Labor and domestic violence: an investigation from victim support groups on Facebook

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Abstract

Statistics reveal a correlation between being a woman and being a victim of violence. Domestic violence is one example, and its aggravating factor is that it is perpetrated by men who have an affectionate relationship with the woman and is considered restricted to the private sphere. In addition, research shows that working women are more likely to be victimized than those who do not have a job. Therefore, this study analyzes the adversities working women face in situations of domestic violence, especially related to their working conditions and work relationships. A qualitative methodology was used through semi-structured interviews. The interviewees' reports revealed that the disorders caused by violence are both more evident (loss of labor performance and opportunities for professional advancement, need to be absent, illness, etc.) and less apparent (externalized from the feeling of loss). We also show that they do not consider their work as belonging to the support network capable of helping them to free themselves from violence.

Keywords: Domestic violence. Gender violence. Labor relations.

Trabalho e violência doméstica: uma investigação a partir de grupos de apoio às vítimas no Facebook

Resumo

As estatísticas revelam que existe uma correlação entre ser mulher e estar em situação de violência. A violência doméstica é uma das manifestações dessa combinação e tem como agravante o fato de ser perpetrada por homens que mantêm relação de afeto com a mulher e de ser considerada restrita à esfera privada. Além disso, as pesquisas evidenciam que as mulheres trabalhadoras têm maior probabilidade de serem vitimadas do que aquelas que não possuem emprego. Considerando esses dados, o objetivo deste estudo é analisar as adversidades enfrentadas pelas mulheres trabalhadoras em situação de violência doméstica, especialmente a relacionada com sua condição laboral e as relações de trabalho. Para tanto, utilizou-se a metodologia qualitativa, por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas. Os relatos das mulheres entrevistadas revelaram que os transtornos acarretados pela violência são tanto de ordem mais evidente (perda de performance no trabalho e de oportunidades de ascensão profissional, necessidade de se ausentar, adoecimento etc.) quanto menos aparente (externada pelo sentimento de perda). Destacamos, ainda, que o trabalho não é considerado por elas como pertencente à rede de apoio capaz de ajudá-las a se desvencilhar da violência sofrida.

Palavras-chave: Violência doméstica. Violência de gênero. Relações de trabalho.

Trabajo y violencia doméstica: una investigación en grupos de apoyo a víctimas en Facebook

Resumen

Las estadísticas revelan que existe una correlación entre ser mujer y estar en situación de violencia. La violencia intrafamiliar es una de las manifestaciones de este binomio y su agravante es el hecho de ser perpetrada por hombres que tienen una relación afectiva con la mujer y de ser considerada restringida al ámbito privado. Además, la investigación muestra que las mujeres que trabajan tienen más probabilidades de ser victimizadas que aquellas que no tienen trabajo. Teniendo en cuenta estos datos, el objetivo de este estudio es analizar las adversidades que enfrentan las mujeres trabajadoras en situaciones de violencia doméstica, especialmente relacionadas con su condición laboral y las relaciones de trabajo. Para ello, se utilizó una metodología cualitativa, a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los relatos de nuestras entrevistadas revelaron que los trastornos provocados por la violencia son tanto más evidentes (pérdida de desempeño laboral y oportunidades de avance profesional, necesidad de ausentarse, enfermedad, etc.) como menos aparentes (exteriorizado por el sentimiento de pérdida). Destacamos también que el trabajo no es considerado por ellas como perteneciente a la red de apoyo capaz de ayudarlas a librarse de la violencia sufrida.

Palabras clave: Violencia doméstica. Violencia de género. Relaciones laborales.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Article 5 of Maria da Penha Act (Lei nº 11.340, de 7 de agosto de 2006), domestic violence can be understood as "any action or omission based on gender that causes death, injury, physical, sexual, or psychological suffering, and moral or property damage". Gender-based violence is defined as violence committed inside or outside the home, as long as it involves people who live in or are part of that environment, such as maids, for example (Carneiro, 2020). Therefore, domestic violence is related to the female gender, and to the way our society structures the values that regulate the notion of female and male behavior (Saffioti, 2015).

Gender differences have become social and political distinctions, according to which hierarchies between genders were created, with higher value attributed to the male gender and, consequently, the naturalization of a power relationship of men over women: the patriarchy (Carneiro, 2020). Considering the hierarchy between genders and patriarchy, women are in a situation of higher vulnerability in society, since they are exposed anywhere (on the street, at work, at church, at the hospital, or at home, with the family), because violence is one of the oldest ways for patriarchy to exert power (Teixeira, 2016).

Violence against women is a global phenomenon, and considered a public health crisis of pandemic proportions by the World Health Organization (Organização Mundial da Saúde [OMS], 2021). In Brazil, one out of four women has experienced some kind of violence (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2019), and 43.1% of violent cases against women occurred at home (Cerqueira, Moura, & Pasinato, 2019). In addition, the country ranks fifth among those with the highest number of feminicides (women's murder simply because they are women) in the world (Waiselfisz, 2015).

Financial independence is a way for women to break out of the cycle of violence; however, as shown in a study conducted by Ipea (Institute for Applied Economic Research), of those who had suffered domestic violence, 52.2% were female and belonged to the Economically Active Population (PEA), while the rate among those who made up the Non-Economically Active Population (PNEA) was 24.9%. Therefore, women's economic empowerment is not sufficient, by itself, to get rid of the cycle of violence in which they are embedded, and it may even be a motivator of violence (Cerqueira et al., 2019).

The Survey on Socioeconomic Conditions and Domestic and Family Violence against Women (PCSVDF Woman), conducted by researchers from the Graduate Program in Economics of the University of Ceará, revealed that women workers in situations of domestic violence showed a series of problems that compromised their performance at work, such as loss of autonomy; increased stress; higher absenteeism; high dropout rate; lower hourly salary, and job instability (Carvalho & V. H. Oliveira, 2017).

In contrast, data from the survey Violence and Harassment Against Women from the Perspective of the Corporate World[1] showed that over half of the companies (55.31%) do not monitor or act in cases of women suffering some kind of violence, and 19.29% of the respondents did not know of any action by their employers in this regard (Américo & Meirelles, 2019).

In addition to facing a double shift (work and home/family care), many women also suffer domestic violence. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the adversities faced by working women in situations of domestic violence, especially those related to their working condition and labor relations. To do so, we carried out a survey with support groups for women who suffer domestic violence, present on Facebook.

Studies that assess the impact of domestic violence on working women's lives are still a few, especially in Brazil, and are more concentrated in the economic and health areas (Carvalho & V. H. Oliveira, 2017). A large part of these studies is international, and most emphasize the aspects of the environment external to the organization, and how these are affected by domestic violence. Paiva and Souza (2020) argue that the statistics on violence against women show the need for a specific look at this phenomenon, especially if we consider the high rate of feminicides in the country. Hence, this study contributes to a better understanding of female vulnerability at work, based on the experiences of female workers who suffered domestic violence.

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[1] The survey was carried out by the Talenses group, through an online questionnaire sent to companies that operate in Brazil, and received 311 answers.

This was an exploratory research, based on contacts with 12 virtual support groups for women in situations of domestic violence, present on Facebook. We took as the research *corpus* the posts in the groups, and the reports obtained through semi-structured interviews with women participating in these groups. We carried out the analysis using the content analysis technique.

In the next sections, we present the theoretical framework, where we discuss violence against women, the gender division of labor, and its interactions with the labor relations of women in situations of domestic violence. Next, we present the study methodology and the research *corpus*, followed by the results and discussion. We conclude by presenting the final remarks.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Violence against women

Under a historical perspective, studies show that the patriarchal culture has spread in the country since the colonial period. In the 19th century, due to economic factors and arranged marriages, women were treated as objects; there was a high level of violence in marital relations, characterized not only by physical violence (beatings and floggings), but also by abandonment, contempt, and aversion. In Imperial Brazil, under the excuse of adultery, murdering women was not a crime. In 1916, the new Civil Code considered adultery by both genders as grounds for divorce; but it did not change the custom of killing one's wife or partner, being the crime forgiven by the superior rights of men over women. Although the urbanization process and greater access of women to the labor market, which occurred throughout the 20th century, fostered some change in society's behavior - by no longer accepting the violence against women that was previously natural – the killing of women by their husbands or partners continued to be justified as legitimate defense of honor (Piosiadlo, Fonseca, & Gessner, 2014).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the phenomenon of violence is not explained by just one factor, but is the "result of the complex interaction of individuals, social and cultural relationships, and environmental factors" (Krug et al., 2002, p. 12). According to Piosiadlo et al. (2014, p. 729), "[...] the expression 'gender violence', which emerged in the 1990s, is used to name aggression and abuse arising from gender conflicts and the way of dealing with them, expressing the radicalization of existing inequalities between men and women". Thus, the gender hierarchy established by structuring norms around the feminine and the masculine, and the power relations associated with it "enable" men to be violent with women (Saffioti, 1987).

There are three factors that favor gender violence: the first comprises the structural causes related to gender (the inequality between men and women, based on social norms; the emphasis on violent masculinity; the gender division of labor as the basis of power inequalities; and the intersectionality of gender, race, and class as a social construct that worsens the manifestations of violence and generates barriers for accessing rights). The second concerns circumstantial factors of the relationship, associated with the use of alcohol and drugs; unemployment or financial problems; relationship problems; the birth of children; and conflicts regarding children's education or family heritage. Finally, factors aggravated by social, political, economic, and health crises (ONU Mulheres, 2020).

For Meneghel et al. (2003), for understanding gender violence it is necessary to consider that its genesis and continuity in our society have a close relationship with the concept of patriarchy, which manifests itself in all relationships – personal, social, and institutional. Therefore, it can be defined "as a heterogeneous but structured complex of patterns that imply disadvantages for women [...]" and "is activated concretely in institutions and in daily relationships" (Biroli, 2018, p. 11). As a social phenomenon, it is constantly changing, but keeps at its core the priority of men's power over women, including over their right to live or die (Saffioti, 2015).

Domestic violence is an expression of gender violence, whose main characteristics are its practice by an intimate partner or former partner, and the involvement of people (usually women) who share the same household or have a close living (Carneiro, 2020). Domestic violence is expressed not only by physical aggression to women, but also by sexual or psychological harm, including sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors (Lei nº 11.340, de 7 de agosto de 2006; OMS, 2021); in addition, another form of domestic violence is when the husband goes to his wife's work and assaults her in front of her colleagues (Saffioti, 2015).

This is a historically invisible problem, seen as a private issue, because generally domestic violence takes place at home, and women are the main victims (Aboim, 2012). However, the consequences of violence against women, and especially domestic violence, have made this issue a public sphere demand, not only for being an attack on women's human rights, but because it brings significant consequences to health care and to children. Furthermore, it has high economic and social costs, as women who are isolated are unable to work, suffer wage losses, and have limited capacity to take care of themselves and their children (OMS, 2021).

The gender division of labor and its interactions with work relations of women in situations of violence

The gender division of labor is the way of separating the social labor that result from social gender relations. This form is historically adapted for each society. Its characteristics are the priority assignment of men to the productive sphere, and women to the reproductive sphere and, simultaneously, the occupation by men of functions with strong social added value – political, religious, military, etc. (Kergoat, 2009, p. 67).

According to Standing (2013), at the beginning of globalization and the process of productive restructuring, the proportion of women who filled work places increased considerably, indicating a feminization of labor. However, in the same period, there was an expansion of flexible and more precarious work opportunities, and these positions were mostly held by women.

In addition, the gender division of domestic work itself, which forces women to care for the children and the elderly, pushes them into part-time jobs, with traditionally lower pay and more flexible work relations, so they have time for home care. The report 'Gender Statistics: Social Indicators of Women in Brazil', published by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2021), shows that 29.6% of working women have part-time jobs, compared to 15.6% of working men; that is, the percentage of women at these jobs is almost twice that of men.

Hence, thinking of the gender division of labor goes beyond observing inequalities (men *versus* women), but becomes an instrument to reflect on the processes by which society uses this difference to rank activities (Kergoat, 2009). It tends to worsen the context of violence towards the female gender; while pushing women into precarious jobs, it also destabilizes the bases of male power (confining women to the private space) and the asymmetry generated by that division. Performing activities outside the home withdraws women from the aggressor's center of influence and surveillance, and enables contact with people who can offer support (Parizotto, 2019).

Considering the studies that address the impact of domestic violence on the labor market, Swanberg, Logan, and Macke (2005) rank them in two groups: 1) those that assess the external effects for women in situations of violence, such as working hours and salaries; 2) those that evaluate the internal effects, that is, the impact on women's ability and productivity. The authors observe that these consequences are not necessarily direct, and are involved in a complex relationship of variables that change their effects in the short and long terms, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Transmission mechanism of domestic violence impacts on the labor market
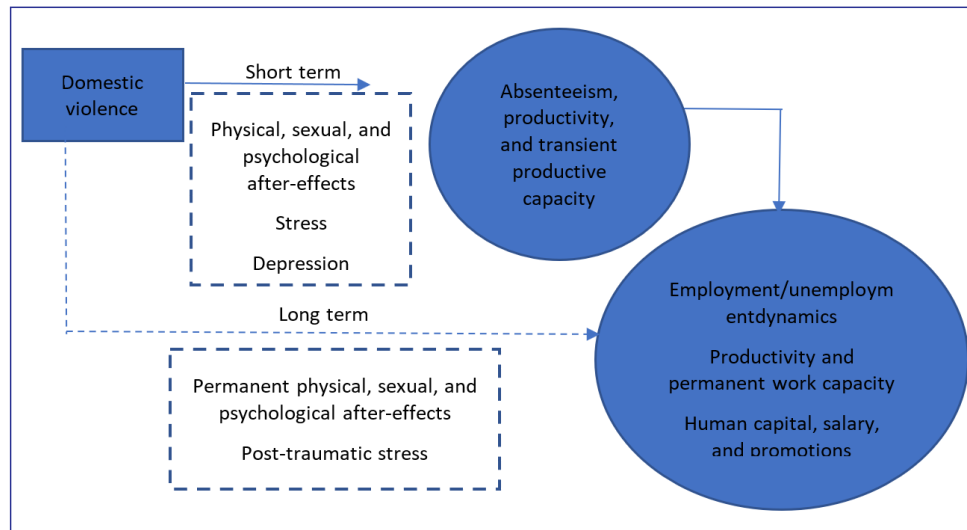
Source: Carvalho and V. H. Oliveira (2017, p. 6).

In addition to the impacts on the labor market arising from domestic violence, work is considered by women in situations of domestic violence an escape valve from aggressions, and an important alternative for breaking the cycle of violence, although many of them did not share that problem with the company (Echeverria, M. H. B. Oliveira, & Erthal, 2017).

Another issue raised by the studies regards the aggressor's need to keep control over the woman. Thus, working in a paid activity out of home represents a threat to this attitude. In his quest to dominate her, many times the workplace becomes a space where the aggressor sees an opportunity to do so, either through threats of attacking the woman there, or even by chasing her during her entry and exit times. In addition, the attacker uses several strategies that compromise her performance at work, such as frequent monitoring through phone calls and messages (Echeverria et al., 2017; Woodrow et al., 2015).

METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the introduction, this research was qualitative and exploratory in nature, since we intended to analyze the adversities imposed on working women who face situations of domestic violence. In this sense, we follow Gil (2008, p. 27), for whom the purpose of exploratory research is to "provide an approximate overview of a certain fact".

Hence, our research *locus* were the support groups for women in situations of domestic violence present on Facebook, considering two main reasons: 1) the assumption that this is an environment where women can express themselves freely, and feel safe to do so, as they access it voluntarily; and 2) the social isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made face-to-face research unfeasible. Facebook has a number of groups whose purpose is to provide support to women in situations of domestic violence; so, we chose to access those that had more than one thousand participants. By doing that, we became members of 12 groups that, together, have more than 50 thousand participants (Association for Supporting Women Victims of Domestic Violence; Violence Against Women; Denounce – call 180; Say No to Violence Against Women and Children; I Say No to Violence Against Women; Say No to Violence against Women; Support Group for Fighting Violence against Women; Abusive Relationship and Domestic Violence; Violence against Women is a Crime, Report it; Domestic Violence – Support Group; Domestic Violence and Abusive Relationships/Support to Victims; No more Violence against Women).

With access to the groups, we sought material to make up the research *corpus*. The first step was to analyze the content of 2019 and 2020 posts, looking for those that reported, in some way, issues associated with women's labor relations. We got very little material on this topic, because, in addition to a large number of posts with information (how to make a report;

what configures domestic violence; disclosure of support services; motivational messages, etc.), most of the stories dealt with violence itself, women's emotional condition, or how they broke free from the cycle of violence.

Since we did not have many spontaneous reports, we decided to obtain them by posting messages in the groups, searching for participants to interview, and we got five volunteers. The interviews were conducted through messaging applications (Messenger and WhatsApp). Before starting each interview, we explained the participants the study goals, the confidentiality of their identity, that they could interrupt the interview at any time, and that they would receive feedback on research results. With these explanations, all of them authorized the use of their reports.

In order to preserve the identity of interviewees, they were all named after Brazilian women recognized for their struggle for gender equality and human rights. In Table1, we outline a brief profile of them.

Box 1
Interviewees' profile

Fake name	Place of residence	Activity	Children?	Was able to leave the aggressor?
Maria	Timon, MA	Telemarketing supervisor	Yes	Yes
Penha	Not informed	Diarist	Yes	Yes
Mariele	Porto Alegre, RS	Administrative assistant	Yes	Yes
Margarida	Rio de Janeiro, RJ	Reservist – Biller	Yes	No
Bertha	São Paulo, SP	Attendant and stockist	Yes	Yes

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As we see in Box 1, interviewees are from different Brazilian regions, and their activities are also diverse. All have children and, in many reports, they see them as the necessary incentive for leaving the cycle of violence, especially because of the suffering that this condition causes to them, as well.

We used a semi-structured script to ask the questions, based on the literature review on the topic, from which three categories emerged *a priori*: 1) impact on work (Carvalho & V. H. Oliveira, 2017); 2) women's exposure at the work environment, due to aggressor's actions to harm their jobs (Echeverria et al., 2017; Woodrow et al., 2015); and 3) work as a support network (Echeverria et al., 2017).

We used the content analysis technique for data treatment and analysis, focusing on thematic analysis[2]. To examin the *corpus*, we followed the three steps proposed by Bardin (2006): 1) pre-analysis; 2) material exploration; and 3) result treatment, inference, and interpretation. In this process, a fourth category emerged, different from those in the available literature, which we called "losses".

In the next section we present the study results and discuss them in light of the literature review.

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[2] For Minayo, Deslandes, and Gomes (2011, p. 316), "thematic analysis regards finding out the cores of meaning that make up a communication, whose presence or frequency means something for the intended analytical purpose".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact on work

Domestic violence affects the work performance of women in situations of violence (Carvalho & V. H. Oliveira, 2017; Echeverria et al., 2017; Woodrow et al., 2015). Absenteeism is one of the consequences and, as a result, women have a productivity drop due to the days away from work (Lloyd, 1997). Carvalho and V. H. Oliveira (2017) identified that, on average, women in situations of domestic violence are absent from work up to 18 days over a year.

All women that we interviewed reported this kind of problems, resulting from the violence they suffered:

> Yes, I had to. Sometimes. In my first job, I missed sometimes. Or I would leave early, just as in this job where I am until today. I missed when I had to have surgery on my nose, which he had broken (Maria).

> In the last months, I missed a lot, and that did not happen before. I miss work due to exhaustion, since my partner won't let me sleep (Margarida).

Absences and loss of performance are also due to emotional disorders caused by violence, as mentioned by Banyard, Potter, and Turner (2011), Campbell et al. (2002), and LaVan, et al. (2012), and according to Margarida's report, reinforced by Bertha's:

> [...] this guy always passed in front of the pizzeria, and then one day he made a threatening sign; I have panic syndrome, so I started to feel sick, and had to leave early [...] (Bertha).

In addition, there are other negative consequences of domestic violence for women's mental health, which can affect indirectly their ability to work, like depression (White & Stayen, 2015), alcoholism (Kaysen et al., 2007), and use of illicit drugs (Atkinson et al., 2009), which, in extreme cases, can lead to a suicidal behavior (Devries et al., 2011), as we identified in Penha's speech:

> [At home] Every time I tried to talk to him about it, it was a real mess! Then, most of the time, he took advantage of the situation and went out to drink and use drugs. I was very tired physically, emotionally. I cried every day!

> [At work] Since I worked smiling, singing, playing with her daughter and got the job done, she should think that it was only a minor problem, but, in fact, I was at the edge! When they left for work after lunch, I went to the bathroom to bend my knees, praying and crying a lot! I cried out to God all the time, so that He would not allow me to lose control of my mind. I was very afraid of going crazy. I thought of suicide dozens of times, but I always gave up (Penha).

Carvalho and V. H. Oliveira (2017), in their research in Northeastern state capitals, showed that domestic violence commonly affects women's mental health, since 33% of those who participated in the survey reported this problem. They assessed indicators related to these women's welfare (ability to concentrate, sleep, make decisions, state of stress, and happiness) and, in all of these, women in situations of violence reported a higher frequency of problems than those who were not assaulted.

Therefore, we can infer that domestic violence tends to produce harmful effects on the working condition of women, especially regarding the psychological and emotional issues necessary for them to achieve a good work performance. Besides the effects on their mental health and performance, domestic violence affects the organizational climate and productivity in the area where women work, due to constant delays, absences, and even job abandonment.

Aggressors' attitudes that bring harm to women at work

Echeverria et al. (2017) observe that women in situations of domestic violence are mainly affected on their income and work routine, making it difficult to separate work assignments and home problems. Another important issue is that domestic violence can also take place at the workplace - the abuser may feel that he needs to have control over the woman and make her dependent; hence, her work is a barrier to that control. Even the job can make a woman particularly vulnerable, since it has a known place and schedule, which facilitates the aggressor's public access (Woodrow et al., 2015).

Bertha's attacker used to walk constantly by her work door, at night, making threatening gestures, but he had never gone to her other job, during daytime, until one day he threatened her, and it was necessary to call the police. However, nothing could be done, because there was no flagrant: "He went to her daytime job, where nobody knew. We called the police, but it was useless. There was filming and witnesses" (Bertha).

The threats take place not necessarily through his going to the wife's job, because it can also be done through messages, as Maria tells:

> I recall an episode when we discussed, and he sent a photo of a weapon, saying that he was going to my workplace and that would be my end. I said that I was not feeling well and left in a hurry. Weeping. Only God knows how I got home dying of fear (Maria).

Another aggressor's strategy regards defaming the woman: either to her work colleagues or to the bosses. This happened with Mariele, who worked at the same place that his husband and aggressor at the time. She was fired and he kept the job.

> And when the aggressions started, he spread stuff about me at school. People told me that he spread videos and defamed me for months. He told the college owners terrible things about me (Mariele).

Hindering the execution of work activities is also a way for the aggressor to reinforce his power and seek to harm the woman at work, as Maria explains:

> And there were times when he would turn off my equipment when I was working at home office. He would take the notebook and put it on top of the closet, and I had to lie to my superiors about it, saying that it was the internet (Maria).

The aggression is also expressed by preventing the woman from resting, in order to work the next day, as Margarida observes: "He is at home and sleeps during the day. At night he walks around, jumps on the bed, and turns on the lights".

These aggressors' attitudes may be related to the fact that women's work represents a possibility for their emancipation, that is, a means to get rid of the power network exerted by her aggressor. Our interviewees' reported the need for the aggressor to expose and harm women, in order to strengthen his sphere of power, even disregarding the risk of being criminally charged.

Losses

The reports of interviewees reflect literature findings on the difficulty of keeping a job while in a situation of domestic violence, since only one of them was still working during the research period.

In many cases, like Bertha's, besides losing her job, she had to move out to ensure her physical integrity.

> I lost everything I had achieved, because I had to sell everything to leave, I lost everything. Now I don't even have a place to live, I live in favor and I'm running after a job. I left my father and mother behind, and they suffer a lot because of my children. There isn't a day that I don't remember everything I've been through (Bertha).

The aggressor's surveillance over a woman at her workplace also affects her working relations, career advancement, or accepting a better offer. According to Carvalho and V. H. Oliveira (2017), 23% of women experiencing domestic violence in the previous 12 months reported turning down employment opportunities during that period, because their partner prohibited, compared to 9% of women not assaulted by their partners. This result strengthens that domestic violence deteriorates women's autonomy, as described by Maria:

> [...] It was a large call center. And, since the beginning, it was very difficult. Although he didn't work there, he manipulated me in such a way that I felt I was doing something wrong. Men couldn't even sit close to me because it was a mess. [...] I received an offer to work in another big call center like the first one. A person who worked with me called me to hold the same function as before – operational leader. The salary was much better. And I didn't go. Because my ex-husband didn't let me. He put several obstacles (Maria).

Mariele's situation drew attention: she was fired after informing her chief that she was being assaulted by her husband, who was also her colleague at work.

> When I arrived at school, I was fired. Then, I went to report the incident, and I took the police report to the company and left it there with the HR lady. He was promoted months later, won prizes within the company, and worked there until the end of last year. In other words, nothing happened to him, I lost my job. They didn't give me any reason for dismissal. [...] Even my sector head didn't know they were going to fire me (Mariele).

Emotional balance is also affected, as we saw previously. When we asked Mariele about how she is currently, since her story took place at the turn of 2019 to 2020, she said that she is "still in psychological treatment, without a registered job; and taking medication for depression and anxiety".

The feeling of loss is also associated with abandoning dreams and achievements, as Penha described: "How many dreams have I buried to try to help him!!! [...] he took away the few things I had achieved, he put me in debt [...]".

The reports that made up this category express the effect of patriarchy on women's lives, since it is a phenomenon whose manifestation patterns directly imply disadvantages for them (Biroli, 2018). Aggressions often lead to losing almost everything (employment; possibilities of earning a living with some independence; social position; self-esteem; trust; a working career; sometimes their own professional image, due to criminal aggressions classified in law as libel and slander), while men, even those who commit a crime, change their lives very little. There are those who manage to rise in their careers, even after top management is informed of the aggressions against their wives, who become former employees.

Work as a support network?

The gender division of labor socially structures the functions intended for women, placing them in positions of more precarious conditions and lower social prestige, compared to men's opportunities (Kergoat, 2009). Moreover, given the patriarchal culture, the work environment itself is hostile to women, being a space where gender violence also takes place, as pointed out by the survey "Perceptions on violence and harassment against women at work". According to the data, 92% of respondents agreed that women are more likely to suffer embarrassment and harassment at the workplace than men. Furthermore, 36% of interviewed women said that they had already been victims of prejudice or abuse at work, just for being women; when asked about more specific situations, 76% had already suffered one or more episodes of violence and harassment at work (Locomotiva/Patrícia Galvão, 2020).

Facing an already unfavorable labor market for women, with the need to keep their jobs, and considering the culture that domestic violence is a private sphere issue (Echeverria et al., 2017; Leal, 2015), companies are not seen as support networks for women to get out of the domestic violence situation they are involved in.

> [Colleagues] asked; I omitted, at the time, ashamed, but later I ended up telling (Mariele).

> That one, I had to tell the truth to some co-workers and my chief. Because, as soon as I got the job, we had an argument, because he had arrived in the morning. And I broke my nose. At first, I didn't tell anyone. I omitted it and said that I had fallen (Maria).

> [...] I didn't tell her the whole story. I just told her that I couldn't stand having sex with him, that I was sick and he was forcing me to do it. She was thoughtful, but didn't say anything; I was ashamed. And I was a little embarrassed to bring problems to work (Penha).

According to Leal (2015), there is the cultural aspect of treating domestic violence as an exclusive issue of the private environment, and that only those involved should solve the conflict, thus disregarding its negative experiences and consequences. This makes us reflect on the feeling of shame that is present in women's speech, not exposing their condition to the company, besides the inability of organizational actors to handle it when they are told, as reported by Mariele. She was the only interviewee who went directly to the company's HR head to tell her situation and, as we already mentioned, the outcome was not what she expected: "I thought I would be accepted because she was our friend. I would at least have a job, so I could support myself financially without him".

The ideology behind the problem of domestic violence, which considers it inherent to the private sphere, is so embedded that people prefer not to get involved when they become aware of cases of abuse. According to the survey "Perceptions of violence and harassment against women at work", about 70% of respondents agree that people who suffer domestic violence have a worse performance at work. In contrast, 62% said that they feel uncomfortable when a woman tells them that she suffers this type of violence. In addition, 40% of respondents agreed with the statement that domestic violence is not companies' problem, and that they should stay out of it (Locomotiva/Patrícia Galvão, 2020).

This issue was also addressed in our research, since all interviewees said they were unaware of any corporate action to support female employees in situations of domestic violence; some even found this possibility strange, saying that it was not the organization's role to act on this type of problem.

> [...] most of them only prioritize the profit (Maria) [on the relevance of companies designing support programs for women in situations of domestic violence].

> In the 20 years that I have worked with hospitality, I followed several cases of colleagues in this situation, and I have never seen a program about it. I have suffered violence for six years, and I think about costs; generally, companies have attractive social projects that they advertise - I am a sustainable firm, I am a green firm, you know. I'll be cheering for you (Margarida).

We showed in this section that the social building of domestic violence as a problem of the private sphere makes it even more complex to form a broad support network for women in situations of domestic violence. Organizations do not design programs that can change this condition; consequently, women do not see this environment as a possibility for help: on the contrary, they fear exposure and loss of the job.

FINAL REMARKS

As we have seen, due to the gender division of labor, although women are gaining space in the labor market, the conditions for their insertion were – and still are – very tough, since they mostly hold precarious jobs. In short, the analyses of this study reflect that domestic violence is one of the consequences of the asymmetry of power between genders in our society, and brings as a contribution, mainly based on the reports of the category "losses", that this distinction extends to the work environment, where women in situations of domestic violence have even more difficulty in fully exercising their activities and achieving better positions.

Although there are few studies – mainly in Brazil and in the administration area – that correlate domestic violence and work, they expose the considerable impacts of this combination for women at different levels: social; psychological; in productivity; in career advancement; in difficulty for qualification; in flexible working schedule, or even in work performance. On the other hand, most organizations remain inert about this problem, possibly due to the cultural aspect of being something that does not concern them, because it is considered a problem of the private sphere.

However, there were recent advances in studies related to the Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) agenda, and its implementation in many companies. These are aligned with the commitment to social development that characterizes corporate decision-making and guides healthy financial practices, and may lead to the adoption of internal policies for fighting and raising awareness on the effects of domestic violence at the workplace and outside, in terms of public health, education, and safety. Therefore, ensuring an environment free of violence and threats for their employees, besides contributing to the reduction of feminicide rates and gender equality, is an important aspect for consolidating companies' social impact.

Our research findings show that the losses caused by domestic violence are different from those found in other studies on the impact of domestic violence on working women. In the case of losses, they refer not only to the economic aspect, as identified in other studies, resulting from dismissal or abandonment of work ties, but also to the loss of dreams and achievements and to the emotional damage generated by violence.

Another finding that is distinct from other papers in the field of domestic violence regards the notion of work as a support network. This idea is related to our concern, which sought to understand the opinion of organizations in the face of the violence suffered by these women. The words revealed companies' omission and inertia, configuring another act of violence against these women and strengthening the picture of structural violence they suffer. Furthermore, the non-recognition by the interviewed women that the workplace could be considered a support network reflects not only the culture of organizations, but also the fact that the workplace is not a support for workers in general, but rather a *locus* of unequal exchanges between actors with unequal powers - chiefs, subordinates, bosses, and employees.

We believe that these findings are a contribution to the field, and reflect the need for deepening this topic, especially in the area of administration, together with others also mentioned in this study: the position of organizations toward domestic violence; the influence of patriarchy in organizations and its correlation with negligence regarding the violence suffered by women; the search, with women in situations of violence, of support actions they consider important for companies to take, in order to help them; the potential influence of the type of link and working conditions on how women deal with domestic violence at their working environment. In short, there are many possibilities, since this topic is still little studied in the administration area.

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