act as a police officer, so that wears you out.

The relational process of "being" and the circumstances "all the time", "something can happen", "looking at everything around you", and "an observation service" are used to explain why the "wears you out" of "being attentive" operates as a trigger for disorders, once this type of situation "demands a lot from your mind".

E. R. Souza, Minayo, J. H. Silva, and Pires (2012) discuss the situation of permanent alertness, claiming that police officers who have suffered some type of victimization are more likely to develop psychological distress. Although there may be more resilient police officers, some end up developing a series of symptoms, including the permanent state of alert, which precedes cumulative stress. The studies by Ferreira et al. (2017) and Jenkins et al. (2018) also suggest relationships between mental illness and permanent alertness, once working conditions impose uninterrupted engagement on police officers.

By mentioning the possibility of some entertainment that could distract or disperse attention, the policewoman uses the high-level deontic modality, stating that she "can't" to reinforce, without compromising, that police work is unpredictable "because at any moment something can happen". According to the study by Spode and Merlo (2006), although there is a distinction between the spheres of power, it is possible that, also in the FDPD, part of police officers' suffering experiences is due to the organizational mechanisms of control that maintain constant pressures and guide the personal conduct of police officers through prescriptive rigor.

We also observe transitivity in the material process "demands", which represents police work as exhausting. Three situations illustrate this demand: "[…] that demands a lot of your mind"; "[…] it demands a lot, it is a lot of pressure […]", and "people are watching you and will demand of you". The demand is intensified twice by the circumstance "a lot". Discursively, the first two articulations suggest a direct relationship with working conditions concerning the requirement of the concentration degree and the state of alert that the position requires. Knowing that "people are watching you" makes the police officer assume a "posture" and indicates the existence of a correct way of being and acting. This causes constant self-surveillance over the image, in front of the institution's gaze, in the role of superiors, who watch according to discipline and compliance with norms, and in the view of society, which expects a behavior idealized by the image of what they believe to be the police.

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Surveillance works without the policewoman having access to those who actually watch her, internalizing the feeling of being permanently observed, conditioning self-surveillance. In the context of mental illness, Franco et al. (2010) describe that these characteristics lead the worker to feel in constant threat and isolated.

At last, the lexical selection category "posture" associated with body presentation (Holanda, 2020) admits a direct relationship with the police officer's archetype. In this sense, a police officer's illness is not only linked to psychic pressure but also to the demand to maintain control of the body in conditions that are not always favorable (Bezerra et al., 2013; Davey et al. 2000). In light of Clinical Psychology, we can identify the policewoman's appeal to the limitations of the body, seen as the first inscription of identity and guide of the subject's relations with others and with the world, a vital dimension of human reality, under which the psychic functions are based (Lhuilier, 2006). To be bothered by the discomfort of the body is to enunciate the discomforts of the psyche.

FINAL REMARKS

The analysis of the collected material showed that the elements that most contribute to the mental illness of police officers involve psychological pressure, disciplinary regime, and the lack of means of flow. As in the literature, the study shows that the police work organization, powerless of reaction and conditioned to the total and unrestricted obedience of organizational dictates, conditions the ways of being, thinking, and acting.

The continuous state of alert, physical-postural rigidity, and the adversities typical of police work, especially for women, contribute to the feeling of lack of control over one's body, deprivation of freedom, tension, and frustration. Police officers' socio-professional relationships overlap their other relational links. Social connections weaken in the face of the impositions and demands of the profession, and relations with society are affected by the social imaginary built for "being a police officer".

Two limitations admit essential character considering the contributions of this study. There was a large volume of data whose analysis focused on the attempt to unveil the subtleties related to the forms of domination and subjection in police work. Obviously, different approaches could be adopted, in addition to other variables evaluated. In addition, of course, there are counterpoints to the perceptions of the sample of interviewees.

We should note, however, that the ethnographic research was a unique approach to understand the culture in which the police officers of the Federal District are inserted. Hence, it was possible to understand the subjective elements that make up the organizational imaginary and, from there, to understand the effects perceived on the subjects in the relationship they maintain with work. In this sense, listening to these subjects, in parallel with the experience carried out there, ended up enabling both the deepening and the refinement of what was perceived and what was analyzed. Despite the existing studies, this analysis contributes, in terms of the depth of the investigation carried out on the discourse, to an immersion in the field of linguistics, as well as in the socio-clinical approach adopted.

Questions related to the alternatives of police officers' mental health care, negligence, institutionalized moral violence, the inappropriate and abusive use of power, and the factors that encourage interpersonal conflicts, among other themes that emerged from this study, are important aspects to be addressed in future studies. The integration of research results of this nature may reveal the disparity in the agents' perception, fostering new possibilities for social change.

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