ARTICLE

Racism, sexism, and remnants of slavery in job advertisements

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Abstract

Job advertisements may present elements of racial oppression, albeit in subtle ways, as in the expressions "good looks" and "good hygiene." This acknowledgment makes us reflect that the job market, and society in general, is racially structured, not only in the permanence and professional advancement of black women but even in recruitment, including online job advertisements. This research aims to understand how the publication of job advertisements with phenotypic characteristics such as "good looks" contribute to the perpetuation of racism and sexism. Specifically, we aim to understand how resistance to racist labor market practices and structure occurs. We invoke references of decoloniality and intersectionality and use thematic analysis in a corpus of 285 job advertisements on four classified sites and four black employability initiatives present on LinkedIn. In the results and discussion, we indicate that an ideal of a white worker is perpetuated in the domestic work market and that good image and good hygiene are euphemistic expressions that mask racism in the labor market, which is a remnant of slavery. Current black employability initiatives highlight the need to think about affirmative action for black men and women, historically excluded from more prestigious and remunerative jobs and decision-making spaces. This movement, between oppression, resistance, and black existence, operates a decolonial project of intervention in reality, the main contribution of this research.

Keywords: Job Market. Race. Gender. Decoloniality.

Racismo, sexismo e resquícios do escravismo em anúncios de empregos

Resumo

Anúncios de empregos podem apresentar elementos de opressão de raça, ainda que sutilmente, em expressões como 'boa aparência' e 'boa higiene'. Tal constatação nos faz refletir que o mercado de trabalho, assim como a sociedade em geral, é racialmente estruturado não apenas na permanência e ascensão profissional de mulheres negras, mas até mesmo no recrutamento, do qual os anúncios de emprego *on-line* fazem parte. Na presente pesquisa, partimos do objetivo de compreender como a publicação de anúncios de emprego que trazem em si características fenotípicas e relacionadas a 'boa aparência' contribuem para a perpetuação do racismo e do sexismo. Especificamente, almejamos compreender como se dá a resistência às práticas e à estrutura racista do mercado de trabalho. Recorremos a referenciais de decolonialidade e interseccionalidade e utilizamos a análise temática em um *corpus* de 285 anúncios de emprego, 4 *sites* de classificados e 4 iniciativas de empregabilidade negra presentes no LinkedIn. Nos resultados e discussão, indicamos que um ideal de trabalhadora branca perpetua-se no mercado de trabalho doméstico e que boa imagem e boa higiene são expressões eufemísticas que mascaram o racismo presente no mercado de trabalho, manifestando resquícios do escravismo. Ainda assim, iniciativas atuais de empregabilidade negra buscam trazer à tona a necessidade de pensar ações afirmativas para homens e mulheres negros, historicamente excluídos de empregos de maior prestígio e remuneração, assim como de espaços de decisão. Esse movimento entre opressão, resistência e existência negra opera um projeto decolonial de intervenção na realidade, principal contribuição da presente pesquisa.

Palavras-chave: Mercado de Trabalho. Raça. Gênero. Decolonialidade.

Racismo, sexismo y resquicios de la esclavitud en los anuncios de empleo

Resumen

Los anuncios de empleo pueden presentar elementos de opresión racial, aunque sutilmente, como en las expresiones "buena apariencia" y "buena higiene". Esta constatación nos hace reflexionar que tanto el mercado laboral como la sociedad en general están racialmente estructurados, no solo en la permanencia y promoción profesional de las mujeres negras, sino incluso en el reclutamiento, del cual forman parte los anuncios *online* de empleo. En la presente investigación, partimos del objetivo de comprender cómo la publicación de anuncios de empleo con características fenotípicas y relacionadas con "buena apariencia" contribuye a la perpetuación del racismo y el sexismo. Específicamente, nos proponemos comprender cómo se produce la resistencia a las prácticas y a la estructura racista del mercado laboral. Recurrimos a referencias de decolonialidad e interseccionalidad y utilizamos el análisis temático en un *corpus* de 285 anuncios de empleo en 4 sitios de anuncios y 4 iniciativas de empleabilidad negra presentes en LinkedIn. En los resultados y discusión, indicamos que se perpetúa un ideal de trabajadora blanca en el mercado de trabajo doméstico y que "buena imagen" y "buena higiene" son expresiones eufemísticas que enmascaran el racismo presente en el mercado laboral, con resquicios de esclavitud. Aun así, las iniciativas actuales de empleabilidad de los negros buscan sacar a la luz la necesidad de pensar en acciones afirmativas para hombres y mujeres negros, históricamente excluidos de los trabajos más prestigiosos y mejor remunerados, así como de los espacios de decisiones. Este movimiento entre opresión, resistencia y existencia negra opera un proyecto decolonial de intervención en la realidad, principal aporte de esta investigación.

Palabras clave: Mercado de trabajo. Raza. Género. Decolonialidad.

INTRODUCTION

"South central *Home Angels* called me up asking for 10 workers to act as substitutes for night-shift employees [...]. The only requirements were: they cannot be black or fat, and must have at least three-month experience of this type of work." (Alves, 2019). Lobo (1985, p. 69) had already warned us more than three decades ago that "[...] sexism (and racism) is, sometimes, "invisible", and that criteria are not the same for men and women, resulting in a disqualification process of women labour that can be detected in job advertisements, and even when euphemistic expressions such as 'good looking' are employed, they mask racist and sexist practices. The reading of Alves' (2019) works led to the following research question: how do racism and sexism manifest nowadays in the Brazilian job market and how are they faced?

We hold the opinion that the manifestation of racism in the job market begins at the very point of entry and continues throughout the permanence and ascent stages. This article addresses the elements involved in black women access to the job market and its main objective is to understand how job advertisements that include phenotypic and 'good-looking' characteristics contribute to perpetuate racism and sexism. We intend, specifically, to understand how resistance to racist practices and structure is put up in the job market.

Historically, black slavery in Brazil, which lasted up to 1888 as an element of colonialism, still bears deep marks related to the sociability of black people, especially black women, relative to whom a triple discrimination process (race, class, and gender) takes place, since the stereotypes engendered by racism and sexism submit them to the highest levels of oppression (Gonzalez, 2020). From an intersectional viewpoint, we hold the opinion that the race and gender categories are interconnected and that these links result in different forms of discrimination against black women.

Also from a decoloniality point of view – considering racism as a "[...] constitutive principle that organises, from the inside, all domination relations of modernity, from international division of labour to epistemic, sexual, gender and religious hierarchies" (Bernardino-Costa, Maldonado-Torres, and Grosfoguel, 2020) – we also believe that these colonial processes do not take place without resistance. Counteracting forces, as part of a decolonialisation project, act now to help black men and women ascend both professionally and socially to occupy positions historically exclusive to whites.

In our research, we emphasised these movements of oppression and resistance, pointing both to the presence of racism in job advertisements and to the emergence of initiatives of black employability, the latter being responses to the racist and sexist structure of the job market. Although a limited number of researches has indicated the difficulties faced by women (Costa & Silva, 2020) and blacks (Costa & Silva, 2021) in accessing the labour market, as well as the racially biased judgement by physical appearance in the selection of people (Paim & Pereira, 2018), we hold the opinion that the originality and the contribution offered by this article lies in the fact that we try to identify subtle elements of job advertisements as expressions of race and gender oppression, and also because, guided by a decolonial project, we unveil the way resistance to the racist structure of the job market operates in spaces shared with the same previously mentioned advertisements.

After this introduction, we indicate, in section two, the relationships between labour, race and gender from a decolonial and Afro-diasporic viewpoint and, subsequently, in section three, we discuss the specificities of job advertisements. In the fourth section, dedicated to methodology, we describe the path followed to select the advertisements. The fifth section analyses the data collected and in the sixth section, we present results, discussions, and our final considerations.

LABOUR, RACE AND GENDER FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF DECOLONIALITY AND AFRO-DIASPORIC THOUGHT

We are of the opinion that the decolonial option and the Afro-diasporic thought offer relevant contributions to the approach to labour, race, class, and gender in (and based on) Brazil. The decolonial theory, as presented by Maldonado-Torres (2020, p. 29), is a "living struggle" against colonialism and coloniality, the former understood as historical formation of the territory of colonies, and the latter as "[...] a global dehumanisation logic capable of existing even in the absence of formal colonies", inasmuch as the "discovery" of the New World and the forms of slavery become central and fundamental elements of the Eurocentric modernity and coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2020).

Coloniality, therefore, refers to the imposition of a social classification model that is supported by social discriminations – racial, ethnic, and national (Quijano 2005), and of gender (Lugones, 2020) – among colonisers and colonised. Along the journey of blacks in Brazil, although the colonisation process has been fundamental, the inequality that supported it and created the conditions for advancing is still present in the coloniality viewpoint, since, according to Quijano (2005), there is a mental construct that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination that, since then, permeates the most important dimensions of global power. In this context, Aníbal Quijano elaborated the concept of coloniality of power, in order to understand the historical frame of inequalities in Latin America (Bernadino-Costa, 2013).

The coloniality of power is linked to a pattern of power that constitutes the system of the modern and/or colonial world that emerged in 1492, when America was discovered. From then on, a pattern of world power was originated based on the idea of race (Quijano, 2005). Following the end of colonial relations and the abolition of slavery, the social construction of the concept of race began to be reinforced by the establishment of racism (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). Thus, since social relations that were emerging were domination, race, and social identity relations, they established themselves as instruments of basic social classification of the population (Quijano, 2005).

Race differentiation legitimated the imposed domination relations: "[...] historically, this meant a new way of legitimating already old superiority/inferiority relation ideas and practices among dominators and dominated" (Quijano, 2005, p. 107). Since colonial times and up to the present, there has been a racial and sexual division of labour, which legitimated social positions and roles of white women and men, as well as those of black women and men and Natives. Even after abandoning the legal condition of slaves, black women and men still had their images and bodies submitted to the control of a domination pattern stemming from the coloniality of power (Bernadino-Costa, 2015). With respect to the effects of colonialism, Fanon (1968) warns that Europe acknowledged a civilisational model that put Africa in a no-place and, consequently, condemned black people of African ancestry. In this regard, it is necessary that blacks affirm their identity and their bodies, so that they may become visible.

For our current purposes, it is worth highlighting that the considerations of Bernardino-Costa et al. (2020) are especially important in that they adopt a broad definition of decoloniality, which is not restricted to the Modernity/Coloniality group and includes the traditions of the political and academic fight of black populations, especially the Brazilian, in "[...] processes and resistance and fight for re-existence of Afro-diasporic populations" (Grosfoguel, 2020, p. 9). The decolonial project, therefore, is an attempt to overcome this coloniality structure of power (Bernadino-Costa, 2016).

Considering the discussion of labour, race and gender based on Afro-diasporic thought, we are of the opinion that the sphere of labour is central to reflect on citizenship. Access to labour has been denied to black Brazilians, since, when migrating from slave to remunerated labour, legislation has been passed to officially prevent black men and women from having access to labour (Prudente, 1988). In addition, another movement, namely the miscegenation process, has magnified these problems, in as much as it helped create the myth of racial democracy. Racism in Brazil "[...] operates according to the biological race ideology, disguised as the myth of racial democracy (racial harmony) fostered, among other things, by the Brazilian potential for miscegenation" (Gomes, 2019, p. 98).

Hasenbalg (2022) explains that the notion of racial democracy was created by Gilberto Freyre, who based the development of his idea on the cultural flexibility of Portuguese colonisers and on the advanced stage of racial miscegenation of the Brazilian population. Based on the idea of racial democracy, a belief was shared that there was no racial discrimination or prejudice in Brazil and, therefore, social, and economic opportunities were equal for both blacks and whites. Historical analyses, however, reveal that the true nature of our social, cultural, and political structure is essentially racist. "Such discrimination uses the

different nuances of blacks' epidermal colour as a mechanism for making the black man disappear in the maze of a whitening ideology, in search of the ideal man" (Nascimento, 2019, p. 55). In this context, by eliminating the political category of race, the national narrative of racial democracy did the same to the language that could describe the racial inequalities that affect the lives of Brazilian black people (Collins & Bilge, 2021).

Despite the fact that racial issues affect both black men and women, it is worth highlighting that "[...] the conjunction of racism and sexism produces on black women a kind of social asphyxia that leads to negative consequences on all dimensions of life [...]" (Carneiro, 2011, p. 127). When the author mentions 'all dimensions of life', she includes labour as one of them. Black women are mostly confined to less prestigious and lower remunerated occupations, by being denied access to and occupation of good positions, and promotions, based on euphemisms such as 'good looking', whose practical meaning is: white women are preferred; even better if they are blonde (Carneiro, 2011). Gonzalez (2020) reinforces that, in job advertisements that appear on newspapers, expressions such as 'good looking' and 'excellent appearance', among others, are used, which, in truth, mean "that black candidates should not apply because they will not be hired" (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 57).

To address black women, we decided to use intersectionality as an analytical tool, that is, how categories of gender, class, nation, sexuality and power and race relations interconnect (Collins & Bilge, 2021). According to Crenshaw (1990), the concept of intersectionality is used to address the several ways race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's experiences. The author additionally states that race and gender categories incorporate a big and continuous project aimed at subordinate people, because of "[...] inherent particular values and [...] the way these values promote and create social hierarchies" (Crenshaw, 1990, p. 1297). Therefore, intersectional discrimination positions racial and/or gender dimensions – which are both part of the social structure and factors that contribute to produce subordination – in a prominent place.

We need to regard people as a non-homogeneous and differentiated mass of individuals (Collins & Bilge, 2021). In this respect, intersectionality contributes to explain how the many axes of oppression place people differently in the world. Black women and other minorities face barriers when trying to access safe and well-remunerated jobs and those offering fringe benefits. Intersectionality is, after all, an analytical tool that helps to understand the intersecting structure between social and economic inequalities, from a social and globally constructed viewpoint (Collins & Bilge, 2021).

Bernardino-Costa (2013, 2015) propose a correlation between power coloniality and intersectionality. For him, these two categories are related because the former addresses a more static power pattern that is up to now in force, and the latter refers to a more dynamic dimension of production, maintenance, fight, and resistance to inequalities and to stigmatised and subordinated identities. Thus, power coloniality and the notion of intersectionality make possible a deeper understanding of the hierarchic system and of the inequalities experienced by black women in the job market, as well as the consideration of empowerment relations, since members of marginalised groups are able to resist and generate individual and/or collective political mobilisations. It becomes clear that the gender dimension is not enough to explain the reality of all women, because the structural inseparability between patriarchy, sexism, racism, and its articulations imply multiple oppressive situations experienced by black women. In this context, the hegemonic feminism in modern western societies is not able to deal with the many axes of power and discrimination responsible for creating inequalities.

RACIAL PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION IN JOB ADVERTISEMENTS

Racial discrimination and prejudice are ways through which racism manifests itself. Supported by Grosfoguel (2020), we consider racism not only an ideology or superstructure, but rather an organising principle of all social relations that take place in modernity and, from within, of domination relations, including, obviously, the international division of labour. Racial discrimination and prejudice acquired new functions and meanings within the social structure after the abolishment of slavery, that is to say "[...] the racist practices of the dominating racial group, far from being mere reminiscences of the past, are related to material and symbolic benefits that whites obtain from the competitive disqualification of black citizens" (Hasenbalg, 2022, p. 111).

Specifically in the case of Brazil, the category race has the colour of the skin as the most important articulator of differences among subjects, that is, "[...] for Brazilians, the colour of the skin means a mark that identifies who is and who is not black [...]" (Rosa, 2014, p. 252). The mulatto, offspring of a white and a black parent, who is born with thin lips, straight hair, a not-so-wide nose, or a somewhat whiter skin colour may be socially seen as white and enjoy some of the privileges reserved for whites, since, as stated by Nogueira (2007), the intensity of the prejudice is directly proportional to black traits. This dynamics is justified by the fact that blacks have their phenotypic traits and culture regarded as inferior in comparison to those of white people – this is what Fanon (2008) calls epidermisation of inferiority. The colonialist society has so intensely instilled the idea of inferiority associated with the colour of the skin into black people's minds that black people's traits started to make their holders seem uglier and to subject them to existential deviation.

In the job market – an important sphere of sociability and locus of modern life – "[...] racism has reserved for blacks the tasks considered dilettante or peripheral in society"; whenever qualifications are the same, blacks are put aside in favour of whites and, when selected, they earn lower wages for the same activities (Carneiro, 2011, p. 125). Racism may be historically detected in important stages of selection and/or recruitment of workers, both in job advertisements published by newspapers, since the beginning of the twentieth century, and in recruitment websites, in recent times.

Similarly, Paim and Pereira (2018) believe that, in a society marked by structural racism, attributes such as beauty, competence and intelligence would supposedly occur, or not, according to the perceived race, indicating the presence of racism and prejudices in the selection processes of organisations. Complementarily, Oliveira and Pimenta (2016) believe that newspapers played a fundamental role in the discrimination of black men and women, since they treated them, still during the slavery period, as merchandise in their sale and exchange advertisements. In another historical context, however, after the abolishment of slavery, blacks represented backwardness and barbarism inherited from a colonial past, while white European immigrants represented hope of progress and development for the country (Moura, 2019). Later on, blacks were made invisible in publicities by means of a whitened self-image of Brazil, committed to the perpetuation of a white aesthetics embedded in racist implications (Hasenbalg, 2022). Despite the fact that it is currently possible to find black men and women in advertising campaigns, they are still underrepresented.

Still with regard to job positions, Damasceno (2013, p. 1) points that a substitution, or semantic shift, of explicit racial categories took place in job advertisements, where these categories have been replaced by the "moral notion of 'good looking', as a metaphor for colour". For the author, 'good looking' may not be simply taken as 'only for whites'; above all, this is a negotiated social construct, commonly used since the 1930s and 1940s and up to the present – as presented in this text. The use of 'good looking' occurs initially combined with colour (white) and origin (European), until it eventually detaches from these concepts and the category of advertisements changes: initially, domestic workers suitable for 'families of fine taste' were sought-after, that is to say, not black. Later, the notion of 'good looking' started to be linked to job advertisements for socially more valued positions in the job market and, in spite of some ads being targeted at boys and young men, most 'good-looking' advertisements offered positions to women (Damasceno, 2013).

Some legal advances have been made to prevent the publication of advertisements that included phenotypic traits or references to the appearance of potential candidates. The Labour Legislation itself (the Brazilian *Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* [CLT] – Decreto-Lei nº 5.452, de 01 de maio de 1943) prohibits the publication of such job advertisements and the denial of job positions on account of skin colour, sex, or familiar condition. Paim and Pereira (2018) point that, in Mato Grosso do Sul (Lei nº 1.905, de 24 de novembro de 1998), and in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Lei nº 5.876, de 06 de julho de 2015), the use of the expression 'good looking' in job advertisements is prohibited. The same applies to the city of Salvador, by virtue of Law No. 5,420 of 1998 (Lei nº 1.905, de 24 de novembro de 1998).

Albeit these significant advances, discriminatory job advertisements still persist, especially when targeted at women. As highlighted by Lobo (1985, p. 69), women are not selling only their work when they sign a contract. The criteria adopted to evaluate their abilities to occupy a certain position include aspects of their feminine characteristics (especially their physical traits): "[...] this is why pregnant women are not fit, fat women are not fit, and black women are not fit." Therefore, this discriminatory process, often present in job advertisements despite legal attempts to curb them, reinforces sexism in the job market and reflects the racism that shapes social relations and, consequently, job relations in modern times.

METHODOLOGY

This research may be characterised as qualitative-descriptive. To collect data, we performed documental research in websites that publish job advertisements. As for the methodological path, firstly, contact with reports on positions of caregivers for the elderly that should not be black or fat (Alves, 2019) invited us to look for similar advertisements. The search led us to Damasceno's (2013) research on semantic shift in expressly racist advertisements that used expressions such as 'good looking'. This led us to look for terms that express race and phenotypic characteristics of women (white, negro, black, type of hair, nose, and skin), such as 'good looking' in websites that publish job advertisements.

We then selected four job advertisement websites, three of which being listed as the most visited websites by those looking for jobs: LinkedIn (2022), Catho (2022) and Vagas.com (2022). We have also conducted searches in the website Trovit (2022) for two main reasons: it is an aggregator of advertisements published by other websites (such as Caderno Nacional, Infojobs, Jobleads, Empregosbr and Netvagas, among other similar local websites), in addition to being the sole search engine that advertises positions for domestic workers and caregivers, a crucial aspect when it comes to job relations involving black women. In the Trovit (2022) job advertisement website, 213 ads were found displaying the expression 'good looking' as a trait required from candidates. The word 'white' was found in 8 ads. The words 'negro' and 'black' have been found in five and one ads, respectively. All of them, however, were affirmative initiatives by the companies and were therefore disregarded. In the websites LinkedIn, Catho and Vagas.com, the expression 'good looking' has been found in 13, 48 and 3 advertisements, respectively. No advertisement was found in these websites including words that refer to racial characteristics of women in an attempt to negatively discriminate them, only mentions of affirmative actions. After such filtering, a total of 285 advertisements have been tabulated and analysed.

From a decolonial viewpoint, as stated above, we came to the understanding that the movements to resist racist practices are also central to our analysis. Accordingly, we searched LinkedIn (2022) for black employability initiatives. We found four initiatives in the mentioned website: EmpregueAfro, Indique, Afro Presença and Afro Oportunidades, which are part of a movement to fight racism in the job market. We started from the black employability initiatives, instead of from isolated positions, based on the idea that changes to employment relations come about as a consequence of collective initiatives and social movements, and not only of individual initiatives. Box 1 summarises all collected and selected data.

Box 1
Sources of data used in the research

Date of search	Title	Author
06/01/2022	Search engine for offers, positions and employment in Brazil (221 ads)	Trovit (2022)
06/01/2022	Catho (48 ads)	Catho (2022)
06/01/2022	Linkedin (13 ads)	LinkedIn (2022)
06/01/2022	Vagas.com (3 ads)	Vagas.com (2022)
06/01/2022	EmpregueAfro	LinkedIn (2022)
06/01/2022	Indique	LinkedIn (2022)
06/01/2022	Afro Presença	LinkedIn (2022), Afro Presença (2021)
06/01/2022	Afro Oportunidades	LinkedIn (2022)

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

To perform the analysis of data we adopted the Thematic Analysis (TA) (Aronson, 1995; Braun & Clarke, 2006), an analytical and qualitative method to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) in a given set of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The TA may be guided by data or by theory. An intermediate path, which we adopted in this research, is also available, in which a cyclic movement involving theory and data takes place, configuring a mixed approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We selected, *a priori,* two themes to research: 'explicit racism, revealed by a predilection for white women', and 'good looking as a characteristic important to the good image of the company'. As discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme captures something important about the data with respect to the subject being researched and to the objectives of the study, thus representing a systematised answer or meaning subjacent to the data collected. As highlighted by the authors, the importance of the theme is not given by quantitative measurements, but rather by whether it captures something important with regard to the question posed by the research and its objectives.

The TA goes through the following stages: (1) familiarisation; (2) generation of codes and data systematisation; (3) mapping, classification and grouping of themes; (4) revision of the themes; and (5) definition and naming of categories of analysis. Familiarisation was conducted by immersion into data, in a data reading and rereading process, so as to obtain close acquaintance with the sample. Since two themes have been selected *a priori* ('explicit racism, revealed by a predilection for white women', and 'good looking as a characteristic important to the good image of the company'), this process was conducted targeting at elements that could prove (or deny) the central importance of these themes to the study.

Generation of codes and systematisation of data took place by the preparation of a spreadsheet into which information on the advertisements – such as data, position, place, discriminatory words, and relevant observations – was fed. Here, we conducted codification taking code as data characteristics that seemed interesting for the analyst (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Accordingly, we worked with the following codes in the sample: good looking, professional appearance, hygiene, black people's traits, organisational image, whiteness, caregivers' jobs, domestic work, prostitution, affirmative policies, black employability, and fight against racism.

Having concluded codification, we classified and grouped codes so as to create two new potential themes, namely 'good looking, aesthetics and prostitution' and 'production of resistance'. After an extensive revision of themes, their pertinence and adequacy to the objectives of this article, we reached three final themes, which correspond to the three analysis categories of this article, which will be addressed ahead: (1) good looking and good image of the company, (2) domestic work and the ideal white worker, and (3) production of resistance in the face of a racist job market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Advertisements in the **good looking and good image of the company** category are distributed across the employment websites LinkedIn (2022), Catho (2022), Vagas.com (2022) and Trovit (2022). They include expressions such as 'good looking', ' well-treated appearance', 'good professional appearance' (the latter, a nonnegotiable characteristic), 'keeping or having good visual appearance', 'carefully treated personal appearance', or 'care for physical and mental appearance before the team and the public'. The advertisements have led us to what Carneiro (2011) and Gonzalez (2020) had already stated: the 'good looking' euphemism (and its variations), which remains even after semantic shifts (Damasceno, 2013), has the practical meaning of giving preference to white people, to the detriment of blacks.

Most positions that are so advertised involve functions that require direct contact with the public, that is, they presuppose that the image of the company may be influenced by the 'external appearance' of its employees, or, in other words, the closer the employee comes to the white phenotype, the better for the image of the business, since, as stated by Nogueira (2007), in Brazil, the intensity of the prejudice varies in direct proportion to negroid traits. Besides, black people are constantly associated with certain social, economic, and intellectual conditions, always inferior to those of white people (Moura, 2019), and, therefore, they are often regarded as intellectually unfit for practising certain professions.

Before justifying the use of terms that are equal or refer to 'good looking' as describing personal hygiene and/or clothing, instead of phenotypical characteristics, it is important to mention that employers who try to stay away from discriminatory postures adopt expressions such as 'having a good personal hygiene appearance', 'personal hygiene that protects the image of the company', 'preening and concerned with the appearance' or 'care for appearance and clothing in accordance

with standard operating procedures and with codes of good practices'. In some ads, it is possible to observe that there are employers who distinguish between 'good appearance' and requirements related to personal hygiene and/or clothing. For instance, advertisements to hire drivers and/or delivery helpers often described the desired profile as 'good looking' or 'displaying personal hygiene that does not compromise the good image of the company'. That is to say, these attributes are not synonymous, leading us to the conclusion that, once again, 'good looking' means here physical characteristics.

With respect to care for the body and/or physical appearance, or by referring to expressions used in advertisements analysed such as 'personal hygiene', 'take care of appearance', 'professional appearance', 'care for personal appearance', Gomes (2020) explains that, in our society, this kind of care is a desirable behaviour in any social group, and an expectation not always associated with racism. However, when this kind of care is assigned to people of a specific physical appearance related to a given ethnic and/or racial trait, it arouses concerns. The author exemplifies this dynamics commenting the dreadlocks hair style, often adopted by black people and regarded as poor hygiene or dirty. Black people's appearance has been long associated with dirt, in as much as the low level of integration of black people into society results in a high number of black people being exposed to unworthy living conditions, poverty, underemployment or temporary jobs and tasks requiring only physical effort. In this particular context, black people are often associated with dirt, since decontextualisation "[...] of labour and socioeconomic conditions [...] reinforce the racist conception that the smell of sweat is the natural odour of black and poor people." (Gomes, 2020, p. 156).

In regard to the relevance of phenotypical characteristics, one advertisement that appeared in the Trovit (2022) website looking for actresses describes the desired phenotypical characteristics: 'brunettes and white women with dark and long hair'. A constitutive element of black people's identity, and major phenotypical characteristic of black women, is coarse or curly hair. Denying it creates a barrier to the fight against inferiority and may reinforce racism (Rezende, Mafra, & Pereira, 2018). This type of hair – in spite of growing similarly to fine hair –, when not altered by chemical or mechanical straightening looks shorter, owing to shrinking; in other words, the curvature that results from the shrinking of this type of hair strand makes its growth less perceptible and leads to the sensation that it is shorter than it actually is. In light of this reflection, it is possible to infer that, when a requirement such as 'women with long hair' is laid down for an employment position, black women with coarse hair are excluded. In addition, expressions such as 'brunette' or 'brown-skinned' are problematic with respect to racial analyses.

Especially in Brazil, in addition to white and black people there is another racial category known as mulattos. Genuinely Brazilian people are a mixed race that combines European, African, and indigenous people, a fact that gave rise to the idea of racial democracy (Gomes, 2019; Hasenbalg, 2022). The unique characteristics of each country's slavery determined the degree of miscegenation between races. In countries like Spain and Portugal, which have not introduced slavery into their own territories, and in colonies where apartheid policies separating whites from blacks prevailed, like the United States and South Africa, processes were different from what happened in Brazil, where miscegenation became an important tool (Camino, Silva, Machado, & Pereira, 2001) to legitimate the narrative of absence of racial prejudice and discrimination, and to disguise a political project to gradually whiten the population (Hasenbalg, 2022).

Many blacks use the term 'dark skinned' to move away from the negative meanings assigned to black and negro categories. One notices that "[...] this ideology, characterised, among other things, by the idea of whitening, prevented black people from putting into operation the motto 'unity is strength', in that it divided blacks and mulattos and alienated them in their search for identity" (Munanga, 1999, p. 15). In speaking about 'dark-skinned women with dark and long hair', we come closer to the ideal of a white identity (based on the corporeal aspect of whites – fine hair and light skin), regarded as superior (Munanga, 1999), consequently relegating those who do not exhibit such traits to a marginal condition; in the case of the ad being analysed, to a condition not ideal for occupying the offered job position.

With respect to the **domestic work and the ideal of white worker**, we relied on Damasceno's (2013, p. 3) research, who, when investigating job advertisements in Rio de Janeiro's newspapers of the 1930s, 1940s and up to the middle of the 1950s, noticed that domestic work was "[...] a special situation to make racial conditions explicit, especially the expressed preference of employers for 'white' persons, often of Portuguese or other European nationalities (therefore, potentially 'white')". Putting this discussion into the current context, advertisements published by the Trovit (2022) website, in addition to advancing 'good looking' as a desirable attribute, also explicitly mention a preference for white female workers.

Some advertisements targeted at hiring caregivers for the elderly or babysitters required candidates (preferentially Brazilian white women) to be 'young' or 'middle-aged', and 'to be available to work every single day, including weekends, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.', and 'do all the domestic work'. Ads also emphasised that the racial preference was justified because the person to be taken care of 'had unavoidable limitations at that point in his or her life' owing to Alzheimer's' disease.

Job advertisements that mention more explicit racial categories point to white women workers as ideal for domestic work. Teixeira (2021) explains that during slavery times in Brazil, black beautiful women, that is, those who had all the teeth, were tall, looked pretty and had attractive bodies, were preferred for domestic work. This dynamics was explained by the fact that these women had a closer contact with their masters and their families.

Black women slaves in charge of domestic work were called "*mucamas*", that is, "[...] the black young slave, a pet, chosen to help with domestic tasks or to be companion to members of the family; sometimes they also acted as wet nurses" (Gonzalez, 1984). Although the word *mucama* has now somewhat fallen into disuse, it still points to these black women who, in servitude and submission roles similar to those performed by women slaves, are obliged to carry out all domestic work of the master's house (Nogueira, 2017).

When slave work became paid employment, former women slaves have not been absorbed by this new economic order because they (as well as black men) were considered unfit for paid tasks (Hasenbalg, 2022). Teixeira (2021) also emphasises that, when slavery was abolished, black maids began to be regarded as physical threats to families, since they were suspected to carry diseases. They were also seen as threats to moral integrity, in that they would bring to families bad habits common to black and poor populations. 'Good looking', represented, preferentially, by white persons or by attractive (both in face and body) black women (Teixeira, 2021), may also be interpreted in the context of domestic work, pointing to black women with black traits attenuated by miscegenation.

Carneiro (2011, p. 119) had already said that "[...] in a sample of approximately half of the country's feminine population, only occasionally a black woman occupies any important position". While enslaved, black women, regarded as mere things, were denied any humanity and, when convenient for masters, were also denied their gender and, consequently, exploited as if they were men (Davis, 2016). After the end of colonialism and given the poor integration of black women into society, these women have found employment as domestic workers, one of the very few alternatives they had to ensure their subsistence and that of their families. As Brazil left behind slavery, black women got stuck to a historical fate supported by racism and sexism; therefore the importance of an intersectional regard.

From the point of view of intersectionality, we are able to take into consideration how the several categories of power relations, such as race, gender and class, intersect in the lives of black women, imprisoning them, to a certain extent, in some social roles, making sure they are powerless, and pointing to "[...] the way racism, patriarchal relations, class oppression and other potential axes of power and discrimination create inequalities" (Bernardino-Costa, 2013, p. 474) and perpetuate themselves via an unequal structure of social opportunities to which whites and blacks are currently exposed.

Employment positions offered to domestic workers, in addition to define 'good looking' as a desired profile, also indicated a preference for women. One of the offers added 'no small children' and 'no husband' to the desired profile; another made clear that the ideal candidate should be a 'mother'. A caregiver for elders position, on its turn, added to the ideal profile that the woman should be 'young' (between 25 and 35 years of age), be 'available to work every single day (including weekends) and stay overnight at work', undertake 'all domestic tasks' and be a 'trained practical nurse'. In addition to racial aspects, these offers clearly violate legislation that prohibits any practice that discriminates and restricts access to jobs or maintenance of job relations for reasons related to marital status ('unmarried') or familiar condition ('no small children' or 'be a mother').

We highlight here the excessive exploitation of the labour force, since candidates must be available seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day, in addition to undertaking all domestic tasks. "In Brazil, for a long time, it was usual that domestic workers lived in the house of their bosses [...]. This situation intensified the dynamics of violence, since they were, at any time, available to satisfy the needs of their bosses" (Teixeira, 2021, p. 40). One notices that, even today, the dynamics of exploitation of domestic workers remain, reaffirming domestic work as a natural place of servitude and making the category precarious and highly vulnerable.

If, on the one hand, the job advertisements herein analysed reaffirm that black people face competitive disadvantage at all stages of their individual social mobility process, the situation, on the other hand, is even more critical when we regard the disempowerment dimension related to intersectionality. Bernardino-Costa (2013) invite us to observe the dimension of empowerment, that is, the ability of members of marginalised groups to resist and generate individual and/or collective political mobilisation.

If modern colonialism was responsible for instituting a complete and global dehumanisation logic, capable of existing even in the absence of formal colonies (Maldonado-Torres, 2020), supported by an idea of difference based on race, gender, and other traits, this very same difference that creates inequality, exploitation and oppression may be mobilised to generate egalitarianism, diversity and democratic forms of political agency (Brah, 2006). For that matter, in the category "**production of resistance in the face of a racist job market**", we offer decoloniality as a project to intervene in society (Bernardino-Costa et al., 2018).

In addition to simply understanding how job advertisements that include phenotypical characteristics and expressions like 'good looking' contribute to the perpetuation of racism and sexism, we are trying, now, to make evident the political struggle of Afro-diasporic populations, because only social mobilisation is capable of making possible to reinvent colonial practices. Accordingly, we present four black employability initiatives, grouped as human resources services and social and civic organisations, offered via LinkedIn (2022): EmpregueAfro, Indique, Afro Presença and Afro Oportunidades.

EmpregueAfro was launched in 2004 to provide consultancy in human resources, and focused on ethnic and racial diversity. The objective was to train black young people in selection processes conducted by large multinational companies. Now, responding to a market demand for recruitment and selection, training, and workshop services on the subject, they specialised in and consider themselves as the only human resources consultancy agency in the country having expertise in ethnic and racial diversity (EmpregueAfro, 2022). The objective of the initiative is to identify and enrich the set of competences and abilities of Afro-descendent professionals, in order to promote their professional inclusion in the job market (LinkedIn, 2022).

Indique is "[…] a consultancy in connections between the black community and the job market" that conveys to this minority group information on innumerable new job positions (LinkedIn, 2022). In addition to trying to raise awareness about the construction of diverse and inclusive space among organisations, the initiative also offers consultancy to help organisations create a genuine attitude towards diversity. Indique was created in 2016, and focuses on the connection and development of black women. It is currently active in racial issues as a whole. However, the entire structure of the company is still led, managed and developed by black women. The creators of the initiative declare they believe in the words of Angela Davis: "[…] when a black woman moves, the whole structure of society moves with her" (Indique, 2022).

The Afro Presença movement originated from the *Projeto Nacional de Inclusão de Jovens Negras e Negros Universitários no Mercado de Trabalho* (National Project to Include Young Black Men and Women University Students in the Job Market), conducted by the Brazilian Labour Prosecution Office (MPT). "Since 2017, the MPT works in the construction of a large network to promote ethnic and racial equality throughout the country, and its partners form the basis for Afro Presença" (LinkedIn, 2022). The objective of the project is:

> […] to strengthen initiatives focused on the black population, in an attempt to increase their inclusion and ascent in the job market. The institutions that adhere to the Compact become part of an inclusion network constituted by black movement entities, companies, associations, universities, and national and international organisations (Afro Presença, 2022).

Afro Oportunidades, on the other hand, is a company specialised in ethnic diversity whose objective is to increase the employability of Afro descendants. The initiative is part of Grupo Favela Holding, the first social holding, composed of 21 companies and focused on the social transformation of Brazilian *favelas* (slums) and peripheral areas. They believe that when an organisation brings its growth and success strategy to its teams, it must include ethnic and racial diversity elements too. The initiative works to join these organisations and Afro descendants who are trying to enter the job market (LinkedIn, 2022).

Gomes (2019) believes that these black men and women in movement – that is, citizens – are the ones who really have affirmative racial awareness and fight racism. If, on the one hand, the intersectional axes generate oppression, on the other hand, the members of the marginalised groups are the ones who reconstruct identities and assign new meanings to the social reality of the black population by formulating proposals that are real decolonial practices. Initiatives such as EmpregueAfro, Indique, Afro Presença and Afro Oportunidades put up resistance against racism in the job market and, at the same time, contribute to help black women and men lead fulfilling lives. As stated by Carneiro (2011), access to employment is a necessary condition for the reproduction of life.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this research, we addressed manifestations of racism in the job market, which is a structural element of our society. In job advertisements, either evidently – as in the preference for white women when it comes to caregivers' jobs – or subtly – as demonstrated by the expressions 'good looking', 'hygiene' and 'long hair' – there is a clear predilection for persons who do not exhibit traits of black ancestry, as demanded by subordinate and inferior classification of black people, especially black women.

The major contributions of this article are the interplay between, on one hand, the disclosure of an oppressive reality and its nuances and, on the other hand, the chances of resistance and invention of new job practices and relations that value the presence of blacks. This interplay is important in that it directs our attention not only to denouncement – though it is important – but also to the way black women and men organise to exist, resist, and reinvent quotidian life in the face of all the forms of oppression herein described. Thus, black employability initiatives may be regarded as activities of a decolonial project to intervene in reality.

In addition, with regard to the field of Administration and, specifically, to the area of People Management, this article contributes to deepen discussions on recruitment of people and racial and gender issues, in that it unveils semantic shifts, nuances and subtleties of racist practices in the job market, and enables a more assertive approach to mistakes made in a very important element of recruitment processes, namely, job advertisements. Since they address society and organisations, the discussions presented here may contribute to prevent companies' recruitment processes from being permeated by racism. They also highlight black employability initiatives, which are important elements of a decolonial project that reaches beyond mere denouncement; a project that really attempts to interfere in reality.

Considering the design of the research, the major shortcoming of this article is the exclusive use of secondary data, a fact that limits the proposed interpretations because the study does not address the experiences of either individuals as racial entities or people management divisions in recruitment processes. This shortcoming also suggests guidelines for future studies: we believe that it is relevant to reach beyond advertisements as materialisation of structural racism, and more thoroughly study the experiences of individuals as racial entities and the recruitment processes that involve job advertisements and black employability initiatives, so as to enable a more complete understanding of the complex job relations in a country like Brazil, whose traces of slavery manifest in the coloniality of power.

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