Challenges of the pandemic in the relationship between mental health and the environment

Cristina Maria Douat Loyola[I]
ORCID: 0000-0003-2824-6531

Rosane Mara Pontes de Oliveira[II]
ORCID: 0000-0002-2183-1423

Elizabeth Esperidião[II]
ORCID: 0000-0002-9284-6243

Maria Giovana Borges Saidel[III]
ORCID: 0000-0002-3259-1760

[I] Universidade CEUMA. Member of the Department of Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health at ABEn. São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.
[II] Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Member of the Department of Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health at ABEn. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
[II] Universidade Federal de Goiás. Coordinator of the Department of Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health at ABEn. Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil.
[III] Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Member of the Department of Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health at ABEn. Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil.

Thinking about society's relationships with the environment should be implicit in our way of living and being in the world. We are facing countless limitations and psychological impacts, with challenges that impose us to contemplate and analyze certain phenomena present in the daily life of any living being in the pandemic context.

The proposal in this text is to reflect on the fundamental articulation between man, the environment and mental health, based on three axes: reflections on the environment with all the sociocultural envelope that does not depend on the pandemic; considerations about the liability of psychological distress analyzing the absolute experience immersed in communication/information technologies, addressing the Felicism ideology, encompassed in this process; finally, the 'master-slave' dialectic, to understand the work processes and psychological distress in a context in which economic and social relations are processed with the imposition of remote work in many sectors.

First, it is important to emphasize that, in the pandemic scenario, it is fatigue and not idleness that causes psychological distress. It is a symptom that escapes the muscular perspective, the physical field, being a feeling of tiredness that is subjective, hidden and does not bleed, which is why it is very little valued by contemporary society, without literacy in terms of mental health. Mental disorders and feelings of psychological distress are insidious. There is no possibility of individuals sleeping 'normal' and waking up 'crazy'. There are signs, symptoms and pronouncements, not always socially recognized, with evident negligence and non-valuation of human anxieties[1].

As the environment is all around us, the experience of screens and work exposes an exploration. Often, voluntarily and passionately, we exploit ourselves and this is an evil of the neoliberal income society. Emotional exhaustion often comes from the internal imperative of 'having to yield more and more', a situation amplified by the pandemic. There is social constraint, in terms of impossibility of accessing the other and the almost total lack of corporeality, so relevant to us, relational beings that we are, especially when considering that social interactions are essential for human existence. Currently, humanity resorts to screens, virtual interactions, sometimes to accompany an irreversible social movement, sometimes to sickly replace relationships, sometimes suspended by the current context.

Therefore, a challenge is posed, added to a certain Felicism ideology that was built through a promise of individual success. There is a perverse social construction which considers that it is an option not to be employed, thus exposing a reality of highly qualified workers who undergo occupations with very adverse working conditions. The idea that workers can be their own entrepreneur and take full responsibility for their work, whether successful or not, is implicit, excluding the influence of the environment on individuals and social groups. This construction gave rise to the concept of cognitariat, with an allusion to the term proletariat, referring to a social group conceived by people with high academic education, but with occupations and salary gains that do not reflect their level of knowledge. This

situation awakens the need for contemplation and analysis of the environment, in order to (re)think the production processes and the logic imposed by technology, aiming to build mental health care from another social conception.

The fact that we are being hyper-stimulated with information further impels us to develop ubiquity and telepathy, attributes almost exclusive of deities in times of yore, in the ability to be present in different places or to communicate at a distance, knowing everything that happens in the world through 'clicks'. However, such cognitive functions imply psychological abilities that are not fully developed from an evolutionary point of view. In this perspective, it is possible that a psychological and relational neurological reprogramming is necessary, in order to improve the organism's hardware, which is undergoing a bicultural mutation stage in its 'terminals'. The gap between the development of evolutionary processes and those of the technology era, given the need to structure reality, certainly produces feelings inherent to psychological distress, a worrying condition for the field of mental health[2].

In contemporary society, subjects are forced to surrender, bringing the dialectical logic of 'master-slave', in which he is only a master if he enjoys the goods produced by the slave. Was the master the slave of the slave? Lacanian thought considers the constitution of the master or slave from the perspective of the other. However, in this pandemic overview, there is no other, or if there is, it plays another configuration demanded by the pandemic way of life, in which interactions acquire different particularities. The disciplinary society is hurting the subject, as evidenced by Foucault[3], as individuals are the master and slave of their work, a very characteristic aspect of this historical-cultural moment that brings a fictitious sense of freedom.

In the environment we live in, those who fail, fail because of their already internalized guilt and the sum of these experiences becomes layers of distress, loss of subjectivity, inability to make sense of experiences and atrophy of reflective capacity. The speed of information, often run over by the countless fake news, combined with the need to produce, constantly lashes us, making even more evident the logic of production, which was previously external, which becomes internalized in each one of us. Distance working allows people more time to explore themselves. Home office, so naturalized in the pandemic, lacks a temporal structure of corporeality and further highlights the lack of the presence of the other. In the quality of the human, from the psychic point of view, what we had been progressively losing is now being radicalized due to the virtuality imposed by the pandemic. Doing, in the face of this reality that we are submerged in, exhausts us, gives us no pleasure and can even destroy the social fabric and the community, with great impacts on people's mental health.

The pandemic, now experienced across the planet, has potentialized a transformation that has already begun, in which the world finds itself in a great quarantine, in which survival replaced pleasure, the pleasure of living and depression in a symptom of tired society, stress, anxiety with many signs of psychological distress in most people.

Finally, there is a reflection by Ailton Krenak, environmentalist and philosopher:

> Life is not meant to be useful. Life is fruition. Life is a dance. But it's a cosmic dance and we want to reduce it to a ridiculous and utilitarian choreography, to a biography. Life is more than all this. […]. We have to have the courage to be radically alive. And not negotiating survival, the empty thinking of whites who cannot live with the idea of living for nothing, think that work is the reason for existence, cannot stop and experience life as a gift and the world as a wonderful place … …why do we insist on making life useful?"[4].

And, thus, we invite you to persist in the web of reflection.

REFERENCES

1. Loyola CMD. Mental health and psychiatric nursing: contributions to the resocialization of person in psychic suffering. Esc Anna Nery. 2017;21(3):e20170301. https://doi.org/10.1590/2177-9465-EAN-2017-0003-0001

2. Berardi F. Asfixia: capitalismo financeiro e a insurreição da linguagem. São Paulo: Ubu Editora; 2020. 238 p.

3. Foucault M. Microfísica do poder. Rio de Janeiro: Graal; 1979

4. Krenak A. A vida não é útil. Editora Companhia das Letras. 2020. 128 p.