

Special Section “Work and Health in the Face of Contemporary Metamorphoses”

Working conditions and meanings of working experience: The case of the justice workers

Elka L. Hostensky¹, Josep Maria Blanch^{2,3}, Paola Ochoa⁴, and Vera Regina Roesler⁵

¹ Department of Psychology, Federal University of Santa Catarina [Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)]

² Department of Social Psychology, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB), Barcelona, Spain

³ Faculty of Human & Social Sciences, Universidad de San Buenaventura (USB), Cali, Colombia

⁴ ESPAE Graduate School of Management, Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral ESPOL, Guayaquil, Ecuador

⁵ Perspectivas Desenvolvimento Humano (company name)

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Authors' notes

Elka L. Hostensky  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2463-1654>

Josep Maria Blanch  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7298-457X>

Paola Ochoa  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6657-6406>

Vera Regina Roesler  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1107-5465>

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Elka Lima Hostensky at Departamento de Psicologia, Centro de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas (CFH), Campus Universitário Reitor João David Ferreira Lima, s/n, bloco B, Trindade, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil. CEP 88040-900. *E-mail:* elka.lima@ufsc.br

Abstract

Introduction. The optimal functioning of organizations requires that workers be satisfied with their working conditions and assign positive meanings to their work activity. The reforms of the Brazilian judicial system created opportunities to improve services and customer service. The objective of this investigation was to analyze the relationship that justice workers establish between the evaluation of their working conditions and the subjectivation of their own professional experience, understood as the set of meanings they give to this work. **Method.** A sample of 1,537 workers in the sector answered the Questionnaire on Working Conditions (QWC) and a question about the meaning of their own work experience. A correspondence analysis made it possible to represent the relationships between the categories of a quantitative assessment of working conditions and the qualitative meanings attributed to work experience in contingency tables. **Results.** Those who scored negatively on working conditions evaluated their work experience in terms of discomfort, fatigue, injustice, and little commitment. Those who rated them positively judged their experience in terms of opportunities, relationships, and commitment. **Conclusions.** The study provides empirical foundations and theoretical criteria for a redesign of the working conditions of the justice system that minimizes psychosocial risks for civil servants.

Keywords: working conditions, meaning of work, justice, engagement, burnout

CONDIÇÕES DE TRABALHO E SIGNIFICADOS DA EXPERIÊNCIA LABORAL: O CASO DOS TRABALHADORES DA JUSTIÇA NO TRABALHO

Resumo

Introdução. O funcionamento ideal das organizações requer que os trabalhadores estejam satisfeitos com suas condições de trabalho e atribuam significados positivos à sua atividade de trabalho. As reformas do sistema judiciário brasileiro criaram oportunidades para melhorar os serviços e o atendimento ao cliente. O objetivo desta investigação foi analisar a relação que os trabalhadores da justiça estabelecem entre a avaliação de suas condições de trabalho e a subjetivação de sua própria experiência profissional, entendida como o conjunto de significados que dão a esse trabalho. **Método.** Uma amostra de 1.537 trabalhadores do setor respondeu ao Questionário sobre Condições de Trabalho (QCT) e a uma pergunta sobre o significado da própria experiência laboral. A análise de correspondência permitiu representar em tabelas de contingência as relações entre as categorias de avaliação quantitativa das condições de trabalho e os significados qualitativos atribuídos à experiência de trabalho. **Resultados.** Aqueles que obtiveram uma classificação negativa para as condições de trabalho avaliaram sua experiência de trabalho em termos de desconforto, fadiga, injustiça e pouco comprometimento. Aqueles que obtiveram uma classificação positiva avaliaram sua experiência em termos de oportunidades, relacionamentos e compromisso. **Conclusões.** O estudo fornece fundamentos empíricos e critérios teóricos para um redesenho das condições de trabalho do sistema de justiça que minimize os riscos psicossociais para os servidores públicos.

Palavras-chave: condições de trabalho, significado de trabalho, justiça, *engagement*, *burnout*

CONDICIONES DE TRABAJO Y SIGNIFICADOS DE LA EXPERIENCIA LABORAL: EL CASO DE LOS TRABAJADORES DE LA JUSTICIA

Resumen

Introducción. El funcionamiento óptimo de las organizaciones requiere que los trabajadores estén satisfechos con sus condiciones de trabajo y asignen significados positivos a su actividad laboral. Las reformas del sistema judicial brasileño generaron oportunidades para la mejora de los servicios y de la atención al público. El objetivo de este estudio fue evaluar el grado de satisfacción de los servidores judiciales con sus nuevas condiciones laborales e identificar las palabras clave con que significaron su experiencia laboral. **Método.** Una muestra de 1.537 trabajadores del sector respondió el Cuestionario de Condiciones de Trabajo (CCT) y una pregunta sobre el significado de la propia experiencia laboral. Un análisis de correspondencias permitió representar en tablas de contingencia las relaciones entre las categorías de valoración cuantitativa de las condiciones de trabajo y los significados cualitativos atribuidos a la experiencia laboral. **Resultados.** Quienes puntuaron negativamente en condiciones laborales valoraron su experiencia laboral en términos de malestar, fatiga, injusticia y poco compromiso. Quienes las puntuaron positivamente juzgaron su experiencia en términos de oportunidades, relaciones y compromiso. **Conclusiones.** El estudio proporciona fundamentos empíricos y criterios teóricos para un rediseño de las condiciones de trabajo del sistema de justicia que minimice los riesgos psicossociales.

Palabras clave: condiciones de trabajo, significado del trabajo, justicia, *engagement*, *burnout*

The interdisciplinary literature converges in considering that an adequate performance of individuals and organizations depends on the quality of work life, which, in turn, feeds on a double source: a) the objective working conditions (WC), which correspond to the characteristics of the material, technical, social, and organizational context in which the work activity takes place; b) the set of meanings that configure the subjective experience that includes a complex network of representations, conceptions, beliefs, definitions, assessments, attitudes, attributions, and models of action through which people and groups think about their work experience (WE). Both sources are interdependent and change over time, especially in historical contexts of intense and accelerated crises and changes (Bauer & Jenny, 2013).

The “modernizing” reforms of public services, through the implementation of management models typical of private companies, by the hands of the new public management, made this path, with greater or lesser effectiveness, through and throughout the global world, adopting specific configurations according to countries and regions. For example, in Brazil, Constitutional Amendment No. 45 (Brasil, 2004) boosted the Reform of the Judiciary with the clear objective of improving administrative management, reducing costs, and maximizing the effectiveness of services provided to the country. In general, the changes driven by these reforms appeared to be especially centered on the formal level of methods and procedures, affecting the principles, values, goals, and strategies of these organizations. Also, they impacted heterogeneous elements, such as beliefs and knowledge, aspirations and expectations, roles and competencies, traditions and customs, as well as criteria and moral habits that inspire the organizational and worker’s mentality and guide what should be thought, said, and done in the professional practice of public servers. In this way, the organizational culture of public services experienced a metamorphosis under the canons of the “new management”, driving the emergence of strong pressure for productivity, efficiency, competitiveness, and the imposition of an assessment system based on competencies and results (Morisson & Doussineau, 2019).

The changing trends that the “new management” has generated in WC, labor relations, and professional experience in public organizations have been accelerated and intensified by the economic, social, and labor impact of policies to deal with the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic, especially concerning the digitization of managerial models and processes. Among the most visible transformations regarding this aspect, the virtualization of processes, teleworking, and remote work – whose impact extends, beyond the technological level, to health and safety at work, the quality of work life, and user satisfaction – stand out. Regarding the specific assessment of the psychosocial effects of WC in the judiciary, literature provides evidence about multiple aspects emerging in the job subjectivity of the employees of these organizations (Blanch, 2020, 2021; Eurofound, 2020; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020).

In the Anglo-Saxon world, Lustig et al. (2008a, 2008b) studied the effects of WC on the mental health of United States’ immigration judges who were exposed to burnout, driven by exhaustion and secondary traumatic stress, because of the emotional workload of having to

judge cases that included histories of trauma and human suffering. With a quantitative design, the first study evidenced that the levels of secondary traumatic stress and mental breakdown of these judges were significantly higher than those shown in studies carried out with other professional groups, such as correctional officers and hospital doctors exposed to high care pressure. In the second study, from a qualitative approach, the judges nuanced the meaning of those quantitative data through narrative responses grouped in categories such as the following: workload, time demands, infrastructure problems, challenges to self-esteem, psychology, and health problems.

Moreover, Maguire & Byrne (2017) surveyed the levels of psychological distress, post-traumatic stress, and deficit in Canadian law professionals' quality of working life. These processes were presented as "the hidden face" and "the invisible cost" of justice (Leclerc et al., 2019). Weir et al. (2020) found similar effects in Australian lawyers exposed to "traumatic material". Leonard et al. (2020) provided a summary of this panorama in a scoping review in "When the lawyer becomes traumatized". The focus of the analysis was the frequent symptoms of secondary post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by law professionals exposed, in their daily work, to traumatic situations directly experienced by other people.

Within the European framework, the studies on psychosocial risks in the Spanish judiciary, which include evidence on the association of work overload with pressure for productivity, evaluation based on results, and insufficiency of material and human resources to meet the excessive demands stand out (Jueces para la Democracia, 2014; Gil-Monte et al., 2016). Also, in France (Bazex, 2012) and the Netherlands (Hagen & Bogaerts, 2014), an emphasis has been made on the work pressure to which legal professionals are exposed.

In the Latin American context, Perales et al. (2011) detected work stress, anxiety, and depression levels in a sample of 500,000 workers from the judiciary and public prosecutors in the Peruvian jurisdictional district, including magistrates, inspectors, and judges. From their results, intervention and prevention programs focused on managing work-related stress were recommended. Toia et al. (2020) also found high levels of burnout and low quality of professional life in Peruvian justice operators who dealt with cases of family violence and daily stories of abuse and pain, exposing themselves to psychosocial risks of work exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and loss of meaning of the profession. Also, evidence of psychosocial risk of burnout and psychosomatic disorders was found in Mexican civil servers of the justice system (Uribe et al., 2014).

Rocha et al. (2014) found evidence of remarkable rates of prevalence of common mental disorders in judicial workers in Brazil. Later, Carlotto and Câmara (2019), in a study carried out on a sample of civil servers from a court of law, identified the following occupational stressors as predictors of burnout syndrome: the content and organization of work, the type of public cared for, the social and physical environment, the working hours, and the work overload. From these results, it was pointed out that the need for preventive intervention is grounded in work organization in the courts.

In this framework, it makes sense to ask about how legal professionals assess their current WC and build the meaning of their work and profession in the context of the renewal of the forms, organization, and management of the judiciary. This question is based on an articulated set of background theoretical assumptions: a) WC influence the way people perceive, evaluate, feel, and live their WE; b) in each socio-historical context, the meaning of work influences the way workers live and the relationships they establish; c) changes in WC involve transformations in the meaning of work and professional experience; d) the contemporary metamorphosis of the justice system implies processes of redefinition of the work for professionals in this context.

To summarize, the aforementioned panorama gives an idea of the relevance of structural variables, such as organizational characteristics, workload, or temporal structuring when explaining the dynamics of the justice system regarding health and safety at work, well-being, and quality of the services provided. The literature converges around the idea that the design of safe and healthy WC, which facilitate well-being and optimal performance, has become a priority for governments and corporations. However, a better understanding of some aspects of this dynamic is urgently needed. This research aimed to analyze the relationship that justice workers establish between their WC and the perception of their professional experience, understood as their meaning of work.

Method

Study Design and Participants

This is a quantitative observational study with a sample comprising 1,537 public servants of the Brazilian Judiciary, from a state in the South of the country, working in three types of Justice. The sampling was non-probabilistic, occasional, strategic, and intentional, guided by theoretical representativeness criteria (gender, age, contractual status, workplace, seniority in the profession, and the institution). Regarding gender, participants were homogeneously distributed. In general, the surveyed judicial workers had a mean of 40 years (standard deviation of 8) and an average time of legal service of 12 years (standard deviation of 7).

Instrument

The Questionnaire on Working Conditions (QWC) was applied to collect quantitative data about WC. This questionnaire was designed to assess the psychosocial dimension of the work context in organizations and institutions that provide services to the population. The authors of the questionnaire defined WC as the set of ecological, material, technical, economic, social, political, legal, and organizational circumstances and characteristics within which the activity and labor relations are developed, constituting themselves as inexhaustible sources of risks and opportunities for occupational health (Blanch et al., 2010). The instrument was validated in Latin America by Ochoa and Coello-Montecel (2020). The QWC is composed of 44 items ($\alpha = 0.96$), organized around three factors of two scales each: the *Organization and Method* factor includes the *Regulation* and *Development* scales; the *Organization and Environment* factor includes the

Material Environment and *Social Environment* scales; the *Organization and Person* factor includes the *Organization–Person Fit* and *Person–Organization Adaptation* scales. The items of the first two factors are in an 11–point Likert format (0 = very bad... 10 = great). Those in the third factor have a 7–point Likert format (1 = total disagreement... 7 = total agreement).

In addition to the aforementioned scales, the instrument included: a) an open item with the following command: "*Type four keywords to define your current work experience*"; b) a sociodemographic information section: gender, age, place of work, contractual status, seniority as a professional in their activity, among others.

Procedure

The distribution of the instrument for data collection took place in person. The questionnaire was filled out voluntarily, anonymously, and confidentially, with the informed consent of the participants and the corresponding authorizations from the competent authorities of the three institutions of the Judiciary involved, previously informed about the objectives and methodology of the study. A total of 1,537 valid surveys were considered in the sample after excluding questionnaires with missing data. Before its implementation, the research project was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings (*Comitê de Ética e Pesquisa com Seres Humanos* [CEPSH]) of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina [UFSC]) under the embodied opinion number 936/11.

According to the objective of the study, data analysis comprised three phases: 1) descriptive statistics of the QWC scores across each type of Justice; 2) textual analysis of the lexical forms obtained in the open item (keywords), called descriptors of the meaning of WE; and 3) multivariate statistics through correspondence analysis between the categories of quantitative assessment of WC and the qualitative meanings attributed to WE.

Textual analysis of lexical forms and correspondence analysis fall within the scope of statistical analysis of textual data and the technique of interdependence analysis, respectively. The sum of all responses to the open item provided a *corpus* consisting of 4,896 WE descriptors. In this step, two procedures were performed: a) inductive analysis (bottom–up way), which comprises a data coding process without adjusting it to pre–existing coding milestones; and b) deductive analysis (top–down way), which is a data coding process that tends to be managed according to theoretical interest. Coding involves several steps in a complex process of inductive and deductive thinking in which the researcher must make comparisons and questions. The steps followed in the textual analysis included:

- spelling and typographic revision: spelling and typography of all keywords were revised and corrected;
- *corpus* debugging: lexical forms without content, such as prepositions and articles, were identified and excluded;

- *corpus* lemmatization and homogenization: different verb tenses, synonymous expressions, genres, and forms that belonged to the same semantic field were unified. We chose to work with nouns;
- categorization of keywords: based on the use of the dictionary originally in Spanish;
- semantic approximation and adjustments: all the keywords in the dictionary (in Spanish) were translated into Portuguese with the help of bilingual dictionaries and qualified judges to validate the translation process and the correct localization of the *corpus* words in the general and specific codes. This resulted in a dictionary translated into Portuguese;
- attribution of value to the words in the *corpus*: positive, negative, or neutral;
- *corpus* encoding: this phase involved the assignation of a number (or code) to each keyword in the *corpus*, directly in the database.

The categorization and encoding procedure were based on the empirical approach for the analysis of WE descriptors applied by Ochoa and Blanch (2016) to medical professionals and by Granero et al. (2018) to nursing professionals. The authors built their dictionary based on the literature on work and organizational sciences, which provided an explanatory framework about the relationship between WC, well-being at work, and professional performance, articulating burnout, engagement, and job demands-resources models. According to this model, both engagement and burnout comprise a complex panorama that includes negative effects as malaise and deteriorating health, as well as positive experiences such as psychological well-being, motivation, bonding, and commitment.

The dictionary provided six general codes for each pole and a total of 25 specific codes. The textual analysis procedure allowed encoding each keyword in the *corpus* of the judiciary, clustering 4,896 keywords in 25 codes. In other words, the quantitative analysis of qualitative-nature data was carried out based on the counting, categorization, and encoding of the descriptors of the WE. This transformation of textual data allowed carrying out a correspondence analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

The correspondence analysis is a type of factor analysis. This technique was used to analyze the relationship between the QWC scores and the descriptors of WE clustered in categories that moved from malaise to well-being and from burnout to engagement. The correspondence analysis dimensions extracted in this investigation were total inertia values, eigenvalues, absolute contributions, relative contributions, and graphical representations.

Results

Given the research objective, the results will be presented in three stages: descriptive statistics of WC, codes of meaning of WE, and correspondence analysis.

Working conditions: the QWC scores suggested that Judiciary workers, in the three types of Justice, positively evaluated their material and technical conditions, such as physical

environment, facilities, and equipment, as well as social conditions related to interpersonal relationships within the workplace. Also, this evidence reflected satisfaction with opportunities and possibilities for professional development with some nuances between the types of Justice. In general, the QWC factors and scales mean scores were quite satisfactory.

Meaning of work experience: the keywords, descriptors of WE, reflected the meaning that workers attributed to their WE in the Brazilian Judiciary. From 1,537 respondents, a total of 4,896 keywords were obtained, an average of 3.18 words per participant. The textual analysis provided: a) 3,158 positive descriptors; b) 1,565 negative descriptors; and c) 173 non-specific or neutral descriptors. These neutral descriptors were discarded in the correspondence analysis, so 4,723 lexical forms were used. The frequency of responses to general and specific codes is reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency of responses of work experience descriptors

| Value | GC | Descriptor | SC | Descriptor | n |
|---|----|-------------|----|---------------------------|-----|
| Negative Malaise Burnout n = 1,565 (33.14%) | 1 | Negative WC | 1 | Overload | 264 |
| | | | 2 | Bad management | 85 |
| | | | 3 | Disorganization | 23 |
| | | | 4 | Bad social environment | 101 |
| | | | 5 | Injustice | 91 |
| | | | 6 | Inappropriate work | 196 |
| | | | 7 | Lack of resources | 8 |
| | | | 8 | Instability | 52 |
| | 2 | Malaise | 9 | Dissatisfaction | 80 |
| | | | 10 | Malaise | 160 |
| | | | 3 | Exhaustion | 275 |
| | | | 4 | Cynicism | 104 |
| | | | 5 | Depersonalization | 29 |
| | | | 6 | Inefficacy (+ alienation) | 97 |

Table 1*Frequency of responses of work experience descriptors*

| Value | GC | Descriptor | SC | Descriptor | n |
|---|----|--------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Positive Well-being Engagement n = 3,158 (66.86%) | 7 | Positive WC | 15 | Good conditions | 371 |
| | | | 16 | Opportunity | 265 |
| | 8 | Well-being | 17 | Satisfaction | 153 |
| | | | 18 | Well-being | 159 |
| | 9 | Strength | 19 | Strengthening | 213 |
| | 10 | Commitment | 20 | Commitment | 616 |
| | | | 21 | Ethics | 160 |
| | 11 | Good relationships | 22 | Good relationships | 262 |
| | 12 | Efficacy (+ achievement) | 23 | Achievement | 175 |
| | | | 24 | Efficacy | 470 |
| | | | 25 | Competency | 314 |
| | | | Total | | 4,723 |

Note. GC – general codes; SC – specific codes; WC – working conditions.

In terms of general codes, two positive indicators emerged: effectiveness ($n = 959$) and commitment ($n = 776$), while among the negative codes the negative WC ($n = 820$) and exhaustion ($n = 275$) stood out. However, it should be noted that the general negative WC code included a greater number of specific codes. Disaggregating these results into specific codes, expressions associated with exhaustion ($n = 275$), overload ($n = 264$), and inappropriate work ($n = 196$) were identified in the malaise/burnout pole.

Correspondence analysis: the objective of including that open item on keywords that define WE was to establish the relationship between the QWC scales scores and the words chosen by the participants, to obtain complementary information about how the Judiciary servers experience, represent, and give meaning to the WE.

From the correspondence tables, the correspondence analysis allows establishing relationships between two or more variables. In this research, the descriptors of WE are considered the first variable (V_1) and the QWC scores, the second variable (V_2). This analysis reflected the subjective construction of the meaning of the WE of public servers in the Judiciary. The chi-square statistic allowed to refute the null hypothesis of independence between these variables, confirming the alternative hypothesis that there is a relationship between the meaning of work (WE) and WC, in their scores obtained in terciles. Table 2 shows the descriptors of WE grouped by the terciles of WC.

Table 2*Contingency table of the meaning of work experience descriptors and working conditions*

| WE descriptors | Very bad WC | Regular WC | Excellent WC | Active margin |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Overload | 118 | 105 | 41 | 264 |
| Bad management | 46 | 24 | 15 | 85 |
| Disorganization | 15 | 4 | 4 | 23 |
| Bad social environment | 70 | 19 | 12 | 101 |
| Injustice | 73 | 12 | 6 | 91 |
| Inappropriate work | 82 | 85 | 29 | 196 |
| Lack of resources | 3 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| Instability | 31 | 13 | 8 | 52 |
| Dissatisfaction | 57 | 17 | 6 | 80 |
| Malaise | 112 | 36 | 12 | 160 |
| Exhaustion | 157 | 88 | 30 | 275 |
| Low commitment | 76 | 22 | 6 | 104 |
| Depersonalization | 18 | 8 | 3 | 29 |
| Inefficacy (alienation) | 64 | 17 | 16 | 97 |
| Good conditions | 85 | 118 | 168 | 371 |
| Opportunity | 34 | 97 | 134 | 265 |
| Satisfaction | 16 | 52 | 85 | 153 |
| Well-being | 22 | 52 | 85 | 159 |
| Strengthening | 66 | 66 | 81 | 213 |
| Commitment | 117 | 228 | 271 | 616 |
| Ethics | 28 | 48 | 84 | 160 |
| Good relationships | 33 | 96 | 133 | 262 |
| Achievement | 32 | 50 | 93 | 175 |
| Efficacy | 98 | 173 | 199 | 470 |
| Competency | 71 | 106 | 137 | 314 |
| Active margin | 1,524 | 1,539 | 1,660 | 4,723 |

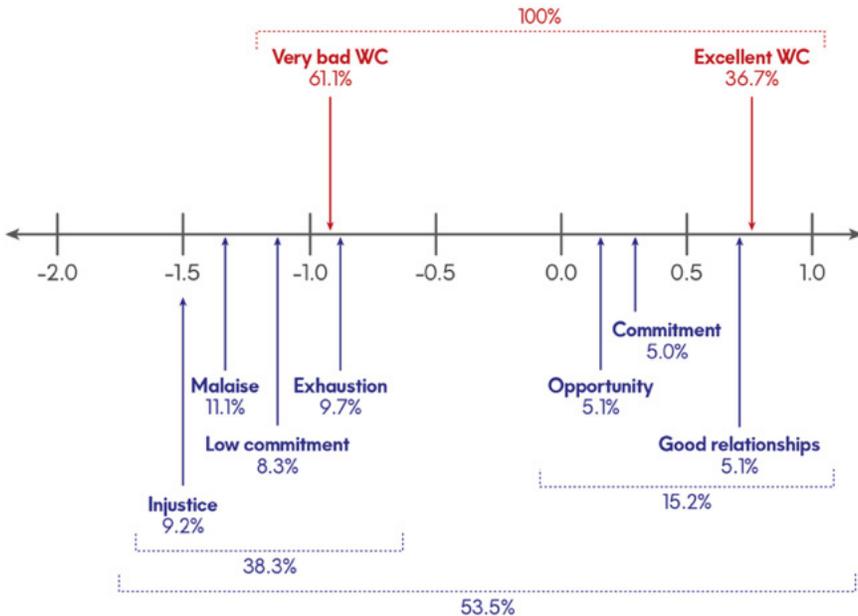
Note. WC – working condition; WE – work experience.

The total inertia, which provides the measure of association between rows and columns, could be explained, at 100%, with two dimensions. The first axis (dimension 1) had an eigenvalue of 0.458 with an inertia of 0.210, which accounts for 94.4% of the total inertia. This was the most important axis when explaining the relationship between WE and WC. The second factorial axis (dimension 2) had a lower eigenvalue of 0.112 with an inertia of 0.012, explaining 5.6% of the total inertia. Considering the absolute and relative contributions, the first axis was composed of the following modalities: very bad WC (0.611), regular WC (0.022), and excellent WC (0.367). The highest relative contributions were in the very bad WC (0.994) and excellent WC (0.956) modalities, and this demonstrated that both were well positioned. The regular WC modality was

not well-positioned (0.365). Figure 1 graphically expresses the analysis of the first axis which explained 94.9% of the correlation between WE and WC.

Figure 1

Work experience and working conditions terciles – relative contributions – dimension 1

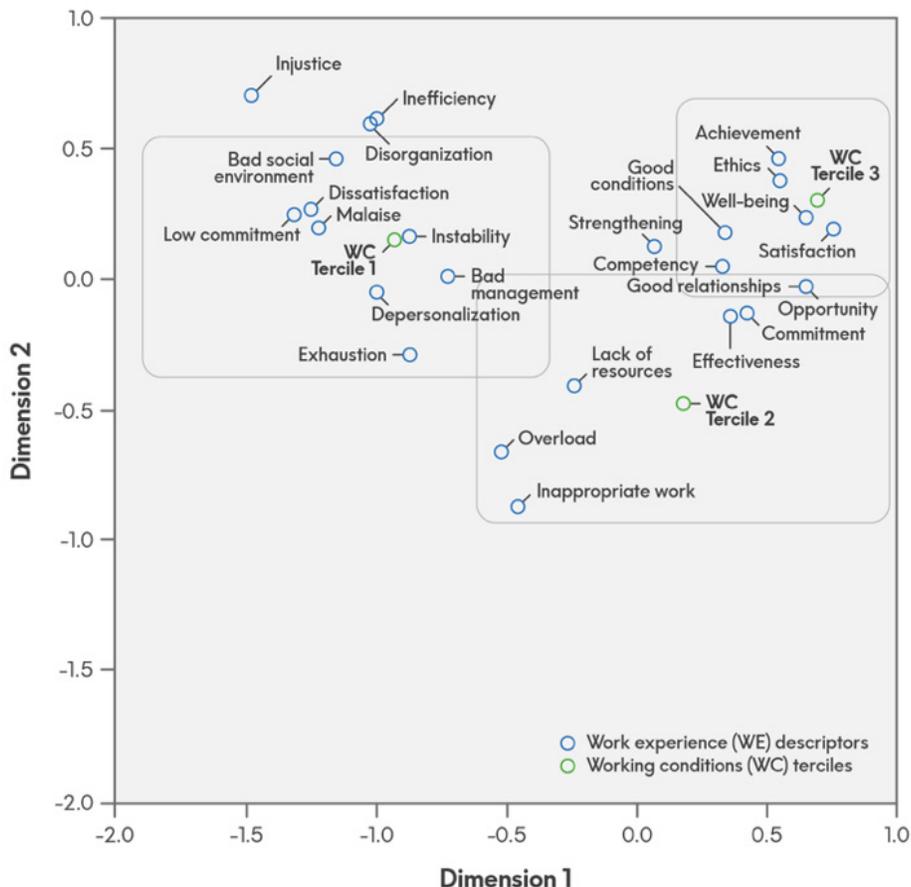


Note. WC – working condition.

Therefore, it was observed that the meaning of WE of those public servers who assessed WC as very bad is associated with expressions of malaise (11.1%), exhaustion (9.7%), injustice (9.2%), and low commitment (8.3%). In turn, workers who assessed WC as excellent reported opportunities, good relationships, and commitment. Dimension 2, which explained 5.6% of the correlation between both variables, showed that those servers who assessed WC as regular explained their experience in terms of inappropriate work (28.2%) and overload (21.9%). Meanwhile, those who rated their WC as excellent expressed their WE in terms of achievement (7.1%) and ethics (4.2%).

Figure 2

Bidimensional representation of the work experience and working conditions



The descriptors of ineffectiveness and injustice appeared poorly positioned on axis 2. However, when viewed from the entire graphic representation (Figure 2), they approach the first tertile, indicating a relationship between poor assessment of WC and the perception of injustice and ineffectiveness.

Discussion

The general assessment of the public servers about their WC expresses the complex panorama as a result of the organizational and technological changes experienced by the Brazilian Judiciary in recent times and its effects on WE. In general, respondents assessed these conditions in an ambivalent way. On the one hand, the material, technical, social, and organizational aspects were evaluated positively. On the other hand, psychosocial risks related to work

overload were highlighted. In this sense, the results of this study are consistent with the literature referenced in the introduction section, especially about mental exhaustion problems and symptoms of general burnout, but not concerning secondary traumatic stress, a risk for which there are no indications in this research.

Regarding the specific descriptors provided by the keywords, the assessment of excellent WC was associated with expressions about remuneration, financial compensation, autonomy, leadership, security, stability, and valorization. Considering the positive pole of well-being, the words most frequently adopted by public servants demonstrated a high degree of implication regarding the institution. According to the results, commitment was related to adequate work, dedication, passion, professionalism, and identification with the organization. Also, judiciary workers' professional effectiveness was explained in terms of agility, speed, productivity, performance, excellence, goals, perfection, and quality.

In the semantic field of malaise, words referring to the psychosocial risk of exhaustion resulting from overload and job demands emerged. The dimension of overload suggested a lack of time to perform work in the judiciary, work accumulation, intensity, and urgency. Meanwhile, inappropriate work was translated into routine, mechanized, monotonous, incoherent, meaningless, empty, and repetitive work. From a theoretical approach, both overload and exhaustion can be considered as two parts of a single process that leads to burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2017; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

The QWC scores indicated a positive and satisfactory evaluation of the WC. However, the analysis of the keywords revealed nuances of this first assessment and allowed to know the dimension of overload, exhaustion, and the characteristics of a job that has lost its meaning for some servers. These findings supported the hypothesis that judicial workers are involved in a breeding ground that leads to malaise and illness, going through stress until reaching burnout. The literature provides abundant empirical evidence on the negative impact of job burnout on work performance, labor productivity, and the quality of services (Blanco-Donoso et al., 2021; Leiter & Maslach, 2017).

In practical terms, it is to be assumed that, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for social isolation without discontinuing the provision of judicial services accelerated organizational changes that were already underway, such as the intense use of information and communication technologies and the home/work amalgamation. Thus, exhaustion could be increased, and health conditions, worsen. Even though our study did not cover the potential negative impact of the pandemic on the labors, we assume, according to the literature, that participants would feel those impacts (Rigotti et al., 2021; Sinclair et al., 2021).

The results of the study provided evidence about the growing work stress generated by the WC in public services that provide care to people, such as the judiciary. In this context, the work overload of justice servers, in terms of quantitative and qualitative, cognitive and emotional, communicational and technological aspects that endanger occupational and organizational health, constitutes a collective challenge that the public administration authorities need to

urgently consider and address. Work processes and strategies should be rethought and redesigned considering the adoption of human, material, and technical resources, so that job demands can be properly managed (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

This challenge becomes more visible, serious, and urgent both in public administration and other economic sectors due to the Covid-19 pandemic effect on the global social and labor systems, a crucial aspect whose relevance has been highlighted by international institutions, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations (UN).

For the aforementioned reasons, occupational risks in the judiciary need to be managed from a new perspective, especially psychosocial risks, including those associated with telework. This transformation implies strengthening preventive measures and promoting models of healthy management that guarantee adequate levels of quality both in worker's life and the services provided to the community.

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